

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Spaces of regionalism and the rescaling of government;
A theoretical framework with British cases*

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

In recent decades, regional pressures for stronger autonomy have encouraged a number of central and federal governments around the world to devolve powers and resources downwards to the regional level. The contemporary revival of regionalist movements and the simultaneous tendency towards greater government decentralisation have received considerable academic attention. Most of these contributions present detailed accounts of the processes of regional mobilisation and devolution in a specific region or set of regions. Although these analytical stories tell us a lot about the distinctive aspects of a particular case, they do not, in general, present a coherent theoretical account that would allow us to study the origins of these two interrelated but distinctive trends in a structured way. This thesis aims to make a contribution towards such an account. Building on the literature on political legitimacy and social movements, this study develops a tripartite typology of regionalisms which allows us to analyse and compare the origins of regional autonomy movements across different contexts. In addition, it seeks to show that an actor-based rational choice approach to the process of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation can help us gain a better understanding of the mechanisms through which such demands influence the shape of the government system. The usefulness of the resulting theoretical framework is demonstrated by applying it to the contemporary history of regionalism and devolution in mainland Britain.

Acknowledgements

The process of writing a PhD thesis is a long and winding road, fraught with dead-ends and cul-de-sacs. For all the things I wish I would have done differently, I remain convinced of one thing: I chose the right subject matter.

I am part Dutch, but neither I nor either of my parents grew up in the Netherlands. I am part Belgian, but don't feel any connection to the country. I am part Frisian, but don't speak or understand the language. I am part Flemish, but grew up in a French-speaking suburb of Brussels. If given the choice I would rather vote in the British general elections than partake in the Dutch ones, yet I have no desire to apply for a British passport. Both my children currently have dual nationality and I can honestly say that that I am indifferent as to which of these identities they will eventually choose to adopt. Taken together, I think it is therefore fair to say that I am at best a reluctant member of my 'imagined' national community, whichever community that may be.

Paradoxically, nationalisms and regionalisms have however been an important part of my life for as long as I can remember. Growing up in Brussels, regional nationalisms were a very real and tangible part of my early childhood. Simultaneously, a more subtle language battle was taking place within the confines of our family home. Despite her often humorous propensity to muddle up Dutch sayings, any hint of a Flemish accent was met with considerable disdain and firm correction by my Dutch mother. Faced with such hostility, my Dutch-Flemish father did what any sensible man would do: he formally capitulated, while secretly encouraging us to sing Flemish nationalist songs at family gatherings. Amid this cacophony of nationalisms, my paternal grandfather desperately tried to teach us about the history of the proud Frisian people and the true origins of the Tijmstra name. I have always suspected that this insistence on our Frisian heritage was borne out of a desire to correct a perceived failing in my father's upbringing. If this was indeed the case, my grandfather need not have worried.

Much to my surprise, and perhaps his own, my father, the man who had successfully dissuade my mother from naming either of his daughters Frouwkjen or Ytske ¹, was genuinely disappointed when we decided to give his first grandson the Dutch version of his Frisian first name.

In many respects, my time at the LSE has thus been a highly rewarding opportunity to explore a puzzle that continues to personally fascinate me. The experience has been made all the more special by a number of extraordinary people who were there to enjoy/endure it with me.

First and foremost, my heartfelt thanks go out to my wonderful supervisor, Professor Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. In the Netherlands, a PhD supervisor is sometimes affectionately referred to as a doktorvater and that word certainly reflects the role Andrés has played in my life over the past years. Like a true father, he has been endlessly supportive and generous with his time, if perhaps a bit too willing to overlook the small and not-so-small failings on my part. Fortunately critics are never in short supply in the academic world, while loyal supporters are few and far between. So thanks Andrés for the faith you have had in me and the help you have given me throughout my time at the LSE.

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¹ By the way, thanks again for that dad; it really is wonderful to have at least one name people can pronounce!

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1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, academic literatures across a range of social science disciplines have been awash with claims that the centrality of the state is increasingly being challenged by “new forms of political mobilization, conflict, and struggle...that cross cut, bypass, or transcend inherited geographies of the national state”(Brenner, Jessop, Jones, & MacLeod, 2003: 11). One of these trends has been the contemporary revival of regionalist and secessionist movements in established democratic societies. The response of the central or federal state to these developments has varied; while some political elites have sought to ignore or suppress calls for regional autonomy, others have proved significantly more accommodating.

Although these trends have been widely noted, the origins of the regionalist revival and the political and institutional factors that shape the response of central and federal powers to such developments remain heavily debated. This study seeks to make a contribution to the literature by developing a theoretically grounded framework of analysis that will allow us to position the existing literatures within a broader context, and strengthen our ability to empirically test the validity of the underlying propositions and hypotheses. The analytical focus of this thesis is thus rather broad. It not only seeks to explain the emergence of popular demands for greater autonomy, but also examines under which conditions such demands are likely to lead to change of constitutional importance. In order to answer these questions, the theoretical chapter develops a tripartite typology of regionalisms alongside an actor-based rational choice approach to regionalist accommodation. The usefulness of these theoretical constructs is demonstrated through an in-depth case study of the patterns of regionalism and regionalist accommodation in post-war mainland Britain.

1.1.Main arguments

This study advances two core arguments. First of all, it will be proposed that regionalism should be seen as a re-scaling of political legitimacy from the centre towards the regional level, rather than an assertion of regional difference or national consciousness per se. Secondly, I aim to show that a rational choice approach can help us to gain a fuller understanding of the processes of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation in different contexts. At face value, neither of these two arguments may seem particularly contentious. Taken together, they do however represent a significant departure from the approach generally taken within the existing literature on regionalism, devolution, and secession. To illustrate this, I shall elaborate on each of these two core arguments and show how the proposed approach challenges and qualifies elements of the conventional wisdom.

Before I delve more deeply into the concept of regionalism as the re-scaling of political legitimacy and the response of political elites to such developments, it is however necessary to briefly discuss the rationale behind the terminology used within this study. The language one chooses to employ to describe popular demands for greater autonomy is a point of considerable contention. While some authors choose to speak of 'stateless nations' or 'nationalisms' (see for example Keating, 2001b), others refer to similar territories and processes of mobilisation as 'regions' and 'sub-national activism' (van Houten, 2007). I would contend that such choices are rarely incidental and often reflect the personal background of the author and the general tenor of the work. I therefore feel that it is important to explicitly acknowledge the considerations that motivated the terminology used in this study.

The question "Who is Sylvia Tijnstra?" is addressed in some detail within the acknowledgements. All that needs to be said here is that I personally do not feel a strong connection to any particular nation or region and that the level of importance attached to such imagined communities by others continues to surprise me. Academically, this study departs from the perspective that legitimacy is multi-faceted and increasingly multi-scalar in nature.

In line with this perspective, I see regional demands of greater autonomy as a partial re-scaling of political legitimacy from the central or federal state towards a smaller territorial unit within this territorial state. This smaller unit may be referred to as a region, a country, a state, or a nation for a variety of historical, cultural or political reasons. In line with my general perspective on the subject, this study deliberately seeks to avoid the use of the term 'nation' when referring to either the state or the smaller territorial unit within it. Similarly, I have tried to minimise the use of the term 'nationalism' to refer to feelings of belonging directed to either of these two scales.

Apart from these arguably normative choices, the choice of terminology was primarily guided by a desire to make this study as accessible to a non-specialist audience as possible. In this context, Sharpe's (1993) more neutral but less intuitive concept of 'meso government' was considered but rejected in favour of the arguably more normatively-laden but readily understandable term 'region'. Popular demands for greater regional autonomy or full secession are in turn referred to as 'regionalism' and 'regionalist'. When discussing a particular case, I at times refer to a region or a regionalist movement by the name commonly employed within the context at hand. Similarly, I talk about the nationalisation and regionalisation of the party system, as this is the vocabulary normally used in the academic literature on this subject. It is important to stress that the choice of words in such instances reflects a convention rather than a normative judgement regarding the nature of a particular community or scale of government.

Having established the rationale behind the terminology used throughout this thesis, I will now move on to the substantive arguments.

1.1.1. Regionalism as the re-scaling of political legitimacy

One of the primary arguments I seek to advance in this study is that we need to devote equal attention to central and regional factors in order to understand the origins of popular demands for greater regional autonomy. This is by no means a new contention; the famous work by Rokkan and Urwin (1982) put forward a very similar argument. The continuing pre-occupation with regional factors and realities that characterises so much of the contemporary literature however suggests that this critique remains as valid today as it was in the early 1980s (Bradbury, 2006). By re-defining regionalism as the re-scaling of political legitimacy from central or federal level to the regional scale, I seek to redress this lack of attention for the state-level trends and development that create the opportunities for regionalist mobilisation.

The literature on social movements has long argued that, in order for mobilisation to occur, “people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem” (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996: 5). Applying this intuition to the case at hand would suggest that popular demands for greater regional autonomy can only emerge if the legitimacy of the centre is challenged in some way and the region is perceived as a more viable or legitimacy tier of government in this respect. From within this perspective, a rise in popular support for decentralisation can have two origins. First of all, new challenges to the legitimacy of the centre may encourage a regionalist revival in areas that have traditionally enjoyed a high degree of regional legitimacy. Secondly, an increase in the legitimacy of the region as an alternative scale of government can create support for decentralisation in areas where the legitimacy of the central state has traditionally been compromised. These two rationales are not mutually exclusive. In other words, improvements in the perceived legitimacy of the region may coincide with the appearance of new grievances at the central level to produce dual incentives towards regionalist mobilisation. The point I am trying to make is instead that we need to acknowledge that grievances with the centre interact with sources of legitimacy at the regional level to create calls for devolution and secession.

In order to gain a better understanding of this dynamic, I argue that we should base our empirical enquiries more firmly on the rich theoretical literature on political legitimacy, rather than relying primarily on the tentative hypotheses emerging from empirical observations. Building on the work of Weber (1978), Easton (1965) and Scharpf (1999), I develop a multi-faceted concept of what makes power legitimate in democratic contexts. Combining this concept with the proposition that regionalism is unlikely to emerge unless people feel both aggrieved by some aspect of the current system and confident that decentralisation or secession would help redress this issue, we can distinguish three ideal types of regionalism. First of all, popular support for greater regional autonomy may be based on grievances with the perceived output produced by the centre, coupled with the perception that decentralisation would improve the economic situation of the region and/or allow residents to enjoy the same public goods and services at a lower cost. I dub this type of support for greater regional autonomy (1) economic regionalism. Secondly, salient spaces of regionalism may emerge when the central government system is seen as inadequately responsive to the needs and wants of the population and decentralisation is perceived as a viable solution to this democratic deficit. I call this type of support for devolution (2) democratic regionalism. Finally, a rescaling of legitimacy may occur when the imagined community at the centre is seen as irreconcilable, or in some way at odds, with the imagined regional community. I will refer to this as (3) identity-based regionalism.

The typology of regionalisms outlined above will no doubt be readily recognisable to those who take an interest in the substantive subject matter at hand. In fact, I deliberately draw on the language most commonly employed in this context, instead of using more precise but less intuitive terms such as “specific” and “diffuse” support (Easton, 1965) or “output-oriented” and “input-oriented” legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999). What is different about the approach adopted here is that it is argued that regional sources of legitimacy should only be seen as a *direct cause* of regionalism if they match perceived legitimacy deficits at the centre.

By contrast, I argue that economic, democratic and identity-based sources of regional legitimacy that are not mirrored by similar grievances at the central level enable, rather than cause, regionalist mobilisation.

To illustrate how the proposed framework helps us to qualify and specify existing perspectives on the origins of popular demands for greater regional autonomy, the empirical part of this thesis will re-analyse the waxing and waning of spaces of regionalism in post-war mainland Britain. Initially I will focus on the contemporary history of regionalism between 1945 and 1997. The United Kingdom is, as the name suggests, a product of the unification of several formerly independent territorial spaces. For much of the twentieth century, this history however did not produce highly salient spaces of regionalism outside of Ireland. Although cultural and linguistic differences existed and institutional reminders of independence remained, mainland Britain was widely seen as a textbook example of successful integration (Rokkan & Urwin, 1982). The re-emergence of the 'home-rule' issue in the post-war period therefore took many by surprise. The wealth of literature that has since emerged on the subject focuses strongly on regional factors and realities in order to explain this trend. This study seeks to complement and challenge these accounts by showing that the waxing and waning of popular support for greater autonomy should in fact be seen as one of several possible responses to the more general challenges to the legitimacy of the British state during this period.

The relatively recent secession of much of Ireland, coupled with the concentration of popular demands for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales, invites a conceptualisation of the post-war regionalist revival as the re-assertion of national rights surrendered in an uneven process of unification. This would however be an oversimplification both of the sources of support for autonomy in Scotland and Wales, and of the history of unification and identity formation. The ideology of nationalism, understood as the idea that the nation and the state should be coextensive, is widely accepted to be a nineteenth century invention (Gellner, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kedourie, 1993).

Largely the product of the French Revolution, it emerged at a time when Wales and England had already been formally unified for more than 200 years. Although the memory of independence was arguably more vivid in Scotland, it too had been part of Britain for nearly a century by that time. As a result, the imagined Scottish and Welsh communities that partially underpin the contemporary spaces of regionalism in these two countries developed very much in tandem with, as well as in opposition to, an overarching sense of Britishness.

Throughout the history of the Union, the relative importance attached to regional and British feelings of belonging has waxed and waned for a variety of reasons. While the Anglicising tendencies in the nineteenth century may well have produced identity-based regionalisms in parts of Scotland and Wales, I argue that the contemporary re-ordering of identities should instead be understood as a more mundane response to the weakening of the British identity. In the 1950s and 60s, the secularisation of British society, the demise of the Empire, and the experience of relative and absolute economic decline jointly undermined some of the most central pillars of the imagined British community. This in turn created opportunities for regional identities to gain in importance relative to central attachments. I will argue that the perceived sources of conflict between the regional 'us' and the British 'other' were however too limited and stable over time to explain the regionalist revival during this period. Instead, I assert that the formal and informal mobilisation structures that tend to accompany historically-grounded spatial identities facilitated the mobilisation of economic and democratic grievances with the centre along territorial lines in Scotland and Wales.

In the 1960s and 70s, the worsening of the economic situation across Britain, alongside the re-emergence of the North-South divide, created generic as well as spatially-concentrated economic grievances with the centre. Across the UK, these economic woes were accompanied by a growing discontent with the performance of the main contenders for office at the central level. The popular response to such grievances differed from area to area.

In England, voters predominantly expressed their discontent by shunning the Labour Party and the Conservatives in favour of the Liberals. By contrast, the challenges to the legitimacy of the centre provoked a rise in support for greater regional autonomy in Scotland. At the time it was widely assumed that a similar, if perhaps less prominent, shift in popular opinion occurred in parts of Wales. In the absence of reliable survey evidence, this contention was primarily based on what, with the benefit of hindsight, can be seen as a misinterpretation of the origins of the sudden rise in support for Plaid Cymru in the late 1960s. While the thawing of the two-party system may have exposed a regionalist core in some parts of Wales, persistent economic grievances and the related decline in support for the Labour Party primarily resulted in an increase in support for the Liberals and calls for change at the central level. I will therefore argue that the Welsh response to the emerging challenges to the legitimacy of the centre bares a greater resemblance to the trends in England than the regionalist revival in Scotland.

In line with the conventional wisdom, I primarily attribute the stronger regionalist response in Scotland to the 1970 discovery of North Sea oil. What makes my explanation subtly different is that I argue that the related shift in the perceived economic legitimacy of the region had such a profound effect on support for independence and devolution precisely because it matched the primary source of grievance with the centre at that time. The spatial pattern of the second regionalist revival in the 1980s and 90s lends further support to this hypothesis. While there were also economic sources of discontent, I will argue that the second regionalist revival primarily coincided with the emergence of new democratic grievances with the centre. The voting patterns in both Scotland and Wales in turn suggested that decentralisation could at least partially redress these democratic deficits. As the framework proposed in this study would predict, this resulted in a much more homogeneous rise in popular support for decentralisation across both countries.

Having re-analysed the contemporary history of regionalism in mainland Britain, I turn to the emerging trends in the post-devolution era. The influence of devolution on the salience of pre-existing spaces of regionalism has been heavily debated; while some argue that the partial accommodation of regionalist demands can help to stem calls for further autonomy (Elazar, 1995; Gurr, 1994; Lijphart, 1977; Stepan, 2001), others content that decentralisation is likely to have the opposite effect (for example see Dikshit, 1975; Kymlicka, 1998; Lustik, Miodownik, & Eidelson, 2004; Roeder, 1991). So far, the immediate effects of devolution on the demand for greater decentralisation in Scotland and Wales have been relatively modest. While popular support for a return to a fully centralised system has declined, demand for full secession has remained fairly stable. Surveys however do tend to find that popular support for more extensive forms of decentralisation has increased. Simultaneously, the experience of devolution elsewhere seems to be increasingly associated with support for the establishment of a directly elected country-level body in England. Using the typology of regionalisms developed in the theoretical part of this thesis I analyse the origins of these emerging trends in more depth.

In particular I argue that, although devolution has altered the way some people choose to articulate feelings of belonging, this effect has been too minimal to produce a real propensity towards purely identity-driven regionalism. Similarly, the perceived failure of the devolved institutions to significantly improve the economic situation in Scotland and Wales has dampened the influence of the New Regionalism discourse on popular support for decentralisation. By contrast, opinion polls suggest that the establishment of directly elected regional bodies has done little to redress the perceived democratic deficits that underpinned the regionalist revival in the 1980s and 90s. Simultaneously, the anomalies in the current asymmetric system of devolution are creating increasingly salient democratic grievances in the non-devolved areas. In this context, I argue that the recent rise in the regionalisation of the British party system is likely to strengthen democratic regionalism across mainland Britain.

In addition, the perceived ability of Scottish elites to use the devolved institutions in order to protect the region's relatively favourable public resource position is producing increasingly salient comparative grievances in England and Wales. This perceived fiscal dividend of devolution is in turn proving an increasingly potent source of economic regionalism. Taken together, this analysis suggests that the recent shift of power at the centre and the related austerity policies may be accompanied by a strengthening of popular demands for further decentralisation in devolved and non-devolved areas alike.

1.1.2. Regionalist accommodation as a veto game

This thesis not only seeks to examine the origins of spaces of regionalism, but also aims to explore under which circumstances such popular demands for greater regional autonomy are likely to lead to an actual rescaling of powers and resources from the central or federal level to the regional scale. While the re-emergence of demands for greater regional autonomy has led to changes of constitutional importance in some contexts and time periods, the response has been considerably more muted in others. Although this heterogeneity has been widely noted, there have been few attempts to develop a coherent theoretical account that can explain differences in regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation in a structured way. In this context, I argue that a carefully developed veto player (VP) approach can help us to develop a better understanding of the prevailing patterns of policy stability and change in the face of bottom-up pressures towards devolution and secession.

Veto player approaches are increasingly being employed by qualitative researchers to examine legislative processes and policy outcomes across a variety of substantive policy areas and country contexts. While the language used in such studies may be distinctive, the explanations offered are generally compatible with those developed by studies adopting different methods. What is distinctive about the VP approach is that the researcher both explicitly identifies the actors that are assumed to possess veto powers within the analytical narrative and takes great care to justify the beliefs and preferences she attributes to these actors.

This approach not only allows for a more structured comparison between different cases, but also produces explanations that can be more readily tested and challenged empirically.

The empirical usefulness of this approach is again demonstrated by applying it to the contemporary history of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation in post-war mainland Britain. It can be argued that the British case is not particularly well-suited to the VP approach, as powers tend to be strongly concentrated in the hands of a single partisan veto player; the party in government at the centre. As a result, the decision-making processes at the central level rarely produce the highly visible bargaining situations upon which this type of analysis tends to rely. The empirical sections of this study however aim to show that the VP approach can nonetheless help us to gain a better understanding of the decisions and non-decisions under consideration here.

Contrary to the usual pattern described above, the first regionalist revival under consideration in this study occurred during a rare period of minority government at the central level. In addition party discipline within the governing party was at an historic low during the mid to late-1970s. As a result a number of groups within the House of Commons gained potential veto powers. On this occasion, the number of veto players within the system and the difference in their policy preferences prevented actual change from occurring. By contrast, the second surge in popular support for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales did eventually result in the asymmetric devolution of powers and resources to directly elected regional bodies.

This change was initiated by a government that enjoyed the largest seat majority since the Second World War. Coupled with low levels of backbench dissent, this firmly concentrated the agenda-setting and decision-making powers in the hands of the newly-elected prime minister and his cabinet. In this context, the views of other groups within the system were largely immaterial to the overall outcome of the decision-making process.

While these differences are widely acknowledged within the existing literature, most of these studies do not examine which of the many observable disparities between the two decision-making moments are necessary or indeed sufficient to explain the difference in the overall outcome. This thesis aims to show that an actor-based rational choice approach can help us to compare and contrast these periods in more detail. In particular, I argue that the primary agenda-setting powers remained strongly concentrated in the hands of the party leadership of the governing party during both periods. In order to understand the differences in the processes of regionalist accommodation during these two periods, we therefore first and foremost need to understand why the main contenders for office at the central level would choose to place the devolution issue on the parliamentary agenda at all.

The formal policies and informal practices through which the preferences of individual party members are aggregated into a single policy position differ from party to party. The process however tends to have a strongly hierarchical element, in the sense that the internal agenda-setting and decision-making powers are concentrated in the hands of the party leadership (Grofman, 2004). In order to gain a better understanding of the factors that guide the formal party response to the emergence of salient spaces of regionalism, we therefore need to start by analysing the incentives faced by the party leadership. As Blau (2008) has argued with respect to electoral reform, it is important to distinguish act-based reasons to support or oppose a change in the existing government system from outcome-based incentives. The act-based incentives faced by the party leadership can in turn be divided into intra-party consideration and external electoral and political concerns. The resulting typology of incentives towards regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation is summarised in Table 1.1. By distinguishing between these different types of incentives and acknowledging that they may at times prove conflicting we can in turn gain a better understanding of the behaviour of political elites in the face of bottom-up demands towards decentralisation.

Table 1.1 Incentives towards regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation

Type of incentive	Explanation
Outcome-based	The outcome of supporting or opposing devolution is beneficial.
Party-interest	Devolution is likely to enhance or decrease the power and influence of the party.
Ideological	Devolution or centralisation is seen as normatively justified or likely to lead to the most preferable outcome in the long-run.
Act-based	The act of support or opposing devolution is beneficial.
Internal	The act of supporting or opposing devolution is likely to help the party leader gain or retain internal support.
Electoral	The act of support or opposing devolution is likely to increase the party's vote or seat share
Political	The act of supporting or opposing devolution will help the party gain or retain veto powers

In particular, I qualify and challenge the common proposition that the divisiveness of the devolution issue within the Parliamentary Labour Party, coupled with the Party's narrow and fast disappearing parliamentary majority, presented the main obstacle to devolution in the late 1970s. Instead I argue that the tight electoral competition at the centre, coupled with the low salience attached to the devolution issue in England, allowed the preferences of a regionalist minority to have an atypically large effect on the electoral incentives faced by the main contenders for office at the centre. The party leadership was in turn in a strong position to respond to such incentives because the 'home rule' issue had re-emerged relatively recently and there were considerable intra-party divisions regarding the proper response to this trend. In other words, I argue that the factors that are often identified as the main obstacles to change should instead be seen as the unusual circumstances that allowed regionalist demands to penetrate the Parliamentary agenda at all.

Given the motivations behind the devolution agenda of the 1974-1979 Labour government, the internal divisions that emerged during the decision-making process seem hardly surprising. A structured veto player analysis however shows that the sheer scale of backbench dissent was not just driven by the divisive nature of the devolution issue, but also in part by the general decline in party discipline that marked the 1970s. Such an analysis furthermore reveals that the House of Commons retains the final veto, even if a consultative popular referendum is introduced. This in turn challenges the perspective that the repeal of the 1978 Scotland Act was the direct result of the so-called Cunningham amendment. Instead I will argue that it was not the '40 percent of the electorate' threshold, but rather the limited appetite for devolution amongst the Scottish population, coupled with the weak position of the minority Labour Government, that ultimately led to the failure of the legislation.

While popular opinion shifted notably in the 1980s and 90s, it would be overly simplistic to present the eventual change in the government system in the late 1990s as the expression of the settled will of the Scottish and Welsh people. Instead I will argue that the gradual absorption of the devolution dimension within the existing party system was instrumental in ensuring that the Labour Party maintained its commitment to Scottish and Welsh devolution when its fortunes changed at the central level. In particular, I seek to show that Labour leader, Tony Blair, had a personal outcome preference for the status quo and faced few electoral incentives to accommodate the views of the regionalist groups in Scotland and Wales. Rather it would seem that his choice to honour his Party's longstanding commitment to devolution in the 1997 election manifesto was guided by internal act-based incentives. I argue that the existence of conflicting act and outcome-based incentives in turn encouraged the Labour leader to devise a mixed policy strategy, which allowed him to reap the internal benefits of formally supporting devolution, while creating a barrier to change in the form regional referendums. While Blair may have misjudged the level of popular support for fiscal devolution in Scotland, the results of the Welsh referendum illustrate that this strategy could have paid off.

Having re-examined the contemporary history of devolution decisions and non-decisions prior to 1997, I move on to examine the dynamics of regionalist accommodation in the post-devolution era. In the British context, it has been widely suggested that the initial decentralisation of powers and resources to a directly elected regional body is likely to unleash further waves of reform (Hazell, 2007; Keating, 2009). While this general assertion fits the contemporary developments in Scotland, Wales, and Greater London, I argue that there is a need to examine the origins of these trends in more detail. Analysing the distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers from a veto player perspective can again be a useful first step in this respect. Such an analysis reveals that, although the British government system has been profoundly changed by devolution, this has not significantly altered the formal distribution of powers over issues of constitutional importance. The logical consequence of this finding is that the effect of devolution on the dynamics of regionalist accommodation must operate primarily through the ability of regional elites to use their new-found powers in order to change the act and outcome-based incentives faced by veto players at the central level.

I will argue that devolution can change the incentives faced by central level parties in two ways. Most directly, devolution can increase the credibility of the threat of secession by providing regionalist parties with new mobilisation structures. Secondly, the benefits derived from simultaneous office holding at the central and regional level enhance the internal bargaining powers of the regional affiliates of the party in office at the central level. While the first dynamic dominates in Scotland, the accommodation of bottom-up demands for further decentralisation in Wales and Greater London operate primarily through internal party politics. As a result, I argue that central veto players with an outcome-based preference for maintaining the Union face stronger incentives to accommodate Scottish preferences for greater regional autonomy in the post-devolution era. This has in turn dampened the influence of the electoral geography of the UK on central party positions. By contrast, the dynamics of devolution in Wales and Greater London strongly hinge on party politics.

At times when there is no formal partisan connection between the regional and the central government, the incentives towards regionalist accommodation faced by the centre therefore remain similar to the pre-devolution situation.

The devolution of powers and resources to Scotland, Wales and Greater London has thus produced regional institutions with very different degrees of bargaining power. Simultaneously, the lack of devolution to the rest of England has meant that the majority of the electorate in mainland Britain does not enjoy any form of regional representation. As a result, English sources of discontent with the current system of asymmetric devolution do not easily find political expression. This in turn allows political elites at the central level to ignore English demands for constitutional changes that would be unpopular in the devolved areas or politically disadvantageous for the party itself. This situation seems unlikely to change unless grievances with the asymmetric system of devolution become salient enough to significantly affect the behaviour of English voters in general elections.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 will firstly develop the theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis. This chapter will also outline the methodological approach in the empirical sections of this study and rationale behind the case selection. The next three chapters will re-analyse the contemporary history of regionalism and regionalist accommodation using the tools developed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 focuses on the origins of popular demands for greater regional autonomy between 1945 and 1997. Chapter 4 in turn examines how spatially concentrated demands for decentralisation affect the formal policy position of the main contenders for office at the central level. Based on this analysis, chapter 5 shows how a veto player approach can help us to understand the outcome of the main decision-making moments during this period. The subsequent two chapters employ the same theoretical concepts to the post-devolution period. Chapter 6 examines to what extent the asymmetric devolution of powers and resources to Scotland, Wales and Greater London has changed the propensity towards different types of regionalism in mainland Britain.

Chapter 7 in turn analyses how the establishment of directly elected regional bodies in some but not all regions has affected the distribution of veto powers in the system and the way the occupants of these veto position form their preferences. Finally, chapter 8 draws conclusions and presents a number of interesting avenues for further research.

2. Devolution in theoretical perspective

The contemporary revival of regionalist movements and the simultaneous tendency towards greater government decentralisation have received considerable attention across a range of academic disciplines. To date, none of these literatures has however produced a coherent theoretical framework that would allow us to study the origins of these two interrelated but distinctive trends in a structured way. This study will seek to make a contribution to this debate in two ways. Building on the literature on political legitimacy and social movements, I firstly propose a tripartite typology of regionalisms. This typology in turn allows us to develop a number of theoretically-grounded hypotheses regarding the origins of popular demands for greater regional autonomy. The observable implications of these hypotheses will guide the empirical analysis in chapters 3 and 6 respectively. Secondly, I develop an actor-based rational choice approach to the process of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 of this thesis will demonstrate that this approach helps us to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms through which spatially-concentrated demands for greater autonomy influence the shape of the government system.

The final section of this chapter will discuss the methodology and the rationale behind the case selection. While this empirical part of this study effectively consists of qualitative case studies, it does not adopt the relativistic approach that tends to characterise much of the existing literature in this field. Instead the empirical analysis is guided by the theoretically-grounded constructs and hypotheses developed in this chapter. In line with this methodological choice, the cases under examination have been explicitly selected with a view to maximise variance on the dependent variables within a single country context. This stands in stark contrast to the prevailing tendency to focus on one or more relatively extreme regional cases with little or no reference to popular opinion in other parts of the country.

2.1. Popular demands for greater regional autonomy

From a variety of academic perspectives, it has been argued that the present age of globalisation and international integration is characterised by a strengthening of the regional scale as a locus of identity, level of democratic representation, and engine of economic growth and prosperity (Keating, 1998a; Scott, 1998; Storper, 1997). While these diverse strands of the literature do build upon and reinforce each other, Jones and MacLeod (2004) are right to stress that we need to distinguish those contributions that argue that globalisation has been accompanied by the emergence of *regional spaces* of innovation and economic competitiveness from those that examine the production and re-production of contemporary *spaces of regionalism*. The former literature argues that the present wave of economic globalisation has resulted in an important rescaling of the economic geography of the world (Scott, 1998; Storper, 1997). By contrast, the latter is primarily concerned with the re-emergence of popular demands for greater regional autonomy or full independence (Jolly, 2007; Keating, 2001a, 2001b; van Houten, 2007). While regionalist and nationalist movements are increasingly incorporating economic arguments in their discourses (Rodríguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008), such bottom-up pressures towards decentralisation tend to be based on a more general rescaling of political legitimacy. In order to understand such trends, we therefore need to draw on the wider human geography and political science literature, alongside the ideas proposed in economics and economic geography.

The current literatures on regionalist mobilisation have been strongly dominated by detailed qualitative case studies into origins of the contemporary regionalist revival in a select number of relatively extreme regional cases, such as Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders and Scotland. In these contexts, bottom-up calls for greater autonomy have been linked to a myriad of region-specific historical, cultural, economic and political factors (for examples see Conversi, 1997; Keating, 2001a; MacLeod, 1998b; B. Taylor & Thomson, 1999).

While it is widely acknowledged that regional claims of difference are generally framed in opposition to the centre (Keating, 1998a; Newman, 1996), the legitimacy of the sovereign state itself is rarely discussed in great detail. In addition, most of these studies tend to conceptualise the regional production of politicised space as a unique process that requires a tailored explanation. As a result, there has been a notable reluctance to derive testable hypotheses and more generic typologies from the empirical evidence (for exceptions see Lecours, 2004; Moreno, 2001). This approach has produced numerous interesting analytical narratives. In my view, it however does not supply us with all the conceptual tools we need to analyse and contrast the origins of regionalist mobilisation across a wider universe of cases.

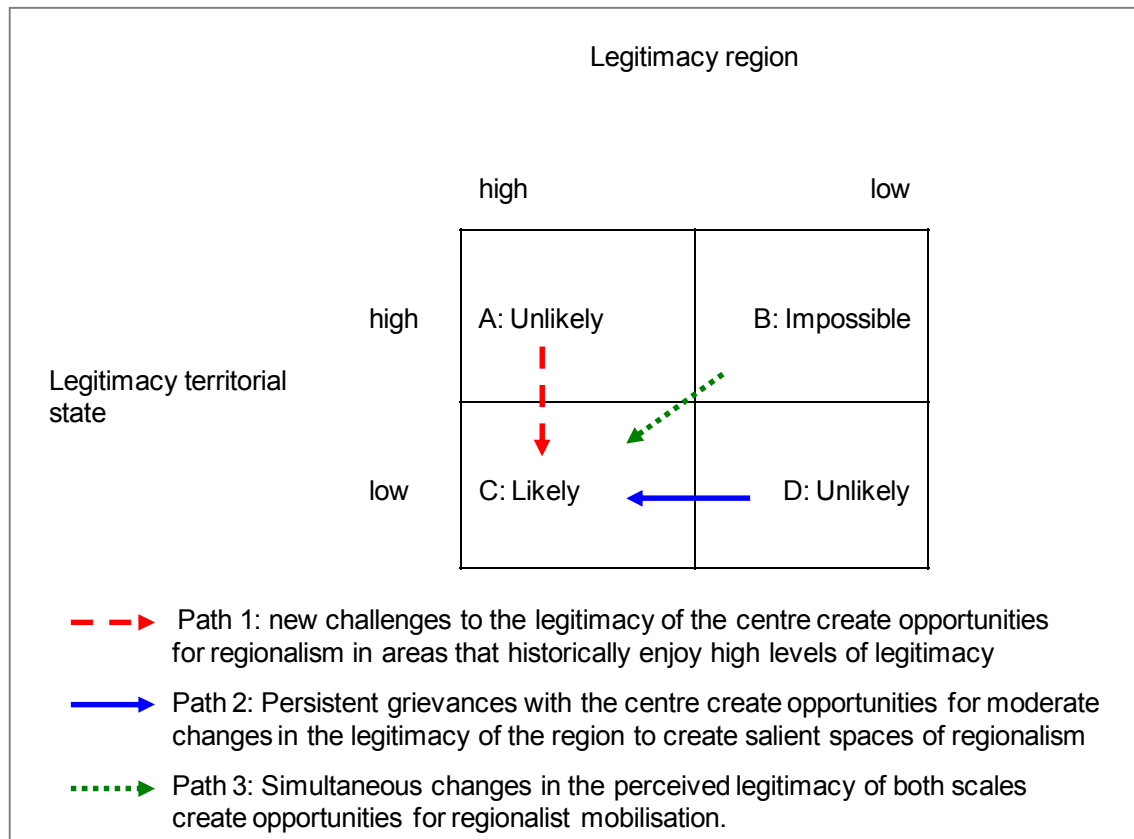
More recently, attempts have been made to partially address this gap in the literature by testing some of the inferences most commonly found in qualitative case studies through quantitative methods. In line with the qualitative literature upon which they are based, most of these quantitative studies primarily seek to explain variations in the popular demand for devolution and independence through a range of economic, cultural and historical sources of difference (Fearon & van Houten, 2002; Tronconi, 2006; van Houten, 2007). In addition, there have been some attempts to link the re-emergence of politicised regionalism to globalisation in general and the European integration process in particular (Dardanelli, 2005; Jolly, 2007). Based primarily on the work of Alesina and Spolaore (1997), such accounts assert that international integration has been associated with a rise in regionalist mobilisation as these processes have increased the economic and political viability of small states.

While these quantitative studies make a valuable contribution to the literature, they primarily test the tentative inductive hypotheses that have emerged from qualitative case studies. As a result, they may challenge elements of the conventional wisdom, but do not generally produce novel theoretical insights. This study aims to show that a stronger focus on deductive reasoning will allow us to arrive at a theoretically-grounded typology of regionalisms that can both qualify and specify the existing hypotheses and produce new insights and avenues of enquiry.

2.1.1. The rescaling of legitimacy

The typology of regionalisms I develop in this study is in its essence based on the proposition that we need to think of regionalism as a rescaling of political legitimacy. From within this perspective, popular support for greater regional autonomy can only emerge when (1) the legitimacy of the centre is challenged in some way and (2) the regional scale is seen as a more legitimate or capable representative of the people in this respect. If we accept this proposition, a sudden rise in popular support for decentralisation can have two origins. First of all, new challenges to the legitimacy of the centre may encourage a regionalist revival in areas that have traditionally enjoyed a high degree of regional legitimacy (path 1). Secondly, an increase in the legitimacy of the region as an alternative scale of government can create support for decentralisation in areas where the legitimacy of the central state has traditionally been compromised (path 2). These two rationales are not mutually exclusive. In other words, improvements in the perceived legitimacy of the region may coincide with the appearance of new grievances at the central level to produce dual incentives towards regionalist mobilisation (path 3). Figure 2.1 captures these assertions in the form of a matrix.

Figure 2.1 The perceived legitimacy of geographical scales and the potential for regionalism



This general framework is useful in that it proposes a potential explanation for seemingly defiant cases like the success of the Northern League in Italy or the apparent lack of politicised regionalism in the Dutch province of Friesland. In particular, it could be argued that the persistent and unresolved legitimacy grievances with the Italian state provided an opportunity for moderate changes in the perceived legitimacy of the region to create relatively strong popular support for greater regional autonomy. Similarly, the absence of deep-felt grievances with the Dutch state may have prevented the emergence of more salient spaces of regionalism in an identity-rich area like Friesland. The validity of these very general propositions can however not be empirically examined in the absence of a clear operationalisation of the concept of political legitimacy at different geographical scales.

2.1.2. Legitimacy as a theoretical concept

Although the legitimacy of institutions, policies and governments is a highly debated subject, it frequently remains unclear what the concept entails. The myriad of often conflicting definitions offered by different groups of scholars from a variety of academic backgrounds go to show that creating a universally accepted definition of what makes power legitimate is not possible (Beetham, 1991). This study will approach the issue from a descriptive rather than a prescriptive point of view. In other words, it will leave aside normative discussions on the forms of government that ought to be seen as legitimate and instead seeks to explore to what extent people perceive different levels of government as legitimate platforms for collective action. To this end, I will take Max Weber's (1978) definition of political legitimacy as the *belief* in legitimacy as a starting point. At first glance, this definition seems to condemn us to retrospectively gauging the perceived legitimacy of alternative scales of government through opinion polls and surveys. However, if we accept that a "given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be justified in terms of their beliefs" (Beetham, 1991: 11), this opens up new avenues of enquiry.

To illustrate this point, let us consider the 2000 presidential elections in the United States of America. In the US system, the president is appointed through the Electoral College System. The intricacies of this system are beyond the scope of this thesis. What is important in this context is that "the net effect [of this system] is to give the [presidential] candidate who wins the statewide popular vote all of that state's electoral votes"(Hoffman, 1996). In 2000, the way this system aggregates state-wide results into Electoral College votes resulted in a peculiar situation; while the Republican candidate George W. Bush won the Electoral College vote, the Democratic candidate Albert Gore Jr. gained the largest share of the popular vote.

The wave of popular discontent that followed the subsequent inauguration of George W Bush cannot be explained by a sudden change in the beliefs people hold about political legitimacy. Instead this popular backlash occurred because a particular distribution of the vote drew popular attention to the fact that the electoral system was capable of delivering results that contrasted with the, by no means recent, belief in the representative purpose of elections (Yates & Whitford, 2002).

By analysing the origins of popular beliefs in legitimacy, it would have been possible to predict the grievances that followed the inauguration of George W. Bush in 2000. Such an analysis would also have revealed that the distorting effect of the Electoral College system only becomes highly visible to the general public under a very specific set of circumstances. As a result, grievances may at set times emerge, but they are unlikely to persist from one presidential election to the next. We can therefore conclude that the potential for sustained popular mobilisation around the issue of electoral reform is relatively limited under the prevailing circumstances. An analysis of the *origins* of beliefs in legitimacy at different geographical scales can similarly provide new insights into the potential for regionalism under different conditions.

2.1.3. Legitimacy beyond the nation-state

Much of the theoretical literature on political legitimacy was developed with one particular power relationship in mind: that of the nation-state and its citizens. The (re-)emergence of salient spaces of regionalism, alongside the increasing prevalence of far-reaching processes of international integration, however challenges the centrality of this concept within the contemporary world. Especially in Europe, decision-making powers are increasingly spread over multiple scales of government. The process of European integration presents social scientists with an example of political and economic sovereignty-sharing that is unprecedented in modern history. Simultaneously, many European states have experienced significant pressures towards decentralisation. In some cases, this has resulted in the fully-fledged federalisation of a formerly unitary sovereign state. In other instances, more moderate and/or asymmetrical forms of devolved government have emerged.

In the face of such growing institutional complex, there is a pressing need to rethink the meaning of political legitimacy at different geographical scales.

Writing on European integration, Scharpf (1999) has argued that a particular scale of government may derive at least part of its legitimacy from the belief that it is or would be particularly well-placed to solve problems that require collective solutions. The author refers to this type of legitimacy as 'output-oriented'. The concept however shows considerable overlap with what Easton (1965) referred to as specific support more than three decades earlier. In essence, both argue that the legitimacy of a governmental tier will to some extent depend upon its perceived ability to produce outputs that meet, or can be expected to meet, the demands of enough of the members of the political community within some reasonable timeframe. In much of Western Europe, the immediate post-war era was characterised by a strong belief in the ability of the sovereign state to manage and resolve most problems requiring collective action (Jessop, 2002). The dominance of the Keynesian paradigm in particular awarded the state a central role in managing the economy. To the extent that local, regional, and international institutions were seen as relevant, they were generally perceived as entities through which the state fulfilled its objectives, rather than places of policy-making that needed to be legitimised in their own right.

The end of the post-war boom, and the mounting economic and social problems that accompanied it, however rapidly undermined this belief in the state's ability to foster economic growth and ensure a degree of social and spatial justice. In the decades that followed, the continued globalisation of economic activity, coupled with the growing concern for environmental and social issues that transcend national boundaries, have continued to erode the perceived ability of the state to address some of the most pressing problems facing its citizens today (Jessop, 2002). According to some, these processes have encouraged an upwards rescaling of legitimacy towards supranational entities (Held, 1995).

Simultaneously, the proponents of the so-called New Regionalism have argued that the regional scale is increasingly establishing itself as an important motor for economic growth and prosperity in the contemporary era of capitalism (Amin & Thrift, 1994; M Jones & MacLeod, 1999; Keating, 1998a; Storper, 1997).

Although the belief that collective action at different geographical scale could produce more favourable outcomes may create popular support for decentralisation and international integration alike, a government system will rarely be able to maintain its legitimacy on the basis of this type of support alone (Easton, 1965; Scharpf, 1999). Long-term collective action invariably requires individuals to forgo some of their personal needs and wants in order to make partial fulfilment possible for the community as a whole. In order to retain its legitimacy, a government system will therefore need to be able to rely on a “reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants” (Easton, 1965: 273). This “reservoir of favourable attitudes”, or diffuse support as Easton (1965) calls it, can in turn be based on a variety of factors.

At the most general level, support for the legitimating ideology that underpins a government system can produce diffuse support for the actions of the authority figures within that system, even if such actions conflict with the personal wants and needs of parts of the population (Easton, 1965). In the context of democratic societies, this would suggest that authority figures and their actions are perceived as legitimate “if and because they reflect the ‘will of the people’- that is, if they can be derived from the authentic preferences of the members of a community” (Scharpf, 1999: 6). Scharpf (1999) calls this type of diffuse support ‘input-oriented’ legitimacy. In my view, ‘democratic legitimacy’ would however be a more appropriate and readily-understandable term. In this context, any perceived or real failings in the democratic system could potentially reduce the legitimacy of the regime itself and the authority figures elected under it.

Such failings can range from outright vote-fixing to much more benign grievances, such as those previously discussed in relation to the 2000 US presidential election. Where grievances with the functioning of the democratic system are profound and persistent, this may in turn be accompanied by a long-term decline in the perceived legitimacy of the governmental system itself.

The concept of democratic legitimacy naturally leads us towards our final source of legitimacy; a sense of community or shared identity. The democratic ideology essentially rests on the assumption that the welfare of the community bound together within a democratic system is a part of the preference function of each individual within that community (Scharpf, 1999). In other words, individuals must be willing to “substitute for their own private or particular wants, a new or different one, that of a higher entity or ideal called the common good” (Easton, 1965: 314-315). While the belief in a common economic interest may be sufficient to produce this type of behaviour, most established democracies draw on a wider sense of ‘sameness’ generally referred to as a common identity or national consciousness. In a world dominated by the concept of the nation-state, the existence of such a widespread sense of community may in turn provide an independent source of diffuse support for a particular scale of government.

In primordial accounts of regional or national attachments, territorial identities are seen as historically-determined ‘givens’ of social existence, based on kinship and religious, linguistic and cultural ties (Geertz, 1963). Like most of the contemporary literature on regionalism and nationalism, this study will however takes a constructivist approach to identity. From within this perspective, territorially-defined feelings of belonging are seen as social constructs that are created *around* a range of ethnic and civic markers. As a result, regional and national identities are “neither determined rigidly by the past or by rooted social values, nor entirely open for invention and manipulation in the present” (Keating, Loughlin, & Deschouwer, 2003: 35). Furthermore it is important to stress that these ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1991) need not be mutually exclusive.

In a variety of contexts, research has shown that feelings of belonging to one particular community can and do often coincide with identities directed to different territories and geographical scale (for example Curtice, 2006; Dardanelli, 2005; Guibernau, 2006; Moreno, 1988, 2001).

2.1.4. A typology of regionalisms

If we combine the concept of political legitimacy outlined in the previous section with the hypotheses summarised in Figure 2.1, we can identify three theoretical ideal-types of regionalism. First of all, regionalism may be based on grievances with the perceived output produced by the centre, coupled with the perception that decentralisation would improve the economic situation of the region and/or allow residents to enjoy the same public goods and services at a lower cost. We will dub this type of support for greater regional autonomy (1) economic regionalism. Secondly, salient spaces of regionalism may emerge when the central government system is seen as inadequately responsive to the needs and wants of the population and decentralisation is perceived as a viable solution to this democratic deficit. We will call this type of support for devolution (2) democratic regionalism. Finally, a rescaling of legitimacy may occur when the imagined community at the centre is seen as irreconcilable, or in some way at odds, with the imagined regional community. We will refer to this as (3) identity-based regionalism.

The tripartite typology of regionalisms described above will no doubt seem highly familiar to those who take an interest in popular demands for devolution or secession. In fact, Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall (2008) make a very similar distinction when analysing the evolution of the decentralisation discourse. The framework proposed here however seeks to qualify and specify such existing accounts by drawing our attention to the interaction between the nature of the grievances with the centre and the perceived sources of legitimacy at the regional level. In particular, it is contended that regional sources of legitimacy should only be seen as a *direct cause* of regionalism if they match the perceived deficits at the centre.

The literature on social movements has long argued that, in order for successful mobilisation to occur, “people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem” (McAdam, et al., 1996: 5). From within this perspective, bottom-up pressures towards decentralisation cannot emerge in the absence of significant legitimacy deficits at the centre. Similarly, the perceived legitimacy of a region as a locus of identity, economic space, or scale of government should not be seen as a direct cause of popular demand for greater autonomy unless it is accompanied by grievances with the centre in the same field.

In my view, it would therefore be incorrect to speak of identity-based regionalism in instances where the needs and wants of the imagined regional ‘us’ are not in some way perceived as irreconcilable or at odds with the needs and wants of the imagined community at the centre. This is not to say that the existence of a collective identity does not play a role in regionalist mobilisation in such instances. As noted, the existence of a strong sense of community can be a powerful source of diffuse support. In addition, these imagined communities are often based on historical, religious, cultural, and linguistic realities that are accompanied by marked institutional footprints in the form of regional media, church communities and educational systems. These institutions can in turn form valuable mobilising structures through which economic and democratic grievances with the centre can be framed and vocalised. All I am seeking to convey is it that, where there is no notable source of conflict between the feelings of belonging directed to the region and the country at large, the existence of a regional identity and the mobilisation structures that tend accompany it should be presented as enabling factors, rather than direct causes of popular demand for greater autonomy.

A similar argument can be made with respect to economic regionalism. Much of the debate in this area focuses on whether this type of regionalism is more likely to emerge in relatively poor or relatively rich areas (Bolton & Roland, 1997; Bookman, 1992; Gourevitch, 1979; Hechter, 1975; Newhouse, 1997; Rokkan & Urwin, 1983). The framework proposed in this study puts this discussion in a new perspective.

Instead of focussing on regional factors, it contends that we should start by examining the nature of the grievances with the central performance. From a rational choice perspective, popular discontent with the spatial redistribution of resources caused by central policies is for example likely to be concentrated in areas that contribute more to the public purse than they receive in public spending. The relatively strong tax-base of such regions in turn creates opportunities to mobilise such grievances along territorial lines. The Northern region of Italy would be a prime example of this type of economic regionalism. By contrast, grievances with the effects of macro-economic policies can emerge in relatively poor and relatively rich regions alike. In this context, the contention that the region is increasingly becoming a key driver of growth and prosperity in the present age of globalisation has the theoretical potential to foster popular support for decentralisation, regardless of the relative wealth of the region.

Quantitative studies tend to find that “[r]egions with a high relative income per capita are more likely to exhibit regional autonomy demands than regions with a lower relative income per capita” (van Houten, 2007: 559). Valuable as these studies are, we need to be careful not to misinterpret these results. In particular, I would argue that such studies measure the overall propensity towards regionalism in different types of regions, rather than the likelihood of economic regionalism per se. As in the case of identity-rich regions, it seems highly plausible that areas with a relatively favourable economic and fiscal position are more prone to regionalism than regions that do not enjoy the same degree of legitimacy as a semi-autonomous economic unit. This may in turn make it less likely that general grievances with the effects of macro-economic policies will lead to confident demands for greater autonomy in relatively poor regions. As a result, the most visible incidences of economic regionalism may indeed be concentrated in relatively rich rather than relatively poor regions. We cannot however infer this from the mere fact that quantitative studies tend to find a significant relationship between popular demands for autonomy on the one hand and a region’s relative income per capita position on the other.

While the re-conceptualisation of regionalism proposed here may seem like a very subtle theoretical adjustment, the empirical chapters of this thesis will demonstrate that conceptualising regional demands for greater autonomy as a region-specific response to central grievances has a significant impact; both on our research practices and the type of explanations we develop. In addition, the proposed typology of regionalisms sheds new light on the potential effects of regionalist accommodation on popular demands for further autonomy.

2.1.5. Regionalism after devolution

Decentralisation and federalisation are frequently presented as strategies towards maintaining the unity of the state in the face of salient regionalist movements (Elazar, 1995; Gurr, 1994; Lijphart, 1977; Stepan, 2001). Using Hirschman's concepts of voice and exit, the main thrust of this literature would be that devolution creates regional opportunities for voice, thereby reducing the incentives towards exit (Lustick, Miodownik, & Eidelson, 2004). In other words, decentralisation is argued to dampen grievances with the centre by giving regional electorates the opportunity to have some of their preferences heard and met through a directly elected regional institution. As a result, popular demand for further decentralisation or full secession is anticipated to decrease. Stepan (2001) calls this holding-together federalism, in order to distinguish it from federations that are the result of the coming-together of formerly sovereign states. If the mechanisms proposed in this literature indeed materialise in practice, devolution should have the observable implication of simultaneously decreasing the democratic grievances with the centre and reducing popular demand for further decentralisation.

By contrast, it has been argued that devolution may in fact increase, rather than decrease, the likelihood of further decentralisation and eventual secession. This literature tends to focus strongly on identity-based factors and the importance of formal and informal mobilising structures in creating and re-creating feelings of belonging (for example see Dikshit, 1975; Kymlicka, 1998; Lustik, et al., 2004; Roeder, 1991).

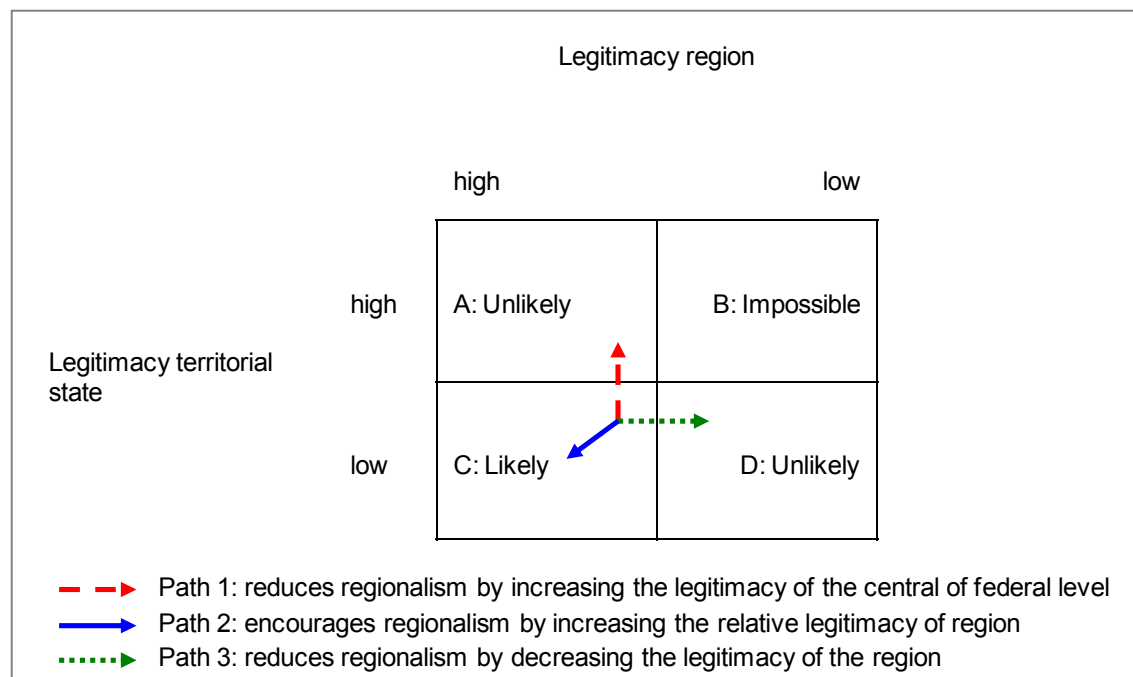
From within this perspective, decentralisation acknowledges and institutionalises the legitimacy of the region as a semi-autonomous polity, while simultaneously undermining a sense of shared interest at the central level. This may in turn reduce the willingness to sacrifice personal needs and wants for the common good of the country at large and therefore increase the likelihood of economic and democratic grievances with the centre. The direct observable implication of this hypothesis would be that devolution is associated with an increase in the relative importance attached to the regional identity and a simultaneous rise in popular demand for further decentralisation.

Figure 2.2 displays the two main arguments advanced within the existing literature as path 1 and 2. The framework advanced in this chapter helps us to qualify and specify these hypotheses in several ways. First of all, the proposed typology of regionalism draws our attention to the fact that the opponents and proponents of the statement that devolution alleviates regionalist tensions are inclined to employ different concepts of legitimacy. By acknowledging that one of the discourses focuses primarily on identity factors while the other hinges strongly on democratic representation and government efficiency, we are better able to contrast and potentially reconcile the two arguments. Secondly, the main literatures on decentralisation, regionalism, and secession tend to ignore the economic effects of devolution. As noted, there is however a growing literature that suggests that decentralisation may also produce an economic dividend. If this is indeed found to be the case, this may increase the economic legitimacy of the region scale and lead to demands for further decentralisation on economic grounds.

Finally, the matrix of support for greater autonomy advanced in this chapter suggests an alternative post-devolution path that is largely ignored within the current literature; the reality of devolution may weaken, rather than strengthen, the legitimacy of the regional level. This could in turn reduce demand for further decentralisation or even lead to popular calls for re-centralisation (path 3). The empirical literature on decentralisation suggests that path 3 is by no means a purely hypothetical option.

It has been widely suggested that devolution frequently fails to deliver the anticipated economic and democratic benefits due to a lack of capacity at the regional level and/or incidences of corruption at this scale (Keefer & Knack, 1995; Oates, 1993; Prud'homme, 1995). Others have argued that devolved administrations rarely receive the power and resources needed to truly address local issues and the effects of decentralisation are therefore often disappointing in practice (Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2003). Taken together, this suggests that the reality of devolution may well reduce the perceived democratic and economic legitimacy of the region, whilst simultaneously increasing popular support for the central or federal level provision of public goods and services.

Figure 2.2 The effect of devolution on the likelihood of demands for regional autonomy



So far we have primarily considered the effects of devolution on the reproduction of existing spaces of regionalism. It has however been argued that the asymmetric devolution of powers and resources in particular can also give rise to demands for greater autonomy in regions that have traditionally not harboured strong regionalist movements (Curtice, 2010; Lecours, 2004; Moreno, 2001).

Again our framework produces a testable hypothesis; it suggests that spaces of regionalism are unlikely to emerge as a direct result of devolution unless the practices of asymmetric devolution simultaneously challenge the legitimacy of the centre in some way and increase the perceived legitimacy of the region along the same dimension. The observable implication of this hypothesis would be that grievances with the functioning of the central level after devolution would in isolation be insufficient to create new spaces of regionalism. Only where the grievances with the existing system of asymmetric devolution match the perceived areas of legitimacy of the region would we anticipate to find an increase in popular demand for great autonomy.

2.2. Regionalism and the rescaling of government

This study not only seeks to examine the origins of popular demands for greater autonomy, but also aims to explore under which circumstances those demands are likely to lead to an actual rescaling of powers and resources from the central level to the regional scale. Countries across Western Europe and North-America have witnessed a regionalist revival in the past decades. In some cases, this trend has been accompanied by a decentralisation of powers and resources to the regional tier. In other contexts, the rescaling of political legitimacy in some parts of the country has not resulted in a similarly substantial change to the government system itself. Within the existing literature, such differences have been attributed to a variety of factors, ranging from the relative strength of regionalist movements to the decision-making rules governing constitutional change. There have however been few attempts to draw these diverse strands of the literature together in a coherent way. This thesis aims to further our understanding of the prevailing patterns of policy stability and change by re-examining the mechanisms that guide regionalist accommodation from a veto player perspective.

Veto player (VP) approaches have been widely employed to examine legislative processes and policy outcomes across a variety of substantive policy areas and country contexts. The basic implications of such approaches are relatively commonsensical.

From a VP perspective, all political systems contain a number of identifiable “individuals or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo” (Tsebelis, 2002: 19). These so-called veto players are in turn assumed to use their powers in order to further their own interests (Ganghof, 2003). Under these assumptions, the likelihood of policy change will depend on the identity of the agenda setter and preferences of the relevant veto players. Players with agenda setting powers are in a distinct advantage, as they can present the initial proposal. In order to change the status quo, these proposals however have to be acceptable to the other players as well. As a result, policy stability will tend to increase as the number of VPs rises and their interests and preferences become more diverse (Tsebelis, 2002).

The basic implication of this argument for the case at hand would be that devolution only occurs when the agenda setter prefers it to the status-quo and the other veto players within the system also support the policy. While this proposition is far from earth-shattering, examining the rescaling of government through this lens can help us to further our understanding of the mechanics of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation in different institutional settings. Much of the existing literature on devolution already implicitly develops veto point or player arguments. Most of these analytical narratives however fail to explicitly state the underlying web of assumptions and causal inferences. Applying a more formal VP approach forces us to identify the institutions and actors that are assumed to have veto powers within our analytical narratives and justify the beliefs and preferences we attribute to them. This not only allows for a more structured comparison between different cases, but also produces explanations that can be more readily tested and challenged empirically.

2.2.1. Identifying the relevant veto players.

While identifying the relevant veto players within a system may sound straightforward, establishing which institutions and political actors can effectively prevent change from occurring is not without its difficulties (Ganghof, 2003). Generally, the constitution of a country formally assigns veto powers to a number of institutions. In practice, some of the individual or collective players may however not be able to realistically exercise these formal rights. For example, Britain's famously unwritten constitution awards formal veto powers to the Monarch. The Crown has however not used the right to veto bills passed by the House of Commons since the Union between Scotland and England in 1707 (Bogdanor, 1997). Similarly, some bicameral systems are what Lijphart (1984) refers to as asymmetric, in the sense that one of the two chambers is considerably more powerful than the other. As a result, the effective distribution of veto powers may not match the formal provisions.

Despite these complications, a careful analysis of the formal decision-making rules and informal conventions generally allows us to identify the relevant institutional veto players within a government system with a reasonable degree of certainty. The political game in turn produces partisan veto players within these institutions. In some circumstances, the partisan groups that enjoy effective veto powers can be identified with relative ease. The Westminster parliamentary system for example tends to return a single-party majority government. Provided that the members of this party share similar preferences or are otherwise persuaded to toe the party line, this constellation of powers effectively means, while the parliament formally hold a collective veto, the governing party is the only real veto player within this institution. Similarly, if several internally cohesive parties form a minimum-winning coalition, in the sense that the agreement of each of the coalition partners is necessary in order to change the status quo, the division of veto powers will be relatively straightforward.

The situation becomes more complicated if party unity is low or the government consists of more or less than the number of parties required to achieve the necessary majority. For example, some have argued that opposition parties usually do not gain effective veto powers when the government does not control a majority of the seats or is subjected to significant backbench dissent (Tsebelis, 2002), while others assert that these groups should be seen as potential veto players in many instances (Laver & Shepsle, 1991). Similar questions have been raised with respect to oversized coalitions that include one or more parties whose agreement is not strictly necessary to change the status quo (Ganghof, 2003). Especially under such circumstances, the validity of our analytical narratives may hinge strongly on our ability to justify the assumed distribution of veto powers that underpins them.

Examining the formal distribution of veto powers within a government system may furthermore be relevant to the study of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation, as it can give us an indication regarding the general propensity to policy change. *Ceteris Paribus*, veto player theory would predict that policy stability tends to increase as the number of institutional and partisan veto players within a system grows (Tsebelis, 2002). Applying these intuitions to a select number of federal and quasi-federal countries, Behnke and Benz (2009) have found that the formal distribution of veto powers indeed has an impact on the dynamics of constitutional change. In particular, they argue that far-reaching constitutional reforms tend to be more common in systems with relatively few veto players. Where constitutional amendment rules prove more stringent, grievances may instead be dealt with through a range of implicit changes, which alter the meaning and effect of the constitution without formally changing it. Despite the repeated failure of formal reform processes, the workings of the Canadian federal system have for example been significantly altered through numerous intergovernmental agreements over the past decades. Similarly, regional elites in Spain have been able to exploit the flexibility within the 1978 Constitution to achieve a considerable decentralisation of powers and resources without the need for formal constitutional amendments.

Although Behnke and Benz (2009) are primarily interested in the dynamics of constitutional reform, their findings are clearly relevant to the topic at hand in this study. Specifically, it suggests that popular demands for greater autonomy may be a priori more likely to lead to far-reaching reforms of constitutional importance if the number of individual and collective players holding effective veto powers over such a decision is relatively limited. Especially in formerly unitary countries, such reforms may in turn change the distribution of veto powers within the government system and with it the likely shape of the legislative response to future demands for greater autonomy. Identifying the institutional and partisan veto players within a system is therefore a useful first step towards understanding the prevailing patterns of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation within a system. As Behnke and Benz (2009) rightfully stress, the existence of a wide range of regional and federal veto players primarily tends to hinder policy change because these veto players tend to have different beliefs and interests. In other words, it is the existence of numerous veto players *with different policy preferences* that creates the obstacle to change, rather than the distribution of veto powers per se. In order to understand the pattern of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation, we will therefore need to examine how popular demands for greater autonomy are likely to influence the policy preferences of individual and collective veto players at different levels.

2.2.2. 'Measuring' the preferences of individual and collective veto players

One of the primary difficulties in empirical veto player analysis is that we cannot directly measure the preferences of the actors that enjoy agenda-setting and decision-making powers. Even in the case of individual veto players, like presidents, the beliefs and preference structures that underpin their actions will have to be at least partially inferred from the very behaviours that we are trying to explain. These problems are compounded when the members of a political party collectively hold veto power, as the potential diversity in individual preferences and the process through which those preferences are aggregated into a formal policy position significantly increase the number of potential explanations for observed behaviours (Ganghof, 2006). In order to construct a coherent analytical narrative, we will therefore have to make certain assumptions regarding the beliefs and preferences of political elites and ordinary party members alike. Based on these assumptions, we can in turn develop a set of alternative rationales that could explain the observed behaviours.

The rational choice approach in general is frequently criticised for its reliance on particular assumptions regarding the beliefs and interests that guide the behaviour of individuals and collectives. While our inability to directly measure the preferences of veto players certainly presents a significant challenge, I would argue that this issue is equally present, if rarely acknowledged, in qualitative case studies applying different methodologies. In my reading, most narratives on regionalism and devolution for example seem to be based on the assumption that political elites at the central or federal level have an interest in preserving powers and resources at this scale. Whenever these actors do formally support devolution, this is usually seen as a strategic move motivated by electoral or political incentives. What makes the approach proposed in this study different from much of the existing literature is therefore not the fact that it is based on a particular set of assumptions about the preferences and beliefs structures of the main actors within the narrative. Rather the innovation comes from the insistence on the need to explicitly acknowledge these assumptions and the different rationales for regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation derived

from them. This in turn deliberately creates opportunities for others to challenge and falsify the proposed explanations.

In democratic societies, veto powers tend to be strongly concentrated in the hands of actors who acquire their position of authority by means of what Schumpeter (1950: 269) famously referred to as the “competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. As a result, there is clearly a link between the formal policy positions advocated by the main veto players in democratic systems and the views and opinions of the general public. The way in which popular preferences influence the behaviour of democratically-elected political elites is however far from unambiguous. In keeping with the methodological approach to the decision-making process itself, this thesis will examine the mechanisms behind regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation from a rational choice perspective.

The assumption that veto players behave as rational actors is a necessary element of the approach, as it helps us to reduce the number of potential explanations for observed behaviours. We must however be careful not to be too restrictive in our understanding of what constitutes rational behaviour. Much of the formal rational choice literature is for example based on the seminal work of Anthony Downs (1957). In line with this approach, partisan veto players are assumed to behave as opportunistic actors “whose sole motivation for engaging in politics is to enjoy the power and perquisites of officeholding” (Roemer, 2001:1). While this assumption clearly facilitates formal modelling, the proposition that, while voters care about policies, the occupants of partisan veto player positions are only interested in gaining office is empirically problematic. Perhaps because those standing for office are themselves citizens of the polity they seek to represent, such actors tend to have policy preferences of their own (Roemer, 2001). As a result, it can be argued that rational partisan veto players will, at least to some extent, seek to maximise their own policy utility, rather than just votes and seats (Wittman, 1973).

Even if we assume that political elites tend to behave as opportunist office-seekers, these actors will usually have to balance their personal desire for electoral success with the need to acquire and maintain support within the political party they formally represent. Even the occupants of individual veto positions, such as presidents, often acquire their position through a two-stage elections process (Grofman, 2004). In the first stage, a candidate is typically chosen based on the appeal her position has in the eyes of fellow party members and other groups that may be given a voice in the internal selection process. In the second stage, general elections offer the electorate a choice between the official party candidates and their respective policy packages. Especially in the face of extensive media coverage, the policy position a candidate adopts during the general elections campaign cannot differ too greatly from the strategy she employed in order to acquire the necessary internal support. As a result, the formal policy position of even the most opportunist individual partisan veto player will be influenced by a mix of internal considerations and electoral incentives.

The constraining effect of the preferences of the wider party membership is arguably even greater where veto powers are formally held by a collective rather than an individual. Unlike her counterpart in a presidential system, the prime minister in a parliamentary system for example needs to rely on the support of her fellow party members in order to gain effective control of the collective veto power her party formally enjoys. If party discipline is high, in the sense that most party members are willing to toe the official party line irrespective of their personal preferences, this will not limit the autonomy of the party leader to a significant extent. If there is a credible threat of internal disobedience, the party leader may however face additional incentives to adjust her position to the internal preference distribution within the party in order to avoid backbench dissent and/or a successful internal leadership challenge.

If we assume that the behaviour of instrumentally rational political elites need not be guided solely by office-seeking motivations, such actors may choose to accommodate or ignore regional demands for greater autonomy for a variety of reasons.

As Blau (2008) argues with respect to the reform of the electoral system, it is important to distinguish act-based reasons to support or oppose a change in the existing government system from outcome-based incentives. A partisan veto player may have reason to believe that the *act* of publicly supporting or opposing devolution will yield political or electoral benefits. Similarly, an actor may adopt a particular policy position because she believes that this will help her to achieve an *outcome* that she sees as desirable. Table 2.1 briefly summarises the act- and outcome-based motivations for supporting or opposing the accommodation of popular demands for greater regional autonomy. I will explore the rationale behind these motivations in more detail in the sections below, before turning to how they are likely to affect the behaviour of instrumentally rational VPs.

Table 2.1 Act- and outcome-based incentives towards devolution and centralisation.

Type of incentive	Explanation	Example for devolution	Example against devolution
Act-based The act of support/opposing devolution is seen as beneficial.			
Internal	The act of supporting/opposing devolution is likely to help the party leader gain or retain internal support.	Opposing devolution would decrease the likelihood of a candidate winning the internal leadership contest.	Supporting devolution is likely to lead to considerable backbench dissent.
Electoral	The act of support/opposing devolution is likely to increase the party's vote or seat share.	Supporting devolution will help secure popular support in marginal seats.	Supporting devolution could lead to vote-losses amongst core voters.
Political	The act of support/opposing devolution will help the party gain or retain veto powers.	A formal commitment to devolution will help to secure the support of a crucial coalition partner.	Supporting devolution would politically isolate the party and make participation in a governing coalition less likely.
Outcome-based The outcome of supporting/opposing devolution is seen as beneficial.			
Party-interest	Devolution is likely to enhance or decrease the power and influence of the party.	The party performs better at the regional level than at the central scale and decentralisation would therefore increase its overall power and influence.	Voting patterns suggest that the party would be unlikely to play a significant role in a directly elected regional body.
Ideological	Devolution/centralisation is seen as normatively justified or likely to lead to the most preferable outcome in the long-run.	Stateless nations have a normative right to self-determination. Devolution is likely to reduce territorial conflict and the risk of secession.	The unity of the sovereign state needs to be preserved and devolution is likely to encourage rather than decrease popular demands for regional self-determination.

2.2.3. Act-based incentives

The act of formally supporting or opposing a specific policy can be beneficial to an instrumentally rational actor for a variety of reasons. As noted above, political elites frequently gain their position of authority through what could be described as a two-stage election process. Once in office, the power enjoyed by these elites will continue to be influenced by their ability to elicit support within their own party. As a result of these twin pressures, the party leadership will face act-based incentives to consider the preference distribution within the party when determining their formal policy position. As in the electoral arena, the size of the pro and anti-devolution sections within the party and the salience attached to the issue by different groups will shape the strength of the internal incentives. Especially if the issue is perceived as highly salient and internal preferences are cohesive, supporting a policy that goes against the dominant view within the party may have serious internal consequences. Minority nationalist parties, like the SNP and the Bloc Quebecois, would be clear examples of cohesive collective players who attach great importance to the issue of secession and devolution. The salience attached to the issue and the cohesiveness of internal party preferences may however be considerably less pronounced within parties that were not specifically formed around this cleavage. Under such circumstances, the party leader may be in a stronger position to ignore the majority preference within the party.

The formal policy response may furthermore be guided by the anticipated electoral costs and benefits associated with regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. As popular demands for greater regional autonomy tend to be spatially concentrated (Sorens, 2009), the direction and size of the electoral incentives faced by partisan veto players are often strongly dependent on the geographical context in which they compete for the popular vote.

In Quebec for example, popular support for provincial autonomy has long been so substantial that most parties competing at this level chose to stand on a regionalist platform, even if their federal namesakes did not². The electoral geography of a country can however also produce strongly differentiated incentives towards regionalist accommodation for parties competing at the central or federal level.

The Belgian case perhaps most strongly illustrates this dynamic. After the adoption of universal male suffrage in 1893, the catholic and socialist parties emerged as the two main groups within the Belgian party system (Hossay, 2003). From the onset, socialist support had been heavily concentrated in the highly industrialised French-speaking part of the country, while the Catholic vote predominantly originated from the Dutch-speaking regions. Especially since both linguistic groups represent around half of the total electorate, the re-emergence of politicised nationalism in Flanders and the popular response to this trend in Wallonia produced highly distinctive electoral incentives for the main parties within the system. Eventually this resulted in a complete reorganisation of the central party system along territorial lines (De Winter, Swyngedouw, & Dumont, 2006).

While the influence of the pre-existing electoral geography on the pattern of regionalist accommodation has been noted in other contexts, the differentiation in the size and direction of the electoral incentives tends to be more limited for two reasons. First of all, the pre-existing level of regionalisation within the Belgian party system was both relatively high and broadly congruent with the emerging spaces of regionalism in Flanders and Wallonia. Where the party system is more strongly nationalised, in the sense that popular support for central level parties is more evenly spread across the different regions within the sovereign state, the electoral incentives faced by each party are likely to be more homogeneous.

² It will be interesting to see if the recent demise of the Bloc Quebecois in the 2011 federal election will change this dynamic.

Secondly, the incentive structure is likely to be influenced by the share of the electorate that lives in regions with a strong regionalist movements, or what Hossay (2003) calls the demographic geometry of regionalism. In this respect the Belgian experience is again exceptional, as the electorate is roughly equally divided across the two main language groups. In most other contexts, popular demands for greater regional autonomy have tended to emerge in territorial units that only represent a relatively small minority of the electorate within the sovereign state at large (Sorens, 2009). As a result, the electoral benefits associated with regionalist accommodation tend to depend greatly on the distribution of preference in the rest of the country.

Unless the voters in other parts of the country also feel that the concerns of a regionalist minority need to be addressed, partisan actors who choose to partially accommodate the demands of a spatially concentrated minority risk alienating a large part of the electorate. Paradoxically, central or federal players competing in a relatively nationalised party system do at times choose to formally support devolution against the wishes of the majority of the voters in the rest of the country. As will be argued in chapter 5, the pro-devolution stance adopted by Labour and the Conservative Party in the run-up to the October 1974 UK general election for example ran counter to the dominant preference in England at that time. As will be discussed below, the adoption of such a non-majoritarian policy position may reflect an ideological or party-interest based commitment to the outcome of devolution. In the context of a multi-dimensional policy space, we can however also develop an act-based rationale for such behaviours.

General elections are not like popular referendums, in the sense that they do not award the general public a direct veto along a single issue dimension. Instead, a range of topics are bundled into a single vote. Under these conditions, it has been shown that rational voters economise on information and vote on the basis of the two or three issues that they consider to be most important (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

This in turn means that political parties do not need to converge towards the median voter position along every policy dimension in order to maximise their share of the votes and seats (Roemer, 2001). As Besley and Coate (2000) have shown with reference to the issue of gun control in the US, it may even be electorally advantageous to accommodate the preferences of a minority for whom an issue is highly salient against the wishes of the majority that attaches less importance to the subject. Applying this intuition to the case at hand, central or federal players competing in a nationalised party system could be argued to face electoral incentives to accommodate the regionalist minority if (a) they have reason to believe that the party will lose seats or votes within the region as a result of non-accommodation and (b) it would be plausible to assume that the issue is not salient enough in other parts of the country for such a move to result in substantial electoral losses elsewhere.

Once elected, a partisan actor may face further act based incentives to adjust her formal policy position for political reasons. Supporting or opposing devolution may for example allow a party to secure the support of a crucial coalition partner. In Italy, Forza Italia has for example proved willing to partially accommodate both the regionalist aspirations of the Lega Nord and the centrist sensibilities of the National Alliance and Union of Christian Democrats in order to gain power and remain in office. In addition, making concessions could allow minority governments to secure the external support they need in order to remain in office. Once it had lost its formal majority, the 1974-1979 Labour government for example faced political act-based incentives to accommodate the preferences of pro-devolution opposition parties in return for their support in no-confidence motions.

2.2.4. Outcome-based incentives

The act-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation outlined above are accompanied by a distinctive set of outcome-based concerns. First of all, if we assume that partisan veto players have policy preferences of their own, they may support or oppose devolution for ideological reasons. Normative beliefs regarding the validity of regionalist claims and the right to self-determination, coupled with the importance attached to protecting the unity and sovereignty of the state, may produce a variety of outcome preferences. How these preferences influence the policy positions of different actors in turn partially depends on their beliefs regarding the effects of devolution on the demands for regional autonomy and the likelihood of secession. Partisan players with an outcome preference for maintaining the unity of the existing state may for example support devolution because they believe that the partial accommodation of regionalist demands will reduce territorial conflict and the associated risk of disintegration. By contrast, a self-proclaimed minority nationalist group with a preference for secession may oppose devolution on similar grounds.

Secondly, devolution may increase or decrease the power and influence a partisan player is likely to enjoy within a system. As with electoral concerns, we would anticipate that the direction of such incentives will be at least partially dependent on the geographical scale at which the actor currently operates. For central or federal level veto players, devolution in essence constitutes a loss of power and resources to the regional level. As a result parties competing at this scale may have an incentive to resist decentralisation, even in the face of widespread popular support for such a policy. By contrast, the main contenders for office at the regional level may be inclined to try to increase the influence and power of this governmental tier, even if popular support for further decentralisation is limited.

The rationales presented above concur with the common proposition that devolution tends to produce regional elites with a personal interest in maintaining and enhancing the level of decentralisation within the system (Agranoff & Gallarin, 1997; Brancati, 2006; Hazell, 2007; Swenden & Jans, 2006). Similarly they fit with the empirical findings of authors like Moreno (2001) and Lecours (2004), who argue that central or federal governments usually display a level of centralist inertia when faced with popular demands for greater regional autonomy. From a rational choice perspective, the regional distribution of the vote may however also produce outcome-based incentives that point in the opposite direction. Devolution can for example increase the power and influence of a political party that persistently performs well at the regional level, whilst simultaneously having relatively poor prospects of forming part of the government at the centre (O'Neill, 2003). Similarly, the regional branch of a party that performs well at the central level, but has little influence at the regional scale, may face incentives to oppose further decentralisation (Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006).

2.2.5. Incentive structures and the behaviour of partisan veto players

The sections above outlined a number of possible rationales for regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. From a rational choice perspective, we would anticipate that actors facing cohesive act- and outcome-based incentives to accommodate regionalist demands will seek to use their agenda-setting and decision-making powers to maximise the likelihood of devolutionary change (cell A, Figure 2.3). Conversely, actors facing homogeneous incentives to favour a centralised system would be anticipated to use their powers to maintain the status quo or increase the level of centralisation (cell D, Figure 2.3). The policy preferences of partisan players become less predictable when the act- and outcome-based incentives do not pull in the same direction (cells B and C, Figure 2.3).

Under such circumstances, instrumentally rational actors may either prioritise outcome preferences over act-based incentives or aim to capitalise on the benefits of formally supporting a particular position, despite the fact that this position runs counter to their outcome preferences.

If the latter strategy is chosen, such players may subsequently seek to use their agenda-setting and decision-making powers to minimise and potentially prevent actual change from occurring. The recent referendum on the system used to elect members of parliament in the UK is an excellent example of such a strategy. The party that currently enjoys the plurality of the seats in the House of Commons faces clear outcome-based incentives to favour the existing first-past-the-post system over more proportional forms of representation. The failure to acquire an absolute majority in the 2010 general elections and the subsequent need to form a coalition government however created strong act-based incentives for the dominant Conservative Party to make a concession to the preferences of the Liberal Democrats in this respect. By making a change in the voting system dependent on a popular vote, and subsequently campaigning vigorously against the proposed Alternative Vote System, the Party was able to secure the political benefits associated with forming a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats whilst simultaneously preventing actual change from occurring.

Figure 2.3 Anticipated strategies of instrumentally rational actors according to act- and outcome-based incentives

		Act-based incentives	
		Centralisation	Decentralisation
Outcome-based incentives	Centralisation	A: Centralisation	B: Mixed
	Decentralisation	C: Mixed	D: Decentralisation

The existence of strong act-based incentives to support devolution may elicit similar types of behaviours from partisan players with an outcome-based preference for centralisation. Conversely, actors with an outcome-based preference for devolution or secession may face incentives to downplay their aspirations for political or electoral reasons, while simultaneously using their agenda-setting and decision-making powers to further their personal agenda in the legislative arena. While some of these strategies may be readily recognisable, others are less overt. The decision to establish an independent commission into the need for devolution may for example be a delaying tactic as well as a genuine attempt to create a wider consensus in favour of reform. Similarly, the introduction of a popular referendum may be motivated by a desire to neutralise elite opposition to a popular policy or make the resulting policy change more difficult to reverse for subsequent central or federal administrations. Alternatively a popular veto can be introduced to minimise the likelihood of policy change.

Unless actors reveal their true outcome preferences through campaigning efforts or the evidence they give to an independent commission, we will have to at least partially infer the motives of the observed behaviours from the very actions we are trying to explain.

Further complications may arise when we are seeking to explain the behaviour of collective, rather than individual, veto players. So far we have predominantly discussed the behaviour of political parties as if they were unified actors. In practice, party unity may be considerably less pronounced. Given the territorial nature of popular demands for greater autonomy, party members elected under a single-member district plurality system may for example face very different act-based electoral incentives. Similarly, normative perspectives on devolution and the effect it is likely to have on the future of the state may differ from individual to individual. Even when party members do face similar act- and outcome-based incentives, they need not necessarily agree on the policy strategy that should be pursued under such circumstances. In particular, some sections of the party may be more willing to make outcome-based concessions in order to secure act-based electoral and political benefits than others. As a result, party cohesion, defined as the extent to which individual party members share the same policy preference, may at times be low.

Under such circumstances, the beliefs and interests of the party leadership often plays a particularly crucial role in determining the official party line. The formal policies and informal practices through which the preferences of individual party members are aggregated into a single policy position will differ from party to party. The process however tends to have a hierarchical element, in the sense that the agenda-setting and decision-making powers are quite strongly concentrated in the hands of the party leadership (Grofman, 2004). Once the formal position of the party has been announced, individual party members will in turn face considerable act-based incentives to publicly support the official party line (Bowler, Farrell, & Katz, 1999). In general, outwards signs of internal conflict are likely to negatively influence the electoral performance of the party.

More directly, failing to conform to the formal policy position promoted by the party leadership can lead to internal sanctions.

If party discipline is high, a lack of internal policy cohesion does not present a substantial problem, as the party would still behave as a unified actor in the legislative arena. A more fine-grained analysis of the incentives that shape the preferences and behaviours of collective veto players may be needed when individual party members prove less willing to toe the party line regardless of their personal policy preferences. As Ganghof (2006) rightly points out, it is difficult to empirically determine whether an outward display of party unity reflects the internal preference constellation within the party or the level of party discipline. By comparing the frequency and magnitude of backbench dissent across different governing periods, parties, and policy areas, we can however develop a fairly accurate feel for the general level of party discipline and the internal contentiousness of an issue. Such an analysis would in turn allow us to distinguish the effects of a general feature of the government system, i.e. the level of party discipline, from the substantive issue at hand, i.e. the degree of cohesion on the appropriate policy response to popular demands for greater regional autonomy.

When faced with an issue that proves so divisive that it is no longer possible to elicit unified voting behaviour through the usual channels, the party leadership may pursue a number of different strategies. First of all, the distribution of powers and preferences may be such that the policy preferred by the party leader is likely to receive the support required to enact it despite the anticipated level of backbench dissent. Under such circumstances, an instrumentally rational party leader may choose to ignore the discontent within her party and continue to pursue the original policy strategy. The 1997-2001 Labour government for example enjoyed such a large seat majority that the party leadership was able to successfully guide the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill through the legislative process, despite extensive internal opposition to the proposed change in incapacity benefits (Cowley & Stuart, 2003).

Alternatively, the party leadership may seek to avoid internal conflicts by trying to delay the decision or keep the issue off the political agenda altogether. As will be argued in chapter 5, the failure of the Conservative Party leader, Edward Heath, to act upon his formal commitment to Scottish devolution during his time in office may well be an example of this strategy. Finally, political elites who are in a position to do so could try to encourage individual party members to toe the party line by making policy change dependent on the outcome of a popular referendum.

As the former British Labour leader James Callaghan famously noted, the referendum instrument can be seen as a rubber life raft that a highly divided party is forced to climb into (Qvortrup, 2006). Placing the decision directly in the hands of the general public makes it more difficult for party members to oppose a change on the grounds that there would be no popular demand for it. If this restores party discipline to the required extent and the referendum subsequently produces a clear popular mandate for reform, this would enable the party leadership to achieve its policy objective (Blau, 2008). On the other hand, the popular poll may not produce the outcome favoured by the party leadership, resulting in a very public defeat. The use of the referendum instrument is therefore not without its risks.

The possibility of conflicting act- and outcome-based incentives, coupled with the potential for internal divisions, means that the true motives behind the observed behaviour of partisan veto players can at times prove very difficult to determine. While this will not eliminate the risk of circularity, considering alternative explanations for observed behaviours, and justifying why our proposed set of inferred beliefs and preferences fits the available evidence better than the relevant alternatives, would seem not just methodologically prudent but central to developing a convincing argument in such instances.

2.3. Research design

The remainder of this thesis will test the empirical validity and usefulness of the theoretical framework presented above through qualitative case studies. The methodological approach taken in this study however differs from much of the existing qualitative literature in two important ways. First of all, the empirical enquiry is explicitly guided by a predefined set of proposed causal mechanisms with observable implications. By contrast, much of the existing case study literature either implicitly or explicitly adopts a relativistic approach, in that the proposed explanations are presented as highly contextual and intrinsically non-causal. While I fully accept that the processes under examination here are not governed by law-like regularities, I would also contend that producing testable generalisations is an essential part of developing our understanding of these phenomena. The approach taken here is thus one of causal realism, in the sense that it specifically aims to uncover “mechanisms and processes that derive from agents and institutions, and that in turn produce [phenomenal] regularities” (Little, 1993: 184)

Secondly, the study is based on a comparative analysis of a small number of cases within a single country context. The case selection procedure was explicitly guided by the desire to maximise the observable variance on the dependent variables within the context of a single sovereign state. In this respect this study again differs from much of the existing literature, which tends to focus on one or more regions displaying relatively high level of popular support for greater autonomy. Partially, this difference in approach can be attributed to the desire to produce generalisable explanations and the related need to minimise selection bias (Collier & Mahoney, 1996). Even if we are solely interested in producing context-specific explanations of extreme cases, one could however argue that contrasting the experiences in these regions with negative cases in the same country is likely to prove informative. Perhaps surprisingly, this approach is scarcely employed within the existing literature.

Instead there has been a tendency to compare extreme regional cases across different country contexts. This in turn makes it more difficult to draw structured comparisons between different cases.

This thesis aims to make a contribution to the existing literature by analysing variations in popular demand for greater autonomy and regionalist accommodation across a range of regions within a single state context. In order to maximize the variance on the dependent variables we firstly need to define the frame of comparison. This study seeks to address two related research questions. First of all, what explains the emergence or re-emergence of spaces of regionalism? Secondly, under which conditions are regionalist demands for greater autonomy likely to lead to actual policy change of constitutional importance? In order to derive the appropriate frame of comparison from these questions, we need to define what Garfinkel (1981) calls the 'contrast space' of each question. In other words, we need to explicitly acknowledge that we are not asking "Why α ", but rather "Why α and not β ". In order to find a satisfactory answer to such questions, we conversely need to define both β and α .

In our case, the first question effectively needs to be split into two separate contrast spaces. Firstly, this thesis asks why there is a popular demand for greater regional autonomy in some regions, but not in others. Secondly, it seeks to explore why demands for greater autonomy within a specific region are more pronounced at certain points in time than at others. A similar distinction between regional and longitudinal variations can be discerned in the second question, in the sense that it effectively asks why demands for greater autonomy lead to actual decentralization in certain contexts and time periods but not in others. To examine the usefulness of the framework proposed above in answering this question, we therefore need to select a sovereign state context and time period that produces sufficient variation, both in terms of regionalist mobilization and in patterns of accommodation.

Based on the criteria defined above, post-war mainland Britain was selected from within the universe of potential contexts and time periods for a number of reasons. First of all, mainland Britain has experienced a re-emergence of spaces of regionalism during the post-war period, but this trend has been far from universal. While popular support for greater autonomy has been relatively pronounced in Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales, regionalist demands have remained largely absent in the English regions. In addition, popular demand for greater autonomy within Scotland and Wales has waxed and waned over the past decades. As a result, the British context provides both the regional and the longitudinal variation needed to test the usefulness of the framework of regionalism proposed in the first section of this chapter. Northern Ireland has been deliberately excluded from the analysis. The inclusion of this region is not necessary in order to capture the full contrast space suggested by the research question. By contrast, broadening the scope of the comparison to include this highly unusual case would undoubtedly result in a significant rise in causal heterogeneity. In line with the methodological recommendation of Collier and Mahoney (1996), I therefore decided to limit the analysis to the smaller set of more homogeneous cases.

With respect to the second research question, the selected case context and period again ensures the variance needed to effectively test the proposed approach. At the start of the period, the main contenders for office at the central level uniformly espoused centrist positions. The re-emergence of salient spaces of regionalism in the 1960s initially encouraged both parties to adjust their formal policy platforms, although they did not prove equally willing to accommodate Scottish and Welsh demands. Following a short period of non-decision, the first regionalist revival ultimately resulted in a decision to maintain the status quo in late 1970s. From that moment onwards the willingness of the main contenders for office to accommodate regionalist demands started to diverge more markedly.

Following a long period of non-decision under Conservative rule, the return to power of the Labour Party in 1997 resulted in a rapid succession of decision-making moments. As a result, Britain was transformed from a highly centralised system to a uniquely asymmetrical form of devolved government within the space of 3 years. The incremental changes to the initial settlements that have occurred since then in turn suggest that this change in the government system may have been accompanied by a shift in the dynamic of regionalist accommodation (Hazell, 2007; Keating, 2009). Taken together, the British case thus presents a number of intriguing historical and contemporary puzzles through which the validity and usefulness of the proposed veto player approach can be tested.

While veto player approaches are increasingly acquiring a central place in policy analysis (Ganghof, 2003), the method has not been widely used to analyse British politics. Partially this may reflect a reluctance to engage with political economy approaches in much of British academia (Dowding, 2006). It can however also be related to the strong concentration of veto powers that tends to characterise the British system at the central level. Although the Crown and the House of Lords formally retain institutional veto powers, the primary agenda-setting and decision-making powers firmly rest with the House of Commons (McLean, 2001). The British electoral system in turn tends to produce a single-party majority government within this House. As a result, the central system rarely produces the highly visible bargaining situations upon which this type of analysis tends to rely. Where bargaining does occur, this generally takes place “in the corridors of Westminster rather than more openly in the committee rooms and floor of the House” (Dowding, 2006: 27). This can in turn make it difficult to gather reliable empirical evidence with respect to such events. By testing the proposed approach within the British context, rather than analysing for instance Canada or Belgium, this thesis seeks to show that the empirical usefulness of the veto player approach is not restricted to particular institutional settings.

2.4. Conclusion

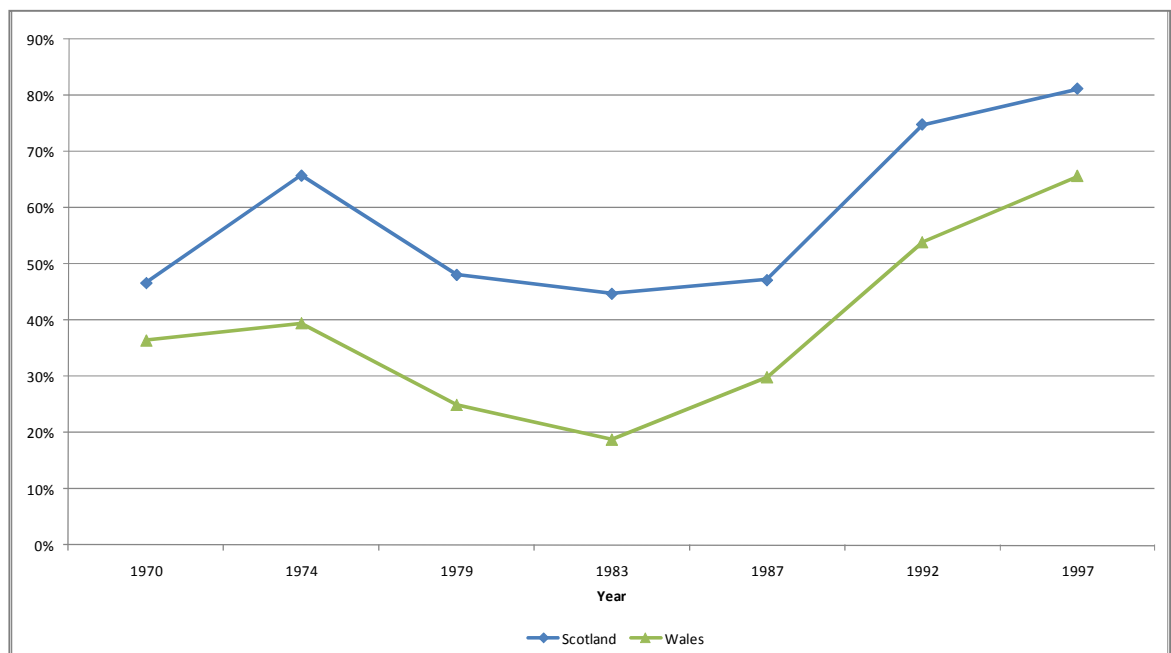
The aim of this chapter was to present the theoretical framework and methodological approach that will underpin the empirical analysis in the remainder of this thesis. By framing regionalism as a rescaling of political legitimacy from the central level to the regional scale, the proposed approach seeks to move away from the dominant pre-occupation with regional factors and realities. Drawing on the rich literature on political legitimacy it in turn developed a typology of regionalisms which proposes that central grievances need to be accompanied by regional competencies in the same area in order to produce popular support for greater regional autonomy. Chapters 3 and 6 of this thesis will seek to show that this re-conceptualisation of the subject matter both challenges elements of the conventional wisdom regarding the history of regionalism in post-war mainland Britain and provides us with the tools to analyse the emerging trends after devolution in more depth.

Popular demands for greater autonomy do not effortlessly translate into actual policy change. This chapter proposed that veto player analysis can help us to develop a better understanding of the processes of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 will test this proposition in the British context. As noted, the British political system is not particularly amenable to this type of analysis. Nonetheless, the empirical chapters will show that the practice of identifying the institutions and actors that are assumed to have veto powers within our analytical narratives and justifying the beliefs and preferences we attribute to them can help us to produce more robust and readily testable explanations of contemporary trends.

3. The waxing and waning of regionalism in mainland Britain (1945-1997)

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the typology of regionalisms developed in chapter 2 can help us to gain new insights into the history of regionalist mobilisation in mainland Britain. Prior to devolution, opinion polls into the level of popular support for decentralisation and secession and the possible origins of these demands have been almost exclusively focussed on the most visible spaces of regionalism. The resulting lack of data on popular opinion in England necessarily pushes the gravitas of the analysis towards developments in Scotland and Wales. At first glance, the available evidence suggests that shifts in popular opinion have tended to follow a similar pattern in both of these territories (see Figure 3.1). The first exception to this rule occurred in the early to mid-1970s. During this period, support for devolution and independence increased markedly in Scotland, while a similarly significant shift in popular opinion could not be discerned in Wales. Between the 1983 and 1987 general election the opposite trend occurred, with support for devolution increasing notably in Wales whilst it remained relatively stable in Scotland.

Figure 3.1 Support for greater regional autonomy in Scotland and Wales (1970-1997)



Sources: Own elaboration based on Crewe, Robertson, & Sarlvik (1977a, 1981), Crewe, et al., (1977b), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1983, 1993), Miller & Brand (1981), Social and Community Planning Research (1970), Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Brand & Mitchell, (1994), Heath, et al. (1999), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, Brand, & Mitchell (1993) and McCrone, et al. (1999)

If we place these findings in the context of the framework presented in chapter 2, the available survey evidence is thus broadly compatible with the hypothesis that changes in the legitimacy of the centre lay at the heart of the waxing and waning of support for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales. Region-specific explanations will however need to be developed to explain the divergent trends in the early to mid-1970s and mid to late-1980s. In order to gain a better understanding of the origins of such general trends and regional variations, this chapter will firstly examine the observable evidence for all three of the ideal types of regionalism defined in the previous chapter. These sources will subsequently be drawn together to create a more comprehensive picture of the sources of regionalism and unionism during the period under consideration.

3.1.Identity-based regionalism

Like much of the existing literature on devolution and secession, this chapter will start by examining the role of identity in producing the noted regional and longitudinal differences in demand for greater regional autonomy. The product of the joining together of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland into one state, the history of the United Kingdom very much invites identity-based explanations of demands for greater autonomy. The Welsh assimilation into the English shire system has its origins in the Edwardian conquests of the thirteenth century and was formalised through the legislation of 1536-1543. The 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland formally created the British state. The 1800 Acts of Union united the Kingdom of Great Britain with the Kingdom of Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (Powell, 2001). In this context, it seems reasonable to conceptualise Scottish and Welsh demands for greater autonomy as the re-assertion of national rights surrendered in an uneven process of unification. This would however be an oversimplification both of the sources of support for autonomy in Scotland and Wales and the history of unification and identity formation.

3.1.1. The origins of and contemporary challenges to the British identity

The ideology of nationalism, understood as the idea that the nation and the state should be coextensive, is widely accepted to be a nineteenth century invention (Gellner, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kedourie, 1993). Largely the product of the French Revolution, it emerged at a time when Wales and England had already been formally unified for more than 200 years. Although the memory of independence was more vivid in Scotland, it too had been part of Britain for nearly a century. Only in the case of Ireland can the formal union be argued to coincide with the emergence of modern politicised nationalism. Even modernists would concede that nineteenth century nationalism builds on pre-existing national sentiments and cultural heritage. However, these sentiments were far less unified than the four 'nations' conceptualisation of the 'Home Rule' debate would suggest.

At the time of national awakening, Ireland was already heavily divided along religious lines, with Catholics, Anglicans and Presbyterians forming distinct communities (English, 2007). Within Wales and to a lesser extent England religious and linguistic differences also created a patchwork of cultural identities sharing differing degrees of similarity (Powell, 2001). In Scotland, the key internal division was based on geography rather than religious difference, with the Highlands and Lowlands harbouring distinctive culture practices and identities (Devine, 1999).

In all four countries of the United Kingdom, a more cohesive national identity thus emerged very much in the context of the British state rather than independently of it. At the time, centralising and Anglicising tendencies, as well as regionally-concentrated economic hardships, created important grievances in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. From the onset this created a sense of country identity which differentiated a collective 'us' from a primarily English 'other' in these areas. As the dominant partner in the Union, English grievances with the centre were far less pronounced. As a result, the country-level identity formation process remained relatively weak. With the emergence of nationalism in Ireland and to a lesser extent Scotland and Wales, the need to distinguish between England and Britain increased. This resulted in the emergence of a relatively weak sense of English identity based on a Saxon heritage and typically 'English' institutions like the Parliament and the monarchy (Kumar, 2003).

With the notable exception of much of Ireland, the development of these regional senses of belonging occurred in the context of a parallel process of British identity formation. One of the earliest potential markers of British identity, as well as a main source of conflict, was religion. From the sixteenth century Reformation onwards, the dominance of Protestantism on much of the British Isles stood in stark contrast with the predominantly Catholic mainland of Europe. Between the 1707 Act of Union and the 1815 battle of Waterloo, the Protestant tradition, combined with the repeated wars with France, created and deepened images of a Protestant British self defined in contrast to a Catholic other.

Although religious zeal already started to diminish in the early nineteenth century, popular reactions to the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act clearly showed that Protestantism was indeed an important marker of British identity and patriotism at that time (Colley, 2003). Simultaneously this religious heritage alienated large parts of the predominantly Catholic Irish population as well as the Catholic Scottish Highlanders. In addition the Protestant faith was far from unified. While the majority of the English population was Anglican, Wales was marked by strong Episcopalian and dissenting traditions and the Presbyterian Kirk was dominant in most of Scotland (Powell, 2001). These religious differences served as important identity markers in all of the four 'nations' (Machin, 1977).

Alongside the simultaneously unifying and dividing force of religion, the rise of the overseas empire and the Industrial Revolution helped create a more diffuse sense of British pride and identity. Experiencing its main expansion after the 1707 Union, the age of empire is very much a British rather than an English experience. Though arguably itself the result of internal empire-building by the English (Hechter, 1975), overseas conquests gave rise to an imperial nationalism that defined the British as the 'state-bearing' peoples within the British empire (Kumar, 2003; Powell, 2001). This sense of a common purpose and place in history was based primarily on a belief in a shared destiny as a dominant world power and civilising force. The British Industrial Revolution and the resulting economic supremacy reinforced this sense of superiority. Simultaneously the uneven process of industrialisation gave rise to inequalities and lines of conflict that largely cut across country borders. Symbolically captured in the English North-South divide, the industrial regions of South Wales and Central Scotland were very much part of the industrialised North, while the non-industrialised areas of Scotland and Wales shared the concerns of the South of England. In addition, industrialisation produced a working class with shared interests that transcended national boundaries.

In the context of a ruling class that was already organised at the British level, this led to the emergence of a British, rather than a Scottish, Welsh or English Labour movement (Kumar, 2003). As a result social class became an important additional marker of British identity.

Taken together, these identity markers resulted in a largely civic sense of Britishness. The lack of a clear ethnic component aside from Protestantism enabled the co-existence of this state-wide identity with other national feelings of belonging in much of mainland Britain (Coupland, 1954). Although the Irish struggles and eventual independence of Southern Ireland did inspire calls for Home Rule in Scotland and Wales, a relatively strong sense of British identity and loyalty to the British state made the emergence of widespread politicised nationalism and calls for independence seem unlikely during the interbellum and the immediate post-war period (Nairn, 1977). As in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the shared experience of fighting an external 'other' deepened feelings of British unity (Colley, 2003; Davies, 1994). To the extent that national unity was in any way threatened during this period, this was caused by the economic and political differences between the prosperous south and the depressed areas in the north and west of Britain, rather than any form of widespread political nationalism in Scotland or Wales (Powell, 2001).

In this context, we need to re-examine what allowed Scottish and Welsh feelings of belonging to regain prominence in the decades that followed. The framework proposed in this thesis suggests that such a rescaling of feelings of belonging is only likely to occur when the legitimacy of the central level identity is challenged in some way and regional factors allow for a successful transfer of feelings of belonging to this geographical scale. The available empirical evidence fits this hypothesis, in the sense that the strengthening of regional identities in the post-war period occurred in the context of significant challenges to a number of the key markers upon which the British identity has traditionally been based.

As the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism lost much of its salience outside of Northern Ireland, religion gradually lost its potency as a marker of identity in mainland Britain. This trend was further augmented by the increasing secularisation of British society. As noted, religious zeal already started to diminish in the nineteenth century. The hardships endured during the First and Second World War encouraged a temporary religious revival. From the 1950s onwards, church membership and attendance however started to decline at an unprecedented rate (Brown, 2001). By the 1970s what remained of Britain's religious identity is at best described as a lingering and often non-religious sense of a Protestant or more generally Christian heritage (Miller, 1997).

Simultaneously another key marker of British pride and identity, the country's position as a dominant political and economic power, started to crumble. The dismantling of the overseas Empire was perhaps the most visible manifestation of this trend. Though cracks were already starting to appear in the pre-war era, the rapid and largely uncontrolled fashion in which the Empire collapsed between 1945 and 1970 had a profound effect on the popular culture of Empire. In two decades, the number of people under British Rule decreased from 700 million to 5 million (Jeffery, 1998). More importantly, the process was not marked by the harmonious transition to democratic self-government that many had hoped for and anticipated. The relative randomness of imperial borders led to numerous violent conflict and the inherited system of parliamentary democracy quickly disintegrated in many former colonies (Louis, 1998). Together with increasing attention for the excesses of imperial rule (Owen, 1998), these developments seriously challenged the image of Britain as a bearer of civilisation and democracy.

At the same time, Britain was losing its position of economic dominance as well. In 1945, the UK was still one of the main economic powers in the world, second only to the United States. The immediate post war years were characterised by strong GDP growth, low unemployment and a general sense of achievement. Over the course of the 1950s and 60s this initial optimism turned to dissatisfaction.

Although the real performance remained strong until the mid-1970, it became increasingly clear that many western European countries were growing significantly faster than the UK. Simultaneously the British share of the world export market rapidly declined (Supple, 1994). The resulting weakness in the balance of payment position of the country, combined with large-scale speculation against the British pound, created repeated currency crises (Howson, 1994). In light of these developments, it became painfully clear that Britain's reign as an economic world power was coming to an end.

Taken together, these developments challenged the very essence of what it meant to be British. In the absence of strong alternative spaces of identity, it has been argued that these challenges primarily invited a redefinition of what it meant to be British in much of England (Miller, 1997). In Scotland and Wales, the same trend however created a clear opportunity for a rescaling of feelings of belonging from the central towards the country level. Simultaneously, many of the main identity markers at this scale however also lost part of their salience. In Scotland, the rapid decline of Kirk membership and communions challenged the religious foundations of Scottish identity during the immediate post war period. In Wales, secularisation was but one of many contemporary challenges to the country identity. Since the turn of the century, the Welsh language had also been in a permanent state of decline (see Table 3.1). Rural depopulation, outward migration to English regions and the spread of English language media intensified these pressures during the interbellum (J. Davies, 1999). From the 1950s onwards, the use of the Welsh language became more and more spatially concentrated. Rural areas of Wales experienced unprecedented levels of inward migration from England. Simultaneously, outward migration increased due to adverse economic conditions, particularly in the mining sector. This change in the industrial structure in turn represented a further challenge to Welsh identity, as the practices and values associated with mining and mining communities played an important role in the redefinition of Welsh feelings of belonging during the industrial age (Jones, 1992) .

Table 3.1 The decline of the Welsh language (1901-1981)

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Share of respondents able to speak Welsh	50%	44%	37%	37%	29%	26%	21%	19%	19%

Source: Censuses, April 1901 to April 2001, Office for National Statistics.

3.1.2. The link between regional identity and regionalism

The preceding section suggests that the weakening of some of the primary markers upon which the British identity was based created opportunities for a reprioritisation of spatial identities in Scotland and Wales. To what extent this shift in identity-based legitimacy contributed to the rise in support for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales is however far from evident. Taken at face value, survey evidence seems to suggest that a rescaling of feelings of belonging from the sovereign state towards the region facilitates regionalist mobilisation. Across the board, respondents who prioritise their country identity over British feelings of belonging in a forced question are found to be substantially more inclined to favour devolution or independence than those who primarily see themselves as British (see Table 3.2). In the 1970s, this effect was significantly stronger in Wales than in Scotland. Data from the 1990s suggest that this difference has since disappeared.

Table 3.2 Share of respondents who support devolution or independence by forced choice identity group (1974-1997)

	1974		1979		1992		1997	
	Scotland	Wales	Scotland	Wales	Scotland	Wales	Scotland	Wales
Region	71%	NA	56%	32%	80%	62%	87%	73%
British	59%		36%	13%	61%	45%	73%	67%
Region/ British	1.2		1.6	2.6	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.1

Sources: Own elaboration based on Brand & Mitchell (1994), Crewe, et al. (1977b, 1981), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al. (1993), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, & Norris (1999), McCrone, et al. (1999) and Miller & Brand (1981)

The initial difference in the strength of the relationship between identity and support for devolution in Scotland and Wales has been linked to the origins of feelings of belonging in Wales in particular. Unlike in Scotland, Welsh feelings of belonging have historically been marked by a strong linguistic component. While this helped to mobilise support for greater autonomy in the Welsh-speaking heartlands of Dyfed and Gwynedd, it simultaneously had the potential to alienate non-Welsh speakers from the regionalist cause. Secondly, the location of Wales within the UK has meant that certain parts of the country have traditionally enjoyed much stronger cultural and economic connections with England than others. This creates a further spatial division within the predominantly non-Welsh-speaking parts of the country. In the border counties and Pembrokeshire, the continuous influx of English migrants and increasing exposure to English media strengthened the overarching British sense of identity. In addition, the strong economic ties with the rest of the Union undermined much of the economic rationale for devolution. In comparison, the communities around the south Wales coalfields were much less exposed to English influences. Here a strong sense of Welsh identity emerged out of the shared industrial experience in the mining communities of mid- and west-Glamorgan. The economic woes of the mining sector in the 1960s and 70s heightened both this sense of identity and the belief that economic policies designed for the UK as a whole were not benefitting Wales. Taken together this has been argued to have aided regionalist mobilisation in what Balsom has dubbed 'Welsh Wales' (Balsom, 1985).

Balsom's 'three Wales model' has long continued to inform studies on support for devolution in Wales (Osmond, 2002). At face value, the spatial voting patterns during the 1997 devolution referendum indeed seems to suggest that the model remained broadly relevant in the late 1990's (see Table 3.3). At the same time, the available survey evidence suggests that Welsh identity no longer played an exceptionally prominent role in creating support for devolution at that time (see Table 3.2).

During the 1980s and 90s, the regionalist discourse in Wales also shifted from a strong reliance on identity-based arguments towards the benefits in terms of democratic representation (see section on democratic regionalism for more detail). A focus on the shift in popular opinion between 1979 and 1997, rather than the absolute level of support for devolution at each point in time, helps us to marry these seemingly contradictory findings. As Table 3.3 shows, the increase in support for devolution between 1979 and 1997 has been remarkably similar across different parts of Wales. In addition, the difference in the level of support for devolution in the linguistic heartland on the one hand and British Wales on the other also diminished markedly. This suggests that, although the traditional patterns of support for devolution are still visible, the ‘three Wales’ model cannot explain the surge of support for devolution that occurred in the late 1980s and 90s.

Table 3.3 Support for devolution in the two referendums and the ‘three Wales model’ (1979, 1997)³

	% voting yes		Shift 1979-1997
	1979	1997	
Welsh-speaking heartland	30.6%	61.7%	+31.0
Welsh Wales	18.7%	48.5%	+29.8
British Wales	13.1%	40.8%	+27.7
Welsh-speaking heartland/British Wales	2.3	1.5	-0.8

Source: Own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

³ The 1979 results are based on Balsom’s original formulation. The Welsh-speaking heartland groups together the results in Dyfed and Gwynedd. Welsh Wales refers to Mid- and West Glamorgan. British Wales comprises of Clwyd, Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan. Due to changes in constituency boundaries, the 1997 groupings do not fully overlap with the original boundaries. The data for Welsh-speaking Wales is based on the results in Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Gwynedd. Welsh Wales refers to Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, and Torfaen. Data for British Wales is calculated on the basis of the results in Cardiff, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Vale of Glamorgan and Wrexham.

Comparing survey evidence in Wales and Scotland furthermore highlights the need to carefully analyse the nature of the relationship between feelings of identity and support for greater autonomy. In 1979, the percentage of respondents who placed their country identity above the British identity in a forced choice question was almost identical in both countries (see Table 3.4). Nonetheless, support for greater autonomy was much more pronounced in Scotland than in Wales. Unfortunately comparable data is not available for the 1980s. When the identity question was reintroduced in the 1992 general election survey, support for greater autonomy had jumped up in both countries compared to the 1979 situation. However, while this change was accompanied by a marked rise in the percentage of Scottish respondents willing to placing their country identity above the British identity in a forced choice question, a similar trend was not discernable in Wales.

Table 3.4 Trends in support for greater regional autonomy and the articulation of identity in a forced choice question (Scotland and Wales, 1970-1997)

	Scotland						
	1970	1974	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997
Support devolution or independence	47%	66%	48%	45%	48%	75%	73%
Scottish identity in forced choice question		66%	56%			72%	74%
	Wales						
	1970	1974	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997
Support devolution or independence	36%	40%	25%	19%	30%	54%	66%
Welsh identity in forced choice question			56%			56%	54%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Crewe, et al., (1977a, 1977b, 1981), Heath, et al., (1983, 1999), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Miller & Brand (1981), Social and Community Planning Research (1970), Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Brand & Mitchell (1994), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al.(1993) and McCrone, et al.(1999)

These findings suggest that the nature of the relationship between support for devolution and independence and the way people choose to articulate their identity differs from context to context. In Wales, the country-level identity has traditionally been based on cultural, linguistic and religious factors alongside a distinctive shared industrial past (Morgan, 1980). None of these factors are susceptible to rapid change. In this context we find that support for devolution can wax and wane without notable shifts in the share of the population who place their country identity above the British identity in a forced choice question. By contrast, Scottish identity is strongly anchored in a history of statehood. As a result, feelings of belonging and preferences in terms of regional autonomy are intimately linked. This link is most clearly illustrated by the notable decline in the share of respondents prioritising the country identity over the British identity in a forced choice question between 1974 and 1979 (see Table 3.4). This rapid change in the articulation of feelings of belonging cannot be explained by marked changes in either Scottish or British identity markers. Rather it would seem that the failed 1979 devolution referendum led to a decline in the perceived desirability and/or viability of a more autonomous Scotland, which in turn influenced the way respondents choose to articulate their feelings of belonging.

This shows that we should not assume that identity is driving support for devolution just because trends in the articulation of feelings of belonging mirror those in the level of support for greater autonomy. Especially where a history of statehood forms an important identity marker, causality may in fact be running in the opposite direction to an important extent. The trends presented in Table 3.4 furthermore suggest that similar levels of national awareness can be accompanied by vastly differing degrees of support of greater regional autonomy, even within the same region. This in turn lends support to the contention that the existence of a regional identity alone is not sufficient to create support for devolution. Rather, the regional 'us' must be seen as in some way incompatible with the central 'other' or other types of grievances need to provide incentives towards regionalist mobilisation.

British opinion surveys have rarely included general questions regarding the personal attachments of respondents to different geographical scales. The introduction of the so-called Moreno question in the 1990s however suggests that the potential for purely identity based regionalism is fairly limited in mainland Britain. The Moreno question asks respondents to locate their personal feelings of belonging directed towards two geographical entities on a five-point scale, ranging from 'country identity, not British' to 'British, not country identity'. In both Scotland and Wales, the vast majority of respondents choose a point somewhere between these two extremes. This shows that regional feelings of belonging are not widely perceived as irreconcilable with the wider British identity in either of these countries. The high levels of support for greater autonomy can therefore not be argued to be purely identity-driven. Rather the existence of a regional identity seems to have facilitated the mobilisation of democratic and economic grievances in a territorial way.

In a world dominated by the concept of the nation-state, historically-grounded feelings of belonging help to legitimise calls for greater autonomy, both at home and abroad. In addition, a sense of identity tends to be accompanied by stronger formal and informal institutions through which citizens can engage in collective action (Hechter, 1992; McAdam, et al., 1996; Treisman, 1997). A history of difference frequently leaves a footprint in the form of formal institutions like regional newspapers and religious organisations (Keating, 2001a, 2001c). Feelings of identity also produce informal institutions like trust and a sense of common interest. These not only provide valuable framing opportunities to existing regionalist elites but may also be conducive to the creation of mobilising structures like regional political parties or interest groups (Bates, 1983).

In Scotland, the institutional footprint of independence indeed clearly facilitated regionalist mobilisation. Despite the formal unification in 1707, Scotland has always maintained distinctive legal, educational and religious institutions. In 1885, the central government chose to further recognise the country's special status through the creation of the Scottish Office. Despite the controversial nature of this institution, this provided Scotland with a ready-made platform to shape its concerns in a territorial way (Paterson & Jones, 1999). Similarly, the continued independence of the Scottish Church created both an important identity marker and a valuable mobilisation structure (Highet, 1960). Unlike its English counterpart, the Kirk did not shy away from engaging in public debate and criticising central government policy. Publishing regular reports on the social and economic conditions in the country since the 1940s, it also provided an important source of regional information at a time when this was not widely available (Highet, 1960). This was further supplemented by the existence of Scottish newspapers and television and radio stations. Taken together, these institutions reinforced the idea of a distinctly Scottish cultural and economic reality. In the absence of an elected regional body, they also provided pro-devolution groups with valuable platforms through which they could present their ideas to the general population (Denver, Mitchell, Pattie, & Bochel, 2000).

This effect has arguably been less pronounced in Wales. Unlike Scotland, Wales did not retain its own legal, educational or indeed religious institutions during the process of unification. Despite a strong nonconformist presence and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales in 1920, religious institutions did not provide a unified platform for regionalism comparable to the Kirk (Pope, 2001). In addition, the centre long proved less willing to reinforce the country's special status. The Welsh Office was only created in the mid-1960s and initially enjoyed a much more limited remit and budget than its more established Scottish counterpart. During the 1979 to 1997 Conservative rule, its role increased markedly. Simultaneously, the number of quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos) focussing exclusively on Welsh issues grew rapidly.

Although the Welsh Office and the quangos have been severely criticised for their lack of direct democratic accountability, it can be argued that this development nonetheless strengthened the mobilising structures at the country level (Snicker, 1998). This is certainly true if we compare the situation in Wales to that of the English regions, where formal mobilising structures have been largely missing throughout the period under consideration here.

3.2.Economic regionalism

The previous section has argued that the demise of a number of key British identity markers encouraged a re-prioritisation of feelings of belonging during the 1950s and 60s. In Scotland and Wales, this process resulted in a partial rescaling of identity from the central to the regional level. Despite this trend, feelings of belonging to the wider British polity remain widespread in both countries. As a result, it cannot be argued that the re-emergence of spaces of regionalism was purely or even primarily identity driven. Instead, the existence of a relatively strong sense of belonging at the regional level seems to have facilitated the mobilisation of other grievances into support for greater regional autonomy. In order to gain a better understanding of the waxing and waning of support for decentralisation in Scotland and Wales, we will therefore need to look beyond identity factors. This section will examine to what extent economic grievances created opportunities for regionalist mobilisation during the period under consideration. The next section will subsequently analyse the role played by shifts in democratic legitimacy.

3.2.1. The economic legitimacy of the centre in the 1960s and 70s

In Britain, as in much of Western Europe, the immediate post-war era was characterised by a strong belief in the ability of the sovereign state to manage and resolve most problems requiring collective action (Jessop, 2002). The dominance of the Keynesian paradigm in particular awarded the state a central role in managing economic growth and social welfare. At a time of strong GDP growth and low unemployment, this initially granted a substantial degree of economic legitimacy to the central state.

As has been noted in the previous section, this general sense of achievement quickly turned to dissatisfaction over the course of the 1950s and 60s. The experience of relative economic decline, poor export performance, and repeated currency crises slowly started to undermine popular belief in the centre's ability to effectively manage the economy during what was arguably a golden age in terms of employment, growth and prosperity(Howson, 1994; Supple, 1994).

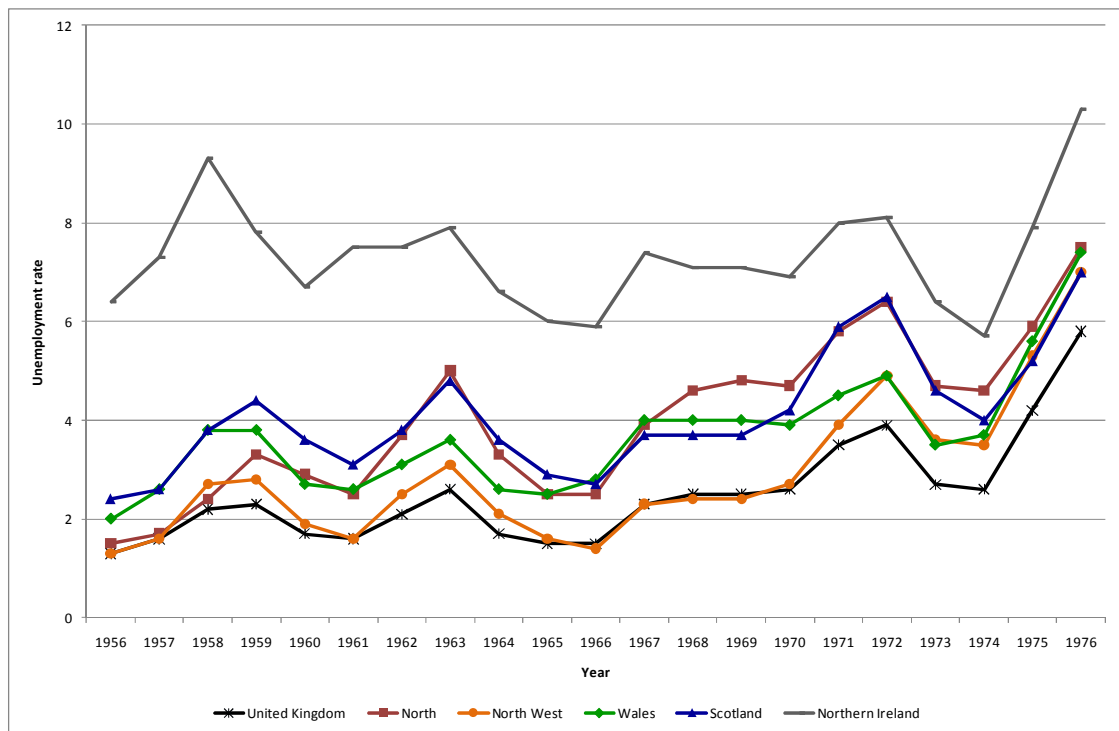
During the 1970s, the rapid deterioration of the real performance of the British economy created more direct and increasingly salient sources of popular discontent. During this period, increasing inflation was accompanied by a slowdown in growth and a rise in unemployment (Feinstein, 1994). Especially against the backdrop of the rapid increases in living standards experienced during the previous two decades, this created substantial economic grievances across the country. In addition, the inability of successive central governments of different political persuasions to turn the economic tide gradually undermined popular belief in the ability of the government to effectively manage the economy and ensure a degree of social justice. The resulting disillusionment with the two main competitors for office at the central level found expression through a marked rise in third party voting across Britain (see next section for details). Taken together, these general trends created fertile ground for the emergence of new lines of conflict.

The potential to mobilise the general economic grievances with the centre along territorial lines was augmented by the re-emergence of the so called North-South divide (Hall, 2002; Massey, 1986; Von Tunzelmann, 1981). This spatial pattern of inequality first emerged during the economic troubles of the 1920 and 30s. At that time, recurrent recessions, restrictive economic policies, and a worsening trade position had meant that unemployment reached record heights across the UK. Due to its focus on depressed export-based industries like shipbuilding, coalmining and textiles, the industrial north was particularly hard hit by these trends. By contrast, the South-East and the Midlands had traditionally been less reliant on such sectors.

Higher population densities accompanied by a stronger domestic and business demand meant that these areas also proved better able to sustain new growth industries, like business machinery, consumer durables and motor vehicles (Phillips, 2008). Taken together, these trends reversed the internal economic geography that had marked Britain during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth century.

In the face of increasing trade protection, rearmament and the subsequent post war boom, the salience of the North-South divide temporarily declined. Although important regional differences continued to exist, the achievement of near full employment, coupled with rapidly rising living standards, considerably dampened the resulting potential for territorial grievances in the immediate post war period. In the late 1950s, the issue however re-emerged as a result of the declining role of coal in transport and heating and the related drop in demand for this resource (Feinstein, 1994). Pits closed in fast succession, creating mass unemployment in the Northern mining communities. The subsequent moves towards trade liberalisation in the 1960s and 70s further exposed the uncompetitive nature of the industrial sectors in the north (Supple, 1994). As a result, unemployment rates rose rapidly. While the average unemployment in the UK remained well below 3 percent until 1971, unemployment in the North of England, Scotland and Wales had risen to 4 percent or more by 1970. In most cases this was accompanied by relatively high male inactivity rates, suggesting that actual unemployment differentials may have been substantially higher. The period of real economic decline and increasing unemployment that followed reinforced this pattern of inequality. In addition, the so-called 'North' slowly expanded to include areas like the North West of England (See Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Unemployment rate in the UK and selected regions (1956-1976)



Sources: Own elaboration based on Office for National Statistics (1966, 1996)

The re-emergence of the regional problem encouraged the 1959-1964 Conservative government to resume an active regional policy. This policy specifically aimed to reduce regional inequalities by redirecting industry into areas of high unemployment. Highly visible examples of such interventions include the establishment of steel strip mills in declining industrial areas in central Scotland and south Wales (Payne, 1979). Despite these efforts, regional differences in unemployment rates however persisted. This can partly be related to the simultaneous pursuit of so-called 'stop-go' macro-economic policies (Tomlinson, 1994). Primarily aimed at curbing inflationary growth in the South-East and Midlands, the stop phase of this policy clearly disadvantaged the high unemployment areas in the North. Taken together, these policies did little to defuse the growing discontent with the economic record of the government in general or the potential for territorially-based grievances in particular.

The subsequent general election returned a Labour government and the party remained in power until the general election of 1970. Despite Labour's reputation as the protector of the periphery, the change in government did little to redress the north-south divide. On the one hand, regional policies were applied much more consistently and government expenditure rose rapidly (Balchin, 1989). At the same time, the government however implemented deflationary policies, like the 1966 Prices and Incomes Act, which were largely inappropriate to the economic situation in the North. In the context of rising regional disparities, this created a distinct impression that the centre was inclined to prioritised curbing inflation in the South over the needs of workers in the North regardless of which party was in government at the time.

Economic grievances with the centre deepened even further with the return of a Conservative government in 1970. Against the backdrop of worsening economic conditions and a looming EEC membership, this government tried to turn the economic tide through a move away from active supply-side interventions. As could be expected, this led to significant industrial closures and rising unemployment, particularly in the already ailing North of the country. In 1971, the first test of the policy in Scotland's Clydeside conurbation met with strong opposition (Evans & Taylor, 1996). The resulting work-in by the UCS shipbuilders created an outpouring of support amongst the general public as well as important parts of the business community. Though the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath, was initially unwilling to compromise, the level of popular resistance clearly played an important role in the subsequent policy U-turn (Foster & Woolfson, 1986). Working class discontent with the effect of central policy on job security and wage levels in the North acquired further expression through the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes. Again broad popular support for industrial action showed that substantial economic grievances existed amongst large sections of the population in the North.

3.2.2. The regional response to these grievances

Taken together, the spatial concentration of economic woes combined with the perception that the economic policies developed by the centre were favouring the more dynamic regions in the South created a clear potential for economic regionalism (Hechter, 1975; Horowitz, 1985; Rokkan & Urwin, 1983). In Scotland, the spatial distribution of the vote in the 1979 devolution referendum lends some support to the hypothesis that economic grievances with the centre indeed increased support for greater autonomy during the 1970s. In this country, the government's decentralisation proposals received majority support in the industrialised central parts of the country as well as the traditionally less affluent highlands. By contrast the proposals failed to achieve majority support in most of the rural areas, which were less directly affected by the economic downturn. A similar pattern can however not be discerned in Wales. Here support for greater regional autonomy was primarily concentrated in the predominantly rural and Welsh speaking areas of Gwynedd and Dyfed. Support for decentralisation in British and Welsh Wales however remained very limited, despite a strong reliance on the declining traditional industries and coal mining (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Results of the 1979 devolution referendums in Scotland and Wales

Scotland		Wales	
<i>Region</i>	<i>% in favour</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>% in favour</i>
Borders	40.3%	Clwyd	21.60%
Central	54.7%	Dyfed	28.10%
Dumfries and Galloway	40.3%	Gwent	12.10%
Fife	53.7%	Gwynedd	34.40%
Grampian	48.3%	Mid Glamorgan	20.20%
Highland	51.0%	Powys	18.50%
Lothian	50.1%	South Glamorgan	13.10%
Orkney	27.9%	West Glamorgan	18.70%
Shetland	27.0%		
Strathclyde	54.0%		
Tayside	49.0%		
Western Isles	55.8%		
Scotland	51.6%	Wales	20.30%

Source, Own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

In the Northern regions of England, economic grievances did not lead to mass support for greater autonomy either. Notable differences in the response to the changing economic climate can nonetheless be discerned. In the North West, the economic grievances themselves and the re-emergence of political regionalism in Scotland and Wales did not even spark much of an elite level debate let alone a popular response. Based on disputed boundaries, the different constituent parts of the North West standard region contained highly distinctive local economies facing a variety of economic issues. The political scene was similarly fragmented, as the North West did not have a strong history of one-party predominance at that time. As a result no single political party could claim to be the 'voice of the region', locally or centrally. In addition the regional development organisations proved unable to unite local stakeholders behind a regional agenda (Dicken & Tickell, 1992). Taken together, this internal fragmentation limited regional mobilisation opportunities and ultimately curbed the region's bargaining power at the central level (Bristow, 1987).

By contrast, the Northern region developed a more cohesive regional response to relative economic decline. Unlike the North West, most areas in the Northern region faced similar issues and concern. Since the 1930s, a succession of proactive regional development organisations managed to unite local authorities, business organisations and trade unions behind a common programme aimed at bettering the situation of their region as a whole (Dicken & Tickell, 1992). The predominance of the Labour Party throughout the post-war period similarly ensured a more unified regional voice at the central level. In this context, the continued economic decline of the region, alongside the contemporary developments in Scotland and Wales, did prompt a lively elite discussion on the best way to protect the region's interests in the future.

In this context, a broad consensus emerged around the need to consolidate the existing regional organisations into one more powerful regional body. There was however considerable disagreement regarding the shape such a new institution should take.

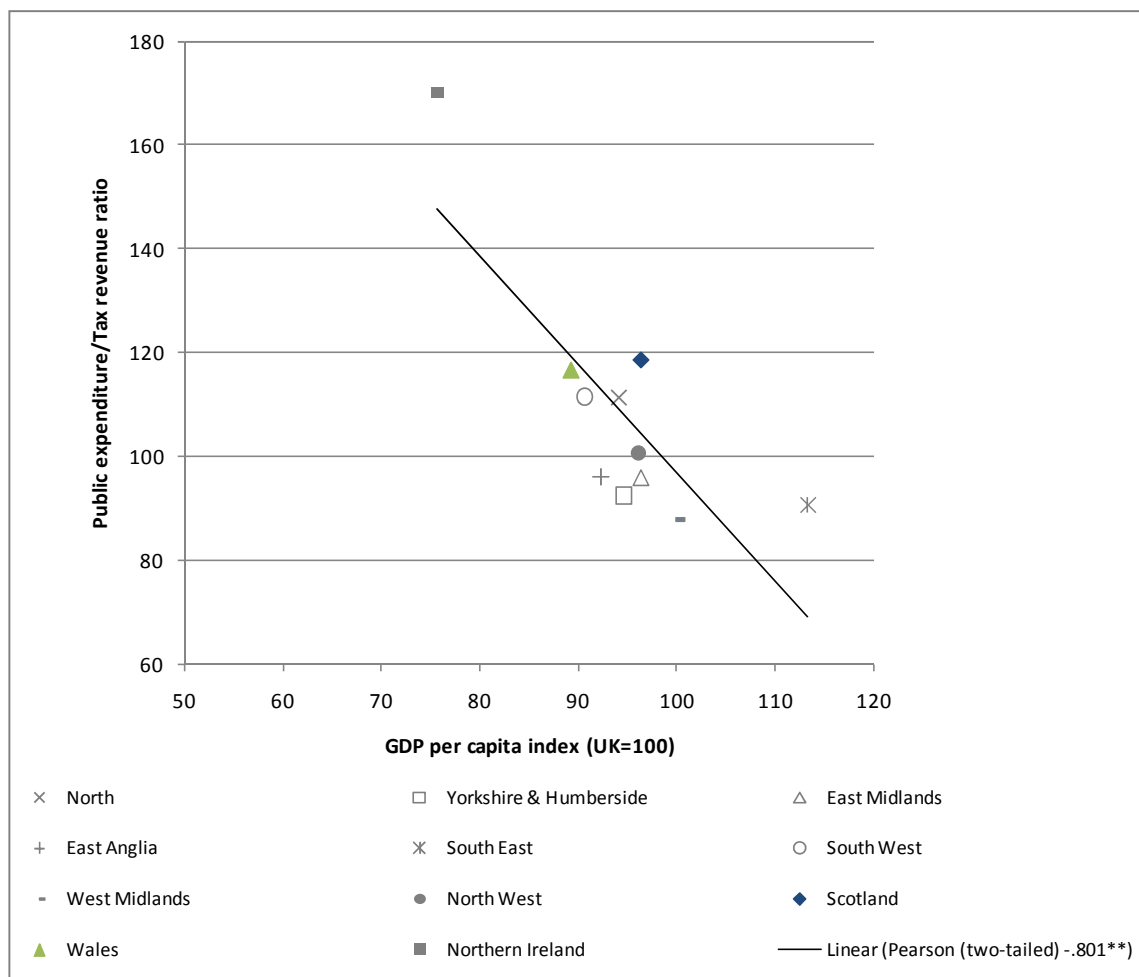
A group of Labour MPs in the region favoured the creation of a regional development agency and ultimately an elected regional body aimed directly at economic development. The Planning Council amongst others however argued that such a move would jeopardise the region's favoured position in the central system, especially if it created demands for similar institutions across England. The advocates of this view felt that the economic interest of the region would be better served by a strengthening of the existing structures of consultation and representation at the central level (Anderson, 1990). This lack of elite consensus clearly hindered the mobilisation of popular support for either of the two options.

The diverse experiences in Scotland, Wales and the northern regions of England suggest that regional factors influence the degree to which economic grievances with the centre will lead to regionalist mobilisation. Where regional boundaries are perceived as random and a sense of a common interest at this scale is limited, the potential for regionalist mobilisation around central grievances is severely restricted. A sense of regional awareness alone is however not sufficient to create economic regionalism. The experiences in Wales in particular show that substantial economic grievances can coincide with a strong sense of regional identity without creating substantial support for greater autonomy. This draws attention to the role of the perceived legitimacy of the region as a relatively autonomous economic unit.

In a centralised state like the UK, regional level data on public revenues and expenditure is notoriously scarce and unreliable. A rare study by Short (1981) provides estimates of public expenditure and tax revenue by region for the mid- to late 1970s. These figures in turn suggest that substantial interregional transfers took place over this period. As Figure 3.3 shows, Northern Ireland benefitted most this spatial redistribution. Scotland, Wales, the Northern Region and the South West of England were however also net beneficiaries of this system. By contrast, other regions contributed relatively more than they received.

Although these differences in regional public expenditure and tax revenue ratios were strongly correlated with regional differences in GDP per capita, Figure 3.3 shows that this association was not perfect. In particular, it is notable that East Anglia, Yorkshire and Humberside, and the East Midlands were net contributors to the system, despite having below average GDP per capita levels.

Figure 3.3 The relationship between regional public expenditure/ tax revenue ratios by regional GDP per capita (1975-76)



Sources: Own elaboration based on Short (1981) and Office for National Statistics (1984).

Within the English regions, there is little evidence of significant elite or popular awareness of these differences in regional revenue and expenditure positions. The primary exception here is again the Northern region. In its 1976 report, the Northern Region Strategy Team drew attention to the similarities in the economic situation of the North and Scotland and the difference in the extent to which both benefitted from regional redistribution. The fear that devolution to Scotland and Wales would strengthen this relative disadvantage created both elite support for devolution to the North and substantial opposition to one-sided devolution to Scotland and Wales among Northern Labour MPs. This opposition in turn played an important role in the failure of the 1977 guillotine motion on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Guthrie & McLean, 1978). In response, the central government reconsidered the process of expenditure allocation. The resulting needs assessment by the Treasury concluded that actual public expenditure indeed surpassed identifiable 'need' in Scotland and Northern Ireland (H. M. Treasury, 1979). In the end, this finding was not used to devise a more equitable system of expenditure allocation. It nonetheless shows that regional elite mobilisation and clear expressions of comparative grievances can result in greater central government attention to the plight of relatively disadvantaged regions.

In Scotland and Wales, popular and elite awareness of regional revenues and public expenditures streams was much more pronounced. In Wales, it was widely acknowledged that the country was a net beneficiary of the system and that this situation was unlikely to change in the near future. This severely limited the economic rationale for full independence or extensive fiscal devolution. As discussed, the debate about the possible devolution of powers and resources to Scotland and Wales however did spark a re-examination of regional expenditure allocation by the treasury (H. M. Treasury, 1979). This exercise found that for Wales actual need outstripped public expenditure in the policy areas that would be devolved under the 1976 plans. The spending formula that was eventually adopted however did little to redress this problem.

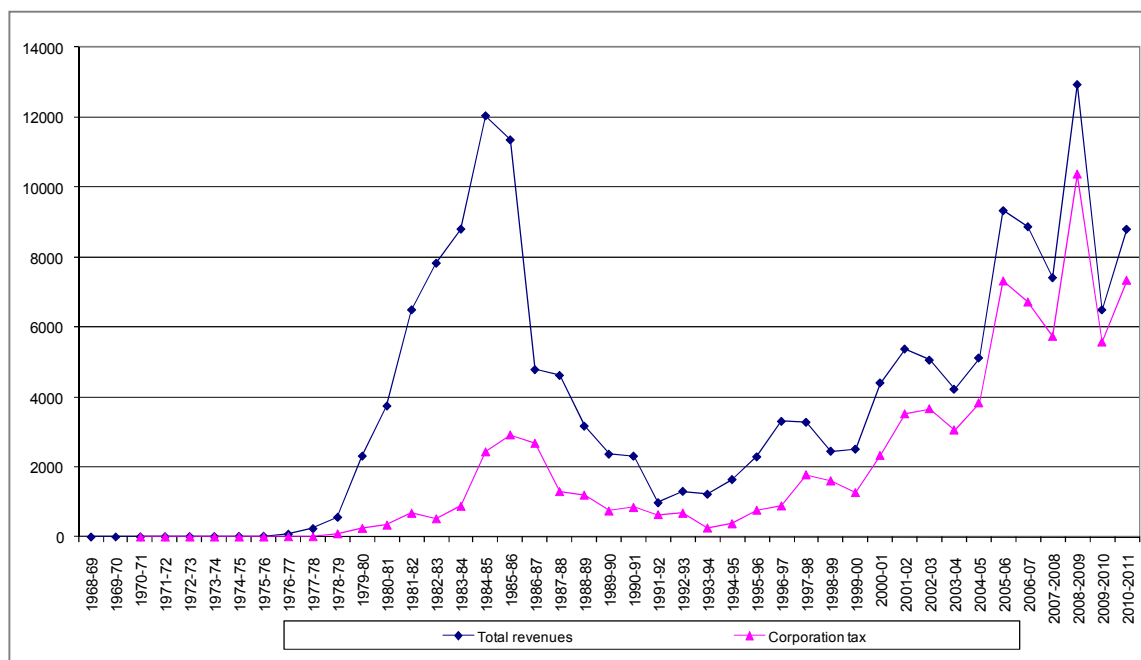
Instead the mechanics of the Barnett formula were deliberately designed to encourage the convergence of expenditure levels towards the average English level (Heald, 1994). This outcome has been argued to reflect the limited bargaining power of the country vis-à-vis the central government at the time (McLean & McMillan, 2003). A stronger economic situation, coupled with a more credible threat of secession, might have produced different results.

Prior to the discovery of North Sea oil, Scotland had been in a very similar position to Wales. The sudden wealth in natural resources however radically changed the dynamics. If we accept the argument that the tax revenue from this resource should be fully attributed to Scotland, the oil revenues had the potential to transform Scotland from a net beneficiary to one of the largest contributors to the public coffers in the UK. The Scottish National Party very effectively used this tax-based argument to build on its emerging success (Keating, 2001a; Rodríguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008). The 1973 SNP by-election success in the traditional Labour safe seat of Govan can be seen as an early indication that the improved tax-base indeed aided the mobilisation of economic grievances in a regional way. Although the SNP candidate only achieved a marginal victory, the promise of a more prosperous future in an autonomous Scotland clearly appealed to voters in the seat at the centre of the UCS work-in. The spatial distribution of the 1979 referendum vote provide further evidence in support of the hypothesis that the discovery of oil greatly enhanced the potential for economic regionalism.

During the 1970s, the revenue stream from oil was still quite limited. If we combine the data collected by Short (1981) with the oil revenues data, Scotland in fact remained a net beneficiary in 1977-1978. The extent to which the newfound wealth in natural resources would in the long run change Scotland's revenue and expenditure position was much debated at the time.

While the government long tried to downplay the tax revenues generated by the North Sea exploration, the SNP categorically arrived at far more substantial tax benefits (McCrone, 1974). In reality, both estimates were dwarfed by the actual returns (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 North Sea oil revenues (financial years 1968-69 to 2006-07, in £million)



Source: (HM Revenue & Customs, 2011)

Recently the SNP has argued that the 1974-1979 Labour government deliberately tried to hide the true value of North Sea oil in an attempt to stem the growing support for Scottish independence (Fraser, 30th of January 2006). Though a report emphasising the potential value of North Sea oil was indeed withheld from the public domain at the time, the true consequences of complete independence would also have been more complex than the SNP would like to admit. First of all, the degree to which an independent Scotland would have benefitted from the full revenues related to North Sea explorations would depend on the delimitation of boundaries on the continental shelf (Brown, 1978). Even if the boundaries were to correspond to the 1968 Continental Shelf (Jurisdiction) Order, the economic and social effects of full independence would have been mixed.

As Figure 3.4 shows, the actual revenue stream related to North Sea oil would indeed have provided an independent Scotland with a very comfortable budgetary position and a

balance of payments surplus. However, the real appreciation of the exchange rate that accompanies substantial extraction of natural resources probably would have crowded out other tradable sectors in the economy.

Originally coined the Dutch disease due to the adverse effects of the discovery of natural gas reserves on Dutch manufacturing in the 1960, this effect has since been discerned in a number of contexts (Sachs & Warner, 2001). As the lesser-quoted part of McCrone's 1974 re-examination of the case for Scottish Nationalism clearly conveys, similar problems could be anticipated in the case of Scottish independence (McCrone, 1974). The substantial balance of payments surplus created by oil exports would almost certainly have encouraged an upward revaluation of the Scottish pound, in particular with relation to pound sterling. As a result, Scotland's already ailing manufacturing industries would have found it increasingly difficult to compete both at home and abroad. Similarly, the tourism industry could suffer detrimental consequences and Scottish farmers might have experienced considerable reductions in CAP subsidies. Without careful management and considerable growth in new industries, Scottish independence could therefore have led to relative wealth combined with high levels of unemployment and outward migration (Harvie, 1994). The extent to which these more complex arguments would have been able to counter the more intuitive tax-base arguments presented by the SNP is however doubtful.

3.2.3. The economic legitimacy of the centre in the 1980s and 90s

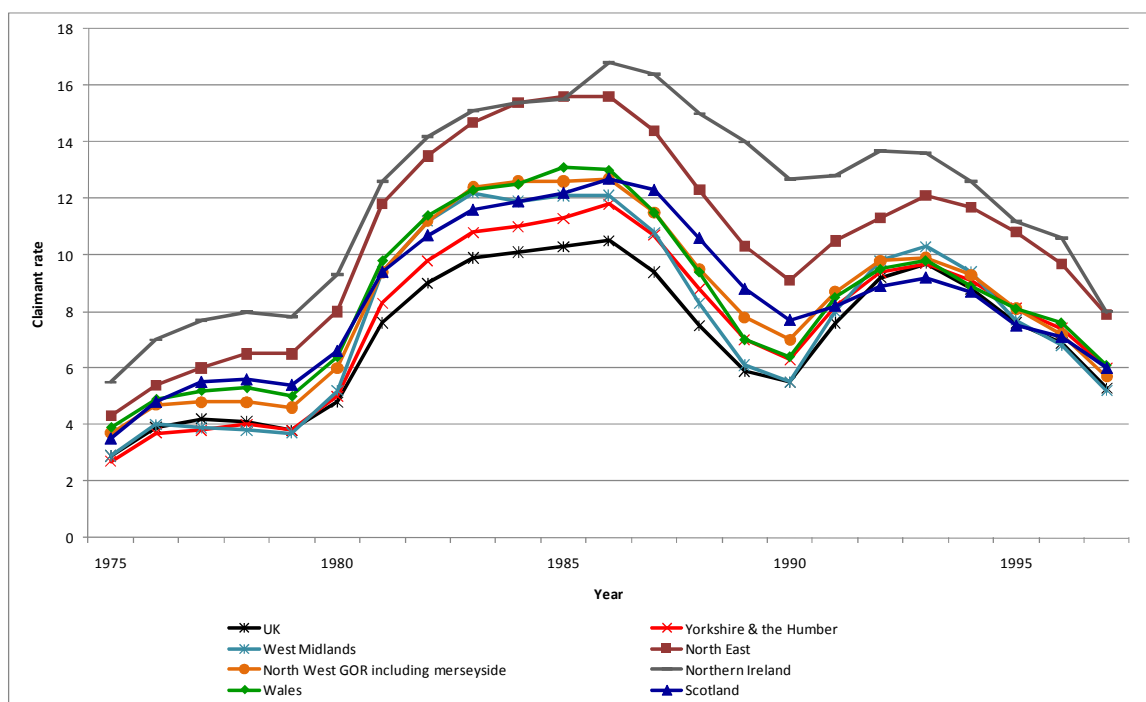
The failure of the 1979 devolution referendums and the subsequent election of a Conservative government under Thatcher heralded a new era of economic and regional policy. Keynesian politics were resolutely replaced by a laissez-faire approach. Thatcher's

Conservative predecessor, Edward Heath, had already tried to make this shift during his 1970 to 1974 term in office. The new Prime Minister however pursued the agenda with much more resolve. In the context of a general recession, this resulted in rapid industrial restructuring, large scale firm closures, and mass redundancies. Though pockets of relative deprivation were visible across the country, the regions in the North of Britain were again disproportionately affected. The restrictive, deflationary monetary policies and streamlining of national industries encouraged an intense rationalisation of the manufacturing base of the North (Martin, 1988). The rapid growth in North Sea oil production and the related appreciation of Sterling accelerated this process. Simultaneously government spending on regional policy continued to decline in the context of growing national unemployment, severe fiscal constraints and the perception that 40 years of active regional policies had done little to address the regional problem. By contrast government expenditure in depressed inner city areas increased. By 1985, this expenditure stream exceeded government spending on regional policy in England and Wales. Furthermore, much of this sub-regional spending was concentrated in the cities of the South rather than the North (Damesick, 1987).

At the same time the so-called 'North' continued to expand. Alongside the 'traditional North' and the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands also emerged as areas of relative deprivation. At the same time, the South, now reduced to the South East, East Anglia, the South West and East Midlands, continued to flourish. Traditionally less reliant on the manufacturing industry, it proved better equipped to take advantage of the new opportunities. Thatcherite policies further aided the development of these new growth areas, particularly in the financial and service sectors (Balchin, 1989). Figure 3.5 graphically illustrates these trends through the development of regional claimants' rates. These differences in economic fundamentals and unemployment levels were in turn accompanied by important disparities in terms of income, wealth and ultimately social welfare (Martin, 1988). Amidst a growing consensus that the government

was primarily concerned with the economic prosperity of the South, these growing disparities led to considerable grievances in the North. Changes in regional voting patterns during the 1980s clearly reflect the spatial distribution of the resulting popular discontent (Johnston, Pattie, & Allsopp, 1988). While Thatcher continued to enjoy strong support in the southern regions, the Conservative share of the vote steadily declined in the North (see next section for details).

Figure 3.5 Claimant rates in the UK and selected regions (1975-1997)



Source: Own elaboration based on Office for National Statistics time series data

During the 1990s, the link between economic conditions and voting patterns gradually weakened. While the regionalisation of the vote continued to increase, the recession was accompanied by a degree of economic convergence. With the exception of the North East and Northern Ireland, regional claimant rates in most lagging regions moved towards the UK average during the early 1990s. When the economic situation improved, claimants'

rates remained relatively close to the national average in these regions (see Figure 3.5). Some have rightfully argued that a focus on claimant rates alone overestimates the degree of regional convergence (Fothergill, 2001). As Table 3.6 shows, male inactivity rates indeed continued to hover well above the UK average in most of the regions in the extended North. Development in terms of average regional earnings and Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita are also more mixed. While the relative position of Scotland and Northern Ireland improved between 1989 and 1997, other parts of the North remained stagnant or experienced further relative decline.

Table 3.6 Regional economic inactivity rates and GVA per head (1989-1997)

Male inactivity rate						GVA per head (Index: UK = 100)								
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Northern Ireland	18.4	20.2	20.1	19.5	18.4	73	73	75	76	78	78	79	79	79
North East	19	18.9	19.8	19.1	20.9	84	83	84	84	83	83	83	82	80
North West	16.5	17.2	18.3	18.9	18.2	91	91	91	91	91	91	90	89	89
Yorkshire and the Humber	14.5	15.4	15.6	16	17.7	90	89	90	89	89	88	89	89	89
West Midlands	14.3	14	14.7	14.1	14.8	92	92	91	91	91	92	92	92	92
Wales	20.9	20.5	21.2	21.1	19.9	85	84	83	83	83	83	84	82	80
Scotland	15.6	15.4	17.6	17.4	17.9	96	97	98	99	99	99	99	98	97
United Kingdom	14.2	14.6	15	15.2	15.4	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Office for National Statistics (2009a, 2010)

3.2.4. The regional response to these grievances

In England, the widening of economic differences in the 1980s again failed to create prominent spaces of regionalism. In the absence of regional mobilising structures, these grievances were instead absorbed within existing class cleavages and North-South divisions. In Scotland and Wales, formal and informal mobilising structures provided better opportunities for regionalist mobilisation around territorially-concentrated economic grievances. The timing of the re-emergence of regionalism however suggests that economic grievances were a contributing factor to, rather than the main driver of, regionalism at this time.

In both Scotland and Wales, support for greater autonomy remained relatively stable during the early and mid-1980s, before increasing rapidly in the late 1980s and early 90s (see Figure 3.1). The rise in support for devolution thus by and large coincides with a period when both countries were converging to the national average in terms of claimant rates. In Wales, relatively modest claimant rates were combined with persistently high male inactivity rates and continued relative deprivation in terms of GDP per capita. In Scotland on the other hand, average male inactivity rates were much more modest. In addition, the country experienced a distinct improvement in terms of relative GDP per head during this period. As both countries displayed similar increases in support for devolution during this time, it would therefore be hard to argue that this trend was primarily based on economic factors.

To argue that the re-emergence of prominent spaces of regionalism during the late 1980s and 90s was not primarily linked to economic grievances, is not to say that the economic conditions under successive Conservative governments did not play a role in this trend. Without a doubt, the painful industrial restructuring of the 1980s coupled with the controversial economic policies pursued by the central government created considerable grievances in both Scotland and Wales. The timing of the resurgence of regionalism in Scotland and Wales however suggest that such economic factors primarily affected support for devolution through the mounting democratic grievances with the centre, rather than directly.

3.3.Democratic regionalism

In the immediate post war period, the British party system could be seen as a textbook example of a stable two-party system centred around one dominant cleavage (Webb, 1999). Following the partial resolution of the Irish issue in the 1920s, social class gradually established itself as the main dimension of political conflict in post-war Britain. In line with Duverger's Law (1951), the single-member district plurality electoral system in turn favoured the emergence of a two-party system dominated by the working class Labour Party and the middle class Conservative Party. Taken together, the two main contenders for office at the central level attracted well over 90 percent of the British vote at every general election between 1945 and 1959. In addition the system was marked by a high degree of electoral balance, in the sense that the mean difference in the share of the vote attracted by the two main competitors for office was relatively small. As a result, there was a regular alternation of power at the centre. Although regional differences in voting patterns did exist, the party system also displayed a relatively high level of nationalisation throughout the period (Caramani, 2004; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). From the mid-1960s onwards, these features of the British party system started to change. This section will argue that these shifts both undermined the legitimacy of the central system in important ways and created opportunities for regionalist mobilisation.

3.3.1. The thawing of the British party system in the 1960s and 70s

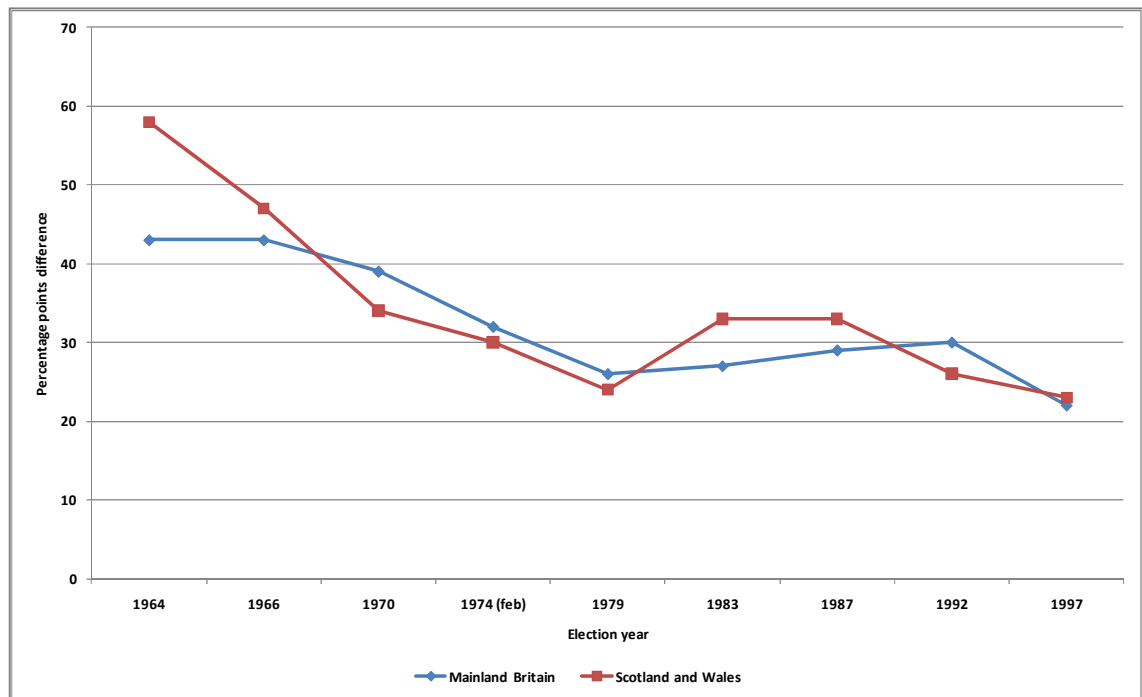
Lipset and Rokkan (1967) famously argued that European party systems were the product of two revolutions: the National Revolution and Industrial Revolution. These in turn produced four basic cleavages: the center-periphery conflict, the church-state conflict, the Land-industry conflict and the capitalist-workers conflict. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) contend that each of these political controversies continued into the contemporary world to some extent. The continuing industrialisation of the economy, coupled with the extension of suffrage to all adult men, however magnified the importance of the social class dimension while simultaneously cutting across many of the other cleavages.

In the decades that followed, the class cleavage became institutionalised within the political system, leading to what is often referred to as the 'freezing' of cleavage alignments.

As noted, the relative stability of the British party system during the immediate post-war period largely concurred with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) propositions. From the mid-1960s onwards, the traditional pattern of class alignments has however started to thaw. In particular, the strength of the relationship between occupational class and the vote for one of the two main contenders for office started to decline markedly across mainland Britain. To visualise this development, Figure 3.6 reports the difference between the Conservative share of the two-party vote within the manual and nonmanual occupational strata between 1964 and 1997. In the 1960s, the Conservative share of the nonmanual vote was still 43 percentage points above the Party's share of the manual vote. By 1979 this difference had been reduced to 26 percentage points.

Survey evidence suggests that the general decline in the political significance of social class occurred slightly earlier and was more pronounced in Scotland and Wales than in England (see Figure 3.6). In 1964, the Conservative share of the nonmanual vote in Scotland and Wales was 58 percentage points above the Party's share of the manual vote. By the time of the 1966 general election, this difference had already been reduced to 47 percentage points. By 1970, the difference between the Conservative share of the manual and nonmanual vote had declined so much that it was now in line with the results amongst English respondents. During the 1970s, trends in Scotland and Wales were largely in line with those in the rest of Britain.

Figure 3.6 Percentage point difference in the Conservative share of the two-party vote within manual and nonmanual occupational strata (1964-1997)

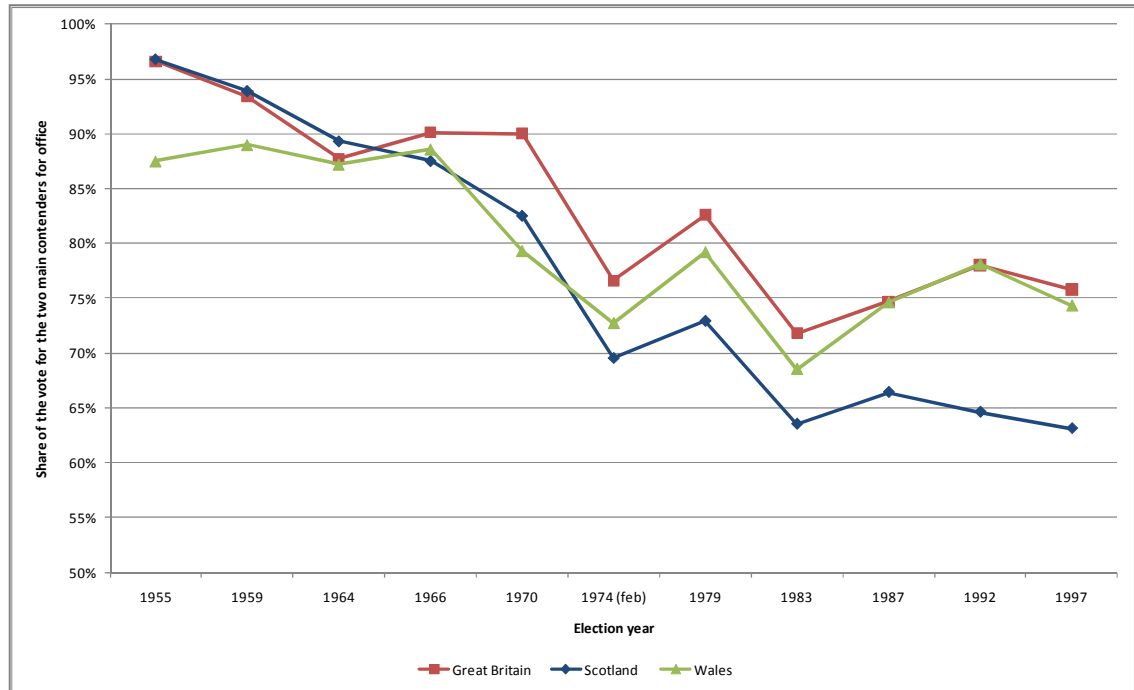


Sources: own elaboration based on Butler & Stokes (1979), Crewe, et al. (1977a, 1981), Heath, et al. (1983), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al. (1993), Heath, et al. (1999)

Whether the decline of the traditional class cleavage should be interpreted as class dealignment or rather a realignment of voting behaviour along more complex class lines is heavily debated (Manza, Hout, & Brooks, 1995). Whatever the true origins of the thawing of the two-class/two-party system, the process clearly helped to expose the growing discontent with both Labour and the Conservative Party across the UK. As discussed in the previous section, the end of the post-war 'golden age' acutely exposed important spatial differences in economic fundamentals. Despite highly visible government efforts to rebalance these emerging spatial inequalities, voters in the declining manufacturing heartland and industrial periphery, as well as the major conurbations, increasingly shunned the incumbent Conservative government in favour of the Labour Party and the Liberals. The return of a Labour government in the mid 1960s however did little to reverse the relative decline of these areas.

This inability of consecutive central governments of different political persuasion to turn the economic tide lead to grievances with central government output and ultimately a turn away from the main contenders for office (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Share of the vote attracted by the two main contenders for office (1955-1997)

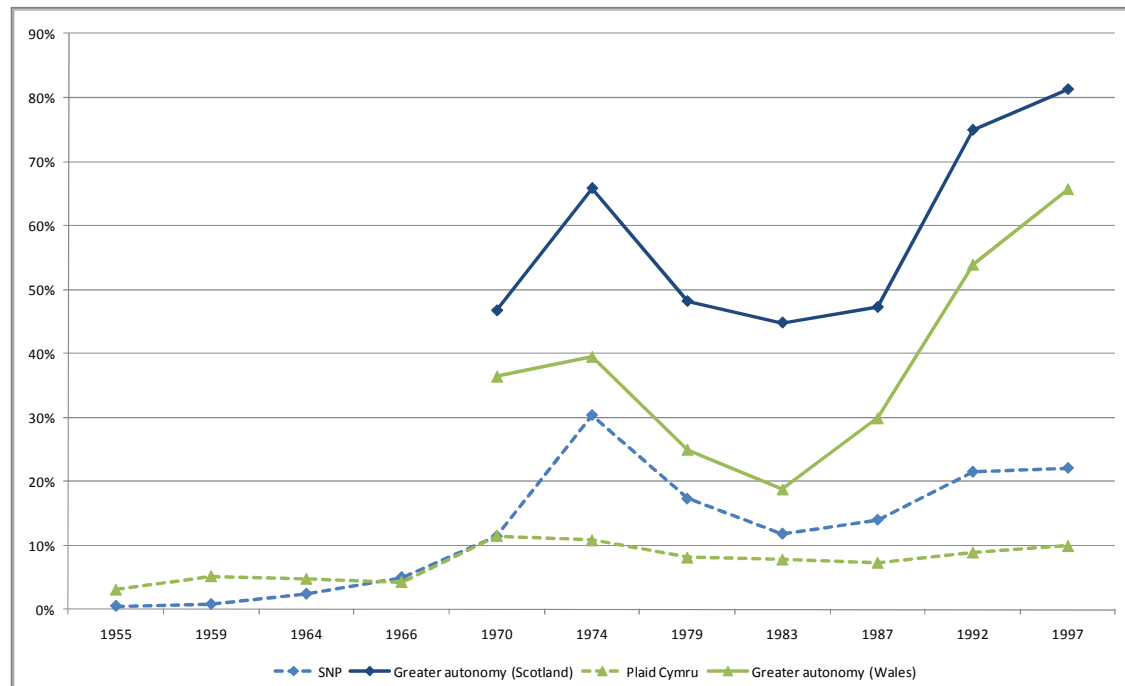


Source: own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

Between 1955 and the February 1974, the percentage of the vote attracted by the two main contenders for office decreased from 97 per cent to 77 per cent of the vote in Great Britain. Scotland and Wales were very much part of this general trend towards third party voting. In Wales, Conservative support had traditionally been weak. In Scotland, the fortunes of the Conservative Party started to decline from the 1960s onwards. Initially, the Labour vote remained robust in both countries. Discontent with the actions of the Labour Party when it returned to office in 1964 however soon eroded this support base. When Labour replaced the Liberals as one of the two main contenders for office in the early twentieth century, it inherited its predecessor's position as defender of the regions. As Labour had not been in office for much of the post-war period, maintaining this dual image had long been a cost-free exercise. The return to power however exposed the Labour Party as a primarily centralist working-class party (Urwin, 1982). This was in turn associated with a marked decrease in Labour support in both Scotland and Wales.

Initially the main beneficiaries of this trend were the SNP and Plaid Cymru. The extent to which this early rise in regionalist voting should be seen as an expression of pre-existing regionalist feelings or a signal of increasing popular support for greater autonomy is debatable. Figure 3.8 shows the share of the regional vote attracted by the SNP and Plaid Cymru in general elections between 1955 and 1997. From 1970 onwards, it also reports survey evidence regarding the level of support for greater autonomy in each country. In Scotland, patterns of regionalist voting and support for greater autonomy show considerable overlap in the 1970s and 80s. This makes it seem highly probable that the rise in SNP support during the 1960s and 70s was also indicative of a more widespread rise in support for greater regional autonomy. In Wales, the share of the vote attracted by Plaid Cymru has been relatively stable from the 1970s onwards. Support for greater autonomy on the other hand proved much more volatile. Given this pattern, it seems probable that the disappointment with the 1964-1966 Labour government, coupled with the demise of the traditional class cleavage, exposed a pre-existing regionalist core in Wales without a similarly strong rise in support for devolution.

Figure 3.8 Regionalist voting and support for greater autonomy (Scotland and Wales, 1955-1997)



Sources: Own elaboration based on Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Brand & Mitchell, (1994), Crewe, et al. (1977a, 1977b), Crewe, et al (1981), Heath, et al. (1999, 1983), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al. (1993), McCrone, et al., (1999), Miller & Brand (1981), Rallings & Thrasher (2007), Social and Community Planning Research (1970)

This interpretation is supported by the nature of third party voting in the 1974 elections. In Wales, like in England, the decline in support for the main contenders for office predominantly benefitted the Liberals, while the share of the vote attracted by Plaid Cymru remained relatively stable between 1970 and 1974. It has been argued that the rise of the Liberal Party in Wales can be seen as an alternative re-assertion of Welsh values and identity (Madgwick & Balsom, 1974). Wales indeed has a strong Liberal tradition. In addition, the Party has traditionally been associated with a pro-decentralisation stance. Nonetheless, the opinion polls leading up to the 1979 referendum consistently showed that the level of support for devolution amongst Welsh Liberal identifiers was similar to or even below the Welsh average (Balsom & McAllister, 1979). This suggests that the rise in Liberal voting should be interpreted as a protest vote, rather than a rise in support for greater autonomy. In Scotland by contrast SNP voting and support for greater regional autonomy both increased markedly between 1970 and 1974.

This pattern is more consistent with rising support for regional autonomy in response to building grievances with the centralised system and its effects.

Regardless of its origins, the emergence of relatively successful regionalist parties inspired the 1974-1979 Labour government to offer devolution to both Scotland and Wales (see chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of the motives behind this shift in policy position). Following a long and painful legislative process, the 1978 Scotland and Wales Acts were both subjected to popular referendums. In Wales, this resulted in a resounding defeat of the government's proposals. In Scotland, a narrow majority voted in favour of the moderate package of devolution on offer at the time. This majority however fell short of the 40 per cent of the electorate threshold introduced during the committee stage of the bill. Without a strong popular mandate, the severely weakened Labour government proved unable to avoid the repeal of the Scotland and Wales Acts (see chapter 5 for details). In both countries, support for devolution and independence decreased markedly after this failure at the polls (see Figure 3.1).

3.3.2. The regionalisation of the vote during the post-war period

The existing academic literature on Scottish and Welsh devolution firmly links the subsequent re-emergence of demands for greater autonomy in the 1980s to the distinctive voting patterns in Scotland and Wales and the related grievances with a central government that never received majority support in either country (Brown, McCrone, & Paterson, 1998; Denver, et al., 2000; Devine, 1999; Keating, 2001a; Miller, 2005). From within this perspective, the regionalisation of the vote can lead to feelings of non-representation and democratic grievances with centre. This is particularly true under a single member plurality electoral system, which tends to prioritise majority interests over minority views and tends to strongly concentrate power in the hands of a single governing party (Norris, 1997). Initially, the highly nationalised nature of the British party system minimised the potential for this type of grievance in mainland Britain. From the late 1950s onwards, regional voting patterns have however started to diverge.

Figure 3.9 traces the regionalisation of the party system in Britain and England from 1955 until 1997. In line with Jones and Mainwaring (2003), the Gini coefficient of the share of the regional vote attracted by a party in each of the regions is used as a measure of the regionalisation of party support⁴. A Gini coefficient of 0 signifies that a party receives the same share of the vote across all regions, while a Gini coefficient of 1 means that it relies solely on popular support within a single region. The regionalisation of the party system as a whole is calculated by multiplying the Gini coefficient of each party with the share of the national vote it received and summing these products for all parties. Like the Gini coefficient for party support, the party system regionalisation score can theoretically range from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating a more regionalised party system. The regionalisation score is calculated on the basis of voting data for Scotland, Wales, 7 English Standard Statistical Regions (SSR), Greater London, and the rest of the South East Standard Statistical Region⁵.

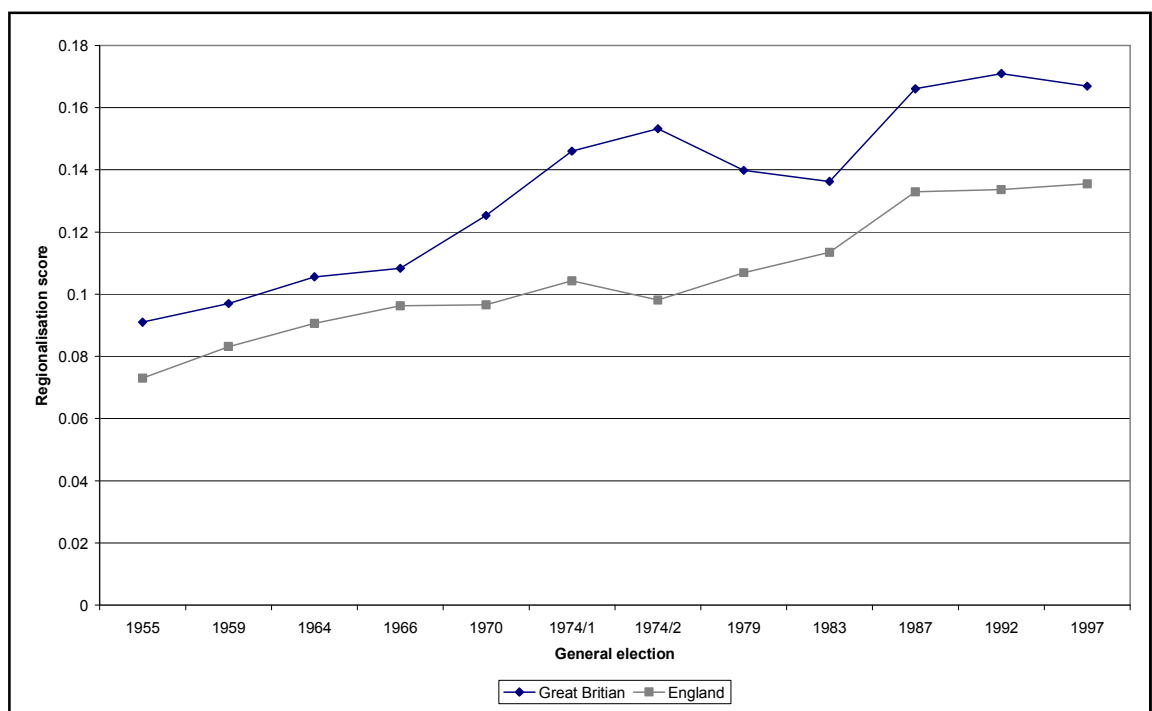
Although movements towards both regionalisation and nationalisation can be discerned, the general trend that emerges throughout the post-war period is one of increasing regional differentiation in voting behaviour. Within the devolution literature, attention has primarily been focussed on the traditionally distinctive distribution of preferences in Wales and the increasing distinctiveness of voting patterns in Scotland. As Figure 3.9 shows, the regionalisation of the party system is indeed more pronounced when Scotland and Wales are included in the analysis. However, a trend towards regionalisation is also visible in the English party system. Between 1955 and 1966 a tendency towards regionalisation can already be discerned. From 1966 until 1974, the emergence of more distinctive voting patterns in Scotland and Wales is accompanied by a more modest regionalisation of the vote in England.

⁴ For an overview of the limitations of the Gini please look at Jones and Mainwaring (2003). The authors use 1 minus the Gini coefficient as a measure for the *nationalisation* of the party system. As we are primarily interested in regionalisation, it does not make sense to include this transformation.

⁵ The South East standard region is already divided into Greater London and the South East SSR excluding London in order to take account of Greater London's current status as a separate Government Office region with an elected assembly.

From October 1974 until the 1983 general election the regionalisation of the English party system however continues, while voting patterns in Scotland in particular converge towards the British average. During the 1980s, a further regionalisation of the English and British party system can be discerned. During the 1990s the regionalisation of both party systems stabilised. Over the period as a whole, the regionalisation score has doubled in both England and Great Britain. The 1997 scores still fall well below those found by Jones and Mainwaring (2003) for a highly regionalised country like Canada. On the other hand, they are similar in magnitude to those generally found in a large federal country like the United States of America.

Figure 3.9 Regionalisation of the vote in Great Britain and England (1955-1997)

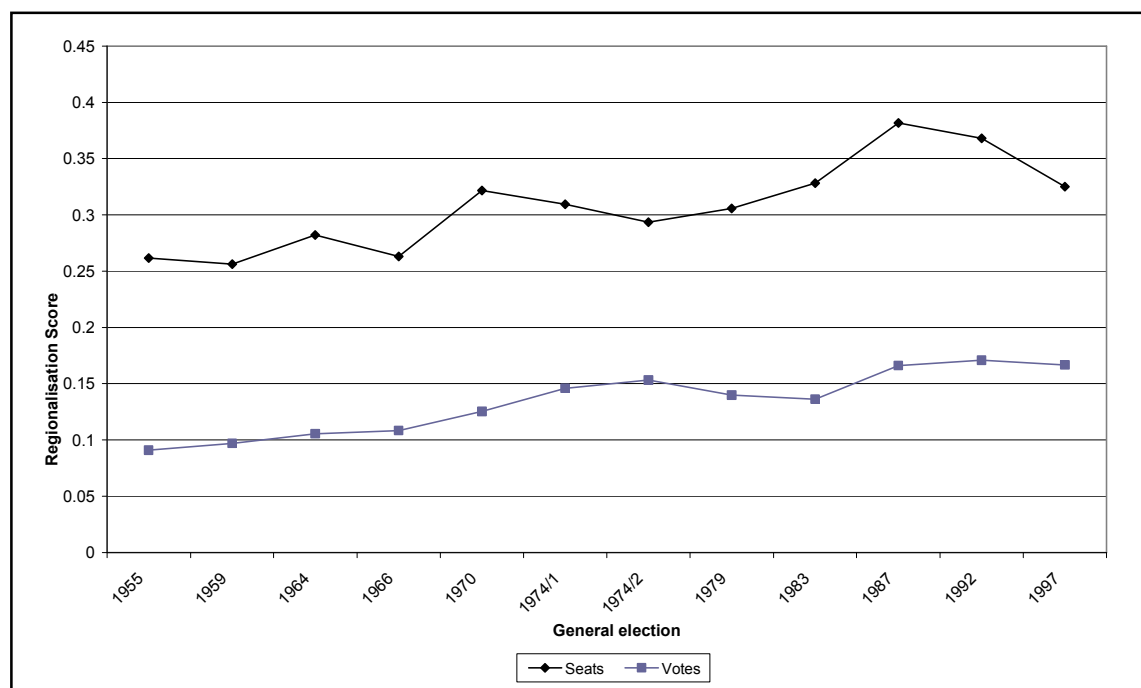


Source: own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

It is widely accepted that the way in which the single-member plurality electoral system translates votes into seats magnifies the regionalisation of the party system (Johnston, 2001). Our measure of regionalisation provides an excellent opportunity to quantify this distorting effect. Like the regionalisation of the vote, the regionalisation of party support in terms of seats can be expressed using the Gini coefficient, with a Gini of 1 representing complete regionalisation and a Gini of 0 indicating complete nationalisation.

The seats regionalisation of the British party system as a whole can then be calculated by multiplying the Gini coefficients of the seats for each party with the share of the British seats this party attracted and summing these products for all parties. Figure 3.10 shows that the regionalisation of the British party system in terms of seats is indeed much more pronounced than the regionalisation of the vote. Dividing the regionalisation score in terms of seats by the regionalisation score of the vote shows that, during the period under consideration here, the electoral system on average more than doubled the regionalisation of the vote in the seats distribution.

Figure 3.10 Regionalisation of votes and seats in Great Britain (1955-1997)



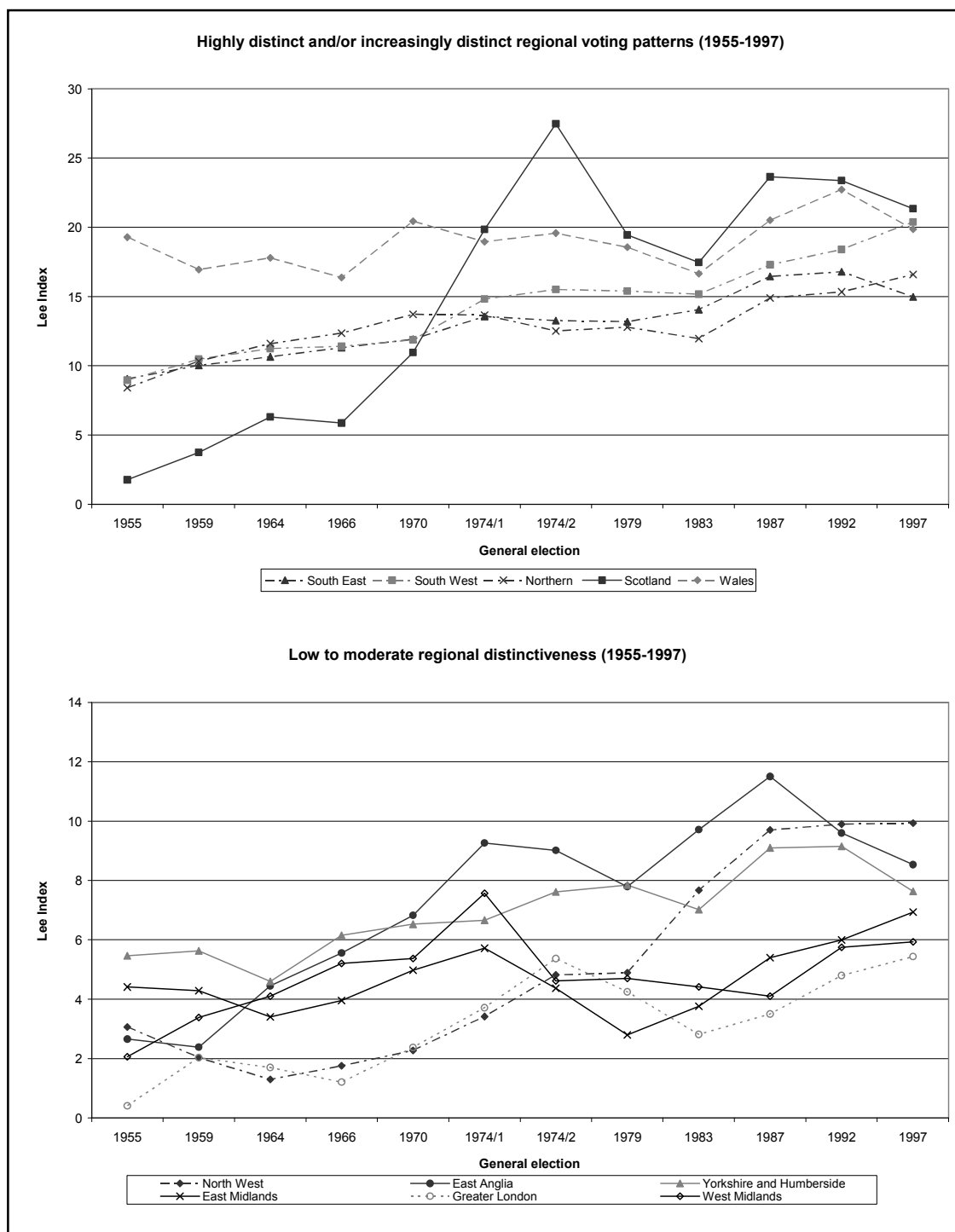
Source: own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

This exaggeration of the voting pattern in the seats distribution has the potential to exacerbate the real and perceived underrepresentation of regions with highly distinctive voting patterns (see chapter 4 for more detail). Not every region is however equally strongly affected by this trend. The Lee index (Hearl, Budge, & Pearson, 1996) provides an opportunity to examine how the distinctiveness of voting in Scotland and Wales compares to that found in English regions. The Lee index measures regional distinctiveness in voting patterns in the following way:

$$\text{Lee Index} = \sum |d_{r-n}|/2$$

where \sum is the summation and $|d_{r-n}|$ is the absolute difference between the regional and countrywide percentage of the vote a party attracts. By dividing the sum by 2, double counting is avoided. Figure 3.11 show the Lee index for Scotland, Wales and the previously defined English regions between 1955 and 1997.

Figure 3.11 Regional distinctiveness in English Regions, Scotland and Wales (Lee index, 1955-1997)



Source: Own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

In Wales, voting behaviour has consistently diverged from the British average throughout the post war period. In Scotland the regional voting pattern was initially fairly similar to the British average. Between 1966 and 1974, the distinctiveness of political preferences increased rapidly. Peaking in October 1974, the Scottish Lee index has since hovered just above the index for Wales. Scotland was however not alone in experiencing a rise in regional distinctiveness. The South East, The South West and the Northern region already displayed relatively distinctive voting patterns in 1955. Over the next two decades, regional preferences diverged from the British average even further. By 1997, the Lee index of South West was fairly similar to that of Wales. Voting patterns in the South East and Northern regions were less distinctive, but the Lee index still doubled between 1955 and 1997⁶.

The waxing and waning of support for greater regional autonomy in Wales does not coincide with changes in the distinctiveness of regional voting patterns. In Scotland, changes in the Lee index are correlated with changes in support for devolution. Closer examination however reveals that this is a spurious relationship, as both the dependent and the independent variable are strongly correlated with SNP voting. It is well-known that regionalist voting disproportionately affects the Lee index (Hearl, Budge, & Pearson, 1996). Support for regionalist parties will usually be concentrated in one specific administrative region⁷. As a result, the share of the regional vote such a party attracts within its core region will automatically be significantly larger than the percentage of the national vote. In Wales, this does not present a problem as Plaid Cymru voting is not significantly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy. In Scotland, the electoral success of the Scottish Nationalist Party is however significantly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy.

⁶ In 1994, England was divided into Government Office regions. This change in boundaries did not affect the South West. In the case of the Northern region the shift to Government Office regions removed Cumbria from this region. This change in boundaries accentuated the electoral distinctiveness of the region. A similar effect can be discerned in the case of the South East. Reflecting the former South East SSR minus Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Essex, the South East GOR displays a more distinctive voting pattern than its predecessor.

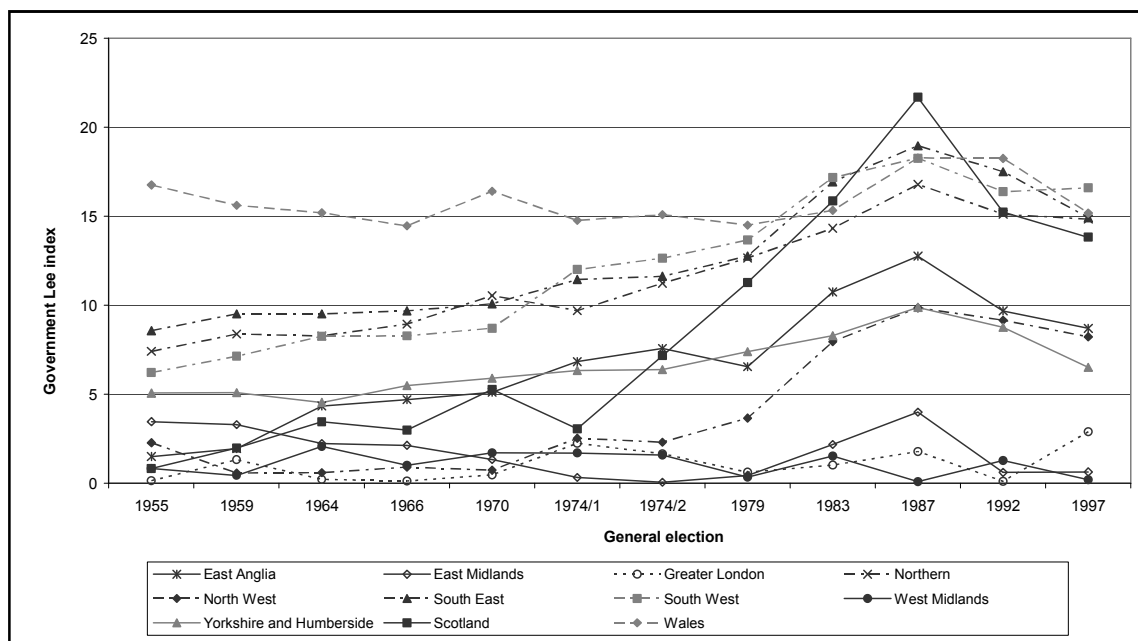
⁷ Some regionalist groups, like for instance the Italian Lega Nord, build wider platforms and draw support from a number of administrative regions.

The issue can be avoided by limiting the analysis to differences in support for the two main contenders for office at the central level. This has the additional benefit of focussing attention on the main grievance that can result from the regionalisation of the vote under a plurality system: the lack of regional support for the party in office. In order to do this the following variation on the Lee index is proposed:

$$\text{Government Lee index} = (|d_{Cr-Cn}| + |d_{Lr-Ln}|) / 2$$

As in the original Lee score, this measure focuses on the absolute difference between the percentage of the vote received at the regional and the national level. Unlike the original, the Government Lee index only considers regional and national levels of support for the Conservatives ($|d_{Cr-Cn}|$) and the Labour Party ($|d_{Lr-Ln}|$), rather than summing the differences for all parties. To take account of this focus, the vote attracted by each party at each level is expressed as a share of the vote for the two main competitors for office. As in the original Lee score, the sum of absolute differences is divided by 2 to avoid double counting.

Figure 3.12 Regional distinctiveness of Conservative and Labour support in English regions, Scotland and Wales (Government Lee index, 1955-1997)



Source: Own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

Again Wales stands out as the only region that has consistently displayed a highly distinctive preference structure in terms of support for the main contenders for office at the central level (see Figure 3.12). In Scotland such a pattern only emerged from mid-1970s onwards. Although the change is particularly dramatic in Scotland, the country is not alone in this trend. The Northern, South East and South West regions already displayed moderately distinctive preference structures in the 1950s and also experienced a marked increase in distinctiveness over the course of the period. Between 1974 and 1987, a form of regional distinctiveness also develops in the North West, East Anglia, and to a lesser extent Yorkshire and Humberside. This trend however tapers off towards the end of the period. At the lower end of the scale, areas like the West and East Midlands and Greater London persistently display voting preferences close to the British average.

3.3.3. The regional response to Conservative pre-dominance

During the 1980s and 90s, the election of four consecutive Conservative governments, on the back of a support base that was increasingly spatially concentrated, definitely received considerable attention in England. However, instead of being seen as a regional issue, the emerging spatial pattern of support for the main contenders for office was primarily framed as a North-South divide (Johnston, et al., 1988). In both Scotland and Wales, regional elites did use the regionalisation of the vote as an instrument to mobilise support for devolution. Much of the academic literature on devolution mirrors this discourse by relating the re-emergence of regionalism during the 1980s and 90s to the long period of Conservative rule in the face of a progressive majority in Scotland and Wales (Brown, et al., 1998; Keating, 2001a; Mitchell, Denver, Pattie, & Bochel, 1998; Pattie, Denver, Mitchell, & Bochel, 1998). While this situation was indeed new in Scotland, Wales faced similar conditions during the 1950s and early 1960. To fully understand the emergence of democratic regionalism in the 1980s, we therefore need to explain why previous periods of Conservative rule did not create an equally strong sense of democratic regionalism in Wales.

In part this difference can be attributed to changes in the level of political polarisation in the British party system. The immediate post war era was characterised by a high level of agreement across political parties on a large number of issues including the mixed economy, the welfare state and regional policy. This political consensus gradually broke down over the course of the 1970s. While Thatcher moved her party decisively to the right, Labour activists succeeded in strengthening the leftwing agenda in their Party (Kavanagh, 1990). As a result of these internal party politics, the political spectrum polarised and policy outputs were much more strongly influenced by which party was in government at the central level. During the long period of Conservative government that followed, the more extreme stance created very real output grievances in Scotland and Wales (see section on economic regionalism). In addition, regional elites in both countries were able to use this polarisation to emphasise the difference between a collectivist, social democratic and liberal 'us' and the English 'other' with very different socio-political values (McCrone, 2001).

Thatcherism thus clearly created conditions that were conducive to the rise of support for devolution in the 1980s and 1990s. However, I would argue that the perception that the incongruence between the country vote and the outcome of the general election was a potentially permanent feature of the political system, rather than a temporary predicament, played a crucial role in converting such generally conducive circumstances into actual support for devolution. This hypothesis is consistent with the waxing and waning of support for devolution during the Thatcher years (see Figure 3.1). During her first term in office, Thatcher arguably pursued some of the most radical elements of her policy agenda in the face of a general recession and worsening economic conditions (Kavanagh, 1990). Nonetheless, support for devolution in Wales continued to fall between 1979 and 1983, while it remained relatively stable in Scotland. Over the course of Thatcher's second term, support for greater autonomy again did not change much in Scotland, although it did tentatively start to rise in Wales.

In both countries, the biggest surge in popular support occurred between 1987 and 1992, despite the fact that Thatcher was replaced as party leader by the more moderate John Major in 1990. This suggests that a growing sense of potentially permanent political non-representation, rather than Thatcherism per se, is at the heart of the emergence of democratic regionalism in both areas.

This growing sense of non-representation can in turn be linked to the emergence of an alternating predominant party system in England. Pinard (1973) rightfully argues that one-party predominance is to an extent a matter of perception. In order to use this concept empirically, we will however have to operationalise the concept into an objective structural feature of party competition. Loosely following Sartori's (2005) suggestions, a predominant party system will in this context be defined as a system in which (i) a single party wins the absolute majority of the seats (ii) for at least three consecutive government periods (iii) on the basis of a percentage of the seats that is at least 10 percentage points higher than that of the second most successful party. On the basis of this definition, the Welsh party system can be characterised as a predominant party system for the entire post war period. With the exception of the 1983 election, Labour has attracted the absolute majority of the Welsh seats with more than 10 percentage points at every election. Therefore the 1983 election can be seen as an unusual event within an otherwise stable party system. In Scotland, early signs of Labour predominance emerged in the 1960s. The success of the SNP in the two 1974 elections temporarily halted this development. The pattern from 1979 onwards however clear points towards Labour predominance. The English party system by contrast remained characterised by two-party competition until 1979. This was followed by nearly two decades of Conservative predominance.

A regional analysis of the changes in voting behaviour within England reveals that this shift in the party system was mainly due to the developments in the Midlands and Greater London. East Anglia, the South East and the South West have been characterised by Conservative predominance throughout the post war period.

The Labour Party traditionally enjoyed a similar predominance in the Northern region, Yorkshire and Humberside, and Wales. From the mid-1960s onwards Labour acquired a comparable position in Scotland and the North West of England. The pattern of relatively balanced electoral competition that characterised the British party system until 1979 was the result of a competitive two-party system in the Midlands and Greater London. From the late 1970s onwards, these areas however also started to display a Conservative predominance. Simple demographics meant that the resulting Conservative predominance across the south of England overshadowed the predominance of Labour in the north. We now know that the competitive two-party system that used to characterise the Midlands and Greater London was not permanently replaced by Conservative predominance in the 1980s. But especially without the benefit of this knowledge, this change in voting patterns clearly created the potential for territorially-concentrated grievances in the areas characterised by Labour predominance.

Within England, the issues of political non-representation caused by the First-Past-The-Post system in the context of parallel predominant party systems and significant levels of third party voting failed to capture the public imagination. Quantitative evidence of the level of support for electoral reform during the long period of Conservative rule is limited. The evidence that is available suggests that the wording of the question has an important effect on the level of support that is recorded for the various options (Dunleavy, Margetts, & Weir, 1993; Kellner, 1992; Weir, 1992). Furthermore, qualitative research shows that voters neither cared much nor indeed had a great understanding of voting systems and their ultimate effects on the distribution of seats (Farrell & and Gallagher, 1999). Partially this can be linked to the diversity of views amongst political elites. While the Conservatives favoured the status quo, the Liberals supported a shift towards the single transferable vote system.

The Labour Party on the other hand remained divided between a traditionalist bloc that continued to support the single member plurality system, moderate reformers championing a supplementary vote system and modernisers in favour of the additional member system (Norris, 1995). The persistence of elite disagreement, coupled with the myriad of complex alternatives developed by politicians and academics alike, did not aid the mobilisation of the issue into strong popular support for electoral reform.

In Scotland and Wales, regionalist elites incorporated the emergence of parallel party systems into their discourse much more successfully. Here too complex new voting systems were suggested, but the issue was primarily mobilised through the more emotive discourses on regional identity and differences in values (R. Davies, 1999; Keating, 2001a; Osmond, 1995). Although survey evidence tend to suggest that values do indeed differ from region to region, the differences are usually found to be too small to adequately explain the large disparities in voting behaviour (Curtice, 1988, 1992, 1996). This is especially true if the results are corrected for regional variation in socio-structural factors (Brown, et al., 1998; Miller, Timpson, & Lessnoff, 1996). Regardless of the lack of empirical evidence, the conceptualisation of divergent regional voting patterns as evidence of distinctive norms and values clearly resonated with voters.

Table 3.7 Grievances with England's dominant position in the electoral system and preferences for regional autonomy (1997)

<i>Scotland</i>			
	Preferred system of governance by response to Q31: "Has it ever made you angry or not that it is English voters who mainly decide who runs Scotland?"		
	Yes very angry	Yes somewhat angry	No not angry
Independent	54%	29%	12%
Devolution with fiscal powers	35%	40%	28%
Devolution without fiscal powers	5%	15%	10%
No elected body	5%	16%	50%
N	271	215	157
Correlation	.483**		
<i>Wales</i>			
	Preferred system of governance by response to Q31: "Has it ever made you angry or not that it is English voters who mainly decide who runs Wales?"		
	Yes very angry	Yes somewhat angry	No not angry
Independent	30%	16%	7%
Devolution with fiscal powers	28%	28%	12%
Devolution without fiscal powers	26%	35%	25%
No elected body	15%	21%	56%
N	123	147	365
Correlation	.407**		

Source: own elaboration based on Jowell, Heath, & Curtice (1998). ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

The available survey evidence seems to concur with the suggestion that the emergence of conflicting dominant party systems played an important role in creating popular demands for greater regional autonomy. The 1997 Scottish and Welsh Referendum studies asked respondents whether it ever made them angry that it is English voters who mainly decide who runs Scotland or Wales. As Table 3.7 shows, the response to this question was strongly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy in both countries.

Those who did at some point feel very or somewhat angry about England's dominant position were significantly more likely to support devolution or independence than their counterparts who did not feel aggrieved by this. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine to what extent this grievance was also present during the 1970s and 80s, as the question was only introduced in the context of the 1997 referendum surveys. The lack of attention to this grievance in the public debate during this period however suggests that similar concerns were not highly salient at that time.

3.4.Conclusion

This chapter looked at the origins of waxing and waning of popular support for greater regional autonomy. It challenged the emphasis traditionally placed on region-specific factors, by placing demands for greater autonomy in the context of wider challenges to the legitimacy of the central system. By acknowledging that the emergence of demands for devolution or even full independence are region-specific responses to grievances that are not necessarily regional in nature, we gain a better understanding of the true origins of such demands. By teasing out the different aspects of legitimacy at both the central and the regional level, this chapter developed a clear typology of the sources of regionalism. The use of this typology enables us to situate regionalism within wider trends and distinguish between the types of demands that emerge in different regions at different points in time. Applying this theoretical framework to the British case, draws attention to a number of factors that have played a role in the waxing and waning of support for regional autonomy. Due to the focus on the regional level, many of these factors have been underemphasised or misinterpreted in much of the current literature.

As most of the studies in this field, this chapter started by looking at identity-based sources of regionalism. It is undisputedly true that regionalist movements are strongly concentrated in regions with a historically grounded sense of identity at that scale. The history of identity formation in the UK, as well as the more contemporary survey evidence, however shows that we should resist the temptation to conceptualise demands for greater autonomy as a simple re-assertion of pre-existing identities.

The coexistence of multiple scales of belonging has been a reality for many in Britain since the emergence of modern nationalism in the nineteenth century. Throughout the history of Britain the degree to which these different spatial identities have been seen as conflicting has waxed and waned. Partially, this can be linked to independent changes in feelings of identity. As discussed, British identity in particular has been profoundly challenged in the post war period. This creates opportunities for the re-assertion of country or regional senses of belonging. Especially since country identities also faced important challenges during the post-war period, the direct changes in feelings of belonging alone are however not sufficient to explain the trends in support for devolution.

Through a reanalysis of the available survey evidence, it was shown that the direct effect of identity on support for devolution was much more limited than the strong concentration of regionalist movements in identity-rich regions would suggest. This invites a re-conceptualisation of the role of identity in the emergence of popular support for devolution. What constitutes 'us' and the 'other' is not a primordial given. The degree to which a regional identity acquires political expression depends instead on the context within which it takes on meaning. A spatial identity only legitimises stronger autonomy at that level if the needs and wants of the regional 'us' are perceived as, at least in some way, irreconcilable or at odds with the needs and wants of the central 'other', and a devolved system is believed to allow for a more satisfactory result. In the absence of widespread grievances with the British identity per se, regional feelings of belonging play a role in mobilising other legitimacy grievances along territorial lines, but it does not independently create calls for more autonomy.

In this conceptualisation, the concentration of regionalist movements is at least partially linked to the formal and informal mobilisation structures that tend to accompany historically-grounded spatial identities. In a world dominated by the concept of nation-states, the existence of a historically-grounded and widely felt identity helps to establish a sense of polity. In addition, a history of statehood in particular frequently leaves a physical footprint in the form of formal institutions.

Regional level institutions, such as religious organisations, offices of state, political parties and even quangos, clearly aided the mobilisation of more general grievances along territorial lines in Scotland and Wales. Without the distinctive identity and history of these areas, most of these mobilising structures would not have existed. Experiences in the English regions show that it is difficult to create a coherent regional agenda in the absence of such institutions.

Moving on to the trends that motivated the political re-assertion of the regional identity in Scotland and Wales, the analysis shows that such regionalism was for the most part a response to general grievances with the centre. In the 1960s and 70s, the general worsening of the economic situation, alongside the re-emergence of the north-south divide created general as well as spatially-concentrated grievances with the centre. Especially in the context of central government policies that were widely seen to prioritise the needs of the South over the plight of the ailing North, this provided elites in the North with ample opportunity for popular mobilisation. A comparison between Scotland, Wales and the regions in the North of England primarily exposed the importance of formal and informal mobilisation structures in framing issues and mobilising popular support.

In much of England, political elites either did not perceive the issues as regional or were unable to agree on the appropriate course of action for the region. In Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales, the existence of regionalist parties and institutions like the Scottish and Welsh Offices encouraged a regional interpretation of issues that were arguably related more generally to the industrial structure of much of the north of Britain. In Scotland, the discovery of North Sea oil and the related increased legitimacy of the region as a semi-autonomous economic unit resulted in a sudden rise in the potential for economic regionalism. In Wales, the lack of a similar improvement in the economic fundamentals of the country largely prevented the mobilisation of economic grievances with the centre along regionalist lines.

The framework presented in this chapter suggests that this difference in the perceived output-oriented legitimacy of the region was the primary cause of the different trends in popular support for greater autonomy in the two countries at that time.

Across the UK, the mounting economic grievances were accompanied by a growing discontent with the performance of the main contenders for office. The resulting rise in third party voting benefitted the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, the rise in SNP support coincides with a similarly strong rise in support for greater autonomy. This suggests that the discontent with the way central governments of different political persuasions handled the pressing social-economic challenges increased support for greater autonomy in this country. In Wales, it is questionable whether the rise of Plaid Cymru support in the 1960s and 70s demarked a real increase in support for greater regional autonomy. Closer inspection of the available evidence suggests that the rapid demise in the influence of social class on voting behaviour instead exposed a pre-existing core of voters who supported greater autonomy for Wales.

The failed devolution referendums in 1979 were accompanied by a marked decline in support for devolution and independence in both countries. The framework advanced in this thesis suggests that this is linked to a decline in the relative legitimacy of the region, following this very public victory of the Unionist camp. The subsequent re-emergence of politicised regionalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s has been widely related to the lack of support for consecutive Conservative Governments in Scotland and Wales. The analysis in this chapter confirmed that the waxing of popular support for greater autonomy during this period should be primarily related to democratic rather than economic grievances. However, it presented a subtle but significant reformulation of the origins of this perceived democratic deficit. While the existing literature focuses primarily on the nature of Thatcherism, this chapter has argued that the changes in the party system in England may have been equally if not more significant

During the immediate post war period the British Party system could be seen as a textbook example of a competitive two-party system. At the regional level, distinct patterns of predominance could already be discerned. The existence of more balanced systems in populous areas like the Midlands and Greater London however prevented the overall predominance of either of the two main contenders for office. This changed from the late 1970s onwards, with the emergence of Conservative predominance in these areas. The voting patterns from 1997 onwards suggest that these regions developed alternating predominant party systems. Without the benefit of hindsight, this trend however suggested that overall Conservative predominance could be a permanent feature of the British Party System. Particularly in Scotland, the timing of the rise of support for devolution suggests that this general trend, rather than Thatcherism per se, created fertile soil for the emergence of democratic regionalism.

Similarly the timing of the rise in popular support for greater autonomy suggests that economic regionalism played a secondary role at this point in time. In both Scotland and Wales, the rise in support for devolution by and large coincides with a period when both countries were converging to the national average in terms of claimant rates. In Wales, the relative improvements in claimant rates were combined with persistently high male inactivity rates and continued relative deprivation in terms of GPD per capita. In Scotland on the other hand, male inactivity rates were much more moderate. In addition, the country experienced a distinct improvement in terms of relative GDP per head during this period. As both countries displayed similar increases in support for devolution during this time, it would therefore be hard to argue that this trend was primarily based on economic factors.

Having re-examined the sources of regionalism in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the next chapter will analyse under which circumstances popular support for greater regional autonomy is likely to influence the formal policy positions of central level parties.

4. The incentives towards regionalist accommodation (1945-1997)

The previous chapter examined the origins of the waxing and waning of popular support for greater regional autonomy in mainland Britain between 1945 and 1997. This chapter will investigate under which circumstances such regionally-concentrated preferences for devolution and secession influence the policy positions of political parties at the central level. In particular, it will focus on the preferences of the two main contenders for office at the central level; the Labour Party and its Conservative counterpart. As the next chapter will examine in more detail, one of these two parties has been the primary agenda setter within the British system throughout the period under consideration here. As a result, uncovering the incentives faced by these collective actors is crucial to further our understanding of the pathways towards regionalist accommodation in pre-devolution mainland Britain.

This chapter will start by briefly outlining the formal policy positions of the two main contenders for office at the central level during the period under consideration here. This will reveal that the response of Labour and the Conservative Party to the regionalist revival in the 1960s and 1970s differed markedly from the pattern of regionalist accommodation during the 1980s and 90s. Using the typology of outcome and act-based incentives developed in chapter 2, this chapter seeks to further our understanding of this shift in the patterns of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. Specifically it will be argued that the recent re-emergence of the territorial dimension, coupled with the considerable degree of internal conflict regarding the appropriate response to this trend, awarded a relatively high level of policy autonomy to the party leadership in the 1970s. In the context of exceptionally tight electoral competition at the central level, this in turn induced both party leaders to partially accommodate regionalist demands despite significant internal opposition to this policy. Over the course of the 1980s and 90s, the devolution issue was gradually absorbed within the British party system.

I argue that this rise in party cohesion along the territorial dimension in turn limited the ability of party leaders to radically change the party position in response to personal preferences or changes in external incentives.

4.1. The formal policy positions of the main contenders for office.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, the regional problem seemed to have all but disappeared in mainland Britain. When the home rule issue did re-emerge, the response of the main contenders for office to these developments was initially focussed on addressing such concerns within the existing system of government (Conservative Party, 1955, 1959, 1964, 1966). (Labour Party, 1955, 1959, 1964, 1966). As regionalist pressures continued to build, the mainstream parties started to adjust their policy platforms. The Conservative Party under Edward Heath was the first to respond. Following the 1968 declaration of Perth, the 1970 election manifesto stated that a Conservative government would place before Parliament proposals for a Scottish Convention sitting in Edinburgh (Conservative Party, 1970). Devolution to Wales on the other hand was not mentioned. Meanwhile, the 1970 Labour manifesto seemed to make a stronger commitment to devolution in Wales than in Scotland. Although the prospect of a regional Parliament was strongly rejected in both cases, the manifesto stated that “evidence given by the Labour Party to the Commission on the Constitution includes plans for an elected council for Wales with extended powers” (Labour Party, 1970). For Scotland, no such commitments were included.

From the 1970s onwards, popular support for greater autonomy continued to wax and wane in both Scotland and Wales (see chapter 3). Likewise the main contenders for office at the central level have made several changes to their stance on devolution. These changes are however not mere reflections of the shifts in popular opinion in Scotland and Wales. In order to visualise the congruence between the party positions and popular preferences, Figure 4.1 graphically displays both the distribution of popular preferences and the perceived policy positions of the main contenders for office for the years where survey evidence is available.

Where survey evidence on perceived party positions is not available, the position of the political parties has been based on the commitments in the election manifesto. From these visualisations it is clear that the main contenders for office at the central level displayed varying degrees of responsiveness to country-level demands for greater autonomy at different points in time.

Despite early signs of accommodation both the Labour Party and the Conservatives failed to mention the devolution issue in their February 1974 general election manifestos (Conservative Party, 1974a; Labour Party, 1974 February). In October of the same year, the issue did feature much more prominently. Just prior to the October election of the same year, the Labour Government published the white paper, "Democracy and Devolution: proposals for Scotland and Wales" (HMSO 1974), which outlined the government's plans for devolution to both countries. In the subsequent general election manifesto, Labour reiterated its intentions to create an elected assembly in both Scotland and Wales (Labour Party, 1974 October). The Conservative Party also made a commitment to creating an elected assembly in Scotland. With respect to Wales, it merely proposed to increase the powers of existing institutions like the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Council (Conservative Party, 1974b). Despite the similarity in manifesto commitments with respect to Scotland, Labour was perceived to be more accommodating of Scottish demands than the Conservative Party at the time. In Wales, where manifesto commitments were substantially different, Labour was correctly perceived as more accommodating to Welsh demands than the Conservatives.

Following the 1979 devolution referendums, Labour withdrew its commitment to Welsh devolution. With respect to Scotland, the election manifesto stated that "a majority voted for devolution", and the Party would therefore remain committed to creating an elected Scottish Assembly (Labour Party, 1979). In both countries these positions were in line with popular opinion. The Conservative Party manifesto stated its commitment to "discussions about the future government of Scotland, and ... improved parliamentary control of administration in Wales" (Conservative Party, 1979).

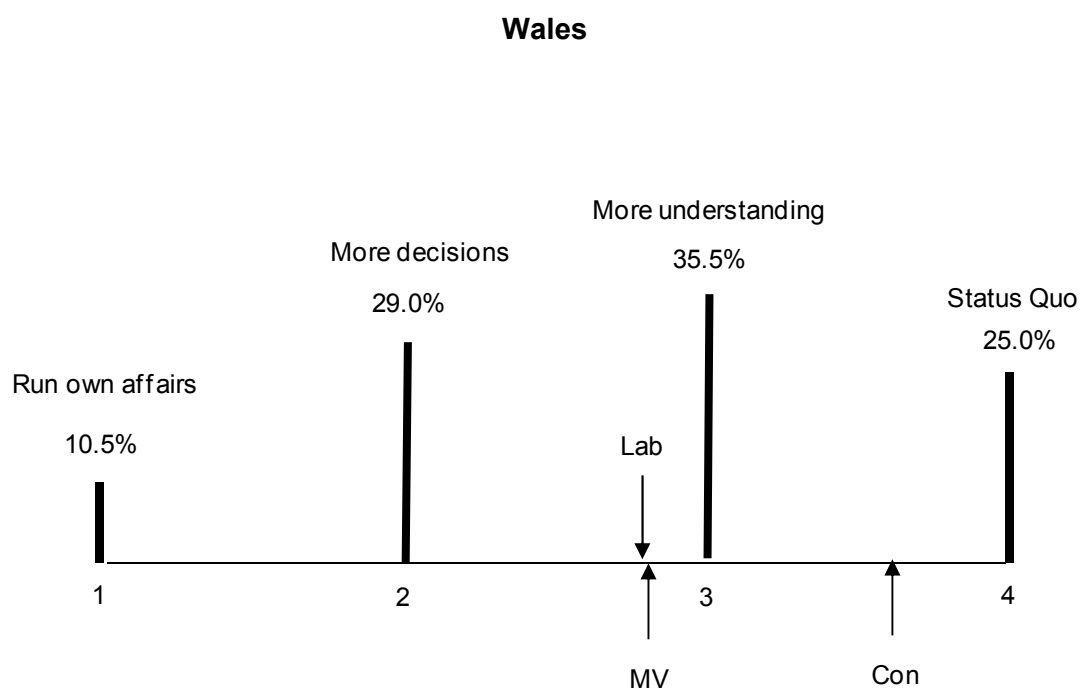
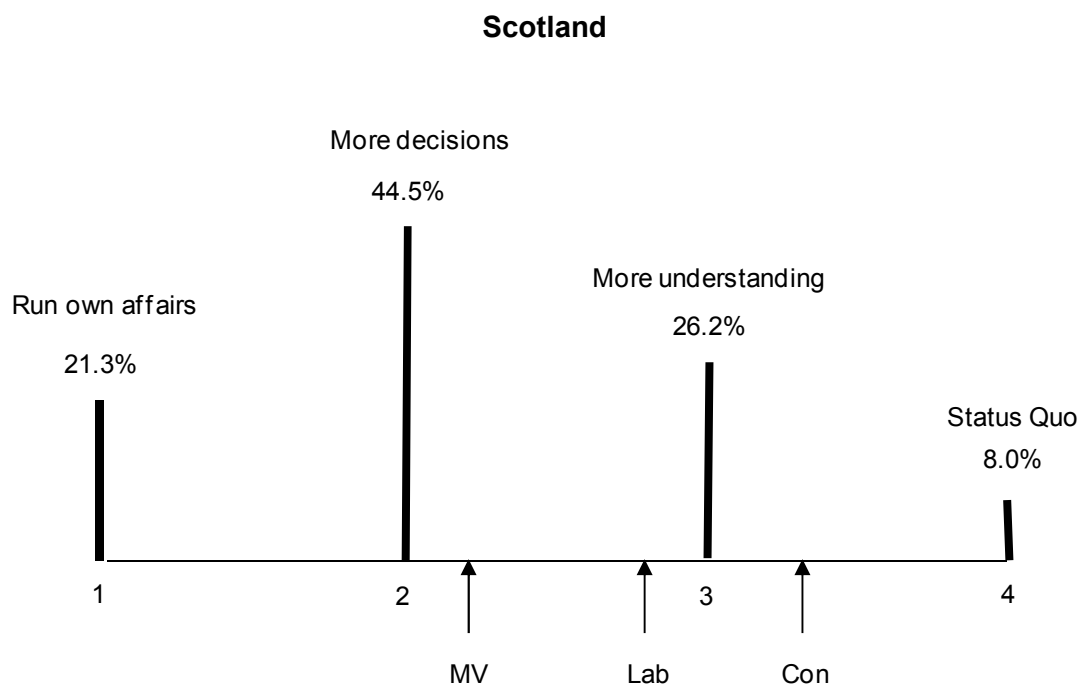
Though this was in line with popular opinion in Wales, it fell well short of the average voter position in Scotland.

In the 1980s, the Conservative election manifestos made no reference to devolution to either Scotland or Wales (Conservative Party, 1983, 1987). Within the Labour Party, policies for Wales and Scotland remained differentiated. Both in 1983 and 1987, the Party devoted an entire section to its commitment to creating a directly elected Scottish Assembly (Labour Party, 1983, 1987). In 1983, Wales did not receive a special mention, while the 1987 manifesto focussed on small concessions within the existing government system. Again Labour's position was largely in line with popular opinion in both Scotland and Wales, while the Conservatives were largely unresponsive to Scottish demands in particular.

In the 1990s, the official commitments of the two main contenders for office polarised more clearly. In its 1992 manifesto (1992), Labour made a clear commitment to the immediate establishment of an elected Parliament in Scotland and an elected Assembly for Wales. The Conservative Party on the other hand openly stated its support for the Union and its intention to oppose any form of devolution to Scotland or Wales (Conservative Party, 1992). By that time, devolution or full independence was supported by the vast majority of Scottish voters and about half of the Welsh electorate. While the Conservative position enjoyed considerable support in Wales, only about a quarter of Scottish voters supported the preservation of the status quo. By 1997, popular opinion in both countries shifted even more resolutely towards greater autonomy. Again the Conservatives failed to respond to these trends, while the Labour's position closely resembled the position of the average voter in both countries (Conservative Party, 1997; Labour Party, 1997).

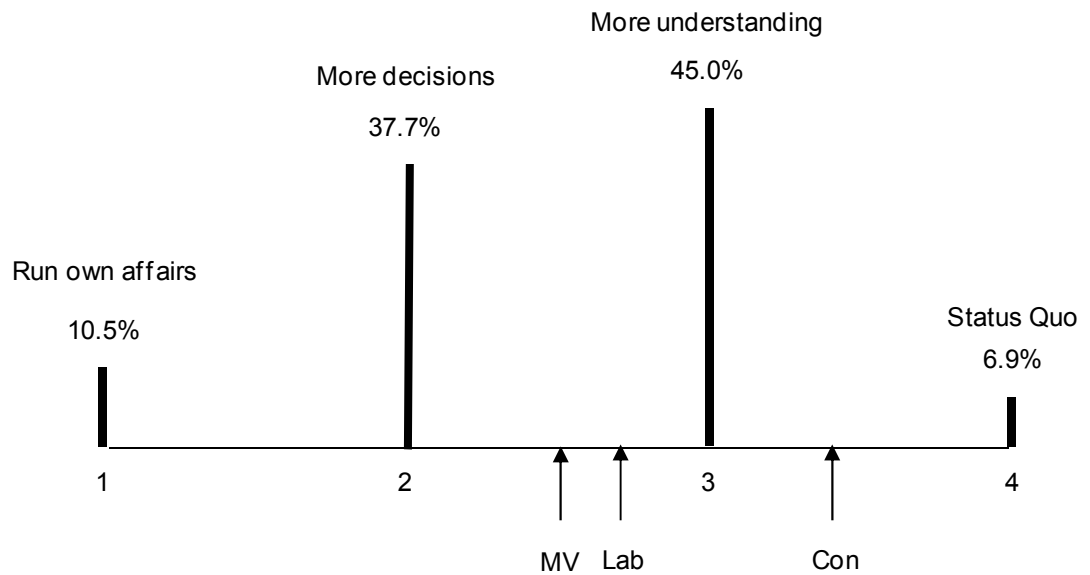
Figure 4.1 Popular preferences and party positions with regards to Scottish and Welsh autonomy (1974-1997)

1974

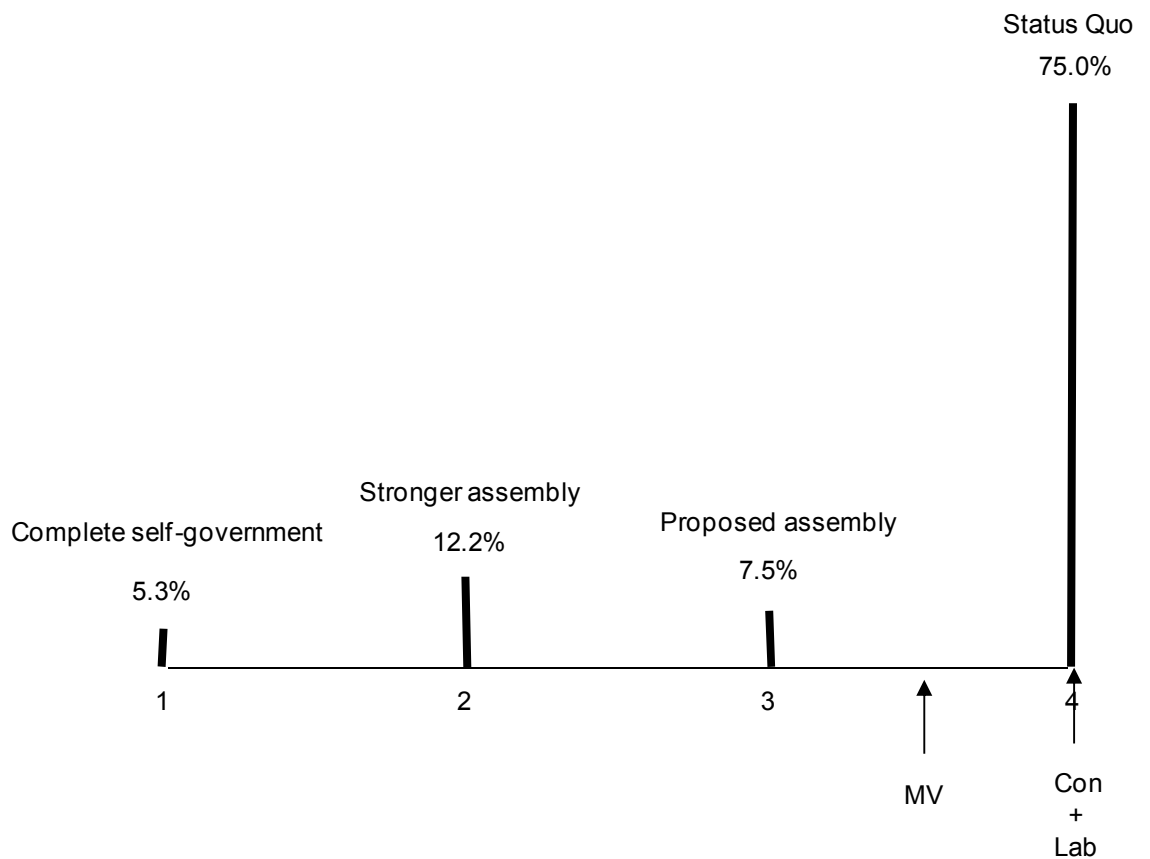


1979

Scotland

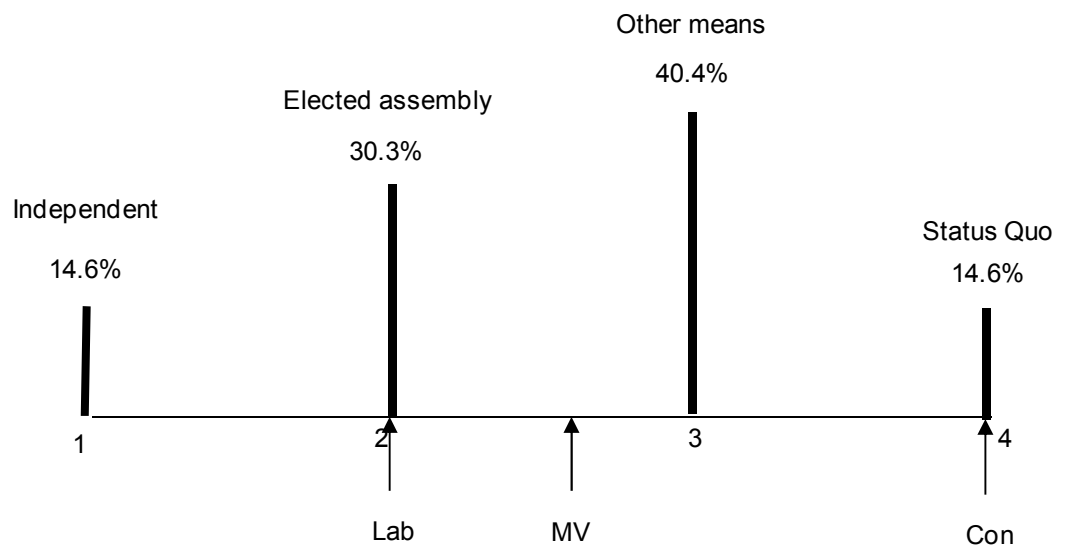


Wales

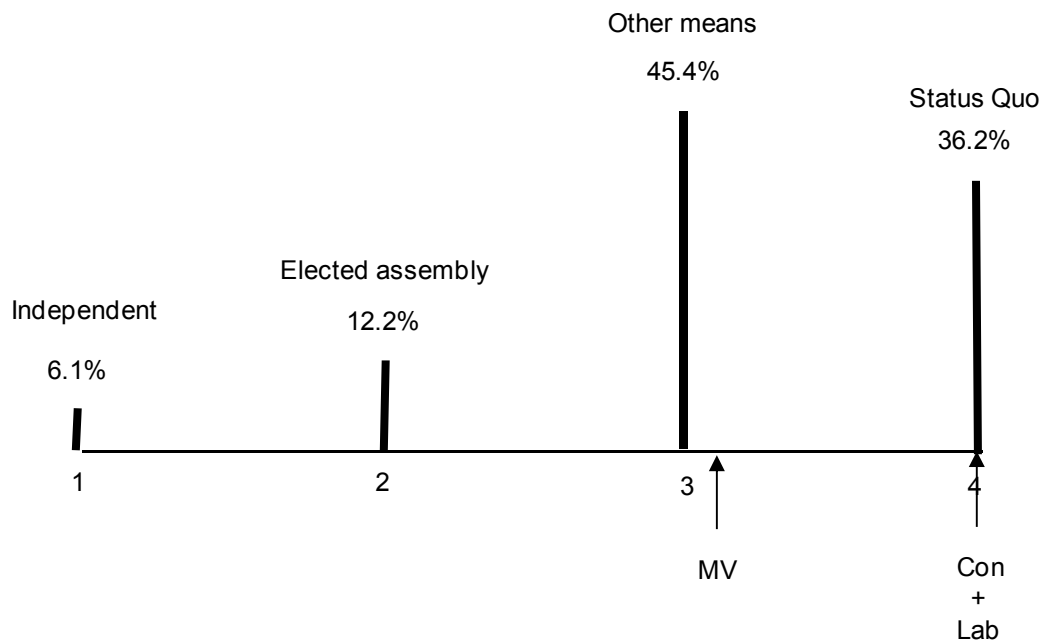


1983

Scotland

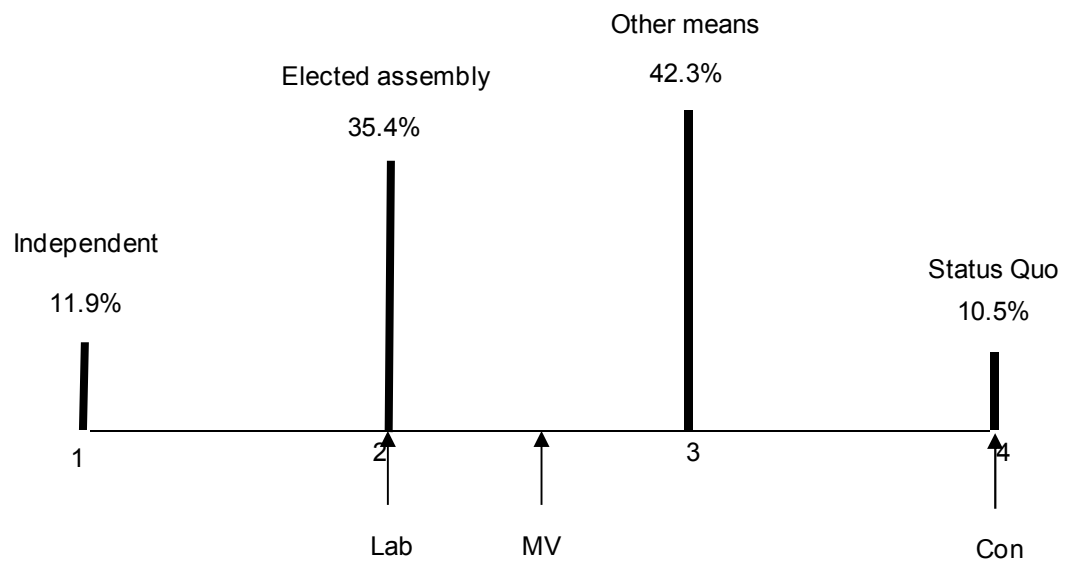


Wales

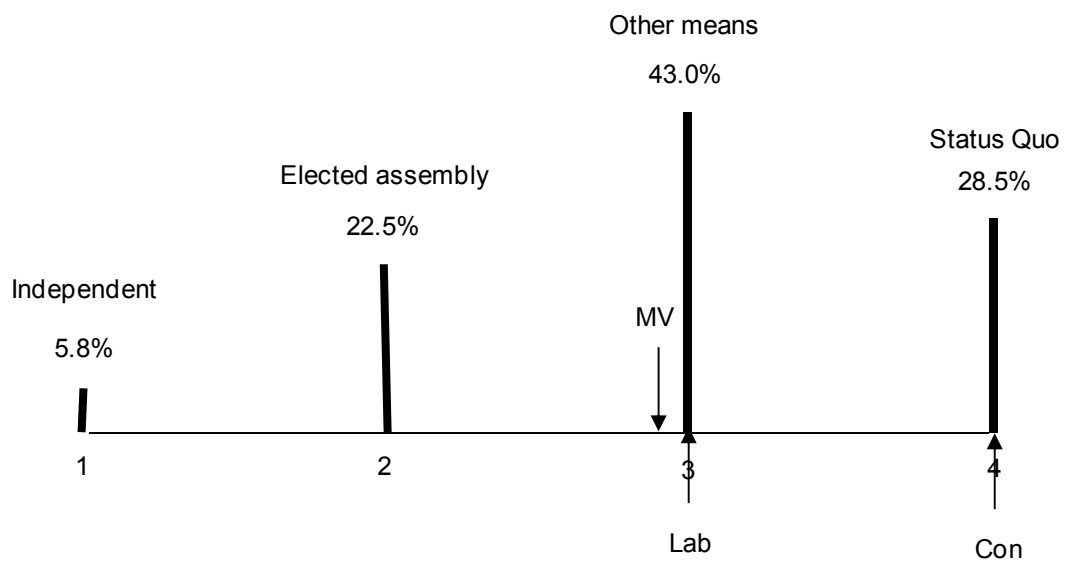


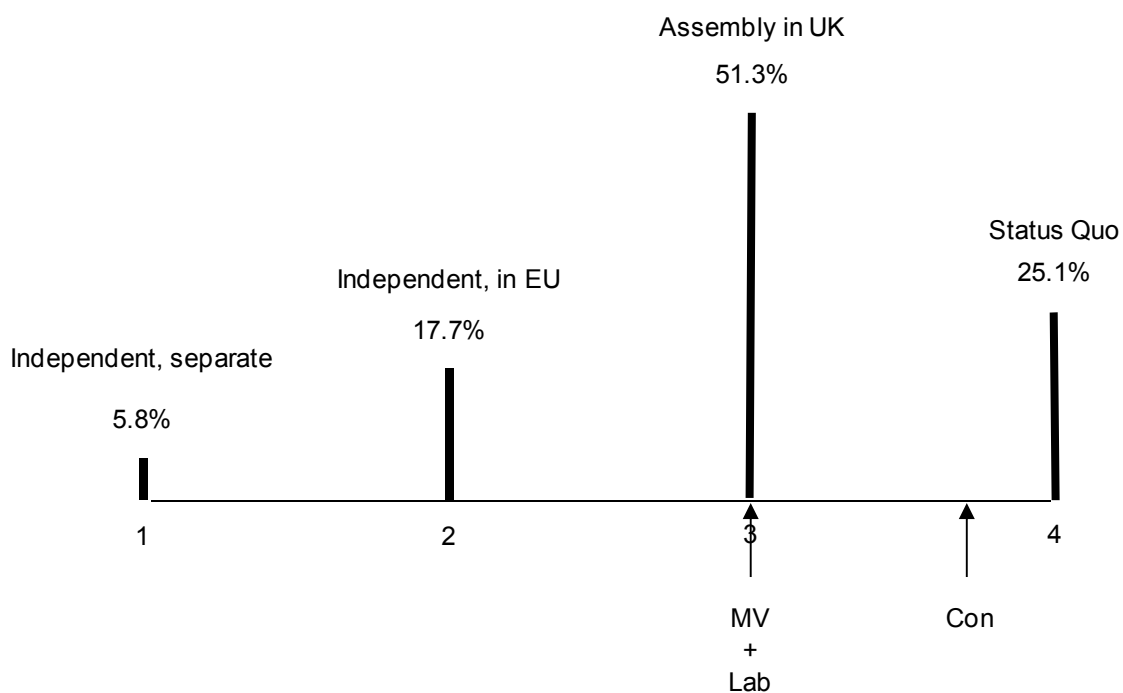
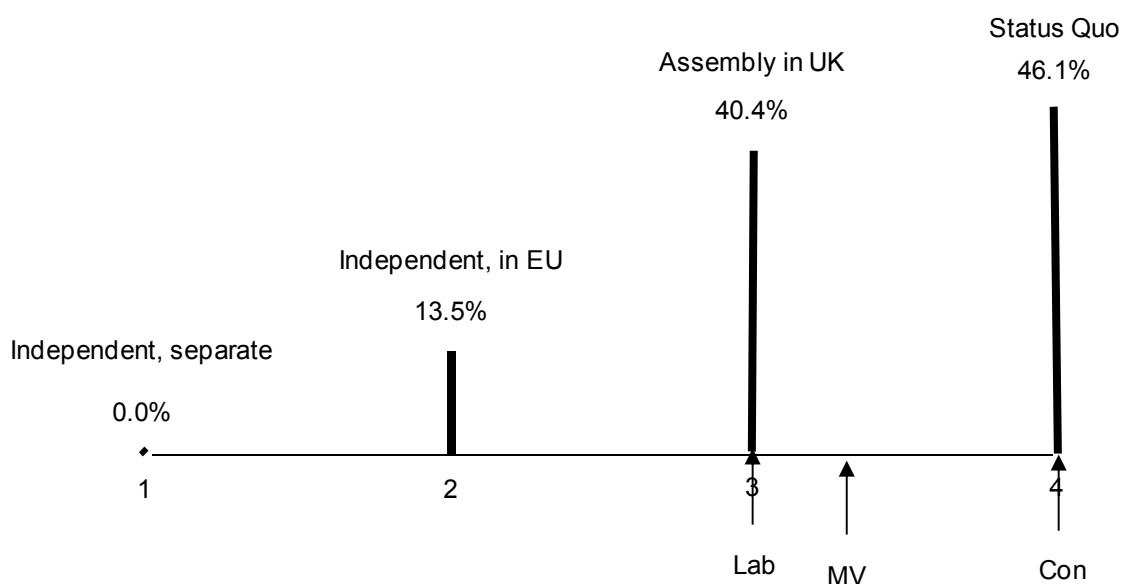
1987

Scotland

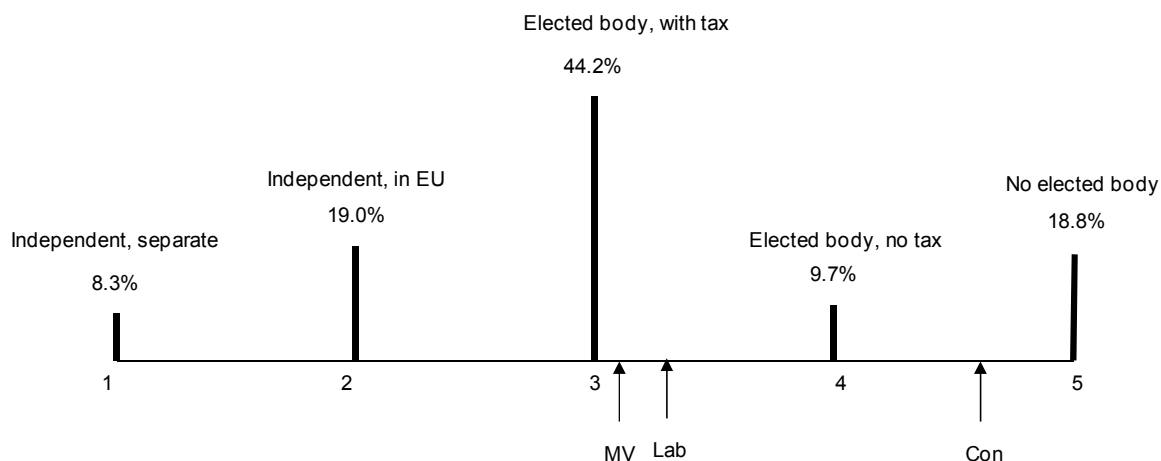


Wales

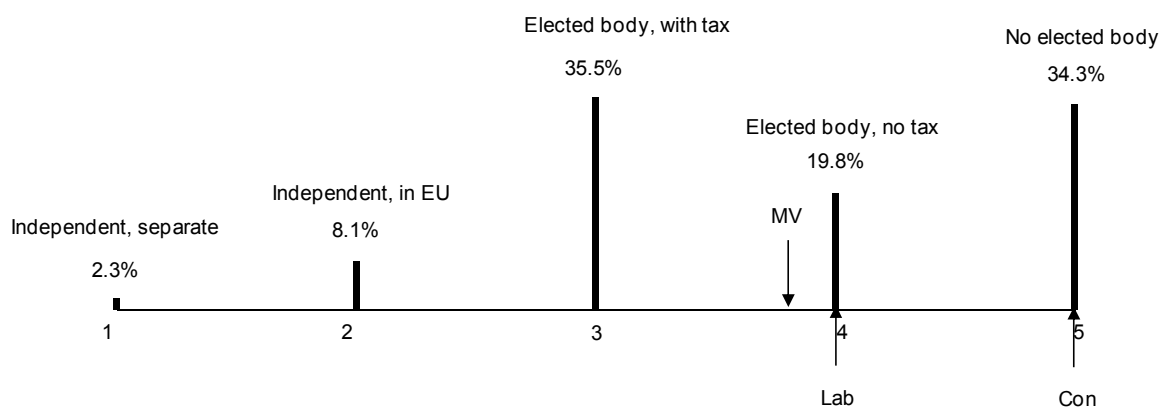


Scotland**Wales**

Scotland



Wales



Sources: own elaboration based on Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Brand & Mitchell (1994), Crewe, et al. (1977a, 1977b), Heath, et al. (1983), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Heath, et al. (1999), McCrone, et al. (1999) and Miller & Brand (1981). MV indicates the mean voter position based on the survey evidence.

The general picture that emerges from this brief overview is that both of the main contenders for office were initially keen to be seen to accommodate Scottish demands for greater autonomy. In other words, the act of publicly supporting asymmetric devolution to Scotland was seen as beneficial by both (Blau, 2008). As will be discussed, the extent to which this act reflects a true preference for the outcome of devolution is more questionable. With regards to Wales, party positions were strongly differentiated; while the Labour Party appeared relatively responsive to Welsh demands, the Conservative Party openly opposed devolution for Wales. From the late 1970s onwards, the extent to which the policy positions of the two main contenders for office reflected popular opinion in Scotland and Wales started to diverge more markedly. While the formal position of the Labour Party continued to broadly concur with popular preferences in both Scotland and Wales, its Conservative counterpart seemed increasingly out of touch with popular opinion in both countries. The remainder of this chapter will examine the origins of the distinctive patterns of regionalist accommodation during these two periods.

4.2. Regionalist accommodation during the 1970s

As noted, the re-emergence of the regional problem in the 1960s and 70s provoked a response from both of the main contenders for office at that time. While the Conservative Party was quick off the mark, it only chose to accommodate Scottish demands for greater autonomy. While the Labour Party did not formally change its position until after the first 1974 election, its proposals included commitments to greater regional autonomy for both Scotland and Wales. Much of the existing literature on devolution assumes that the accommodation of regionalist demands in the 1970s was primarily motivated by electoral incentives. In making this argument it however devotes little attention to the fact that Scottish and Welsh electorates are but a relatively small minority within the British polity. This section will refine the existing explanations by arguing that the spatial concentration of regionalist demands and the differences in issue salience amongst pro and anti-devolution voters played an important role in shaping the electoral act-based incentives faced by central level parties.

In addition, it will seek to show that the relatively recent re-emergence of the regional problem, coupled with the lack of internal cohesion on the issue, awarded the party leadership a high degree of policy autonomy in this area.

4.2.1. The role of electoral act-based incentives

Much of literature on British devolution tends to focus upon regional claims and realities, rather than the constellation of preferences in the wider polity. Within the resulting narratives, the central government is frequently presented as a coercive force that is very reluctant to respond to the legitimate demands of stateless nations within its territory (Bulpitt, 1983). When central level actors do offer to devolve powers and resources to the regional level, this is usually assumed to be a half-hearted ideological concession motivated by electoral considerations (for example see Keating, 2001b; Keating & Bleiman, 1979; Mitchell, 1990). By approaching the issue from a state-wide perspective, this study aims to radically change the entry point of the enquiry. This in turn allows us to develop and challenge the assumptions that underlie many of the existing discourses on regionalist accommodation during the 1970s and beyond.

Scotland and Wales only represent around 15 per cent of the British population and 17 percent of the seats at Westminster. As a result, the asymmetric devolution offered by both the Labour Party and the Conservatives cannot reflect the median voter position within the wider polity, unless support for regionalist accommodation amongst English voters is substantial. Unfortunately, we have no survey data on English preferences with regards to asymmetric devolution during the early and mid-1970s. English respondents were however quizzed on their views on Scottish and Welsh devolution in the 1979 election survey. The results suggest that the overwhelming majority of English voters favoured the status quo or moderate changes within the current government system over devolution or independence for Scotland and Wales at that time (see Table 4.1). To what extent these results can be taken as a proxy for popular opinion at the time when the main contenders for office first introduced their manifesto commitments to asymmetric devolution is questionable.

In Scotland and Wales, the failed 1979 devolution referendums clearly diminished popular support for devolution (see chapter 3). If we assume that these events had a similarly strong effect on popular opinion in England, it still seems highly unlikely that asymmetric devolution to either Scotland or Wales enjoyed majority support amongst English voters during the early and mid-1970s.

Table 4.1 Share of the English voters who favoured devolution or independence for Scotland and Wales (1979)

	<i>All</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Labour</i>
Scotland	19-23%	13-19%	23-26%
Wales	14-18%	10-15%	15-23%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Crewe, et al. (1981). 95% confidence interval.

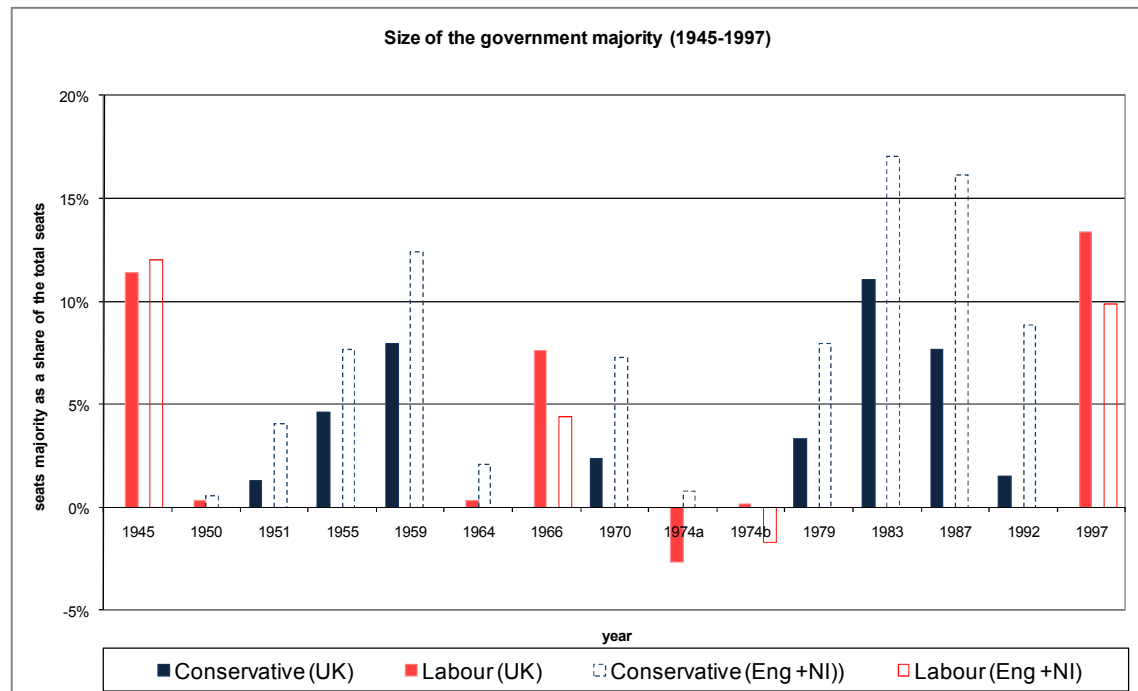
The available survey evidence thus suggests that the willingness of both of the main contenders for office to partially accommodate regionalist demands did not reflect the preferences of the English electorate at that time. There are however strong indications that differences in issue salience limited the electoral losses associated with offering asymmetric devolution. During the 1960s and 70s, the lack of autonomy under the existing centralised system clearly gained in salience in Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales (see chapter 3). By contrast, the public response to these trends in England remained fairly muted. This was exemplified by the 1979 devolution referendums. During the parliamentary debates a number of attempts were made to subject the 1979 Scotland and Wales Bills to a UK-wide referendum (see chapter 5). However, the eventual decision to limit public consultation to the directly affected regional electorates did not provoke much of a public reaction in England.

This suggests that, although the majority of the English public did not support the moderate forms of devolution on offer to Scotland and Wales, the issue was not highly salient for most.

Especially in the context of growing economic woes and unemployment (see chapter 3), it therefore seems unlikely that a significant share of English voters would have been inclined to prioritise devolution above bread-and-butter issues like the management of the economy or the future of the welfare system. As noted in chapter 2, accommodating the views of a minority for whom an issue is highly salient may under such circumstances be a seat-maximising strategy, even if this position does not enjoy majority support within the wider electorate (Besley & Coate, 2000). The observable implication of this hypothesis would be that the patterns of regionalist accommodation matched the anticipated electoral benefits. Specifically, we would expect to find that both parties faced strong act-based incentives to accommodate Scottish demands, while the Labour Party stood to gain substantially more from accommodating Welsh demands than its Conservative counterpart.

The electoral geography of the late 1960s and early 1970s is broadly in line with these predictions. Scottish and Welsh seats only accounted for around 17 percent of all Westminster seats during the period under consideration. In addition, the single-member plurality system tends to produce relatively comfortable single-party majorities at the central level. As a result, Scottish and Welsh seats are only pivotal to the outcome of the general election when mainstream competition in England is particularly fierce. Figure 4.2 plots the outcomes of the general election between 1945 and 1997 and contrasts this with the hypothetical results in England and Northern Ireland alone. This shows that in 1964 and February 1974, a different party would have won the election if Scottish and Welsh seats had not been included. In October 1974, the same party would have won the largest share of the seats, but it would not have enjoyed an overall parliamentary majority.

Figure 4.2 Size of the government majority with and without Scottish and Welsh seats (1945-1997)



Source: own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

Taken together, this suggests that the main contenders for office indeed faced unusually strong electoral incentives to consider Scottish and Welsh preferences during the 1960s and 70s. Furthermore, it can be argued that accommodating spatial-concentrated preferences for greater autonomy represented a relatively efficient way of increasing a party's seat share at that time. Plurality electoral systems, like the one in the UK, are generally perceived to prioritise the effectiveness of government over minority representation (Norris, 1997). The way in which the 'first-past-the-post' system translates votes into seats however means that the potential seat gains associated with accommodating spatially-concentrated minority views are likely to be considerably larger than those related to addressing minority concerns without a spatial component.

To illustrate this point, Table 4.2 lists the share of the vote and the seats won by each of the three main central parties and the SNP and Plaid Cymru between 1945 and 1997. Due to the spatial concentration of their electoral base, the share of the UK vote attracted by the nationalist parties remained relatively limited throughout the period. In addition, the plurality system clearly penalises smaller parties.

As a result the share of the Westminster seats awarded to the SNP and Plaid Cymru consistently fell well below the share of the UK vote attracted by these parties. From the mid-1970s onwards, the nationalist seats to votes ratio however compares very favourably with the ratio achieved by their Liberal counterparts. Considering that the Liberals consistently attracted a much larger share of the UK vote, this strongly illustrates that parties addressing spatially-concentrated minority preferences can more easily challenge the dominant position of the two main contenders for office than third parties servicing spatially heterogeneous minority views.

Table 4.2 Translation of votes into seats under the UK plurality system (1945-2005)

	Share of vote (%)				Seats won				Seat-to-Votes Ratio			
	<i>Con</i>	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Lib</i>	<i>PC/ SNP</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Lib</i>	<i>PC/ SNP</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Lib</i>	<i>PC/ SNP</i>
1945	39.7	47.7	9.0	0.2	210	393	12	0	0.83	1.29	0.21	0.00
1950	43.3	46.1	9.1	0.1	297	315	9	0	1.10	1.09	0.16	0.00
1951	48.0	48.8	2.6	0.1	321	295	6	0	1.07	0.97	0.37	0.00
1955	49.6	46.4	2.7	0.2	344	277	6	0	1.10	0.95	0.35	0.00
1959	49.4	43.8	5.9	0.4	365	258	6	0	1.17	0.93	0.16	0.00
1964	43.3	44.1	11.2	0.5	303	317	9	0	1.11	1.14	0.13	0.00
1966	41.9	47.9	8.5	0.7	253	363	12	0	0.96	1.20	0.22	0.00
1970	46.4	43.0	7.5	1.7	330	287	6	1	1.13	1.06	0.13	0.09
1974a	37.8	37.2	19.3	2.6	297	301	14	9	1.24	1.27	0.11	0.55
1974b	35.7	39.3	18.3	3.4	276	319	13	14	1.22	1.28	0.11	0.65
1979	43.9	36.9	13.8	2.0	339	268	11	4	1.22	1.14	0.13	0.31
1983	42.3	27.6	25.4	1.5	397	209	23	4	1.44	1.16	0.14	0.41
1987	42.2	30.8	22.6	1.7	375	229	22	6	1.37	1.14	0.15	0.54
1992	41.9	34.4	17.8	2.3	336	271	20	7	1.23	1.21	0.17	0.47
1997	30.7	43.2	16.8	2.5	165	418	46	10	0.82	1.47	0.42	0.61

Source: Own calculations based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

In order to benefit from making concessions to spatially-concentrated preferences, a party does however need to be in contention in a substantial number of constituencies where these preferences play a role in voting behaviour. At the constituency level, the candidate that wins the contest rarely attracts less than 30 per cent of the vote. The share of the regional constituencies in which a party candidate captured 30 per cent or more of the local vote therefore gives us some indication of the potential seat gains associated with accommodating regional preferences (Norris, 2004). Table 4.3 shows the share of country-level constituencies in which a Labour or Conservative candidate gained at least 30 per cent of the vote from 1966 until 1979.

At the start of the period, the Conservatives were in contention around 70 per cent of the Scottish seats, while a Labour candidate gained more than 30 per cent of the vote in over 80 per cent of constituencies. When the home rule issue re-emerged in the 1960s and 70s, the potential gains associated with accommodating Scottish preferences were thus substantial for both Parties. Reflecting the historically weaker position of the Conservative Party in Wales, Conservative candidates failed to attract more than 30 per cent of the vote in over 60 per cent of Welsh constituencies in the 1960s and 70s. Given the limited number of seats awarded to Wales at Westminster, this meant that the Conservative Party had very little to gain by accommodating Welsh demands. Labour support on the other hand has traditionally been strong in Wales. As a result, a Labour candidate was in contention in over 90 per cent of Welsh contests at the start of the period. The Labour Party therefore faced much stronger incentives to defend its position in Wales by accommodating spatially-concentrated preferences.

Table 4.3 Share of the country-level constituencies within which a Labour or Conservative candidate was in contention for the seat (1966-1979)⁸

	Scotland		Wales	
	Conservative	Labour	Conservative	Labour
1966	70%	85%	39%	94%
1970	75%	79%	36%	92%
1974F	56%	69%	36%	86%
1974O	35%	68%	33%	94%
1979	46%	76%	44%	81%

Source: own elaboration based on data from <http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/psr.htm>.

Even if a party is in contention in a substantial number of regional constituencies, a pro-devolution stance is unlikely to create significant electoral benefits unless the core regional electorate of a party supports greater autonomy and this issue is perceived as sufficiently salient to influence voting behaviour. In Scotland, there are clear indications that both of these conditions were met during the 1970s. Survey evidence suggests that the majority of the Scottish voters favoured greater regional autonomy. Significantly, this was found to be true both amongst those who indicated that they had voted Labour in 1970 and their Conservative counterparts (see Table 4.4). The rapid rise of support for the SNP furthermore confirmed that such preferences were increasingly influencing voting behaviour. While this trend initially did not lead to substantial seat losses for the main contenders for office at the central level, this situation changed in the mid-1970s. In February 1974, the SNP won 7 seats on the basis of 22 per cent of the regional vote. As a result, Labour lost 2 Scottish seats while the Conservatives had to concede 4. In the October election of the same year, SNP support increased to 30 percent of the regional vote.

⁸ A party candidate was seen as in contention for a seat if he or she attracted over 30 per cent of the popular vote. Contests were marked as marginal if the percentage of the vote attracted by the winner was within 10 percentage points of the share attracted by the runner-up.

While the remaining Scottish Labour MPs managed to withstand the SNP challenge this time around, the Conservative Party lost a further 4 seats in the second 1974 election.

Table 4.4 Share of the population that supports devolution or independence by party voted for in the previous election (1974, 1979)

	Scotland			Wales		
	All	Labour	Conservative	All	Labour	Conservative
1974	63-69%	57-67%	57-69%	31-48%	33-57%	5-33%
1979	44-52%	44-56%	24-38%	22-28%	22-30%	6-15%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Crewe, et al. (1977a, 1977b), Miller & Brand (1981). Table applies 95% confidence interval.

In the context of exceptionally tight electoral competition at the central level, the direct seat losses to the SNP alone provided a considerable incentive to accommodate regionalist demands in Scotland. This effect was presumably heightened by the fact that SNP support was fast nearing the threshold at which the electoral system would start to work in its favour. McLean (2005) for instance calculated that, if the SNP had won 35 rather than 30 percent of the vote in October 1974, the Party's seats total could have been 4 or 5 times as high. This would in turn have seriously compromised the ability of either of the main contenders for office to gain an overall majority at Westminster. Taken together this concurs with the hypothesis that the accommodation of Scottish demands in the 1970s can indeed be related to the direct electoral gains associated with this position under conditions of heterogeneous issue salience.

At face value, the electoral rationale behind Labour's commitment to Welsh devolution seems less compelling. The results of the February 1974 election survey suggest that the majority of Welsh voters did not support greater regional autonomy at that time. Although Labour voters seems substantially more inclined to support devolution or independence than their counterparts. Opinion remained strongly divided even amongst this group.

While this evidence was not yet available at the time, the Labour leadership would undoubtedly have been aware of the fact that popular demand for regional autonomy was substantially more limited in Wales than in Scotland. In 1970, a survey conducted in the context of the Royal Commission on the Constitution had shown that greater regional autonomy was only favoured by 36 percent of Welsh respondents (Social and Community Planning Research, 1970). This was nearly identical to the support for decentralisation recorded amongst English respondents, and 10 percentage points below the level in Scotland. In addition, Plaid Cymru support barely increased between the 1970 and February 1974 general elections, while SNP support more than doubled over the same period. As the next section will show, it is however equally difficult to argue that the Labour leadership faced compelling output-based or internal act-based incentives to accommodate the preferences of the pro-devolution minority in Wales. In this context, the spatial distribution of the constitutional preferences in Wales, coupled with the perceived salience attached to the issue by pro- and anti-devolution voters, may have played an important role.

Table 4.5 The regionalist challenge to Labour candidates in Scotland and Wales (1966-1979)

	Scotland		Wales	
	Share of the regional vote SNP	Labour/SNP contests as share regional contests	Share of the regional vote PC	Labour/PC contests as share regional contests
1966	5.0%	3%	4.3%	3%
1970	11.4%	4%	11.5%	22%
1974F	21.9%	18%	10.8%	25%
1974O	30.4%	54%	10.8%	25%
1979	17.3%	7%	8.1%	6%

Source: Own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007) and <http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/psr.htm>.

As noted in chapter 3, support for greater regional autonomy has traditionally been strongly concentrated in the Welsh-speaking heartlands of Dyfed and Gwynedd and the industrial mining communities of mid and west-Glamorgan. Under the single member plurality electoral system, this spatial concentration of preferences enabled Plaid Cymru to mount a considerable challenge to the Labour Party on the basis of a relatively modest vote share.

To illustrate this effect, Table 4.5 reports the share of the regional vote attracted by the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales as well as share of the constituency level contests within which an SNP or Plaid Cymru candidate was the primary local rival of the Labour Party candidate. This shows that the simultaneous rise of nationalist voting in Scotland and Wales between 1966 and 1970 produced a much stronger direct challenge to Labour's position in Wales than in Scotland. We now know that this change in Plaid Cymru support did not reflect a similarly strong shift in popular opinion or issue salience (see chapter 3). Without the benefit of hindsight, it may however seem highly plausible that the marked rise in SNP voting in the February 1974 election could encourage a similar surge in Plaid Cymru support amongst a spatially concentrated minority of Welsh voters with a preference for greater regional autonomy. In this context, accommodating the views of these voters despite the lack of support for devolution in other parts of Wales could have been seen as a seats-maximising strategy within Wales.

If we accept the explanation presented above, the perceived electoral benefits of regionalist accommodation can thus provide a plausible act-based explanation for the policy positions of the two main contenders for office in October 1974. Observable differences in the electoral incentives faced by both Parties however do not provide a plausible explanation for the fact that the Conservative Party was initially quicker to respond Scottish demands than its Labour counterpart. Similarly, the high level of internal opposition to devolution within both parties begs the question why internal act-based incentives did not constrain the policy autonomy of the party leadership to a greater extent.

4.2.2. The influence of party cohesion

Devolution has historically been a divisive issue within the British party system.

In 1886 the issue even led to the break-up of one of the main contenders for office at the time, the Liberal Party (Douglas, 1971). The decision of the then party leader, William Gladstone, to support Irish Home Rule deeply divided his Party and led to the departure of most of the Liberal aristocracy and a group of non-aristocratic party members led by Joseph Chamberlain. Following this dramatic reorganisation of the party system, the issue temporarily seemed to be absorbed within the main lines of conflict. By the start of the First World War, the Conservative and Unionist Party supported the status quo, while devolution was seen as an integral part of the radical policy agenda within both the Liberal and the Labour Party. Towards the end of the 1920s, the partial resolution of the Irish issue and the shift towards a more firmly class-based understanding of political conflict reduced the salience of the Home Rule issue within the Labour Party (McLean & McMillan, 2005). Simultaneously, the Liberals became increasingly marginalised at the central level. As a result, the issue of regional autonomy largely disappeared from the central policy agenda.

When the territorial dimension remerged following the growing electoral success of the SNP and Plaid Cymru in the late 1960s, it once again did not fit comfortably within the main axis of conflict around which the post-Second World War party system was organised (Field, 1997; Katz & Mair, 1994). In this context, opinions on the significance of the regionalist challenge and the appropriate response to such developments varied widely within both parties. If we apply a veto player approach to the internal process of preference aggregation, we would anticipate that this lack of internal cohesion regarding the appropriate response to the regionalist challenge enhanced the policy autonomy of the party leadership (see chapter 2).

The available evidence indeed suggests that the beliefs and preferences of the party leadership played a strong role in developing the party line during the early years. This is particularly true in the case of the Conservative commitments to Scottish devolution.

Both the Conservative leader, Edward Heath, and his Labour counterpart, Harold Wilson, started their political career with a fairly Unionist outlook. When regionalist support began to rise in the 1960s, Edward Heath however adjusted his position much more rapidly than his counterpart. The resolution passed by the Conservative Scottish central council, calling for a review of the machinery of government in Scotland, certainly played a role in this change of heart (Kellas, 2005). Tellingly, the subsequent report by the committee established for this occasion under Sir William McEwen Younger was only discussed within the shadow cabinet. As a result, a large part of the Parliamentary Party seemed unaware of its contents and the subsequent Declaration of Perth took all but a very select group of MPs by surprise. At the time, this public commitment to Scottish devolution without prior consultation was widely seen as a move by the party leader to foist devolution on the Parliamentary Party in general and its Scottish members in particular. Following the announcement, about a third of Conservative MPs reportedly made their objection to the policy known to the parliamentary whips (Mitchell, 1990).

It has been noted that the input of prominent pro-devolution Conservatives, like Sir William McEwen Younger and John Berridge, may have influenced Heath's perspective on the issue (Kellas, 2005). The readiness with which he accepted their arguments however also suggest that he was personally convinced that the rise of the SNP posed a real and credible threat, not only to Conservative Party fortunes, but also to the Unity of Britain itself (Mitchell, 1990). Although Heath did not act upon his commitments to Scottish devolution during his time in office between 1970 and 1974 (see chapter 5), his actions with respect to the devolution proposals of the 1974-1979 Labour Government reveal the depth of this personal conviction.

During the Commons discussion on the White Paper on Our Changing Democracy, Devolution to Scotland and Wales (Command Paper No. 6348), Edward Heath stated “I believe that there is a settled conviction on the part of the Scottish and Welsh peoples. It needs a substantial political change within the United Kingdom to do justice to their views and to enable the Scots to do justice to themselves.” (Hansard (Commons) 1975-1976, vol. 903, col. 963). Despite the fact that the Party officially opposed Labour’s proposals at the time, he continued to openly defend the creation of an elected assembly for Scotland throughout the 1970s and on several occasions defied the party whip by voting in favour of the policy (Norton, 1980).

It seems highly unlikely that the Conservative Party would have proved equally responsive to Scottish demands if Reginald Maudling, rather than Edward Heath, had won the 1965 Conservative leadership election. This is in no respect a farfetched counterfactual. If Enoch Powell had chosen not to stand for leadership and a few of Heath’s supporters had stayed at home on the 28th July 1965, Maudling would have succeeded Alec Douglas-Home as party leader. Judging by his contribution to the 1976 debates surrounding the second reading of the Scotland and Wales Bill, he was at best personally ambivalent about devolution (Hansard (Commons) 1976-1977, vol. 922 ,col. 1279-1285). He openly questioned the need to debate the topic at all, arguing that devolution was important, but not urgent. As he viewed it, devolution was fundamentally a matter of degree and he seemed unconvinced of the need to substantially change the status quo. With respect to Scotland, he argued “I cannot find adequate evidence of the real feeling of people in Scotland on this issue....some form of referendum is necessary.... It is hard to find any other basis upon which to come to a conclusion on the real wishes of the people of Scotland.” (Hansard (Commons) 1976-1977, vol. 922 ,col. 1283). Given this stance, it seems unlikely that Maudling could have felt compelled to make the Declaration of Perth, although he may have changed his tune after following the surge in SNP support in the February 1974 general election.

Labour leader Harold Wilson seemed to share Maudling's lack of passion for the devolution topic. In his autobiography, he referred to the subject as "boring and soporific" (Wilson, 1979: 46). Faced with a heavily divided Party and a relatively limited immediate threat, he initially devoted relatively little attention to the rising support for the SNP and Plaid Cymru. This lack of initiative reportedly frustrated senior government figures like Richard Crossman, who viewed it as a missed opportunity to nip the nationalist revival in the bud (Tanner, 2006). Wilson also faced considerable pressures to adjust the party line on decentralisation from sections of the Welsh Party. The Executive Committee of the Labour Party in Wales had formally supported the creation of an elected Council for Wales since 1965 (Osmond, 1978). In addition, a number of Welsh Cabinet members, junior Ministers and crucially the 1964-1966 and 1966-1968 Secretaries of State for Wales, Jim Griffiths and Cledwyn Hughes, strongly favoured devolution (Morgan & Mungham, 2000a; Morgan, 1980). As late as April 1967, Wilson nonetheless continued to fervently deny that separate Parliaments for Scotland and Wales were on the government agenda (Hansard (Commons) 1966-1967, vol. 745, col. 151W).

Partially, this reluctance to respond can be related to the strong anti-devolution sentiments within the Scottish Party. Contrary to its Welsh counterpart, the majority of the Scottish Executive firmly opposed any form of devolution, which it believed would encourage rather than stem nationalist sentiments and SNP support (Jones & Keating, 1982). In addition, important figures with the Scottish arm of the Parliamentary Party, including the Scottish Secretary of State, openly opposed devolution (Tanner, 2006). As any accommodation of Welsh demands could be anticipated to create a popular reaction in Scotland, this internal difference in opinion clearly complicated matters. Wilson's willingness to respond to by-election successes of the SNP and Plaid Cymru by setting up a Royal Commission on the Constitution, without the prior knowledge or consent of much of the rest of the Party, however suggest that he was willing to risk upsetting important sections of the party.

In his unpublished diary, Crossman reportedly noted “Once again it was felt that if the inner group under the PM had decided then the Cabinet could only accede” (Crossman as quoted in Tanner, 2006: 27)

Wilson’s early concession was widely regarded as merely paying lip service to regionalist demands, as he showed little interest in the work of the Royal Commission between 1969 and 1973 (Hill, 2004). Similarly, the Conservative commitment to Scottish devolution seemed to falter when the spectacular rise in SNP support predicted by Heath failed to materialise in the 1970 general election. When the real potency of the nationalist threat did become visible in February 1974 this prompted a reaction from both party leaders. Edward Heath used the opportunity to revive the commitment to Scottish devolution that he had made in Perth on a mixture of ideological and electoral grounds. On his part, Harold Wilson responded by formally committing his party to devolution for Scotland and Wales. This rapid change in formal Party positions is consistent with the hypothesis that the party leadership was prepared and able to respond to electoral incentives, even in the face of substantial opposition from within the Party itself.

4.3.Regionalist accommodation between 1979 and 1997

As will be argued in chapter 5, the elite-driven nature of the Labour Party’s formal commitment to devolution, coupled with the anticipated lack of a strong government majority and the general decline in party discipline, created a legislative deadlock. The Labour government’s attempt to salvage the legislation by introducing a popular veto within the decision-making path in turn exposed both the limited level of support for devolution in Wales and the fact that popular opinion had not been firmly established in either country. Coupled with the preference constellation within the House of Commons, this prevented change from occurring. In the two decades that followed, the formal policy positions of the main contenders for office started to diverge more markedly.

As Figure 4.1 showed, the Labour Party's formal manifesto commitments to devolution remained broadly in line with popular opinion in Scotland and Wales. The Conservative Party on the other hand returned to its traditionally Unionist stance, despite growing demand for devolution in Scotland and Wales.

Within the existing literature on devolution, this divergence in the policy positions of the main contenders for office at the central level is often linked to the electoral geography of the UK. During the 1980s, the Conservative pre-dominance in large parts of England ensured that Scottish and Welsh seats were largely immaterial to the overall outcome of the elections (see Figure 4.2). In this context, it has been widely argued that the Conservative Party could afford to ignore Scottish and Welsh preferences (Keating, 1998b, 2001a; Kellas, 1994; Mitchell, 1990; Seawright, 1999). The Labour Party on the other hand developed an increasing strong dependency on Scottish and Welsh seats as its support base in large parts of England eroded. It is argued that this in turn created two types of incentives to support asymmetric devolution (Sorens, 2009). Firstly it has been proposed that Labour's reliance on Scottish and Welsh seats meant that it faced strong electoral incentives to accommodate Scottish and Welsh preferences (Keating, 1998b, 2001a). Secondly, it has been argued that the continued strength of the Labour Party in Scotland and Wales, coupled with the enduring Conservative pre-dominance at the central level, increasingly gave the Labour Party an outcome-based reason to favour asymmetric devolution over the existing centralised system (Keating, 2001a; Mitchell, 1998).

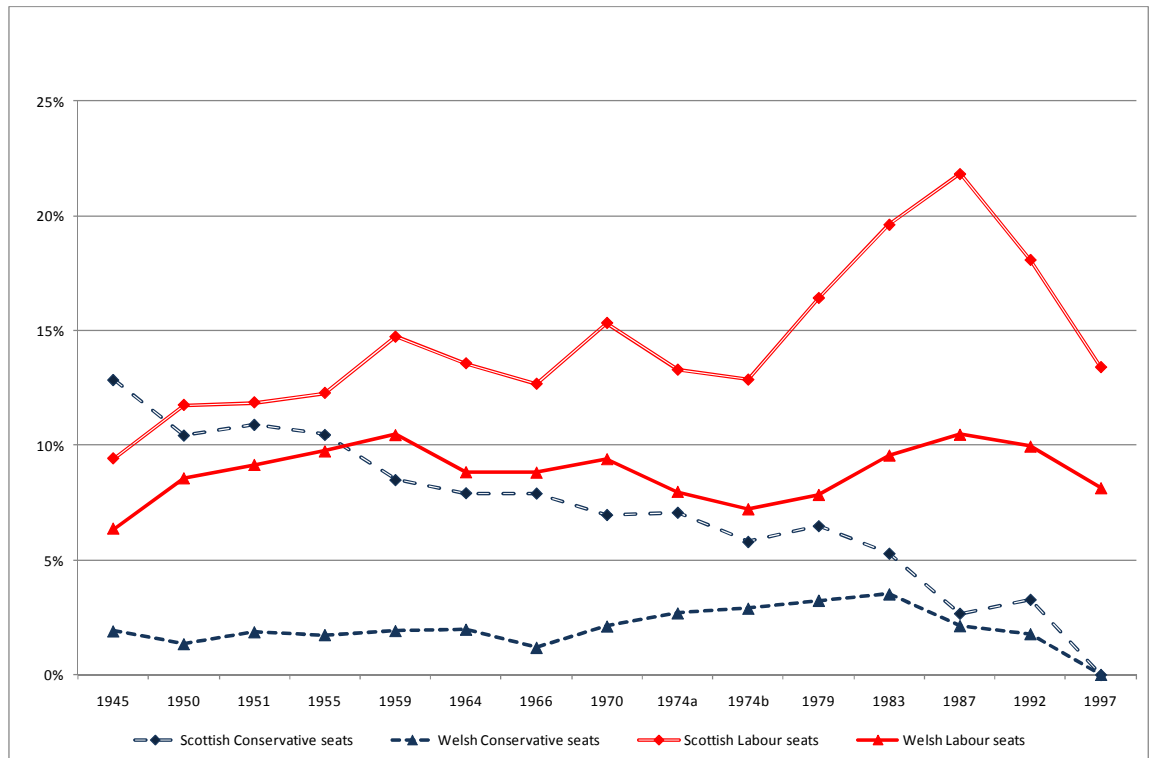
While the two rationales outlined above can coincide, they have distinctive observable implications. If party policies are primarily motivated by the electoral gains associated with the act of offering devolution during general election campaigns, we would expect to find that party positions reflect both the electoral importance of a region and the distribution of popular preferences within that region.

By contrast, the observable implication of the second hypothesis would be that a party supports devolution to the regional level when it is both anticipated to perform well at the regional level and simultaneously has relatively poor prospects of forming part of the government at the centre (O'Neill, 2003). Crucially, this type of outcome-based incentive to support devolution may emerge even in the absence of clear popular support for decentralisation. Using this difference in observable implications, the next section will test to what extent the available evidence fits either of these hypotheses. Based on this analysis it will be argued that, although the policy of the Conservative Party broadly concurs with the conventional wisdom, Labour's formal policy position suggests that we need to look more closely at the preferences of party leaders and the constraining effect of internal preference structures.

4.3.1. The influence of the regionalisation of the British party system

During the 1980s, the strength of Conservative support in much of England meant that the Party had a relatively low dependence on Scottish seats (see Figure 4.3). In fact, the 1983-1987 and 1987-1992 Conservative governments enjoyed an overall majority at Westminster on the basis of English seats alone. As a consequence, the Party did not face strong electoral incentives to accommodate spatially-concentrated preferences for greater autonomy in Scotland or Wales. Simultaneously, the weak position of the Conservative Party in both countries meant that the resulting directly elected regional bodies would most likely be dominated by the Labour Party, the SNP, and to a lesser extent the Liberals. Taken together, it was thus not in the Party's immediate interest to accommodate Scottish and Welsh demands for greater autonomy.

Figure 4.3 Share of the Parliamentary Conservative and Labour Parties representing Scottish and Welsh constituencies (1945-1997)



Source: Own elaboration based on Tetteh (2008)

In the early 1990s, the Conservative Party started to lose considerable ground in many English regions. As a result, the electoral competition at the central level intensified (see Figure 4.2). The Conservative Party did not respond to this challenge by adjusting its position on devolution. It can be argued that this reflects the limited electoral benefits likely to be associated with regionalist accommodation at that time (Keating, 2001a). The Conservative Party was indeed no longer in contention in the vast majority of Scottish and Welsh seats by the time of the 1992 election (see Table 4.5). In addition, the remaining Conservative support base in Scotland and Wales espoused relatively Unionist preferences compared to their non-Conservative counterparts (see Table 4.7). Especially in the context of years of inaction under consecutive Conservative governments, it therefore seems unlikely that the act of publicly supporting asymmetric devolution would have created substantial electoral gains in Scotland or Wales.

However, the Unionist position advocated by the Conservative Party not only ignores Scottish and Welsh public opinion but also seems out of touch with the emerging consensus amongst English voters. As Table 4.6 shows, English support for asymmetric devolution remained limited during the 1980s. By 1992, popular opinion had however shifted decidedly in favour of asymmetric devolution for Scotland. Although Conservative supporters remained more sceptical than their Labour counterparts, the results of the 1992 and 1997 election surveys suggest that the majority of those who voted Conservative in the previous election favoured greater autonomy for Scotland and Wales. The focus on regional realities and grievances has meant that the existing literature on devolution rarely explicitly mentions this fact. It is however crucial to our understanding of regionalist accommodation as it suggests that the Unionist stance taken by the Conservative Party was facilitated not only by the regionalisation of the British party system but also by the apparent lack of salience attached to the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in England.

Table 4.6 English voters in favour of devolution or independence for Scotland and Wales (1987, 1992, 1997)

	All	Conservative	Labour
1987 Scotland	22-25%	16-20%	27-34%
1992 Scotland	67-71%	60-66%	69-76%
1997 Scotland	73-76%	59-66%	78-83%
1997 Wales	71-74%	57-65%	75-81%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Heath, et al. (1999), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al. (1993). 95% confidence interval.

Despite this qualification of the conventional wisdom, it can still be argued that the Unionist stance of the Conservative Party during the 1980s and 90s was primarily caused by the fact that the Party did not face prominent act or outcome-based incentives to accommodate regionalist demands. Explaining Labour's position during this period in terms of the associated electoral gains at the central level or the relative benefits associated with regional office holding is however more difficult.

During the 1980s, the erosion of Labour support in many English regions, coupled with the continued strong performance in Scotland and Wales, increased Labour's dependency on Scottish and Welsh seats (see Figure 4.3). In both countries, the general election results suggest that the devolved institutions proposed in the 1970s would have been Labour-dominated under plurality rule. If the anticipated benefits associated with regional office holding were guiding the position of the Labour Party at the time, we would expect to find symmetrical policies for Scotland and Wales. The Labour Party manifesto's produced during the late 1970s and 80s however only formally supported devolution for Scotland (Labour Party, 1979, 1983, 1987). As Figure 4.1 and Table 4.4 show, this difference in the approach to Scotland and Wales partially reflects a difference in popular opinion. Survey evidence from the late 1970s and early 1980 however suggests that a strong popular consensus in favour of devolution did not exist in either of the two countries at that time.

Similarly SNP support plummeted during the 1979 and 1983 general elections. In this context, the direct electoral gains associated with accommodating regionalist demands for greater autonomy seem rather limited.

Table 4.7 Share of the population that supports devolution or independence by party voted for in the previous election (1979-1997)

Scotland				Wales		
	All	Labour	Conservative	All	Labour	Conservative
1979	44-52%	44-56%	24-38%	22-28%	22-30%	6-15%
1983	40-50%	42-58%	12-29%	13-24%	10-25%	4-21%
1987*	43-53%	49-68%	16-34%	23-37%	23-41%	6-29%
1992	72-78%	81-89%	40-53%	46-62%	50-77%	31-83%
1997	70-76%	79-87%	42-58%	59-73%	62-82%	25-56%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Balsom & Madgwick (1979), Brand & Mitchell (1994), Heath, et al. (1983, 1999), Heath, Jowell, & Curtice (1993), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, et al. (1993), McCrone, et al. (1999) and Miller & Brand (1981). * In 1987 the vote in the 1987 election was used as respondents were not asked which party they had voted in previous election.

Labour's decision to include a formal commitment to Welsh devolution in its 1992 election manifesto (Labour Party, 1992) does coincide with a shift in popular opinion in Wales (see Figure 4.1 and Table 4.4). In this respect, it is consistent with the hypothesis that electoral gains at the central level provide the primary rationale for the accommodation of regionalist demands. By contrast, the inclusion of these commitments at a time when the Labour Party stood a real chance of gaining office at the central level for the first time in a over a decade seem to run counter to the second hypothesis. The improvement of the Party's prospects of gaining office at the central level should theoretically reduce the benefits associated with regional office holding. As a result, we would expect that political parties face fewer incentives to accommodate regionalist demands once they have a real prospect of holding office at the central level (Hopkin, 2009).

By contrast, the continued commitments to Scottish and Welsh devolution in the 1997 general election manifesto do not comfortably fit either of the two hypotheses. In the run-up to the 1997 general election, opinion polls rightfully predicted a Labour landslide (Crewe, 1997). Especially since the resulting seat losses in Scotland and Wales would have been unlikely to benefit the Conservative Party, accommodating Scottish and Welsh demands for greater autonomy was not pivotal to gaining office at the central level at this time. Simultaneously, the relative benefits derived from office holding at the regional level presumably declined even further as the Party's chances of gaining office at the central level continued to improve. In this context, attributing the Labour Party's strong and detailed manifesto commitments to either of these two hypotheses would appear to be an oversimplification. Instead I would argue that the emergence of more cohesive party positions during the 1980s shaped the pattern of regionalist accommodation during the 1990s by reducing the policy autonomy of the party leadership.

4.3.2. The importance of elite preferences and internal act-based incentives

As noted, the re-emerged of the home rule issue in the 1960s and 70s initially created considerable internal conflict within both the Conservative and the Labour Party. The failure of the 1979 devolution referendums, coupled with the strong performance in England, allowed the Conservative Party to formally return to its Unionist roots. While a small minority of pro-devolution MPs remained, the majority of the Party was happy to disregard the growing popular demand for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales. After the 1987 general election reduced the number of Welsh and Scottish Conservative MPs from 35 to 18, the emergence of a distinct regional dimension to British politics could no longer be ignored. Internal pressures to accommodate demands for greater regional autonomy however remained very limited. With the notable exception of Alick Buchanan-Smith, the vast majority of the Conservative MPs who had supported the policy in the 1970s had either lost their seats in the recent shakeout in Scotland or returned to a Unionist stance (Mitchell, 1990; Torrance, 2006).

Within the Labour Party, the opposite shift in opinion occurred. As a result of the changing electoral geography of Britain, the share of the Parliamentary Labour Party representing a Scottish or Welsh constituency increased from around 20 percent in the mid-1970s, to over 30 per cent by the late 1980s. Labour's continued strong position in Scotland and Wales, coupled with its inability to gain office at Westminster, meant that the devolved system proposed in the 1970s would have had clear benefits for a substantial and growing share of the Parliamentary Labour Party (Mitchell, 1998; Morgan & Mungham, 2000b). Instead of spending years in opposition at Westminster, MPs representing Scottish and Welsh constituencies could have governed at the country-level. This would have enhanced the personal career prospects of those MPs, as well as enabled the Party to partially insulate Scotland and Wales from the effects of Thatcherism.

From 1992 onwards, a number of surveys allow us to examine the preferences structures within the Parliamentary Labour and Conservative Party in more detail. The 1992 British Candidate Survey (Norris, 1992) shows that the majority of the Parliamentary Conservative Party favoured the constitutional status quo over devolution or independence for both Scotland and Wales, while the majority of Labour MPs favoured devolution to both countries over independence or the status quo (see Table 4.8). The 1997 British Representation Survey (Norris, 1997) unfortunately only asked MPs about their preference with regards to Scottish devolution. The available evidence suggests that party cohesion increased even further over the course of the 1990s. Support for devolution or independence amongst Conservative all but disappeared, with over 90 percent of all MPs supporting the maintenance of the constitutional status quo. Simultaneously, devolution remained the preferred option of over 89 percent of Labour MPs.

Table 4.8 Devolution preferences within the Parliamentary Conservative and Labour Parties (1992-1997)⁹

	Status quo	Devolution	Independence
1992 (Scotland)			
Conservative	69-80%	16-27%	1-6%
Labour	2-9%	85-95%	1-8%
1992 (Wales)			
Conservative	79-89%	10-20%	0-2%
Labour	8-20%	76-89%	0-7%
1997 (Scotland)			
Conservative	92-100%	0-3%	0-6%
Labour	0-5%	89-98%	0-7%

Sources: Own elaboration based on Norris (1992, 1997). Table reports results with 95% confidence interval.

Applying a veto player perspective to the internal processes of preference formation would suggest that the emergence of more cohesive party positions increasingly limited the ability of the party leadership to adjust the formal position of the party. The observable implication of this hypothesis would be that the outcome and act-based preferences of the party leadership had a more limited impact on the formal position of the party during the late 1980s and 90s. The persistently Unionist stance of the Conservative Party does not offer us an opportunity to test this hypothesis. As both Margaret Thatcher and John Major personally shared the Unionist perspective held by the majority within the Party (Jones, 1999a; Mitchell & Bennie, 1996), they had little reason to challenge the internal consensus on this issue. The Labour Party's enduring willingness to accommodate regionalist demands in Scotland and Wales, despite the personal reservations of some party leaders, however creates a better opportunity to examine the explanatory power of this approach.

⁹ The parliamentary party is defined as the members of the Conservative and Labour Party who were MPs during the government period immediately prior to the general election. Where percentages do not add up to a hundred this is due to rounding.

Compared to its Conservative counterpart, the Labour Party went through a relatively high number of leadership changes between 1979 and 1997. The failure of the Party to regain office at the central level during the 1980s and early 1990s and the general disillusionment this created after each disappointing general election resulted in the resignation of three consecutive party leaders. In 1994, the sudden death of John Smith necessitated another leadership election. As party leaders traditionally enjoy a considerable amount of policy autonomy, the frequent change of leadership has the potential to lead to a more changeable policy agenda. However, with respect to devolution the Party line has been remarkably consistent from the mid-1970 onwards, especially in the case of Scotland.

The continued commitment to Scottish devolution in the 1979 Labour election manifesto, despite the difficult legislative process and ultimate repeal of the 1978 Scotland Act, can be related to the fact that a majority of the Scottish voters did vote in favour of the policy during the 1979 referendum. Having personally championed the proposal, the need to maintain credibility practically forced the incumbent Prime Minister, James Callaghan, to include a commitment to Scottish Devolution in the 1979 Labour Manifesto (Labour Party, 1979). The 1979 general election defeat was followed by Callaghan's resignation in 1980. His close rival in the 1976 leadership election, Michael Foot, succeeded him by beating Denis Healey in the second ballot.

Unlike Wilson and Callaghan, Michael Foot was a passionate advocate of devolution. He was personally convinced that the policy represented both a just recognition of Scottish and Welsh nationhood and an enrichment of the democratic scene (Jones, 1994). After acquiring the deputy leadership in 1976, Foot had worked tirelessly and against significant internal opposition to try to ensure that the Government's devolution proposals were enacted. Even after the 1979 referendums failed to return the required level of support for the policy, Foot attempted to save what could be saved. He reportedly put significant pressure on James Callaghan to circumvent the 40 per cent rule in the Scotland Act, by laying the order of repeal but urging the House to vote against it (Jones, 1994).

Labour's formal commitment to Scottish devolution during the early 1980s, despite significant pockets of resistance to the policy within the Party and a divided public opinion in Scotland, is thus compatible with the hypothesis that the personal views of the party leader remained highly influential at that time. His main leadership rival, Denis Healey, would certainly have been less inclined to take a similar approach. Part of a group of anti-devolution Cabinet ministers that included Willie Ross and Tony Crosland, he played a key role in keeping devolution off the House of Commons agenda between 1974 and 1976 (Rosen, 1999). Given his personal scepticism, it seems more than likely that he would have chosen to keep a divisive issue like devolution off the party agenda.

Following the disappointing results in the 1983 general election, Michael Foot resigned. Neil Kinnock confidently defeated his closest rival, Roy Hattersley, in the subsequent leadership contest held under the newly introduced Electoral College System. Despite growing discontent amongst Scottish and Welsh MPs, the devolution issue did not feature prominently during this internal contest (Mitchell, 1998). This may be related to the fact that both Hattersley and Kinnock were personally sceptical about the policy. Especially in the context of growing internal support for asymmetric devolution, neither may have felt the need to emphasise this dimension of conflict within the internal election process.

Through his actions in the 1970s, Kinnock had shown that his personal opposition to devolution ran particularly deep. A prominent member of the 'Gang of Six' anti-devolution Welsh MPs, he had led the Welsh 'Labour Vote No' campaign in the run up to the 1979 referendum (Balsom & McAllister, 1979). Investing this much time and effort in defying a policy proposed by one's own government shows a real dedication to a cause. In this context, Kinnock's willingness to maintain the Party's position on Scottish devolution and include a commitment to a Welsh Assembly in the 1992 general election manifesto can be seen as surprising. As noted the Party faced considerable electoral incentives to accommodate Scottish and Welsh preferences during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This had however also been the case in the 1970s and at that time Kinnock had been utterly unconvinced that offering devolution was the appropriate response to such pressures. It is possible that Kinnock's personal perspective on the benefits of office holding at the regional level slowly changed during a decade of opposition at the central level. The coincidence of the shift in policy towards Wales with the emergence of a clearer pro-devolution consensus within the Party is however also highly consistent with the hypothesis that the emergence of a more cohesive perspective within the party limited the policy autonomy of the party leader.

When the 1992 general election failed to deliver the expected return to government, the Labour Party went through yet another leadership election. With only two candidates standing, the favourite, John Smith, won the election with over 90 per cent of the vote. Just as Neil Kinnock's personal view on devolution was well known at the time of his election as party leader, so too was John Smith's position. Initially he had been sceptical, arguing that devolution ran counter to the primary aims of socialism. However, he slowly became convinced of its workability and was known as a keen advocate of devolution by the end of the 1970s (Stuart, 2005). Like his Conservative counterpart, he therefore had no incentive to challenge the majority opinion within the Party.

On the 12th of May 1994, John Smith unexpectedly died as a result of a heart attack. Until the leadership election on the 21st of July 1994, the deputy party leader, Margaret Beckett, acted as party leader. Before his untimely death, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were widely seen as the two most likely candidates to succeed Smith as party leader. In the succession battle that followed, Tony Blair soon emerged as the favourite. By the end of May, Gordon Brown had formally announced that he would not stand. Thereafter it was almost certain that Tony Blair would be the next Labour party leader. In fact, when Bill Clinton visited the UK in the context of the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings, the White House reportedly requested a meeting with Tony Blair rather than the acting party leader Margaret Beckett (Stuart, 2005).

In his recent autobiography, Blair admits that he “was never a passionate devolutionist” and felt that it was “a dangerous game to play” (Blair, 2010: 251). He nonetheless appeared eager to dispel any doubts about his stance on devolution during the leadership election campaign. Throughout he stressed his Scottish heritage and emphasised that he would carry on with “Smith’s torch of devolution” (Black, 4 June 1994). In line with this position, he repeatedly pledged to introduce devolution legislation within the first year of a Labour government (Robertson, 5 June 1994, 10 July 1994). Especially given the near certainty of the outcome of the leadership election, this can be seen as a strong indication that the cohesive pro-devolution stance within the Labour Party created strong incentives for prospective party leaders to adopt the majority position on this issue.

Once he was elected party leader, it quickly became clear that Blair did not personally support the devolution policy in its existing form. He strongly felt that Scottish and Welsh devolution should be made dependent upon the outcome of pre-legislative regional referendums. In addition, he was not convinced of the need for tax-varying powers and primary legislative powers to be devolved to Scotland (Campbell, 2010). Blair floated his personal views on the devolution policy during the *Road to the Manifesto* process. While the Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, Ron Davies, broadly supported the idea of a referendum, his Scottish counterpart, George Robertson, was at first fervently opposed to the suggestion (Blair, 2010). Similarly, the Scottish Labour executive initially perceived the move as a betrayal of trust (Campbell, 2010). In the end, Tony Blair managed to convince Robertson and the majority of the Scottish executive of the need for a referendum by arguing that clear popular consent would be needed in order to successfully guide the legislation through the House of Lords (Campbell, 2010).

Having been advised that removing the tax-varying and legislative powers foreseen for the Scottish Parliament altogether would result in a major internal backlash (Campbell, 2010), Blair made more moderate adjustments to the party line in this respect.

Under the new proposals, primary legislative powers would be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Blair however emphasised that power devolved would be power retained and Westminster continued to be the ultimate constitutional authority. With respect to tax-varying powers, the 1997 election manifesto stipulated that a separate question on fiscal devolution would be introduced in Scottish pre-legislative devolution referendum. If a majority voted in favour, limited fiscal powers would be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Taken together, the available evidence shows that Tony Blair's personally views on devolution had a significant impact upon the position of the Labour Party. As Alastair Campbell states "It had been an interesting exercise in leadership. [Tony Blair] had been pretty determined, and without that it is unlikely we would have reached the position we did." (Campbell, 2010: 480). The position that was reached in turn fits very well with the hypothesis that conflicting act- and outcome-based incentives can encourage a creative party leader to develop a mixed policy strategy. The formal manifesto commitment to devolution and the stipulation of a clear timeline for change proved sufficient to prevent a significant internal backlash. Simultaneously the referendum requirement in general and the separate question on the need for fiscal devolution in particular created new obstacles for actual policy change. Given the likelihood of a convincing Labour victory in the general elections and the levels of support for devolution within the Parliamentary Labour Party, Blair's insistence on the need to define the decision-making path within election manifesto can be seen as a calculated attempt to curb the veto powers of his own backbench (see chapter 5 for further discussion). Particularly in Wales, the available survey evidence simultaneously suggested that popular support for devolution fell well below the levels recorded within the Parliamentary Labour Party. As a result, the policy clearly reduced the likelihood of policy change.

Given Gordon Brown's reported reluctance to accept the need for referendums, it seems unlikely that the Labour Party would have entered the 1997 general elections with similar manifesto commitments if Brown had succeeded John Smith as party leader. This suggests that the personal views of the party leader were still influential. Nonetheless, it is notable that the changes to the Party's stance on devolution are not as extensive as Tony Blair would have liked. Given the high level of popular support for greater autonomy in Scotland in particular, abandoning the devolution cause altogether would have undoubtedly created a popular backlash in this country. The continued commitment to Welsh devolution, coupled with the reluctance to significantly reduce the fiscal and legislative powers on offer for Scotland, however suggest that Blair's policy options were equally, if not more strongly, constrained by internal party preferences. The empirical evidence therefore fits the hypothesis that the emergence of more cohesive party positions on devolution significantly limited the autonomy of the party leader along this dimension. This may in turn explain why Labour's formal party position remained relatively stable, despite leadership changes and important shifts in the external act- and outcome-based incentives faced by the party.

4.4.Conclusion

The previous chapter showed that salient popular demands for regional autonomy have periodically re-emerged within Scotland and Wales. This chapter examined under which circumstances the main contenders for office at the central level were inclined to accommodate such spatially-concentrated demands for greater autonomy. Unlike much of the devolution literature, this chapter looked at regionalist accommodation by the main contenders for office from a British perspective. Approaching the issue from this perspective emphasises that both Labour and the Conservatives went against the wishes of the majority of the British electorate by offering asymmetric devolution in the mid-1970s. Over the course of the 1980s and 90s, English voters became increasingly convinced of the need to partially accommodate Scottish and Welsh demands for greater autonomy.

By 1992, survey evidence in Scotland, Wales and England suggests that the average British voter favoured asymmetric devolution to Scotland and Wales over the status quo. While Labour's pro-devolution stance matched British popular opinion in the 1990s, the Conservative Party refused to accommodate demands for greater autonomy despite majority support for the policy.

Partially, this pattern of regionalist accommodation by central level parties emerged as a result of differences in issue salience. Elections bundle together several issues into one single vote. Under these conditions, it has been shown that rational voters economise on information and vote on the basis of the two or three issues that they personally consider the most salient (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). This chapter has argued that voters in Scotland and Wales generally attach much greater importance to the issue of devolution than their English counterparts. As Besley and Coate (2000) have shown with reference to the issue of gun control in the United States, this difference in issue salience creates electoral incentives for parties competing at the central level to accommodate the views of the minority for whom the issue is highly salient.

The empirical evidence largely fits the heterogeneous issue salience hypothesis in the mid-1970s. As a result of unusually tight electoral competition at the central level, Scottish and Welsh seats had the potential to be pivotal to the overall outcome of the general election at that time. In addition, the rise in the support for nationalist parties suggested that the issue of regional autonomy was gaining in salience within both countries. The electoral geography of Britain at that time meant that the Conservative Party faced strong incentives to accommodate Scottish preferences, while the electoral gains associated with a similar move in Wales were much more limited. By contrast the Labour Party faced clear incentives to defend its strong position in both countries. This difference in the electoral incentive structure was reflected in the formal party positions in October 1974.

Electoral incentives under heterogeneous issue salience also present a viable explanation for the Conservative Party's reluctance to respond to shifts in English popular opinion during the late 1980s and early 1990s. While English support for asymmetric devolution remained limited during the 1980s, survey evidence shows that the majority of English voters in fact favoured the policy by the time of the 1992 general election. While Conservative supporters remained more sceptical than their Labour counterparts, the majority of those who voted Conservative in the previous election also favoured greater autonomy for Scotland and Wales. The focus on regional realities and grievances has meant that the existing literature on devolution rarely explicitly mentions this fact. It is however crucial to our understanding of regionalist accommodation as it suggests that the Unionist stance taken by the Conservative Party was facilitated, not only by the regionalisation of the British party system, but also by the apparent lack of salience attached to the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in England.

Within the existing literature, Labour's inclination to be more responsive to regionalist demands is also frequently related to the direct electoral benefits associated with accommodating such regionally-concentrated preferences (Keating, 1998b, 2001a). In addition, it is argued that the continued strength of the Labour Party in Scotland and Wales, coupled with the enduring Conservative pre-dominance at the central level, increasingly gave the Labour Party a outcome-based reason to favour asymmetric devolution over the existing centralised system (Keating, 2001a; Mitchell, 1998). While this chapter acknowledges that these incentives played a role in shaping Labour's position on devolution, it was argued that these external act- and outcome-based incentives primarily influenced the formal party positions of the main contenders for office through the internal preference formation process. Specifically, it was shown that the initial lack of internal cohesion on the devolution issue awarded substantial policy autonomy to the party leadership.

As the incentives outlined above convinced a growing number of Labour Party members that asymmetric devolution would be beneficial, the internal cohesion along this dimension increased. As a veto player approach would predict, there are clear signs that this emerging pro-devolution consensus limited the policy autonomy of party leaders who were personally sceptical about the need for devolution. This suggests that the internal preference formation process played a key role in ensuring the enduring commitment to devolution, as both the direct electoral gains at the central level and the relative benefits of regional office holding declined.

The next chapter draws on this analysis of the origins of the formal policy preferences of the main contenders for office in order to re-examine the main periods of decision-making making during the post-war, pre-devolution period.

5. Veto player preferences and patterns of stability and change (1945-1997)

The previous chapter examined how various act- and outcome-based incentives to support or oppose devolution shaped the preferences and policy positions of the main contenders for office at the central level. This chapter will investigate under which circumstances the resulting formal commitments to devolution are likely to lead to actual policy change. In line with much of the existing literature on Scottish and Welsh devolution, I will primarily seek to uncover the origins of the decision to maintain the status quo in the late 1970s and the mechanics behind the eventual devolution of powers and resources in the late 1990s. Re-examining these well-known events through a carefully crafted veto player approach however allows us to challenge important elements of the conventional wisdom regarding the origins of the divergent outcomes of these two decision-making moments. As Ganghof (2003) rightfully argues, the challenge of qualitative veto player research lies not so much in showing that a veto player explanation can be developed. If we are flexible enough in our attribution of preferences to partisan players this is almost always the case. In fact many of the existing explanations of devolution decisions and non-decisions could easily be couched in veto player language. What I seek to do in this chapter is show that alternative explanations can be developed and some of these explanations actually fit the available evidence more comfortably than the dominant perspective.

In particular, I qualify and challenge the common proposition that the divisiveness of the devolution issue within the Parliamentary Labour Party, coupled with the Party's narrow and fast disappearing parliamentary majority, presented the main obstacle to change in the late 1970s. As argued in chapter 4, the tight competition at the central level significantly heightened the electoral incentives to accommodate the demands of the regionalist minority in Scotland and Wales. The relatively recent re-emergence of the 'home rule' issue and the related lack of cohesive party positions in turn enabled party leaders to more strongly respond to these incentives than would otherwise have been possible.

From this perspective, the factors that are often identified as the main obstacles to change are also the very features that allowed regionalist demands to penetrate the Parliamentary agenda at all. In addition, I will argue that the general decline in party discipline that marked the 1970s was as instrumental in producing the string of government defeats over the devolution legislation as the lack of internal cohesion on the substantive issue. Finally, I will show that analysing the rules governing the use of the referendum instrument and explicitly identifying the various veto points in the range of decision-making paths available to the government radically changes our understanding of the role played by the so-called Cunningham amendment in the repeal of the 1978 Scotland Act.

Similarly, I argue that it would be overly simplistic to present the eventual change in the government system in the late 1990s as the expression of the settled will of the Scottish and Welsh people. Chapter 4 showed that the Labour Party's 1997 manifesto commitment to devolution was primarily shaped by the distribution of internal party preferences rather than electoral considerations or the level of popular support for the policy in Scotland and Wales. It is in this context that a party leader with a personal outcome-based preference for the status quo reluctantly agreed to propose reforms of constitutional importance for both Scotland and Wales.

In line with the model presented in chapter 2, the existence of conflicting act- and outcome-based incentives encouraged Tony Blair to devise a mixed policy strategy, which simultaneously sought to reap the benefits of formally supporting devolution and minimise the magnitude of the actual change to the status quo. By making devolution dependent on the outcome of pre-legislative referendums, he effectively transferred the veto powers from the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Scottish and Welsh electorates. In chapter 4 I argued that this strategy was at least partially inspired by the belief that the population might well look less favourably upon the devolution proposals than the Parliamentary Labour Party.

While the results of the 1997 referendums show that Tony Blair underestimated the popular appetite for fiscal devolution in Scotland, the narrow majority in favour of devolution in Wales suggest that he was not completely mistaken in this estimation.

5.1. The distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers

Before we turn to the specific decision-making moments under investigation here, I will briefly examine the formal distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers within the British government system prior to devolution. The famously unwritten constitution of the United Kingdom awards formal veto powers to the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Crown (McLean, 2001). When discussing devolution decisions and non-decisions, most observers however focus primarily on the proceedings in the House of Commons. While the Crown can indeed be confidently dismissed as an effective veto player in the contemporary era¹⁰, the powers retained by the House of Lords need to be discussed in a little more detail.

At the start of the twentieth century, the second chamber still enjoyed an absolute veto over all bills. In fact, it was the Lords' veto that defeated William Gladstone's 1893 Irish Government Bill, known as the Second Home Rule Bill (O'Day, 1998: 167). The 1911 Parliament Act however replaced the absolute veto power of the Lords with a suspensory veto (McLean, 2001). Under this provision, the House of Lords could only delay bills from turning into law for a maximum of two Parliamentary sessions. After this, the approval of the House of Lords would no longer be needed (Dymond & Deadman, 2006).

¹⁰ Although the Crown formally has the right to veto any bill passed by the House of Commons, it has not exercised this right since the Union between Scotland and England in 1707 (Bogdanor, 1997: 126). The royal prerogative to dissolve Parliament was last used in 1834, when King William IV dismissed Lord Melbourne's Whig administration (Loveland, 1996: 347). Interestingly, the closest a Monarch came to using any of these powers since then was in relation to the 1914 Government of Ireland Bill, which proposed a form of Home Rule for the whole of Ireland. At the time, the Ulster Unionists indicated that they would resist devolution by force if necessary. As such, the proposed legislation had the potential to lead to civil war. In this context, King George V urged both sides to exercise restraint and tried to use the threat of reviving the royal prerogatives to broker a compromise. It has been suggested that this royal involvement may have played a role in enticing Prime Minister Asquith to propose a temporary opt-out for Ulster (Bogdanor, 1997: 128).

The 1945-1951 Labour government in turn used the provisions of the 1911 Parliamentary Act to reduce the suspensory veto of the second chamber to just one Parliamentary session.

As the period investigated here falls entirely in the period after the 1949 Parliamentary Act, the House of Lords can be treated as an institutional player with suspensory veto power of up to a year. In effect this means that any government period can be split into two games; a post-election and a pre-election game (McLean, 2001: 25). When a government is newly elected, the second chamber does not have the power to veto legislation. It can however significantly delay the legislative process and force the House of Commons to discuss and vote on particular elements of a proposed policy again (Loveland, 1996). When the government does not hold a strong majority or is internally divided over an issue, such interventions may still result in significant changes to the legislation. In the final session before a general election is due, the rules of the game change. During this period, a rejection in the House of Lord can potentially prevent change from occurring, as the election may lead to a change of government and this government may not choose to seek to overturn the Lords decision in the House of Commons.

Of the two decision-making periods under consideration here, only the 1979 devolution legislation was still under debate in the final year before the next general election. As Labour did not return to power in the subsequent election, the House of Lords formally had veto power during this period. Informally, these powers were however curtailed by the Salisbury Doctrine. This convention was adopted as part of an agreement reached during the 1945-1951 Labour Government. In recognition of the democratic legitimacy of the Commons, it states that members of the House of Lords should refrain from obstructing any legislation that was part of the party program of the governing party in the general elections (Loveland, 1996).

Although emergency bills have been introduced in relation to specific developments in Northern Ireland, bills concerning the decentralisation of power to British regions have consistently been based on specific manifesto commitments. As a result the absolute veto of the Lords has for all practical purposes been removed with regards to this issue.

The developments in the 1970s clearly illustrate the constraining influence of the Salisbury Doctrine. The number of government defeats and amendments proposed by the House of Lords indicates that the policy did not enjoy majority support within the upper chamber. However, the government's devolution proposals for Scotland and Wales were clearly based on explicit manifesto commitments (Labour Party, 1974 October). As a result, most members of the House did not attempt to use the suspensory veto power to obstruct this legislation. The exception to this rule was Lord Wilson of Langside's attempt to sideline the 1978 Scotland Bill by moving an amendment which would decline the bill a second reading. In response the other Lordships duly reminded him of his duty under the Salisbury doctrine. Despite his well-known personal opposition to devolution, Lord Ferrers, the deputy leader of the opposition, stated that "It was in the Labour Party's Manifesto and therefore, by convention, the Government are deemed to have a mandate for it. It is therefore not our duty to prevent its consideration." (Hansard (Lords), 14th March 1978, vol. 389, cols. 1202). The next day, Lord Wilson withdrew the amendment.

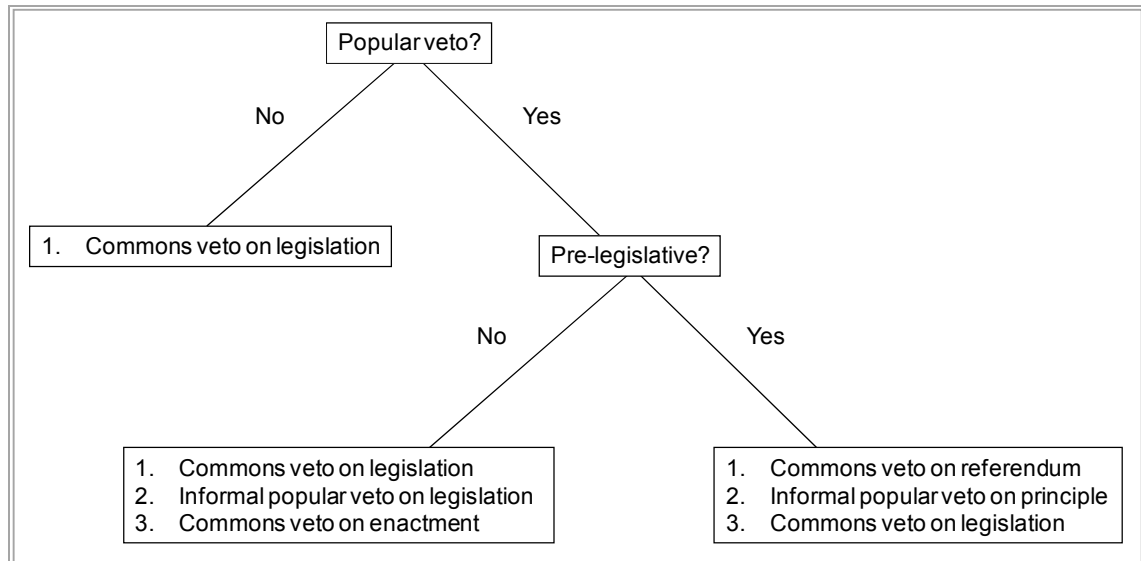
As the previous discussion shows, the House of Commons was the only institution that could effectively use its formal right to veto during the decision-making periods under consideration here. As noted in chapter 4, the electoral system and nature of the British party system mean that a single party usually controls a comfortable majority of the seats with the House. In addition party discipline is usually relatively high. As a result, the agenda-setting and decision-making powers are usually strongly concentrated in the hands of the Cabinet in general and the Prime Minister in particular.

On the rare occasions when the government does not control the majority of the seats or party unity is unusually low, several opposition parties tend to gain *potential* veto powers at the same time (McLean, et al., 2005). Under these circumstances, the government can thus choose which, if any, of these groups it wants to accommodate. As a result, the governing elite can be said to retain its agenda-setting powers, even under minority government conditions.

If it wishes to do so, the government can in turn use its agenda-setting powers to keep a particular subject off the parliamentary agenda altogether. Alternatively it can delay decision-making by asking an external commission to examine different policy options and make a recommendation. This form of pre-legislative consultation can be used to develop legislation in policy areas that are particularly contentious or technically demanding (Chapman & Royal Institute of Public Administration., 1973). The degree to which such commissions are truly independent from the government has been questioned (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2001). Nonetheless, any legislation directly resulting from commission recommendations may still enjoy greater legitimacy than a direct government proposal. From a more cynical perspective, governing elites can also use the instrument to postpone and possibly even prevent unwanted policy change. In other words, establishing a commission can be a symbolic gesture that aims to avoid rather than inform real policy change (Rein & White, 1977).

When the government does decide to introduce legislation in parliament, it has a choice of three decision-making paths (Blau, 2008). Within the British system, there are no formal rules that distinguish changes of constitutional importance from other types of legislation. Devolution can therefore be enacted through the normal legislative process, despite the fact that it would profoundly change the system of government itself. Alternatively, the government may choose to award an informal veto to the general public through the use of a pre- or post-legislative referendum. Figure 5.1 schematically summarises these options and the veto points within in each path. I will firstly discuss the normal legislative process before turning to the effects of adding an informal popular veto to the decision-making path.

Figure 5.1 Veto points in three alternative decision-making paths



Under the normal legislative process, the government will make an initial proposal in the form of a bill. Once a bill has been formally introduced, known as the first reading, it will be subjected to a second reading. At this stage, the general principles of the government's proposal are discussed on the floor of the House of Commons, after which the House votes on the second reading of the bill. The official Opposition frequently votes against the second reading of a government bill. In most cases, their voting power is however too limited to deny the bill a second reading. Failure at this stage is however possible when the government does not enjoy a strong majority and/or party unity is compromised. Once a bill is given a second reading, it is examined in a more detail during the committee stage.

As a convention, bills of constitutional importance are considered in committee of the whole House (Burton & Drewry, 1979: 175). During this stage, any member of the House of Commons can propose amendments. If an amendment gains the support of the majority of the MPs present at the time of the division, the content of the bill will be adjusted accordingly. The government may use this opportunity to move relatively minor or technical amendments to its own initial proposal. More substantial government-initiated amendments only tend to occur in response to unexpected opposition to the initial proposals.

In the context of uncertainty and imperfect information, the government may at times misjudge the mood in the House of Commons. As a result, the initial proposal may be inadvertently positioned outside of the winset of the status quo, in the sense that the proposed policy change is not preferred to the existing system by all of the relevant veto players. Under such circumstances, the government may attempt to salvage the legislation by making concessions.

Aside from the governing elites, individual members of parliament can also move amendments to the government's proposals. As a result, both members of the opposition and the government's own backbench gain secondary agenda-setting power at this stage. If it wishes to do so, the governing elite can attempt to curtail the powers of ordinary MPs during the committee stage by using an allocation of time or 'guillotine' motion. Provided that such a motion is agreed upon by a majority in the House, this sets a limit to the time allocated for debate. Once this limit is reached, the Speaker will ask the House to vote on a bill, even if some of its clauses have not been discussed yet (House of Commons Information Office, 2004). This not only speeds up the legislative process, but also limits the ability of ordinary MPs to challenge and potentially change the Cabinet's initial proposal.

If it sees this as desirable, the government can add a pre- or post-legislative referendum to the normal legislative process. In the British system referendums are by definition facultative in nature, in the sense that the constitution does not stipulate that specific types of policy changes can only take effect following a mandatory popular referendum (Suksi, 1993). Instead, a popular vote can be triggered through the normal legislative process. In the case of a post-legislative referendum, the government introduces a fully-fledged policy proposal with a referendum requirement. Once this bill is agreed upon, the legislation as a whole is put to a popular vote. On the basis of the referendum result, the House then decides whether or not the agreed legislation should be enacted. In the case of a pre-legislative referendum, the government firstly introduces a referendum bill.

If elite agreement can be reached about the need for a popular vote, the public is then consulted on the general principle of the proposed reform. If the referendum result is deemed to provide a popular mandate for change, the government will subsequently introduce a fully-fledged bill, which then passes through the normal legislative process.

In both cases, the bill that triggers the popular vote also sets out the referendum question(s), the decision-making rules and the 'referendorate' (i.e. who is eligible to vote) (Luke & Johnson, 1976). The outcome of the subsequent vote is consultative rather than decisive, as the House formally has the power to enact legislation even if the percentage in favour of the proposal at the polls falls below the threshold previously agreed in the bill. In practice, enacting a bill that was opposed by the majority of those who cast their vote in a referendum will raise serious legitimacy issues. The House does however hold a credible final veto if the proposal was endorsed by a simple majority, but failed to surpass a more stringent threshold set out within the bill. As a result, the pre and post-legislative referendum paths theoretically include three rather than two veto points.

So far, we have looked at the general distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers within the British system. The remainder of this chapter will seek to show that re-analysing the main decision-making moments through this perspective allows us to qualify and challenge elements of the conventional wisdom regarding the dynamics of regionalist accommodation in pre-devolution mainland Britain.

5.2. The decision to maintain of the status quo in the 1970s

As was discussed in chapter 4, the re-emergence of spaces of regionalism in the 1950s and 60s initially met with a relatively muted response from the main contenders for office. The success of the SNP and Plaid Cymru in the 1968 by-elections encouraged the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, to establish a Royal Commission to enquire into constitutional matters in general and the need for devolution to Scotland and Wales in particular (Wilson, 1979).

Especially since the Labour leader subsequently showed little interest in the work of the Commission, this move was widely seen as mere paying lip service to regionalist demands (Hill, 2004). While the Conservative leader, Edward Heath, proved largely immune to Welsh demands, his infamous 1968 Declaration of Perth did make a clear commitment to a moderate form of Home Rule for Scotland. While this pledge was duly included in the 1970 election manifesto (Conservative Party, 1970), the promised proposals for a Scottish Convention sitting in Edinburgh were never placed before Parliament when the Party did return to office.

The inactivity on the part of the 1970-1974 government under Edward Heath is frequently taken as evidence that the Conservative Party's manifesto commitment to devolution was purely based on electoral incentives (Gamble, 2006; Mitchell, 1990). Such an explanation clearly runs the risk of circularity; the argument made is in effect that where public statements and manifesto commitments do not match the government's actions, 'true' preferences must have been different from the stated aims. In addition, the conduct of Edward Heath during the mid to late 1970s does not fit this explanation well. As discussed in the chapter 4, Heath personally continued to support Scottish devolution, despite the increasingly unionist stance taken by his Party under his successor, Margaret Thatcher. This strongly suggests that Heath's personal preference for devolution may not have been purely based on the perceived electoral gains associated with the act of publicly supporting the policy. Rather it would seem that Heath's commitment to moderate devolution was partially based on the belief that this would be the best way to safeguard the future of the Union in the face of growing popular demands for greater autonomy in Scotland. In light of this evidence, I would argue that Heath's reluctance to act on his manifesto pledge should be related to the preference constellation within the rest of the parliamentary party, rather than the feebleness of his own convictions.

When Heath made his Declaration of Perth in 1968, the Conservative Party faced clear electoral incentives to accommodate Scottish demands for greater autonomy. Nonetheless, the Parliamentary Party was strongly divided over the policy. When the SNP did not attract the expected level of support in the 1970 general election, internal opposition to devolution became more pronounced (Mitchell, 2006). In this context, Heath's apparent decision to pursue the less controversial elements of his agenda first seems prudent. The slow progress of the Royal Commission on the Constitution, created by the previous Labour administration, initially provided an excellent guise for such a strategy. When the Commission finally did produce its report, this did not provide the clear and unified defence of moderate devolution that Heath might have been hoping for. As such it was of little help in convincing the many sceptics within his party of the need for Scottish devolution. Against the backdrop of rising unemployment rates, disruptive industrial action, and the 1973 oil crisis, it therefore seems hardly surprising that the Prime Minister chose to sidetrack the internally divisive issue of Scottish Home Rule in favour of less controversial and perhaps more immediately pressing issues.

Whatever the true origins of the relative inaction during the early years of the regionalist revival, it is clear that the sharp rise in third party voting that marked the February 1974 general election radically changed the dynamics of regionalist accommodation in the 1970s. While much of the devolution literature focuses on the surprisingly strong showing of the SNP, chapter 4 demonstrated that the shifts in voting patterns elsewhere were equally important. Specifically, it was argued that the electoral incentives to accommodate the regionalist minority in Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales were significantly amplified by the exceptionally tight electoral competition in England. Under these circumstances, Scottish and Welsh constituencies had a real potential to be pivotal to the overall outcome of the election. As a result, the potential benefits associated with offering moderate devolution were unusually large. Despite internal reservations, both the Conservative and the Labour Party leader proved susceptible to these electoral incentives.

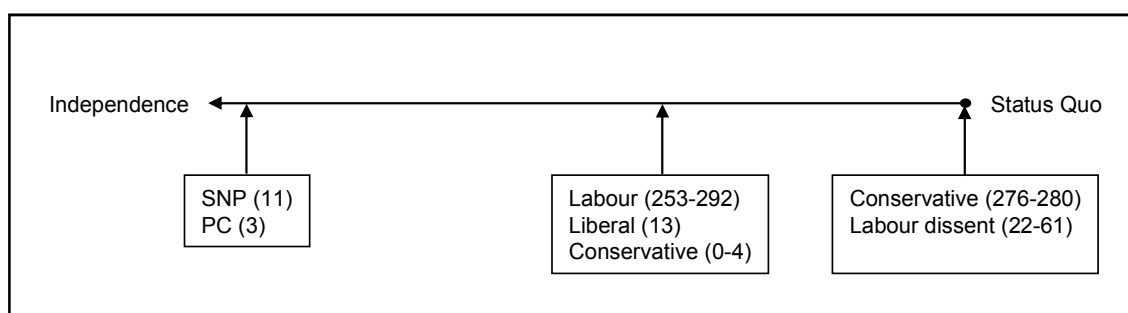
The relative autonomy enjoyed by the leadership of both Parties, combined with the lack of a well-defined internal consensus on the appropriate response to the regionalist revival, in turn allowed both Edward Heath and Harold Wilson to foist their personal views upon their respective Parties.

As could have been anticipated, the nature of the electoral competition at the central level and the lack of internal cohesion on the devolution subject both allowed regionalist concerns to penetrate the parliamentary agenda and made policy change more difficult to achieve. Having emerged from the second 1974 election with a slender majority of the seats, the incumbent Labour government initially seemed reluctant to deal with the divisive issue of Home Rule. The intention to introduce devolution legislation in due course was however clear in the government's dealing with related issues, such as the development agency Bills for Scotland and Wales and the three Bills related to petroleum development and oil taxation introduced in the 1974-75 session (Burton & Drewry, 1977). In January 1976, shortly after the publication of the White Paper on devolution to Scotland and Wales (HMSO, 1975), the government set aside four days for debate. This discussion exposed significant opposition across the House, with Labour backbenchers joining opposition parties in their critique of the government's proposals (Hansard (Commons), 13th- 19th of January 1976, vol. 903 cols 207-344, cols 398-546, cols 590-742 and cols 925-1076).

Although the government was aware of the likelihood of some dissent, the sheer scale of backbench opposition seemed to take the Labour leadership by surprise. Simultaneously, the governing party was gradually losing its slim overall majority as a result of by-elections and MPs crossing the floor. Taken together, this meant that several groups within the House acquired potential veto powers. As discussed in chapter 2, the degree to which the emergence of additional veto players presents a real obstacle to change very much depends on the policy preference of these players. Tsebelis (2002) argues that a one-party minority government is usually able to achieve its preferred policy position, as the preferences of this type of government tend to be fairly centrally located within the policy space.

Figure 5.2 schematically depicts the preference constellation in the House of Commons on the devolution issue in November 1976. The precise location of party preferences and the size of dissenting tendencies within each party are debatable. In the absence of comprehensive survey evidence, we have no other option than to, at least partially, base party preferences on actual voting behaviour. Figure 5.2 should thus be seen as descriptive rather than explanatory.

Figure 5.2 Preference constellation in the House of Commons (November 1976, majority=318 votes)



Source: own estimation based on Wood & Jacoby (1984)

By the end of 1976, the Labour government's share of the seats was reduced from 319 to 314, leaving the government 4 seats short of an overall majority. Formally, the governing party favoured devolution to both Scotland and Wales. During the decision-making process, the lack of party unity on the issue however soon became apparent. The devolution literature tends to see this behaviour as symptomatic of the lack of internal cohesion on the devolution topic (Jones & Keating, 1982; Keating & Bleiman, 1979). As chapter 4 argued, the Labour Party's formal policy position on devolution was strongly elite-driven. From the outset, it was clear that many Labour MPs did not support devolution on ideological grounds and were significantly less willing to prioritise short-term electoral gains over their long-term outcome preferences. As a result, it can be argued that subject-specific backbench rebellions were to be foreseen from the outset. Cohesion in terms of preferences is however only one element of party unity.

Discipline, understood as the ability of the leadership to persuade party members to vote in accordance with the official party line regardless of their personal preferences, also plays an important role. General trends in party discipline can provide us with a fuller understanding of the causes of the lack of unity that frustrated the government's attempts to change the status quo in the 1970s.

Within the UK, party unity has traditionally been high. As late as 1969, a prominent political scientist claimed that party loyalty was indeed so close to a hundred per cent that there was no need to measure the level of backbench dissent (Beer, 1969). As a result, parties could for all practical purposes be treated as unitary actors during this period. The 1970-1974 Conservative government however marked a distinct change in MP behaviour. During its lifespan, Edward Heath's government faced unprecedented levels of dissent from its own backbench. Not only did the number of divisions witnessing dissent increase markedly, so did the number of dissenters per division. In total, backbench rebellions caused six government defeats between 1970 and 1974. Significantly, three of these defeats occurred despite a three-line whip, the breach of which can lead to effective expulsion from the party (Norton, 1997).

This pattern of behaviour continued when Labour came to power in 1974. As Table 5.1 shows, both the governing party and the formal opposition faced considerable backbench dissent between October 1974 and May 1979. In the case of the Conservative Party, the percentage of devolution-related divisions witnessing dissent was only slightly higher than the share of general divisions that befell the same fate. Within the Labour Party, the divisiveness of the Party's formal stance on devolution meant that the government was particularly vulnerable to backbench rebellions on this issue. However, the Labour leadership also faced dissent in around 20 per cent of the whipped divisions on other topics. This suggests that this general trend towards lower party discipline was at least partially to blame for the lack of party unity with respect to devolution.

Table 5.1 Number of divisions witnessing dissent as a percentage of all divisions during the 1974-1979 Parliament¹¹

	General divisions	Devolution-related divisions
Conservative	16%	19%
Labour	20%	42%

Source: Own calculation based on Norton (1980)

It is difficult to determine the size of a dissenting tendency within a political party. Based on voting behaviour in 16 major devolution divisions, Wood and Jacoby (1984) find that around 7 per cent of Labour MPs behaved in a way that would suggest a cohesive anti-devolution stance. A further 12 to 13 percent behaved in a centrist way. Given the relatively low level of party discipline, these centrist MP could be seen as at risk of dissenting. Based on these calculations, the Labour leadership could count on around 253 of its 314 MP to toe the party line on devolution. A further 39 were likely to support the leadership on some but not all occasions. As a result the government needed to secure the support of at least 26 non-Labour MPs in order to change the status quo. Jointly, the Liberals, the SNP and Plaid Cymru represented 27 seats in the House. Even if the Labour leadership was able to effectively enforce party discipline amongst moderately centrist Labour MPs, the support of these pro-devolution parties would thus only be sufficient to create the slenderest majority in favour of devolution.

The October 1974 Conservative election manifesto (Conservative Party, 1974b) formally endorsed devolution to Scotland, but not to Wales. After Edward Heath lost his position as party leader to Margaret Thatcher in February 1975, the Conservative position became increasingly Unionist. Most of the Parliamentary Party was happy to conform to this shift, while a small number of Conservative MPs remained dedicated to Scottish devolution.

¹¹ In order to ensure comparability with the data on general divisions, all dissenting votes on devolution-related divisions were included to calculate the percentage of such divisions that witnessed dissent.

Based on Wood and Jacoby's (1984) analysis, just under 2 per cent of Conservative MPs displayed consistent pro-devolution tendencies in their voting behaviour. As a result, the government could count on a limited level of Conservative support for its plans in Scotland. With respect to Wales, the willingness to dissent from the party line was even more limited.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is therefore clear that achieving devolution through the normal legislative process was always going to be very difficult. While the governing elite may not have been fully aware of this when it first introduced the legislation, the lack of progress made by the initial devolution bill soon made it apparent that considerable concessions would have to be made in order for the legislation to survive. Simultaneously, the loss of an overall majority created additional political act-based incentives not to abandon the devolution issue altogether. The by-election losses and defections suffered by the Labour Party formally awarded potential veto powers to a range of pro- and anti-devolution opposition parties (McLean, et al., 2005). Given the fact that the government had already introduced the devolution legislation by the time it lost its majority, pro-devolution groups however faced much stronger output-based incentives to keep the Labour Party in power while this legislation was still being debated.

In this context, the Labour party leadership attempted to salvage the Scotland and Wales Bill by bringing its own backbench back into line. To this effect, it conceded that "referenda should be held in Scotland and Wales before the respective schemes can be put into effect" (Hansard (Commons), 16th of December 1976, vol. 922, col. 1736). As discussed in chapter 2, the introduction of a popular veto can help to restore party discipline by appealing to the democratic sensibilities of party members. I would argue that the unifying effect of the instrument was further heightened in this case by the precarious position of the government at that time. Given its minority status, a defeat on a key issue could easily trigger a no-confidence motion.

To survive such an attempt to dethrone it, the minority Labour government would in turn have to rely quite strongly on the support of pro-devolution opposition parties, like the Liberals, the SNP and Plaid Cymru (Bogdanor, 1980). Simultaneously, by-election results and opinion polls suggested that Labour could suffer substantial losses in the event of early elections. As a result, Labour MPs faced considerable act-based incentives not to obstruct the devolution legislation.

Under these circumstances, the inclusion of a popular veto did initially seem to have the desired effect and the second reading of the Scotland and Wales Bill was carried by 292 votes to 247 (Hansard (Commons), 16th of December 1976, vol. 922, col.1874). Even with the referendum concession, 10 Labour MPs however voted against the second reading of the Bill. A further 31 Labour MPs chose to abstain. Opposition to the government's proposal continued during the committee stage. After 10 days of heated debates, less than 4 clauses had been debated. The government attempted to curb the powers of ordinary MPs and opposition parties through the use of an allocation of time motion. Moved by the Leader of the House of Commons in February 1977, the motion was defeated 312 to 283 (Hansard (Commons), 22nd of February 1977, vol. 926, cols.1234-1367). Significantly, 22 Labour MPs and 11 Liberals joined the Opposition in voting against the government. A further 21 Labour MPs chose to abstain. This remains the only time a government has been defeated on a guillotine motion during the post war period.

The defeat of the government's guillotine motion led to the withdrawal of the original bill and the introduction of two separate bills for Scotland and Wales. Government papers recently released by the National Archives show that the Cabinet took a calculated risk in separating the two proposals. It was argued that "the Scottish National Party and the Plaid Cymru could hardly fail to support the Government in key votes" (Cabinet Office, 1977:6). In addition, the pact between the Labour government and the Liberals, formed in the context of the no-confidence motion tabled in March 1977, meant that "the Liberal support was also assured" (Cabinet Office, 1977:6).

In this context, the Cabinet's main challenge would therefore be to control its own backbench. As uncertainty about the level of popular demand for devolution was frequently advanced as a reason for opposing Welsh Home Rule, it was hoped that the concession of a popular referendum would pacify the resistance of more moderate Labour backbenchers. In addition, the Cabinet anticipated that good progress on the Scotland Bill would aid agreement on a similar policy for Wales. In the end, this political manoeuvring indeed proved sufficient to secure a convincing majority on the second reading and allocation of time motions of both bills (Hansard (Commons) 14-16th of November 1977, vol 939, cols. 51-213, cols. 357-511, cols. 579-654 and cols. 655-726).

Despite the fact that both bills were successfully guillotined, opposition parties as well as Labour backbenchers were able to use their agenda-setting powers to make a number of amendments during the committee stage. To fully understand the behaviour of MPs during this phase, policy preferences need to be clearly distinguished from output preferences (Ganghof, 2003). As the legislation would be subjected to an informal popular veto, the committee stage was dominated by strategic calculations about which policy would be most likely to lead to the desired outcome. In this context, specific clauses were considered not only in terms of their substantive merit, but also on the basis of their likely influence on popular opinion. For example, a number of anti-devolutionists voted against the inclusion of a clause which declared that devolution would not affect the unity of the Kingdom (Hansard (Commons), 22nd of November 1977, vol. 939, cols. 1323-1409). Were devolution to occur, the substance of the clause proposed by the government would be clearly in accordance with the outcome preferences of Unionist MPs. Strategically the removal of this clause could however aid the campaign efforts of the No-camp, as it would make it easier to argue that devolution would inevitably lead to the break-up of Britain (Mitchell, 1996: 161). This in turn would increase the chance of the government's proposals failing at the polls and the status quo being maintained.

Other efforts to maintain the status quo focussed on changing the decision-making rules that would govern the informal popular veto. When the Government was forced to concede to a popular referendum, it had deliberately limited the referendorate to those living in Scotland and Wales at the time of the poll. As Chapter 4 showed, the English population was far from convinced of the need for devolution to either Scotland or Wales at that time. Securing a majority in favour of the government's proposals would therefore be practically impossible if English voters were to be directly consulted on the matter. By defining the referendorate more narrowly, the government greatly diminished the stabilising effect of the referendum instrument. Recently released papers show that the government expected this definition of the referendorate to be challenged during the Parliamentary debates (Privy Council Office, 1977). During the debate surrounding the Scotland Bill, Labour MP William Hamilton indeed tried in vain to make devolution dependent on a UK-wide referendum. On this rare occasion, pro-devolution Conservative dissent outweighed anti-devolution Labour dissent and the proposal was defeated by 186 votes to 122 (Hansard (Commons), 25th of January 1978, vol. 942, cols.1424-1459).

The proposals of two of Hamilton's backbench colleagues fared considerably better. As discussed earlier, any referendum in Britain is consultative in nature and the decision-making rule is determined within the relating bill. By default, one would assume that the simple majority rule is employed, meaning that a proposal is said to enjoy a popular mandate if it is supported by over 50 per cent of those who voted in the referendum. The fact that this rule can be changed through the normal decision-making procedure however provides those who oppose a policy with an additional opportunity to increase policy stability. The Eurosceptic Conservative MP, Peter Emery, first tried to employ this strategy in relation to the 1975 European Community Referendum Bill. However, his proposal for qualified majority voting did not even make it to a vote in the House. By contrast, anti-devolution Labour backbenchers did succeed in dividing the House and securing a majority in favour of a more restrictive voting system.

Primarily this opportunity was created by the preference constellation in the House. The 1975 Referendum Bill clearly enjoyed majority support at the time. It was given a second reading by 312 to 248 votes (Hansard (Commons), 10th of April 1975, vol. 889, cols. 1543-1548). Significantly, none of the Labour MPs defied the party whip and less than a handful chose to abstain. This stand in stark contrast with the level of backbench opposition recorded in respect to the devolution legislation. The fact that the amendments were moved by Labour's own backbench, combined with the cleverly chosen wording of the threshold, may have also played an important role. The first amendment moved by Labour MP Bruce Douglas-Mann called for the Scotland Act to be repealed if less than one-third of the persons entitled to vote on the referendum voted 'Yes'. Another Labour MP, George Cunningham, subsequently moved an amendment to this amendment which replaced one-third of the electorate by 40 per cent. By stipulating a share of the eligible electorate, rather than those who voted, the rebels were able to set thresholds that seemed fairly modest. This in turn made it easier to argue that these levels could be easily reached, if support for devolution was indeed as widespread as the government claimed (Mitchell, 1996: 162-163).

Given the preference constellation of the House, this cunning strategy proved sufficient to ensure that the main amendment, as amended, was passed by 168 votes to 142. At the time, 37 Labour MPs defied the party whip to support Cunningham's proposal (Hansard (Commons), 25th of January 1978, vol. 942, cols. 1546-1547). During the third reading of the Scotland Bill, the government to no avail tried to overturn the amendment or reduce the threshold (Hansard (Commons), 15th of February 1978, vol. 944, cols. 533-607). This change in the decision-making rule is widely credited with the ultimate failure of the devolution legislation in Scotland (Keating, 1998b; MacLeod, 1998a). Although it clearly played an important role, a structured veto point analysis shows that the distribution of preferences within Scotland and the divisiveness of the issue within the Labour Party were at least as important.

Where a referendum is mandatory, the failure to obtain the approval of a pre-defined share of the electorate inevitably results in the failure of the legislation. This famously occurred in the 1939 Danish referendum on the reform of the Upper House. Even though over 90 per cent of those who cast a vote were in favour of the reform, low turnout rates meant that the level of support fell just short of the 45 per cent of the electorate threshold (Qvortrup, 2005). As a result, the status quo was maintained. The 1979 devolution referendums in Scotland and Wales were however consultative in nature. In the event of insufficient popular support, the government was merely required to lay before Parliament the draft of an Order in Council for repeal of the policy (Bogdanor, 1994). The Parliament however retained the formal right to vote down this draft order (see Figure 5.1). If it had chosen to do this, the devolution legislation could still have been enacted in its original form.

The conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held on the morning of the devolution referendums indicate that the party leadership had little appetite to rescue the 1978 Wales Act in the event of a failure at the polls. In fact, James Callaghan noted that “a clear vote against devolution might be received with some relief in Wales” (Cabinet Office, 1979a: 1). In this respect, the Prime Minister received what he had hoped for, as the Welsh referendum indeed returned the clearest possible rejection of devolution. Even in the regionalist heartland of Gwynedd, support for the policy failed to surpass 35 per cent of the vote (see Table 5.2). Given these decisive results, asking Parliament to vote down the draft order would not have been feasible, even if the political will to do so had existed. Instead, the Cabinet decided it would try to secure an inter-party agreement on “administrative arrangements which could provide some measure of devolution to Wales”(Cabinet Office, 1979b).

Table 5.2 Referendum vote by region (Wales 1979)

Region	Percentage in favour of devolution
Clwyd	21.6%
Dyfed	28.1%
Gwent	12.1%
Gwynedd	34.4%
Mid Glamorgan	20.2%
Powys	18.5%
South Glamorgan	13.1%
West Glamorgan	18.7%
Total (as a percentage of the votes)	20.3%
Total (as a percentage of the electorate)	11.8%

Source: Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

With respect to the Scottish proposals, the referendum results were more problematic. In the run up to the referendum, the Labour leadership was clearly preparing itself for the scenario where a majority voted in favour of devolution, but the turnout was insufficient to clear the 40 per cent threshold. Here, the minutes of the Cabinet meeting show that the Labour leadership was willing to ask the parliament to vote down the repeal order (Cabinet Office, 1979a). As Cunningham himself had argued (Hansard (Commons), 25th of January 1978, vol. 942, col. 1472), the Parliament could have justifiably taken this course of action if the majority in favour of the proposals was deemed sufficiently convincing. In reality, the Scottish referendum only returned a very slender overall majority in favour of devolution. On a turnout of 63 per cent, this fell well short of the 40 per cent threshold. In addition, support for devolution was highly spatially uneven (see Table 5.3); of the 12 Scottish regions, only 6 returning a majority in favour of the government's proposals.

Table 5.3 Referendum vote by region (Scotland 1979)

Region	Percentage in favour of devolution
Borders	40.3%
Central	54.7%
Dumfries and Galloway	40.3%
Fife	53.7%
Grampian	48.3%
Highland	51.0%
Lothian	50.1%
Orkney	27.9%
Shetland	27.0%
Strathclyde	54.0%
Tayside	49.0%
Western Isles	55.8%
Total (as a percentage of the votes)	51.6%
Total (as a percentage of the electorate)	32.9%

Source: Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

At the best of times, this result would have made it difficult for the government to legitimately insist on the enactment of the original Bill (Bogdanor, 1994). In the context of a minority government in an exceptionally weak position, the outcome presented the Prime Minister with a real dilemma. Given the strong opposition to devolution within the Labour Party, asking Parliament to vote down the repeal order for the Scotland Act despite the lack of a clear popular mandate would have seriously jeopardised the unity of the Party. In addition such a move stood little chance of success, given the preference constellation in the House. Labour no longer controlled the majority of the seats at Westminster. In addition, enquiries by the Government Whips indicated that even on a whipped vote 40 or so Labour MPs would be willing to ignore the request to vote down the repeal order (Wilson, 1979). Under these circumstances, the Scotland Act would be repealed, even if Callaghan managed to secure the full support of the Liberals, the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

On its part, the Scottish National Party however insisted that the referendum result did create a popular mandate for devolution. It therefore demanded that the government lay the draft order before Parliament and committed itself fully to the rejection of the repeal (Cabinet Office, 1979c).

Especially since the Lib-Lab Pact was formally terminated in the summer of 1978, the decision to ignore these demands and the withdrawal of SNP support such a move was likely to trigger would leave the Labour government vulnerable to defeat within a no-confidence motion. The minutes of the first Cabinet meeting after the referendum show that Callaghan was acutely aware of this risk (Cabinet Office, 1979b). In a desperate attempt to pacify the situation, he called for inter-party talks on the future of Scotland to be held prior to the debate on the repeal of the Scotland Act (Hansard (Commons), 22nd of March 1979, vol. 964, cols. 1692-1705). The SNP responded to this suggestion by tabling a motion condemning this course of action. The Conservatives sensed an opportunity and, after consultation with the Liberals, they put down a motion of no-confidence.

During the days that followed, the Labour leadership frantically tried to secure the support of other opposition parties. In the end, the reluctance to 'buy' Ulster votes in return for in exchange for a deal on a gas pipeline for Northern Ireland (Butler & Kavanagh, 2000) and the absence of a Labour backbencher due to illness allowed the Opposition to secure a 1 vote majority in favour of the motion (Hansard (Commons) 28th of March 1979, vol. 965 col. 583-590). The resulting general election produced the widely anticipated Conservative landslide. Shortly afterwards, the draft repeal orders laid before the House by the previous government were approved, with the House dividing Ayes 301 and Noes 206 in the case of Scotland Act (Hansard (Commons), 20th of June 1979, vol. 968 cols. 1327-1462) and Ayes 191 and Noes 8 in the case of the Wales Act (Hansard (Commons), 26th of June 1979, vol. 969 cols. 300-359).

5.3.Regionalist accommodation in the late 1990s

During the 18 years of Conservative rule that followed, regionalist demands scarcely penetrated the parliamentary agenda at all. As chapter 3 showed, this prolonged period of Conservative predominance, despite the lack of support for Party in Scotland and Wales, proved a potent source of democratic regionalism in both countries.

Simultaneously, Labour's strong performance at the regional level, combined with its seeming inability to gain office at the centre, slowly produced a more cohesive pro-devolution stance within the Party itself. In chapter 4, I have argued that it was this shift in the internal preference structure in general, and the salience attached to the issue by the Scottish and Welsh sections of the Party in particular, that ultimately convinced the then party leader, Tony Blair, to retain the Party's longstanding commitment to devolution. As a result the 1997 Labour Manifesto pledged to "meet the demand for decentralisation of power to Scotland and Wales, once established in referendums."(Labour Party, 1997)

When the 1997 indeed resulted in the long-anticipated return to power for the Labour Party, this opened up a window for change. This time around, the government was in a very strong position to reach elite agreement on its preferred type of devolution. While its 1970s predecessor had been part of that rare breed of minority governments in the UK, the 1997-2001 Labour government made history by securing the largest seats majority since the Second World War. With the Party controlling over 60 per cent of the seats at Westminster, the leadership could theoretically absorb backbench rebellions of up to 88 MPs. As a result it was able to avoid defeat on highly divisive and salient issues like the 1999 Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill and the 2000 Transport Bill. The autonomy of the party leadership was further aided by the relatively high level of party discipline (Cowley & Stuart, 2003). Throughout its lifetime, the 1997-2001 Labour government only faced 96 incidences of backbench dissent; less than any full term government since the 1960s. By contrast, the 1974-1979 Labour government faced 309 backbench rebellions during its lifetime; the largest number faced by any government during the post war period.

Under these circumstances, it would have been possible to secure elite agreement, even if the devolution issue had continued to be relatively divisive within the Parliamentary Labour Party. As noted, the preference constellation within the Party had however become considerably more cohesive during its time in opposition.

The British Representation Study (Norris, 1997) shows that by 1997 over 90 percent of Labour MPs supported either devolution or full independence for Scotland. Unfortunately, MPs were not asked about their views on devolution to Wales. The 1992 British Candidate Study (Norris, 1992) however suggests that the level of support for greater autonomy for Wales was only moderately lower. As a result, significant backbench dissent could be practically ruled out.

The legislative process indeed conformed to this prediction. The Referendums (Scotland and Wales) Act was the first bill to be introduced by the new Labour government. On the 3rd of June, the time for debate was successfully limited to two days. Not a single Labour MP dissented from the party line. In addition every present Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru and SNP MP also voted in favour of the government's timetable motion. The attending MPs from the Conservative Party and the Ulster Unionist Party all voted against. Taken together this meant that the House divided: Ayes 420, Noes 154 (Hansard (Commons), 3rd of June 1997, vol. 295, col. 240). Attempts to make amendments to the government's proposals during the committee stage on the floor of the House of Commons all failed (Hansard (Commons), 3rd- 4th of June, vol. 295, cols. 247-306 and 398-528). The only substantial amendment proposed by the Lords befell the same fate. The attempt to force the government to hold the referendums in Scotland and Wales on the same day was defeated by 349 to 134 (Hansard (Commons), 30th of July 1997, vol. 299, col. 405). Again the House was perfectly divided according to party lines, with all attending Conservatives MPs voting in favour of the Lords' amendment and Labour, Liberal Democrat, PC and SNP MPs voting against.

The government's strong position at Westminster however did not mean that the Labour leadership could unilaterally enact its ideal position. Instead, the Prime Minister was bound by the commitments made within the 1997 Labour election manifesto (Labour Party, 1997).

The result of an extensive internal bargaining process, this manifesto essentially represents a compromise between a sceptical party leader and an influential group of party members with a strong preference for devolution (see chapter 4). By making an explicit commitment to devolution and setting out an ambitious time line for the legislative process, the document sought to dispel fear that the party leadership would use its control over the parliamentary agenda to delay and possibly prevent a decision from occurring at all. Simultaneously, Tony Blair used his internal agenda-setting and decision-making powers to introduce additional veto players in the system. In Wales, the government would ask voters for the mandate to create an elected Welsh Assembly. Scottish voters would in turn be presented with a two-question pre-legislative referendum on the merits of an elected Scottish Parliament and the need for tax-varying powers. As the Labour Party looked set to comfortably win the elections at the time, pro-devolution sections within the Labour Party firmly opposed the introduction of a referendum requirement. In their view, an informal popular veto should only be introduced if the election results necessitated such a concession (Denver, et al., 2000; Morgan & Mungham, 2000a). In addition, the separate question of the need for fiscal devolution to Scotland was widely seen as an attempt by Blair to prevent this change from occurring.

Table 5.4 Vote in the 1997 devolution referendums by country and region

Scotland		
Region	% in favour Scottish Parliament	% in favour tax-varying powers
Aberdeen	71.8%	60.3%
Aberdeenshire	63.9%	52.3%
Angus	64.7%	53.4%
Argyll & Bute	67.3%	57.0%
Clackmannan	80.0%	68.7%
Dumfries and Galloway	60.7%	48.8%
Dundee	76.0%	65.5%
East Ayrshire	81.1%	70.5%
East Dunbartonshire	69.8%	59.1%
East Lothian	74.2%	62.7%
East Renfrewshire	61.7%	51.6%
Edinburgh	71.9%	62.0%
Falkirk	80.0%	69.2%
Fife	76.1%	64.7%
Glasgow	83.6%	75.0%
Highland	72.6%	62.1%
Inverclyde	78.0%	67.2%
Midlothian	79.9%	67.7%
Moray	67.2%	52.7%
North Ayrshire	76.3%	65.7%
North Lanarkshire	82.6%	72.2%
Orkney	57.3%	47.4%
Perthshire and Kinross	61.7%	51.3%
Renfrewshire	79.0%	63.6%
Scottish Borders	62.8%	50.7%
Shetland	62.4%	51.6%
South Ayrshire	66.9%	56.2%
South Lanarkshire	77.8%	67.6%
Stirling	68.5%	58.9%
West Dunbartonshire	84.7%	74.7%
West Lothian	79.6%	67.3%
West Isles	79.4%	68.4%
Aberdeen	71.8%	60.3%
Total	74.3%	63.5%

Wales		
Region	% in favour Welsh Assembly	
Anglesey	50.9%	
Blaenau Gwent	56.1%	
Bridgend	54.4%	
Caerphilly	54.7%	
Cardiff	44.4%	
Carmarthenshire	65.3%	
Ceredigion	59.2%	
Conwy	40.9%	
Denbighshire	40.8%	
Flintshire	38.2%	
Gwynedd	64.1%	
Merthyr Tydfil	58.2%	
Monmouthshire	32.1%	
Neath Port Talbot	66.5%	
Newport	37.4%	
Pembrokeshire	42.8%	
Powys	42.7%	
Rhondda Cynon Taf	58.5%	
Swansea	52.0%	
Torfaen	49.8%	
Vale of Glamorgan	36.7%	
Wrexham	45.3%	
Total	50.3%	

Source: Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

In the Scottish case, the proponents of devolution need not have worried, as the referendum produced a strong popular mandate for reform (see Table 5.4). The establishment of a Scottish Parliament was endorsed by the clear majority of voters across all Scottish regions. The tax-varying powers were endorsed by 63.5 per cent of those who voted, with the proposal receiving majority support in all but 2 of the 32 regions. Although small amendments were made in the subsequent legislative process, the resulting devolution of powers and resources to a directly elected Scottish Parliament greatly resembled the provisions set out within the initial white paper. In Wales, the results were far less convincing. On a turn-out of barely 50 per cent, the government's proposal was carried by the slenderest of margins. In addition, 11 out of the 22 Welsh regions voted against the establishment of an elected Assembly. In 1979, Scotland had been denied an elected regional body on the basis of eerily similar results.

This time around, the election manifesto had already made clear that a simple majority of those voting would provide a sufficiently strong popular mandate for change. In addition, the Labour Party still enjoyed an overwhelming majority and party discipline was high. In this context, the result proved sufficient to allow the Welsh devolution project to go ahead.

5.4. The popular veto: A calculated risk or a jump into the unknown?

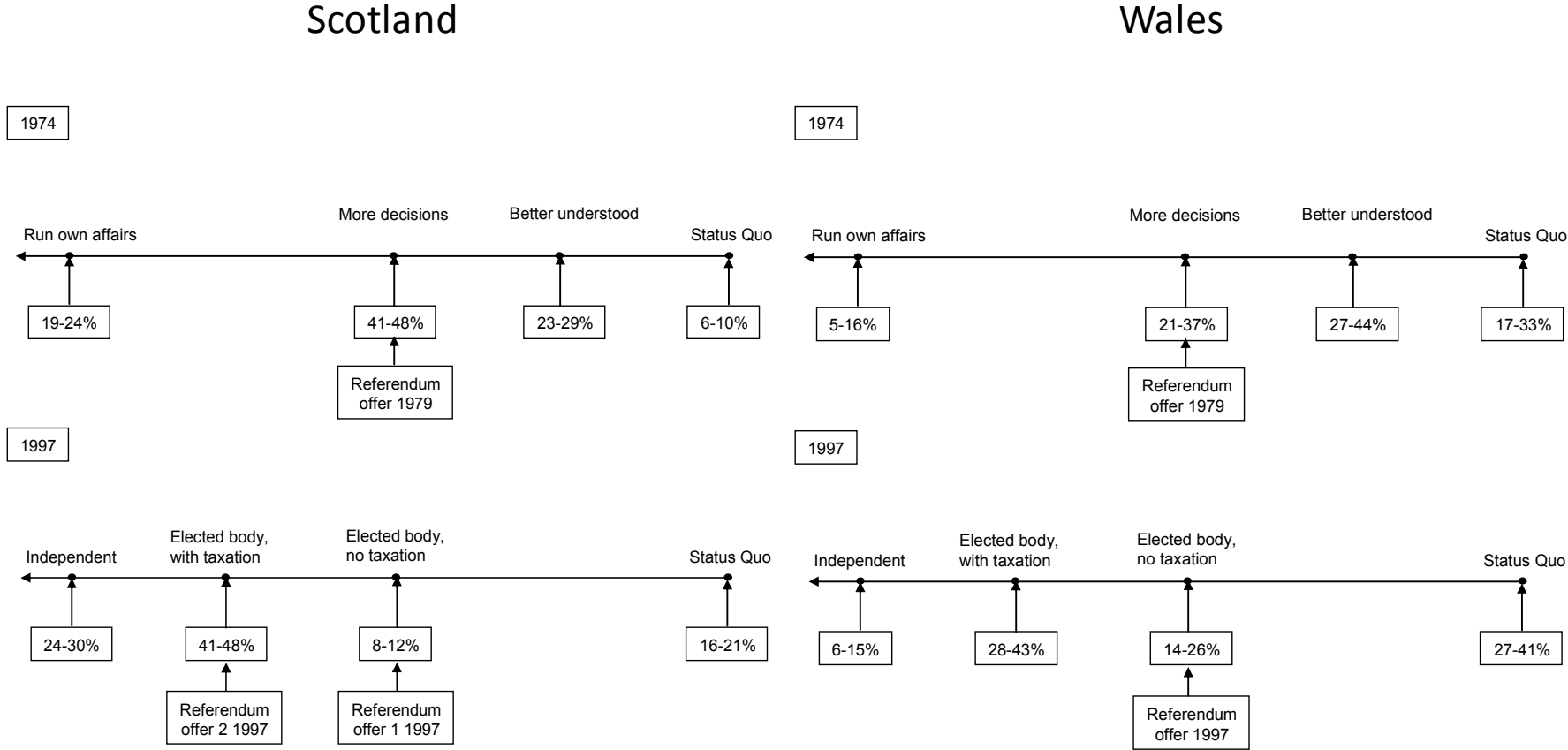
As the previous sections have shown, the referendum instrument can be introduced with a view to achieve a variety of strategic objectives. On the other hand, the introduction of an informal popular veto point may not always lead to the outcome envisioned by the actor who triggers it. Generally, partisan players will possess some information about the preferences of the general public prior when they decide whether or not to introduce an informal popular veto within the decision-making path. Public opinion can however prove notoriously fickle at times. As a result, referendums regularly return results that differ substantially from the predictions on the basis of initial opinion polls. This final section will examine to what extent the actor who triggered the referendum was able to predict the ultimate effects of this decision.

In the two decision-making periods under consideration here, the a priori likelihood that a popular veto on devolution would prevent policy change from occurring differs considerably from country to country and period to period. In both Scotland and Wales, popular support for devolution and independence was more limited in the 1970s than in the 1990s. In addition, the Welsh electorate has consistently been less certain of the need for greater regional autonomy than its Scottish counterpart (see chapter 3 for a full discussion). Taken together, this suggests that the popular veto was a priori more likely to increase policy stability (i) in 1979 than in 1997 and (ii) in Wales than in Scotland. However, the outcome also strongly depends on the position of the referendum proposal. A modest proposal may be able to attract majority support despite public reservations. Similarly an electorate that overwhelmingly supports devolution may still veto more far-reaching forms of regional autonomy.

As the popular veto points were positioned at different stages of the decision-making process, the questions put to the public in the two periods were inherently different. In 1979, voters were asked to give their verdict on two fully-fledged pieces of legislation in post-legislative regional referendums. Both bills offered a modest devolution of powers to elected regional bodies. In 1997, the referendums were pre-legislative. In the absence of concrete legislation, the public was asked to give its opinion on the need for an elected regional body in general. In Scotland, voters were also able to indicate whether or not they felt that such body should have tax-varying powers. Despite these differences, election surveys can provide an insight into the level of support such proposals would have been likely to receive at the time when the formal commitments to devolution were made.

Figure 5.3 graphically depicts the popular preference distribution at the time of the general election and the location of the subsequent referendum proposal in the 1970s and 90s. As the sample sizes in some of the surveys are relatively small, the revealed preferences are presented using 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure 5.3 Referendum offers and the policy space at the previous election (1974-79, 1997)



Sources: own elaboration based on Crewe, Robertson, & Sarlvik (1977a, 1977b), Heath, Jowell, Curtice, & Norris (1999), McCrone, Brown, Surridge, & Thomson (1999)

At both decision-making moments, Labour's manifesto commitment to Scottish devolution seemed to be well within the expected winset of the status quo at the time of the general election. The 1974 election survey suggests that at least 60 per cent of the Scottish electorate favoured greater autonomy over the status quo at that time. By 1997, this percentage had increased to over 70 percent. The government's formal position of a Scottish Parliament with limited tax-varying power was supported by at least 65 per cent of the electorate.

In Wales, the situation is less straightforward. The 1974 election survey found that greater regional autonomy was only favoured by 40 percent of the respondents who had formed an opinion on the subject. As the sample size was fairly small, it is questionable to what extent the outcome of this poll accurately reflects the distribution of preferences in the wider electorate at the time. If we apply a 95 percent confidence interval, the available evidence suggests that between 26 and 53 percent of the Welsh electorate shared Labour's commitment to devolution.

Although support for devolution increased markedly between 1979 and 1997, polls in the lead-up to the 1997 election again showed that a referendum would not necessarily return a majority in favour of devolution in Wales. The 1997 election survey found that 66 per cent of Welsh respondents would favour greater regional autonomy over the status quo. Given the small sample size, this result was in itself insufficient to rule out a referendum defeat. In addition, other opinion polls conducted around the time of the 1997 election produced mixed results; while some predicted that the government's proposals would find majority support, others predicted a narrow defeat (Broughton, 1998). This suggests that Tony Blair's insistence on the need for clear manifesto commitments to pre-legislative referendums had the real potential to prevent actual change from occurring in Wales.

In 1997, the incumbent Labour government wasted no time in calling the referendums on devolution. As a result, polls at the time of the election relatively closely mirror the public mood just before the official start of the referendum campaign (see Table 5.5).

In the 1970s by contrast, the government only conceded the need for post-legislative referendums after a long and difficult legislative process. As a result, polls at the time when the referendum commitment was announced may provide a better insight into the a priori likelihood of a defeat. The government announced its intention to making devolution dependent on the outcome of a referendum on the 16th of December 1976 (Hansard (Commons), 16th of December 1976, vol. 922, col. 1736). In line with the results of the 1974 election survey, an opinion poll taken just a few days before this announcement found that devolution was not supported by the majority of respondents in Wales (Balsom & McAllister, 1979). By contrast, a similar poll in Scotland suggested that support for greater autonomy in this country remained substantial and might even have increased somewhat since October 1974 (Balsom & McAllister, 1979). Given these findings, the government's decision to break the elite impasse by conceding a popular veto can indeed be seen as a credible attempt to salvage the Scottish legislation at the possible expense of devolution in Wales.

Once a referendum is called, opponents and proponents alike may attempt to influence the outcome of the popular vote. The extent to which public opinion is influenced by general media reports and explicit campaign messages will tend to differ from context to context and subject to subject. When the referendum consults the general public on a well-known issue that has been a prominent part of political debates from a long time, voters are likely to hold strong predispositions (Zaller, 1992). Under these circumstances, public opinion rarely changes radically over the course of the campaign. On the other hand, if the referendum concerns a topic that has only recently emerged on the political agenda and is not easily absorbed within the dominant partisan and ideological cleavages, voting behaviour can become much less predictable (LeDuc, 2002).

The two sovereignty referendums in Quebec nicely illustrate these points. At the time of the first referendum in 1980, the status of Quebec within Canada had only recently re-emerged as a key issue on the political agenda (LeDuc, 1977).

When the provincial government decided to call a referendum on the subject, it had carefully phrased the question in terms of sovereign-association, rather than outright independence. Based on the public opinion polls around the announcement of the referendum, this proposal should have been well within the public's winset of the status quo (Pammett, Clarke, Jenson, & LeDuc, 1983). The subsequent debate however showed that public opinion was not firmly established yet. In this context, the federal government managed to radically shift the terms of the debate. A no vote, it argued, would result in renewed federalism, rather than the maintenance of the status quo. At the time, this rhetoric allowed a generally popular federal government to secure a decisive rejection of the provincial proposal.

The long period of debate that followed however did not deliver the promised change within the federal system (Gagnon & Iacovino, 2007). Following 15 years of failed initiatives, the provincial government once again called a referendum on sovereignty. This time around, the electorate was well aware of the issue and partisan positions had been long established (Pammett & LeDuc, 2001). In this context, the campaigning efforts mainly focussed on swaying the small minority of voters who had not made up their minds yet. Prior to the vote, polls suggested that the referendum proposals would be narrowly defeated. This time around, the outcome was very much in line with expectations, with 49 percent voting in favour of sovereignty (LeDuc, 2002).

If we apply these findings to the British context, we would expect to find that public opinion was more fickle in 1979 than in 1997. In the 1970s, the devolution issue had only recently re-emerged on the political agenda. In addition, it proved to be an issue that could not easily be absorbed within the dominant ideological and partisan cleavages at the time. Following the failure of the devolution proposals in 1979, the topic largely disappeared from the central policy agenda. The issue of regional autonomy however continued to be debated in Scotland and to a much lesser extent Wales. In addition, devolution became increasingly embedded in the party system. As a result, the main political parties defended well-known and relatively long-standing positions in the run up to the 1997 referendums.

Table 5.5 Net change of popular opinion between the general election and announcement of the referendum and the referendum outcome

	Percentage in favour of proposals			Difference between polls and referendum	
	election	announcement	referendum	election	announcement
Scotland 1979	66%	70%	52%	-14	-18
Wales 1979	40%	40%	20%	-20	-20
Scotland 1997	81%	75%	74%	-7	-1
Wales 1997	48-66%	59%	50%	+2 to -16	-9

Sources: Own elaboration based on Balsom & McAllister (1979), Broughton (1998), Crewe, et al. (1977a, 1977b), Heath, et al. (1999) and McCrone, et al. (1999) The percentages at the time of the announcement refer to polls published in December 1976 and June 1997 respectively. For the 1997 referendum in Wales, the cell at the time of the election reports a range found over several polls between April and May 1997.

The differences between the relevant predictions in the polls and the ultimate referendum result only partially confirm this prediction. Table 5.5 reports the results of the election survey, an opinion poll around the time of the announcement of the referendum commitment and the actual results of the referendum. The final two columns show the net percentage point difference between the poll predictions and the outcome of the eventual referendum. This only provides a partial measure of the volatility of voting intentions as equal but opposing changes in public opinion would cancel each other out. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that public opinion in Scotland was indeed much less volatile in the run up to the 1997 referendum than it had been in the 1970s. In Wales, the variety of poll results at the time of the 1997 election make a pattern more difficult to discern. If we look at the polls around the time of the referendum announcement, the net change in public opinion was considerably smaller in 1997 than in the 1970s, but still well above that recorded in Scotland at the time.

Table 5.6 Support for devolution amongst those who did have an opinion on the topic (1977-1979, 1997)

Scotland			
1979		1997	
<i>Fieldwork dates</i>	<i>% yes</i>	<i>Publication dates</i>	<i>% yes</i>
5-7 Feb 1977	77%	June 1997	75%
6-14 Mar 1978	68%	July 1997	76%
16-18 May 1978	65%	August 1997	77%
26 Sept-3 Oct 1978	67%	2 Sept 1997	73%
8-20 Jan 1979	64%	7 Sept 1997	75%
29 Jan- 6 Feb 1979	56%	7 Sept 1997	71%
8-11 Feb 1979	60%	8 Sept 1997	75%
15-16 Feb 1979	59%	10 Sept 1997	75%
18-19 Feb 1979	55%	10 Sept 1997	72%
21-22 Feb 1979	57%		
24-25 Feb 1979	52%		
Difference between highest and lowest prediction	25	Difference between highest and lowest prediction	7
Wales			
1979		1997	
<i>Fieldwork dates</i>	<i>% yes</i>	<i>Fieldwork dates</i>	<i>% yes</i>
18 Mar 1977	34%	Jun 1997	59%
5 May 1978	47%	Aug 1997	65%
15 Sep 1978	41%	Sept 1997	51%
1 Feb 1979	40%	Sept 1997	56%
19-20 Feb 1979	27%		
19-22 Feb 1979	25%		
21-22 Feb 1979	25%		
Difference between highest and lowest prediction	22	Difference between highest and lowest prediction	14

Sources: Own elaboration based on Balsom & McAllister (1979: 408-409), Broughton, (1998: 205), Denver, et al. (2000:123)

To get a more detailed view of these developments, Table 5.6 provides an overview of several polls conducted in the run up to the referendums. In the 1970s, public opinion proved fickle in both Scotland and Wales. In the bigger of the two countries, polls initially suggested that a clear majority of the electorate would support the government's devolution proposals. Over the course of the campaign, the yes vote however started to dwindle. In the final poll only 52 percent of respondents indicated that they would favour devolution to Scotland. This represents a drop of 25 percentage points, compared with the poll held at the start of the campaign more than two year earlier.

In Wales, the case for devolution was more marginal from the outset. At the start of the campaign, polls already suggested that around 60 per cent of the Welsh electorate would reject the government's proposals. Towards the end of the campaign, the slender initial support base was eroded even further. The final poll suggested that 3 out of 4 voters would in fact vote against the enactment of the 1978 Wales Act. In Scotland, the 1997 experience stands in stark contrast to that of the late 1970s. During the short campaign, the levels of support recorded in various polls remained remarkably stable, ranging from 71 to 77 percent. In Wales, poll results were much more volatile throughout, with the yes vote falling away sharply towards the end of the campaign.

Within the existing literature on devolution, failings on the side of the Yes camp are widely held responsible for the significant fall in support between the announcement of the referendum requirement in December 1976 and the eventual vote on the 1st of March 1979 (Balsom & McAllister, 1979; Bochel, Denver, & Macartney, 1981; Foulkes, Jones, & Wilford, 1983; Jones & Wilford, 1979). In 1997, the argument goes that in Scotland a much more organised Yes campaign managed to avoid the mistakes of the past and secured the desired outcome (Denver, et al., 2000). In Wales, failings in the yes campaign, the death of Princess Diana three weeks before the vote, and the limited amount of time between the Welsh and Scottish votes are widely cited as possible reasons for the tight results (Morgan & Mungham, 2000a). Nonetheless, some argue that even here the results "can be interpreted as a striking success for the Yes campaign" (Pattie, Denver, Mitchell, & Bochel, 1999: 143). Based on the arguments presented above, the campaign clearly had the potential to be highly influential in the 1970s. The explanatory power in the 1990s is however much more questionable, at least when it comes to Scotland.

In the 1970s, the recent re-emergence of the topic and the confusing ideological and partisan messages prior to the announcement of a referendum presented campaigners on both sides with a real opportunity to influence the outcome of the poll. As in the 1980 Quebec referendum, opponents of devolution were able to redefine the terms of the debate. As the topic had received little attention in the post war period, the Conservatives in particular were able to credibly argue that a rejection at the polls would result in a different type of reform, rather than the preservation of the status quo (Macartney, 1981). This strategy allowed the Party to overcome the discrepancy between its initial manifesto commitments and the subsequent voting behaviour in Parliament. It also aimed to unite the Party by offering those who favoured devolution an opportunity to campaign against the proposed legislation, but not the principle.

Table 5.7 Share intending to vote in favour of devolution by party voting intention (1977-1979)

Scotland				
	Conservative	Labour	SNP	All
5-7 Feb 1977	66%	78%	87%	77%
Apr 1978	49%	73%	88%	70%
29 Jan- 6 Feb 1979	32%	58%	91%	69%
8-11 Feb 1979	38%	65%	92%	60%
15-16 Feb 1979	31%	68%	93%	59%
Wales				
	Conservative	Labour	PC	All
18 Mar 1977	16%	36%	87%	34%
05 May 1978	24%	64%	86%	47%
1 Feb 1979	24%	51%	89%	40%
19-22 Feb 1979	7%	32%	87%	25%

Source: own elaboration based on Balsom & McAllister (1979: 408-409)

Survey evidence suggests that the Conservative approach successfully swayed the Party's core electorate towards voting down the government's proposal. As Table 5.7 shows, the share of Conservative identifiers who indicated that they intended to vote yes in the referendum decreased markedly during the campaign. By contrast, the Labour Party failed to formulate a unified position. Throughout the Commons debates on devolution, Labour identifiers had received mixed partisan clues on the benefits and drawbacks of devolution.

During the referendum campaign, the leadership tried to maximise support from Labour identifiers by arguing that a No vote would be a vote in favour of the Conservatives (Jones & Wilford, 1979). By mounting a highly visible Labour Vote No campaign, prominent rebels significantly obstructed these attempts to turn the referendum into a second order election. Especially in Wales, the prominent 'gang of six' may well have contributed considerably to the dwindling of Labour support for devolution during the final weeks of the campaign (Balsom, 1983).

Shaped by the experiences in the 1970s, studies examining the 1997 referendums tend to focus a significant amount of attention on the campaigning activities that took place in the run-up to the popular vote. Attributing the results of the 1997 referendums to campaigning effort is however problematic. In Scotland, the results of the referendum were very much in line with the opinion polls around the time of the 1997 election. In the eighteen years that separated the two polls, the issue had continued to receive considerable political and popular attention. Especially the creation of the Scottish Constitutional Convention in the late 1980s and the subsequent media coverage for its proceedings ensured that the Scottish electorate was well-versed in the various dimensions of the devolution debate. In addition the topic was fully absorbed in the Scottish party system. Labour and the Liberal Democrats had both maintained their commitment to Scottish devolution throughout the 1980s and 90s. The SNP also favoured devolution, although it still viewed this as a step towards independence. The only opposition to decentralisation came from the heavily marginalised Scottish Conservative Party. As a result, most voters already had firmly established voting intentions before the 1997 referendum had even been called (see Table 5.8). In this context, the main impact of the campaign would be through the influence it would have on the minority who remained undecided. Given the distribution of preferences amongst those who had already made up their minds, it seems safe to say that the influence of the campaign on the overall likelihood of change was therefore always going to be very limited.

In Wales, the story was markedly different. As discussed earlier, Welsh public opinion remained much more volatile. Compared to Scotland, the devolution issue had received relatively little attention in Wales between 1979 and 1997. Following the disastrous results of the first devolution referendum, the Labour Party initially dropped its commitment to an elected body for Wales. During the late 1980s and early 90s, the Party slowly changed its position. This however did not lead to the creation of any cross-party initiative resembling the Scottish Convention. In the absence of structured political debates, neither the merits nor the drawbacks of devolution received much media attention in Wales (Andrews, 2000; Morgan & Mungham, 2000a). Even if cross-party discussions had been a regular occurrence, the relative dominance of English media within the country may still have limited public awareness (Williams, 2000). While only 10 per cent of morning papers read in Scotland are produced in England, nearly 90 per cent of papers read in Wales originate from outside the country. Similarly, while there is almost no broadcast overlap between Scotland and England, large parts of Wales receive both English and Welsh TV and radio channels. Especially when devolution is not discussed at the central level, these English media tend to devote little attention to devolution. Taken together this meant that, at the start of the campaign, public opinion on devolution was much less firmly rooted in Wales than in Scotland.

Table 5.8 Share of voters that remain undecided (1977-1979, 1997)

Scotland			
1979		1997	
Poll fieldwork dates	% undecided	Publication dates	% undecided
5-7 Feb 1977	17%	June 1997	15%
6-14 Mar 1978	19%	July 1997	10%
16-18 May 1978	1%	August 1997	16%
26 Sept-3 Oct 1978	12%	2 Sept 1997	18%
8-20 Jan 1979	19%	7 Sept 1997	16%
29 Jan- 6 Feb 1979	20%	7 Sept 1997	15%
8-11 Feb 1979	17%	8 Sept 1997	11%
15-16 Feb 1979	26%	10 Sept 1997	19%
18-19 Feb 1979	14%	10 Sept 1997	12%
21-22 Feb 1979	11%		
24-25 Feb 1979	17%		
Average	16%	Average	15%
Wales			
1979		1997	
Poll fieldwork dates	% undecided	Publication dates	% undecided
18 Mar 1977	21%	Jun 1997	34%
5 May 1978	27%	Aug 1997	25%
15 Sep 1978	25%	Sept 1997	27%
1 Feb 1979	31%	Sept 1997	34%
19-20 Feb 1979	25%		
19-22 Feb 1979	20%		
21-22 Feb 1979	11%		
Average	23%	Average	30%

Sources: Balsom & McAllister (1979: 408-409), Broughton (1998: 205) and Denver, et al. (2000:123)

Opinion polls showed that a considerable part of the Welsh electorate remained unsure of their voting intentions throughout the campaign (see Table 5.8). Given the distribution of preferences at the time of the 1997 election, a swing of only a few percentage points could be sufficient to influence the overall outcome of the referendum in Wales. In this context, the campaign efforts did have the ability to significantly influence the overall outcome of the referendum. This time around, neither opponents nor the proponents of devolution however made full use of these opportunities. On the Yes side, attempts to form a united campaign were frustrated by disagreements about the exact type of devolution that was needed. In the absence of a Welsh equivalent to the Scottish Convention, Labour had developed its devolution plans in relative isolation.

As a result, Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru concerns with the proposals only emerged in the run-up to the referendum (McAllister, 1998). In addition, a number of prominent Labour MPs continued to question elements of the legislation in Wales (Broughton, 1998). These internal divisions in the yes camp further enhanced the prevailing popular insecurity about what exactly was on offer in the pre-legislative referendum. Given the more moderate preferences of the Welsh electorate (see Figure 5.3), any uncertainty about the extent of devolution clearly had the potential to play in the hands of the No camp. Poorly organised and underfunded, the No campaign however failed to fully benefit from these opportunities (Jones, 2000). Barely visible and seemingly unable to decide whether devolution would lead to an expensive talking shop or the break-up of Britain, it failed to produce a coherent message. The fact that the majority of initially undecided voters ended up in the No camp therefore seem to say more about the failings of the Yes camp, than it does about the strength of the No campaign (Broughton, 1998).

5.5.Conclusion

This chapter examined under which circumstances mainstream accommodation of regionalist demands is likely to lead to actual policy change. By applying a veto player approach, it was able to both formalise existing descriptions of decisions and non-decisions as well as challenge elements of the conventional wisdom. For instance, the failure of Edward Heath to act on his public commitments to Scottish devolution during his time in office is widely seen as evidence of a lack of true commitment to the policy. A veto player approach exposes this argument as potentially circular. Instead, this period of non-decision is more likely to be the result of rational action's on the part of Heath, given the preference constellation within the Parliamentary Conservative Party at the time. When decisions are taken, a veto player approach again draws attention to frequently under-analysed elements of the government system. For example, the existing literature tends to discuss the influence of the House of Lords and minority parties within the House of Commons without classifying the nature of this influence.

Through a structured analysis this chapter was able to demonstrate that the House of Lords did not possess veto powers at any point during the decision-making moments under consideration here. In addition, neither the regionalist parties nor the Liberals possessed primary agenda setting powers at any point in time. They did however acquire potential veto powers during the decision-making process in the 1970s, creating substantial political act-based incentives for the governing party to attempt to salvage the devolution legislation.

By making the distribution of agenda-setting and veto powers explicit, this chapter was furthermore able to advance a new perspective on the dynamics of regionalist accommodation in the 1970s. During this period, the existence of strong anti-devolution tendencies within the Parliamentary Labour Party is widely seen as one of the main obstacles to change. Although a lack of party cohesion on the substantive topic was indeed evident, the level of backbench rebellion was at least partially caused by a general decline in party discipline. Following decades of near perfect party discipline, backbench rebellions increased markedly under the 1970-1974 Conservative government. This trend continued under subsequent governments of various persuasions. Despite its clear relevance to the case, this sudden decline in party discipline across the party system tends not to receive a mention in the devolution literature.

Similarly, it is widely argued that the decision to make devolution dependent on the outcome of a post-legislative referendum was aimed at pacifying the government's own backbench. From a rational choice perspective, it is however hard to explain why this concession in itself would sway an actor with an outcome preference for the status quo to support devolution legislation. This dynamic can only be understood in the context of a minority government with dwindling support in the polls. Given the Party's need to rely on Liberal, SNP and Plaid Cymru support to survive a motion of no-confidence, backbenchers were willing to risk a popular vote on devolution in order to avoid early elections.

If the government had still enjoyed a narrow overall majority or could count on the support of other, more centrist, minority parties, the referendum concession would probably not have restored party discipline to the same extent.

Finally, this chapter shed new light on the role of the referendum instrument in both decisions. Within the existing literature, the decision-making rules governing the referendums and the campaigning efforts in the run-up to the popular vote are generally given considerable attention. Although these aspects clearly have an effect, this study qualifies their relative importance. In the 1970s, the so-called Cunningham amendment is widely blamed for the failure of Scottish devolution. The analysis in this chapter however showed that change was primarily prevented by the weak position of the government, rather than the fact that popular support for the legislation fell below the '40 per cent of the electorate' threshold. Even if the decision-making path includes a post-legislative referendum, the final veto still rests with the House of Commons. The results of the 1979 referendum simply required the government to lay a repeal order before parliament. Given the fact that the majority of those who voted did favour devolution, the government could have legitimately asked the parliament to vote down the order. This course of action was not taken because informal enquiries by the whips showed that the Labour leadership would not be able to muster sufficient backbench support for such a move.

The chapter furthermore argued that the importance of the referendum campaign differed considerably from period to period and country to country. In the 1970s, the campaigning efforts on both sides of the debate are rightfully argued to have had a significant effect on the outcome of the referendums in both Scotland and Wales. The relatively recent re-emergence of the debate, combined with the less than perfect incorporation of the topic in the party system, gave campaigners a real opportunity to radically change public opinion. In both countries, the unified no camp proved better able to make use of these opportunities than the heavily divided yes camp. On the basis of this experience, the studies into of the 1997 referendums tend to devote a disproportionate amount of time on the referendum campaigns.

In Scotland, this focus is wholly unjustified. In the period that separates the two referendums, the devolution issue received considerable attention in the public domain. In addition, the topic became an integral part of the Scottish party system. As a result, public opinion on the subject was firmly rooted by the time of the 1997 general election. Especially in the context of clear majority support for devolution, the campaigns therefore had little influence on the outcome. In Wales, public opinion remained more volatile. In addition, the initial polls suggested that the Welsh were still strongly divided over the need for devolution. In this context the campaign could have been influential. This time around, neither the opponents nor the proponents of the legislation took full advantage of this opportunity. Instead, uncertainty over what was on offer seems to have induced many undecided voters to choose the familiar foe over the big unknown. Having re-analysed the process that eventually led to devolution, the next chapter will analyse how the reality of devolution influences the likelihood of further demands for greater autonomy. The final chapter will examine whether it has also changed the mechanisms through which such demands are accommodated.

6. Regionalism in mainland Britain after devolution

The empirical parts of the thesis so far have re-analysed the rather well-known contemporary history of regionalism and regionalist accommodation in post-war mainland Britain. The remaining two substantive chapters of this thesis seek to show that the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2 can also be fruitfully employed in the post-devolution era. As chronicled in chapters 3 to 5, the re-emergence of spaces of regionalism in Scotland and Wales eventually led to the devolution of powers to elected regional bodies. Together with the devolution processes in Greater London and Northern Ireland, this has transformed the previously highly centralised British government system into a distinctively asymmetric form of devolved government. This constitutional overhaul will no doubt be remembered as one of the key legacies of the 1997-2001 Labour government (Hazell, 2007). Whether it will enter the history books as the beginning of the end for the United Kingdom, or a period of constitutional reform that merely reshaped the Union, remains to be seen.

The dynamics unleashed by devolution will partially depend on the popular response to these developments within the devolved areas and beyond. Over the past decade a number of large scale research projects have sought to shed light on this issue (see for example the ESRC 'Devolution and Constitutional Change' programme and the Leverhulme 'Nations and Regions: The Dynamics of Devolution' programme). By applying the typology of regionalisms developed in chapter 2 to the post-devolution situation, this chapter seeks to place the findings emerging from this research within a coherent theoretical perspective. Chapter 7 will in turn examine to what extent devolution has altered the way in which popular demands for greater regional autonomy filter into the agenda-setting and decision-making processes that guide further changes to the distribution of powers and resources in the post devolution era.

6.1.Trends in popular support for decentralisation.

The effect of devolution and federalisation on popular demand for greater regional autonomy is highly debated (see chapter 2). While some have argued that the partial accommodation of regionalist demands within the existing state can help to stem calls for full secession (Elazar, 1995; Gurr, 1994; Lijphart, 1977; Stepan, 2001), others contend that devolution is likely to increase the legitimacy of the region and with it the demand for greater regional autonomy (for example see Dikshit, 1975; Kymlicka, 1998; Lustik, et al., 2004; Roeder, 1991). Simultaneously, it has been argued that devolution elsewhere may lead to comparative grievances in regions that have traditionally not harboured strong regionalist movements (Lecours, 2004; Moreno, 2001). The surveys conducted during the first decade of devolution offer us a first opportunity to gauge to what extent the developments in different parts of Britain conform to either of these predictions.

In Scotland and Wales, survey evidence so far suggests that devolution has strengthened calls for further decentralisation. This trend has perhaps been most pronounced in Wales. In this country, the creation of the Welsh Assembly has been accompanied by a marked decline in popular support for a fully centralised system. This trend has however not been associated with a rise in support for full independence. Rather, the survey evidence suggests that Welsh public increasingly supports more extensive forms of devolution (see Table 6.2). The results of the recent referendum on Welsh Assembly powers broadly concur with this proposition. In the popular vote, held on the 3rd of March 2011, 63.5 percent of those who voted endorsed the proposed devolution of primary legislative powers to the Welsh Assembly. In addition, popular support for further decentralisation was spatially fairly homogeneous, with the proposal attracting majority support in all but 1 of the 22 Welsh regions. When we compare these results to the outcome of the 1997 referendum, this suggests that support for devolution has increased markedly across Wales (see Table 6.1).

It does have to be noted that this result was achieved on a relatively low turnout rate; only 35 percent of registered voters took part in the 2011 referendum compared to 50 percent in 1997. This may indicate that, although support for further decentralisation is growing, the salience currently attached to the issue remains quite limited.

Table 6.1 The regional distribution of the vote in the 1997 and 2011 Welsh devolution referendums

Region	% in favour of further devolution 2011	% in favour of devolution 1997
Anglesey	50.9%	64.8%
Blaenau Gwent	56.1%	68.9%
Bridgend	54.4%	68.1%
Caerphilly	54.7%	64.3%
Cardiff	44.4%	61.4%
Carmarthenshire	65.3%	70.8%
Ceredigion	59.2%	66.2%
Conwy	40.9%	59.7%
Denbighshire	40.8%	61.8%
Flintshire	38.2%	62.1%
Gwynedd	64.1%	76.0%
Merthyr Tydfil	58.2%	68.9%
Monmouthshire	32.1%	49.4%
Neath Port Talbot	66.5%	73.0%
Newport	37.4%	54.8%
Pembrokeshire	42.8%	55.0%
Powys	42.7%	51.6%
Rhondda Cynon	58.5%	70.7%
Swansea	52.0%	63.2%
Torfaen	49.8%	62.8%
Vale of Glamorgan	36.7%	52.5%
Wrexham	45.3%	64.1%
Total yes	50.3%	63.5%
Turnout	35.2%	50.1%

Sources: BBC (2011a) and Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

In Scotland, popular opinion has proved somewhat more fickle (see Table 6.2). As in Wales, the partial accommodation for regionalist demands was initially accompanied by a marked rise in the share of respondents who favoured devolution over a fully centralised British system or complete Scottish independence. Between 2001 and 2005, the share of respondents who indicated that devolution was their preferred constitutional option however declined from 61 percent to 49 percent. Simultaneously, support for secession and re-centralisation both increased by six to eight percentage points. Recent surveys suggest that this early disenchantment with devolution has now been largely redressed. Support for a return to a fully centralised system seems to have stabilised around the 10 percent mark. Similarly there is little demand for the re-centralisation of the fiscal powers devolved to Scotland under the 1998 Scotland Act. Minor shifts in the level of support for full independence and extensive devolution continue to occur. Nonetheless a fairly stable distribution is starting to emerge, with around 30 percent of the population favouring secession, while a further 50 percent prefers a devolved Parliament with tax-varying powers over full independence.

Table 6.2 Constitutional preferences in the post-devolution era (Wales, Scotland, England 1997-2009)

Wales											
	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007					
Independent	13%	10%	12%	14%	9%	12%					
Parliament with law-making and taxation powers	19%	37%	39%	37%	40%	42%					
Assembly with limited law-making powers only	28%	35%	26%	27%	18%	29%					
No elected regional body	40%	18%	23%	22%	33%	17%					
N	637	506	1039	943	495	830					
Scotland											
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
Independent	36%	28%	31%	29%	31%	27%	32%	37%	32%	23%	29%
Parliament with taxation powers	35%	54%	49%	55%	46%	52%	44%	41%	49%	59%	53%
Parliament without taxation powers	10%	9%	8%	6%	9%	7%	5%	7%	8%	8%	9%
No elected regional body	19%	9%	12%	9%	14%	14%	19%	15%	10%	10%	9%
N	647	1407	1593	1538	1558	1413	1544	1417	1484	1425	1378
England											
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Devolution to region	15%	20%	23%	21%	25%	23%	21%	19%	16%	17%	16%
Devolution to England	19%	21%	17%	19%	18%	22%	20%	24%	19%	29%	33%
Status quo	66%	59%	60%	59%	57%	56%	59%	57%	65%	54%	52%
N	2580	1763	2623	2681	912	2534	1651	860	767	909	914

Sources: Clarke, Stewart, Sanders, & Whiteley (2006), Jones, Heath, & National Centre for Social Research (2004), Jones, Heath, Seyd, & Curtice (2000), Jones & Phillips (2009), Jones, Trystan, & Heath (2002), Jowell, et al. (1998), National Centre for Social Research, (2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011), National Centre for Social Research et al. (2001) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)

In England, surveys have only started to systematically ask respondents about their views on the government of their region or country after devolution to Scotland and Wales became a reality. Overall, the available survey evidence suggests that the English public remains highly divided over the proper form of governance for the country in the post-devolution era (see Table 6.2). In the immediate aftermath of devolution, popular support for the status quo declined somewhat. Simultaneously, the share of respondents who favoured the creation of elected regional assemblies in England increased. From 2004 onwards support, the demand for regional devolution has however started to decline. Initially this trend seemed to be associated with a growing popular acceptance of the status quo. Recent surveys however suggest that popular discontent with the current system of government is gathering momentum once more. This has in turn been accompanied by a growing popular endorsement of devolution to a country-wide elected body.

Taken together, the available survey evidence thus paints a rather mixed picture. While devolution seems to have dampened calls for full secession in Scotland, it has not had a similar effect in Wales. In both countries, the partial accommodation of regionalist demands has however been associated with a rise in popular support for more extensive forms of devolution. Recently, these trends have been accompanied by growing popular demand for a devolved English Parliament. This chapter will seek to make sense of these developments by applying the typology of regionalisms developed in chapter 2 to the post-devolution situation. It will start by looking at the influence of devolution on identity, before turning to the democratic and economic sources of regionalism in a devolved Britain.

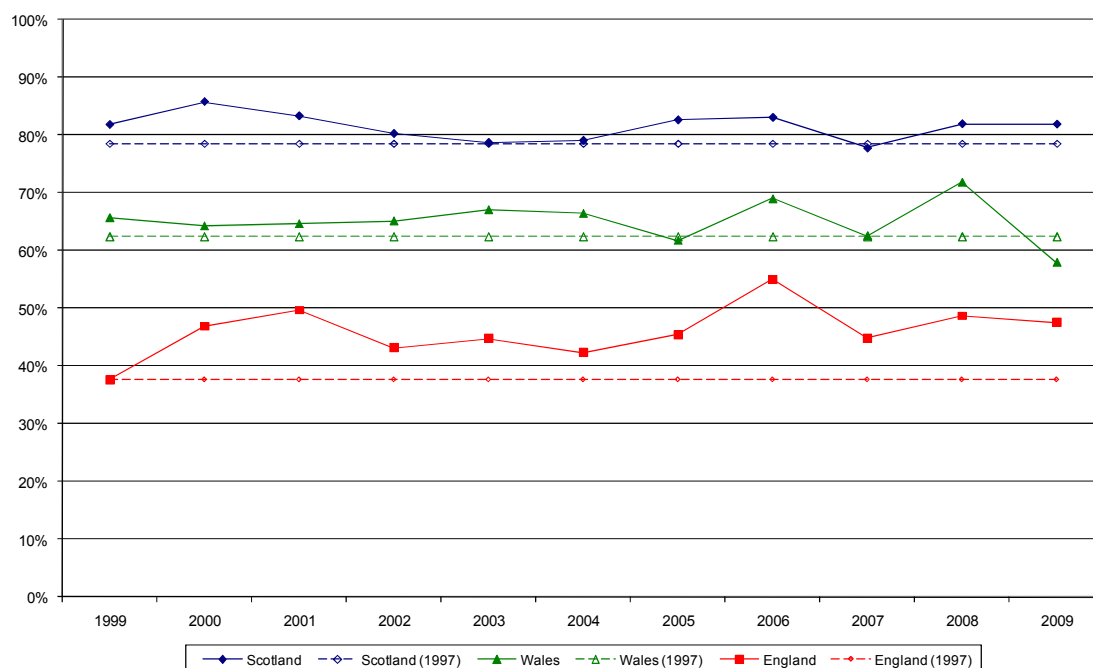
6.2.Identity-based regionalism

New Labour's devolution project was presented as part of the administration's wider effort to construct a new, modern form of Britishness. Thatcherism, so it was argued, had popularised a narrow view of Britain as a nation built upon self-interested individualism and a mistrust of foreigners. Under the slogan 'Cool Britannia', New Labour launched a counter campaign that was to make Britain the first multicultural, multiethnic and multinational state (Gordon Brown as quoted by Richards, 19 April 1999). In line with this ambition, the 1997 Labour manifesto stated that "[t]he United Kingdom is a partnership enriched by distinct national identities and traditions" (Labour Party, 1997). By formally recognising this partnership, it was hoped that devolution would strengthen the loyalty to the Union in Scotland and Wales and remove the threat of separatism. By contrast, others have argued that the partial accommodation of regionalist demands is likely to have the opposite effect (for example see Dikshit, 1975; Kymlicka, 1998; Lustik, et al., 2004; Roeder, 1991). From this perspective, devolution legitimises the imagined community at the regional scale, whilst simultaneously undermining the sense of shared interest at the central level. This section will argue that the currently available evidence in Britain is broadly concurrent with this second proposition, although the effect of devolution on the articulation of identity has been fairly modest so far. As a result, it seems unlikely that devolution will spark an identity-based regionalist revival in mainland Britain.

As Keating (2003: 35) correctly states, feelings of identity are "neither determined rigidly by the past or by rooted social values, nor entirely open for invention and manipulation in the present". It may therefore be too soon to tell what the long term effects of devolution are likely to be in this respect. Based on survey evidence collected during the first five years of devolution, John Curtice (2006) concludes that devolution has been accompanied by a moderate erosion of the British identity, particularly in England.

He however argues that this change “appears to have been a once-and-for-all step change that occurred in and around 1999 rather than a secular decline that might be expected to continue further in the future”(Curtice, 2006: 100-101). The subsequent trends in regional attachments broadly concur with this view.

Figure 6.1 Trends in the share of respondents who identify with the country level rather than Britain as a whole in a forced choice question (1999-2009)



Sources: Own elaboration based on Heath, et al. (1999), Jones, et al. (2000), Jones & Phillips (2009), Jones, et al. (2002), McCrone, et al. (1999), National Centre for Social Research (2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011), National Centre for Social Research, et al. (2001), Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)

Figure 6.1 reports the share of respondents who identify with the country level in a forced choice question over the period from 1999 to 2009. The 1997 figures are presented as a pre-devolution baseline for each country¹². In line with Curtice's (2006) early findings, forced choice questions do not reveal a marked decline in Britishness in either Scotland or Wales. The survey results for Wales suggest that the importance attached to each identity may be waxing and waning, but this movement may also be related to the relatively small sample sizes in years where a Welsh survey is not available. In England devolution elsewhere has been accompanied by a rise in the share of respondents who prioritise their country identity over the British identity in a forced choice question. Following the initial 'once-and-for-all step change' described by Curtice (2006), the prominence of the English identity marginally increased again between 2004 and 2006. The more recent surveys however suggest that this has been a temporary development.

Since the 1990s, several large scale surveys have also included the so-called Moreno question, which asks respondents to locate themselves on a five-point scale ranging from 'country identity, not British' to 'British, not country identity'. The answers to this question allow us to examine the relationship between the regional and the central identity and any shifts in the relative importance attached to each. Table 6.3 summarises the results of this question in the years between 1997 and 2009 for which data is available. The penultimate row for each country reports the share of respondents who indicated that they felt equally, more or only British.

¹² The primary aim of this exercise is to investigate whether devolution has indeed led to an increase in the share of respondents who prioritise the identity of the country they live in over the wider British polity. The samples are therefore limited to those who indicated that they felt either British or the identity of the country that they lived in at the time of the survey. Most studies instead report identity groups as a share of the whole sample (Curtice, 2006) (Bechhofer, McCrone, & 2007; Curtice & Heath, 2009). When examining the overall likelihood of identity-based regionalism, this is the correct approach (see chapter 3). However, when we try to isolate the effect of devolution on feelings of belonging, we need to prevent general trends in migration from affecting our results. Focussing our attention only on those who choose either the British identity or the identity of the country they live in allows us to do this.

Table 6.3 Trends in the importance attached to regional and British identities (1997-2009)

England						
	1997	1999	2001	2003	2007	2009
English, not British	8%	19%	16%	19%	21%	20%
More English than British	18%	15%	14%	21%	17%	17%
Equally English and British	49%	39%	45%	34%	34%	38%
More British than English	16%	12%	11%	15%	15%	11%
British, not English	10%	14%	15%	11%	13%	14%
Equally, more or only British	74%	65%	70%	60%	62%	63%
N	2383	2531	1683	1742	779	1756
Scotland						
	1997	1999	2001	2003	2007	2009
Scottish, not British	24%	34%	37%	34%	28%	31%
More Scottish than British	41%	36%	32%	34%	32%	31%
Equally Scottish and British	27%	23%	24%	23%	29%	28%
More British than Scottish	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%	6%
British, not Scottish	4%	4%	4%	4%	7%	4%
Equally, more or only British	35%	31%	31%	32%	41%	38%
N	841	1423	1541	1441	1425	1325
Wales						
	1997	1999	2001	2003	2007	2009
Welsh, not British	14%	19%	24%	23%	23%	
More Welsh than British	31%	21%	23%	18%	22%	
Equally Welsh and British	27%	37%	30%	36%	33%	
More British than Welsh	11%	8%	11%	7%	11%	
British, not Welsh	16%	15%	11%	17%	11%	
Equally, more or only British	55%	60%	53%	60%	55%	
N	171	744	1047	1134	839	

Sources: Own elaboration based on Heath, et al. (1999), Jones, et al. (2004), Jones, et al. (2000), Jones & Phillips (2009), Jones, et al. (2002), McCrone, et al. (1999), National Centre for Social Research (2001, 2003, 2004a, 2005, 2009, 2011), National Centre for Social Research, et al. (2001), Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2009, 2010)

In 1997, only 8 percent of the respondents in England felt 'English, not British', while 74 percent felt equally, more or only British. By comparison 14 percent of the Welsh and 24 percent of the Scottish respondents indicated that they identified only with the country identity. While 55 percent of Welsh respondents felt equally, more or only British, only 35 percent of the respondents in Scotland fell within this category. As would be anticipated from the noted trends in the forced choice responses, devolution seems to have had the most pronounced effect on the articulation of identity in England. Shortly after devolution, the share of respondents that felt equally, more or only British declined from 74 percent to 65 percent. This shift was primarily caused by a sharp drop in the share of respondents who felt equally British and English. Simultaneously the share of respondents who identify themselves as 'English not British' doubled between 1997 and 1999. Since then, the share of respondents in each of the Moreno categories seems to have stabilised around the 1999 level. At present there is therefore no reason to anticipate that the post-devolution era will be characterised by a perpetual decline in Britishness amongst those living in England. Significant changes to the devolved arrangement or the formal secession of parts of Britain may however cause further shifts in the articulation of feelings of belonging.

In Scotland and Wales, the effect of devolution on the relative importance of the regional and central identity has in many ways been even more modest. In both countries, the share of respondents who felt equally, more or only British has traditionally been lower than in England. There is however no indication that devolution has been accompanied by a further decline in this category. On the other hand, the share of the population that now defines itself as the regional identity only has consistently been above the 1997 level in both Scotland and Wales. This is again in line with Curtice's (2006) early finding that devolution may have negatively affected the loyalty to the overarching British state felt by those who already had a relatively weak sense of Britishness. As this group is traditionally seen as most prone to secessionism, this shift may yet prove significant.

So far, we can thus conclude that devolution has done little to strengthen the loyalty to the British state in the devolved areas, whilst it has simultaneously increased the relative importance attached to the regional identity in non-devolved areas. I would however argue that the noted changes in attachments seem too moderate to create a real potential for large-scale identity-based regionalism at this time. This proposition is supported by the fact that the majority of those who claim to be exclusively Scottish, Welsh or English nonetheless continue to feel very or fairly close to Britain as a whole (see Table 6.4). In England, this tendency is especially pronounced, with over 70 per cent combining an exclusive English identity with a fairly or very close attachment to Britain as a whole. Strong dual attachments are less common amongst those who indicate that they feel ‘Scottish, not British’ or ‘Welsh, not British’. Even among this group, the majority of respondents however did feel very or fairly close to Britain.

Table 6.4 Moreno extremes and feelings of attachment to the British state (2003)

	Scottish, not British	Welsh, not British	English, not British
Very close to Britain	11%	14%	28%
Fairly close to Britain	46%	43%	43%
Not very close to Britain	34%	37%	25%
Not at all close to Britain	9%	6%	4%
N	484	210	324

Sources: Jones, et al. (2004), National Centre for Social Research (2005), Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005)

Further examination of the survey evidence reveals that feelings of attachments to different geographical scales may even be mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting (see Table 6.5). In England, respondents were asked about their attachment to their Government Office region, England and Britain as a whole. Overall, 77 percent of respondents felt very or fairly close to their Government Office region, while 85 percent felt a close attachment to England as a whole. Of those who felt very or fairly close to their region, 90 per cent also felt very or fairly close to England as a whole.

Similarly, the vast majority of those who felt close to England also felt close to Britain as a whole. Interestingly, those who expressed a stronger attachment to the smaller geographical scale were also more likely to have a strong attachment to the larger unit and vice-versa. Taken together, this suggests that the regional, the country and the British identity are nested and mutually reinforcing feelings of belonging for the majority of people in England.

In Scotland and Wales, respondents were asked about their attachment to their country and Britain as a whole. In Wales, 89 per cent of respondents felt a fairly or very close attachment to their country. In Scotland, feelings of belonging were even more pronounced, with 95 percent of respondents indicating a very or fairly close attachment to the country level. In both countries, the vast majority of respondents who felt a close attachment to their country also indicated a fairly or very close attachment to Britain as a whole. As in England, those who felt more strongly attached to their country were also more likely to feel a strong attachment to Britain. Taken together, this suggests that for the vast majority of Scottish and Welsh people, country level attachments can and do still coincide with feelings of belonging to the wider British society as well.

Table 6.5 Feelings of attachment to different geographical scales (2003, column percent)

England			
	Very close to region	Fairly close to region	very or fairly close to region
Very close to England	67%	27%	42%
Fairly close to England	27%	60%	47%
Very or fairly close to England	93%	88%	90%
N	560	894	1454
	Very close to country	Fairly close to country	very or fairly close to country
Very close to Britain	71%	8%	36%
Fairly close to Britain	25%	81%	55%
Very or fairly close to Britain	96%	88%	92%
N	736	884	1620
Wales			
	Very close to country	Fairly close to country	Very or fairly close to country
Very close to Britain	44%	24%	36%
Fairly close to Britain	39%	53%	44%
Very or fairly close to Britain	83%	77%	81%
N	536	336	872
Scotland			
	Very close to country	Fairly close to country	Very or fairly close to country
Very close to Britain	33%	9%	25%
Fairly close to Britain	48%	58%	51%
Very or fairly close to Britain	81%	67%	76%
N	927	494	1421

Sources: Own elaboration based on Jones, et al. (2004), National Centre for Social Research (2005) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005).

Chapter 3 of this thesis already argued that support for devolution in Scotland and Wales during the pre-devolution period could not be characterised as purely identity-driven. The available evidence so far suggests that this remains true in the post-devolution era. There are signs that the decentralisation of powers and resources has been accompanied by a heightened sense of belonging to a regional community.

These effects have however been quite moderate and there is little reason to believe that the growing importance attached to the regional identity has been accompanied by marked identity-based grievances with the centre. We will therefore need to look beyond identity in order to gauge the effect devolution is likely to have on popular demand for greater regional autonomy.

6.3.Democratic regionalism

Devolution and federalisation are frequently presented as institutional tools through which political leaders can manage territorial conflicts (Elazar, 1995; Gurr, 1994; Lijphart, 1977; Stepan, 2001). As noted in chapter 2, this argument primarily rests on the assumption that the creation of opportunities of voice at the regional level will dampen grievances with the centre in areas that are prone to regionalism. The first part of this section will argue that devolution does not seem to have had this effect in Scotland and Wales. Despite some initial disappointments, the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament have established themselves as legitimate spaces of democratic representation. By contrast, devolution seems to have done little to improve popular trust in the central government. In addition, the behaviour of Scottish, and to a lesser extent Welsh, voters has recently started to diverge again from the British average. In this context, I argue that the recent change of power at the centre may well lead to a revival of democratic regionalism in the devolved areas. The second part of this section will subsequently show that devolution has also increased the potential for democratic regionalism in England. This shift has been primarily the result of grievances with the centre, rather than any increase in the perceived legitimacy of the regional level. The support for an English Parliament is therefore likely to evaporate if the democratic anomalies in the current system are addressed through central reforms.

6.3.1. Democratic regionalism in post-devolution Scotland and Wales

Democratic grievances with the centre played an important role in the resurgence of popular support for greater regional autonomy in the 1980s and 90s (see chapter 3). These demands were partially accommodated in the late 1990s. Evaluating to what extent this change in the government system has enhanced the perceived legitimacy of the centre is complicated by the fact that this reform was itself triggered by a shift in power at the central level. In particular, the election of a Labour government in 1997 signalled the end of the era of Conservative predominance in the UK. As was the case in the late 1970s, this shift was primarily caused by changes in the voting behaviour of the regional electorates in the East of England¹³, the Midlands and Greater London (see Table 6.6). In the East, rising support for the Labour Party temporarily resulted in a return to a more balanced two-party system. In the East and West Midlands and Greater London the swing towards Labour was more pronounced. If we apply the criteria set out in chapter 3¹⁴, none of these three regions has displayed true Labour predominance in the post-devolution era. Combined with the decline in Conservative support in the South West of England, the overall swing towards Labour was nonetheless sufficient large to bring the results of the 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections in line with the dominant preferences in Scotland and Wales.

¹³ From 1994 onwards Standard Statistical Regions (SSR) were replaced by Government Office Regions (GOR) in England. The East of England GOR refers to the East Anglia SSR plus Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex

¹⁴ In chapter 3, a predominant party system was defined as a system in which (i) a single party wins the absolute majority of the seats (ii) for at least three consecutive government periods (iii) on the basis of a percentage of the seats that is at least 10 percentage points higher than that of the second most successful party.

Table 6.6 Voting patterns in East Anglia/Eastern, Midlands, Greater London, Scotland and Wales (1997-2010)

East of England				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party in vote share	Con	Con	Con	Con
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	0.9%	5.0%	13.5%	23.0%
Seats share of largest party	60.7%	71.4%	89.7%	58.9%
East Midlands				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party (by vote share)	Lab	Lab	Lab	Con
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	12.9%	7.8%	1.9%	11.4%
Seats share of largest party	68.2%	63.6%	63.6%	67.4%
West Midlands				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party (by vote share)	Lab	Lab	Lab	Con
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	13.3%	9.8%	3.7%	8.9%
Seats share of largest party	72.9%	72.9%	66.1%	55.9%
Greater London				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party (by vote share)	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	18.3%	16.9%	7.0%	2.1%
Seats share of largest party	77.0%	74.3%	59.5%	52.1%
Scotland				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party (by vote share)	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	23.5%	23.2%	16.3%	23.1%
Seats share of largest party	77.8%	76.4%	67.8%	69.5%
Wales				
	1997	2001	2005	2010
Largest party (by vote share)	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab
Percentage points between vote share of largest and second largest party	35.1%	27.6%	21.3%	10.1%
Seats share of largest party	85.0%	85.0%	72.5%	65.0%

Sources: own elaboration based on Rallings & Thrasher (2007) and BBC (2010)

We would anticipate that the greater concurrence of the general election results with Scottish and Welsh preferences enhanced the perceived legitimacy of the centre between 1997 and 2010. Evidence from the 1997 Scottish and Welsh referendum studies lends only partial support to this proposition. In this survey, respondents were asked how much they would trust the UK government in general and selected political parties in particular to work in the interest of their country (see Table 6.7). In both Scotland and Wales, less than half of respondents felt that the UK government could be trusted to work in the interest of their country most or all of the time. Trust in individual central-level parties varied considerably.

As could be anticipated, the nationalist parties were most widely trusted to look after the interests of the country. In both Scotland and Wales, the Labour Party was the second most trusted party, with the majority of respondents feeling that Labour could be trusted to work in the interest of the country most or all of the time. Across the board, trust in the Labour Party was positively correlated with trust in the UK government as a whole. The Conservative Party was far less favourably perceived. In both countries, less than 15 percent of respondents felt that this Party could be trusted to work in the interest of their country most or all of the time. Significantly, trust in the Conservative Party remained positively correlated with trust in the central government in general. While the election of a Labour government removed some of the immediate democratic grievances that had marked the 1980s and early 1990s, survey evidence thus suggests that anti-Conservative sentiments continued to have a negative effect on the democratic legitimacy of the centre.

Table 6.7 Trust in UK Government and central parties to work in the interest of Scotland/Wales (1997)

Scotland					
	UK Government	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
just about always	4%	3%	12%	3%	28%
most of the time	32%	9%	49%	31%	37%
only some of the time	53%	31%	34%	41%	22%
almost never	10%	57%	5%	25%	13%
N	647	661	656	558	628
Correlation with trust in UK government		0.262**	0.198**		
Wales					
	UK government	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	PC
just about always	8%	2%	9%	2%	24%
most of the time	38%	12%	46%	25%	35%
only some of the time	48%	41%	37%	56%	25%
almost never	5%	45%	8%	18%	16%
N	626	640	646	525	568
Correlation with trust in UK government		0.226**	0.256**		

Sources: Own elaboration based on Jowell, et al. (1998), ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

Unfortunately, survey evidence does not allow us to test whether these effects have persisted throughout the post-devolution era. There is however little evidence that trust in the central government as a whole improved over the course of three consecutive Labour administrations (see Table 6.8). Quite on the contrary, surveys held in the immediate aftermath of devolution show a noticeable decline in the share of Welsh and Scottish respondents who trust the central government to work in the interest of their country. More recently, the share of respondents who feel that the centre can be trusted to work in the interest of their country has all but returned to the pre-devolution level. This suggests that popular confidence in the devolved system may gradually be increasing.

Nonetheless, the majority of Scottish and Welsh voters do not feel that the centre can be trusted to work in the interest of their country most or all of the time. As was the case prior to devolution, distrust in the central government has remained strongly correlated with support for independence and devolution. Particularly in Wales, this association has become more rather than less pronounced over time.

Table 6.8 Trust in UK government to work in the interest of Scotland/Wales (1997-2009)

Scotland											
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
just about always	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%
most of the time	32%	31%	17%	20%	17%	20%	19%	21%	18%	31%	23%
only some of the time	53%	51%	54%	56%	53%	56%	52%	54%	53%	48%	51%
almost never	10%	15%	28%	22%	27%	22%	27%	23%	26%	17%	25%
N	647	1438	1627	1572	1616	1471	1600	1492	1546	1463	1438
Correlation with constitutional preference	-.156**	-.246**	-.177**	-.195**	-.123**	-.190**	-.120**	-.141**	-.193**	-.254**	-.204**
Wales											
	1997	1999		2001		2003				2007	
just about always	8%	6%		2%		2%				4%	
most of the time	38%	28%		22%		21%				31%	
only some of the time	48%	53%		59%		59%				52%	
almost never	5%	14%		17%		18%				12%	
N	626	777		1054		973				868	
Correlation with constitutional preference	-.082*	-.104*		-.108**		-.129**				-.200**	

Sources: Own elaboration based on Jones, et al. (2004), R. Wyn Jones, et al. (2000), Jones & Phillips (2009), Jowell, et al. (1998) National Centre for Social Research (2002b, 2004a, 2004b, 2009), National Centre for Social Research, et al. (2001) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010) Constitutional preferences have been coded as: 1=independent, 2=devolution with taxation powers, 3=devolution without taxation powers, 4=no devolution. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed).

Taken together, there is thus little reason to assume that devolution has significantly increased the democratic legitimacy of the centre. In this context, Labour's recent fall from grace in England has the potential to create a substantial regionalist backlash. Table 6.9 reports the voting patterns in 2010 by country and region, as well as the percentage point change from the 2005 results. In the UK as a whole, Labour's share of the popular vote declined from 35 per cent in 2005 to 29 in 2010. This shift was even more pronounced in England, where the Party's share of the vote dropped by 7.4 percentage points. Across the board, the electorates in the English regions turned away from Labour in favour of the Conservative Party, and to a lesser extent the Liberal Democrats and other smaller parties. The only English region to partially buck this trend was Greater London, where Labour support declined by a relatively modest 2.3 percentage points. Outside of England, the trends have been mixed; while the changes in voting patterns in Wales largely mirrored those in England, support for the Labour Party actually increased by 3.1 percentage points in Scotland.

Table 6.9 General election results 2010 by country and region

	Labour		Conservative		Liberal Democrats		SNP/PC	
	Share of the vote	Change from 2005	Share of the vote	Change from 2005	Share of the vote	Change from 2005	Share of the vote	Change from 2005
UK	29.0%	-6.2%	36.1%	3.8%	23.0%	1.0%	2.30%	0%
England	28.1%	-7.4%	39.6%	3.9%	24.2%	1.3%		
East Midlands	29.8%	-9.2%	41.2%	4.1%	20.8%	2.3%		
Eastern	19.6%	-10.2%	47.1%	3.8%	24.1%	2.3%		
Greater London	36.6%	-2.3%	34.5%	2.6%	22.1%	0.2%		
North East	43.6%	-9.3%	23.7%	4.2%	23.6%	0.3%		
North West	39.5%	-5.6%	31.7%	3.0%	21.6%	0.2%		
South East	16.2%	-8.2%	49.9%	4.9%	26.2%	0.8%		
South West	15.4%	-7.4%	42.8%	4.2%	34.7%	2.1%		
West Midlands	30.6%	-8.1%	39.5%	4.5%	20.5%	1.9%		
Yorkshire and the Humber	34.7%	-8.9%	32.5%	3.4%	23.0%	2.3%		
Scotland	42.0%	3.1%	16.7%	0.9%	18.9%	-3.7%	19.9%	2.2%
Wales	36.2%	-6.5%	26.1%	4.7%	20.1%	1.7%	11.30%	-1.30%

Source: BBC (2010)

Despite the significant decline in Labour support across England and Wales, the swing towards the Conservatives was not large enough to award the Party an overall majority in the House of Commons. Following a short period of negotiations, the Conservative Party entered into a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The Liberal democrat party leader, Nick Clegg, has argued that his Party's participation in government will help to prevent a return to "the savagery of Margaret Thatcher's axe" (Nick Clegg as quoted by Rawnsley, 6th of June 2010). Nonetheless, substantial cuts in public spending are being implemented. Against the backdrop of economic recession and growing unemployment, these measures have already led to considerable public protests. As the effects of these policies become increasingly tangible, popular discontent is likely to increase. Especially in traditionally left-leaning regions with a strong dependency on the public sector, such grievances about central policies may lead to a revival of democratic regionalism.

The experiences from the 1970s suggest that discontent with central government and its policies may take some time to translate into support for greater regional autonomy. In particular, chapter 3 argued that popular demand for devolution only really started to rise markedly when it became clear that the existing Conservative predominance at the centre might be becoming a long term feature of the British party system. Based on this experience, it could be argued that the current shift in English voting patterns is unlikely to lead to an immediate rise in support for further decentralisation in Scotland and Wales. Rather, the potential for democratic regionalism would seem to depend on the extent to which the recent regionalisation of the British party system will persist in subsequent elections.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the recent change of power at the centre occurred under very different circumstances and past experiences may therefore be a poor predictor for future developments in this case. Margaret Thatcher for example gained office in 1979 on the back of a pronounced and fairly uniform shift towards the Conservative Party across all British regions (see Table 6.10). In Scotland, popular support for Conservative candidates increased from 24.7 percent in October 1974 to 31.4 per cent in 1979. Similarly, the Conservative Party captured 32.2 per cent of the Welsh vote, which constituted an increase of over 8 percentage points compared to the previous election. This suggests that the change of power at the centre in the late 1970s represented a real and profound shift in popular opinion, even in traditionally left-leaning regions. As noted, the swing towards the Conservatives in 2010 was significantly less pronounced but largely uniform across England and Wales. By contrast, Scottish support for the Conservative Party hardly increased at all between 2005 and 2010 (see Table 6.9). As a result, the current prime minister, David Cameron, and his party only received an explicit mandate to govern from 16.7 percent of the Scottish electorate.

Table 6.10 General election results in 1979 by country and region compared to October 1974 results

	Labour		Conservative		Liberal Democrats		SNP/PC	
	Share of the vote	Change from 1974	Share of the vote	Change from 1974	Share of the vote	Change from 1974	Share of the vote	Change from 1974
UK	36.9%	-2.4%	43.9%	8.2%	13.8%	-4.5%	2.0%	-1.4%
England	36.7%	-3.4%	47.2%	8.4%	14.9%	-5.3%		
East Anglia	32.6%	-2.9%	50.8%	7.0%	16.0%	-4.6%		
East Midlands	38.6%	-3.6%	46.8%	8.3%	13.7%	-4.3%		
Greater London	39.6%	-4.3%	46.0%	8.6%	11.9%	-5.1%		
Northern	50.2%	-2.0%	35.9%	6.0%	12.4%	-4.1%		
North West	42.6%	-2.0%	43.8%	6.8%	13.0%	-5.0%		
South East	26.8%	-4.1%	54.7%	9.7%	17.5%	-6.2%		
South West	24.4%	-4.3%	51.9%	8.3%	22.4%	-4.9%		
West Midlands	40.1%	-3.8%	47.1%	9.6%	11.5%	-6.3%		
Yorkshire and Humberside	44.5%	-1.9%	39.4%	6.8%	15.1%	-5.1%		
Scotland	41.5%	5.2%	31.4%	6.7%	9.0%	0.7%	17.3%	-13.1%
Wales	48.6%	-0.9%	32.2%	8.3%	10.6%	-4.9%	8.1%	-2.70%

Source: Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

Both in the late 1970s and in the recent elections, the shift towards the Conservatives in England and Wales was accompanied by a rise in Labour support in Scotland (see Table 6.9 and 6.10). This similarity presumably prompted SNP leader, Alex Salmond, to argue that the relatively strong showing of the Labour Party in 2010 should be seen as part of a “very long-term and probably bad [Scottish] habit of trying to prevent Tory governments taking power in England by voting Labour in Scotland” (Peterkin & Urquart, 7th of May 2010). These seemingly uniform trends however have very different origins. In the 1970s, the rise in Labour support was primarily related to the collapse of the SNP. Having gained considerable ground during the start of the 1970s, SNP support declined markedly in the latter half of the decade. In this process, a significant number of those who had switched to the SNP in previous elections returned to Labour and the Conservatives. As a result, both Parties significantly improved their share of the Scottish vote.

By contrast, opinion polls suggest that the rise in Labour support in the 2010 general election was primarily related to a late swing from the Liberal Democrats towards Labour (YouGov, 2011). Coupled with the a priori likelihood of a hung Parliament and the absence of any notable improvement in the Conservative vote in Scotland, this evidence is much more consistent with the hypothesis that left-leaning Scottish voters flocked towards Labour with the specific intention to keep the Conservative Party out of office.

Taken together, the available evidence suggests that Scottish opposition to the return of a Conservative-led government at the centre was significantly more pronounced in 2010 than it had been in 1979. While a similar trend could not be discerned in Wales, Conservative support in this country also falls well below the level recorded in 1979 (see Table 6.9 and 6.10). Simultaneously, it can be argued that the viability of the region as an alternative scale of democratic representation has increased significantly in both Scotland and Wales. As described in chapter 5, the 1979 general elections were directly triggered by the failure of the devolution referendums. In these polls, the proposed devolution of powers to a directly elected regional body had been firmly rejected by the people in Wales, while the plans also failed to receive majority support in 6 of the 12 Scottish regions. In this context, convincing the Scottish and Welsh electorates that devolution could provide a viable solution to the mounting democratic grievances with the centre was always going to be an uphill struggle. By contrast, the 2010 Conservative-led government came to power more than 10 years after the 1997-2001 Labour Government had successfully secured majority support for its devolution proposals. The existence of fairly well-established regional opportunities for voice may in turn facilitate the mobilisation of democratic grievances with the centre along regionalist lines in the post-devolution era.

Table 6.11 Trust in elected regional body to work in the interest of the country (1997-2007)

Scotland											
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
just about always	35%	27%	10%	13%	9%	11%	9%	10%	8%	14%	14%
most of the time	49%	56%	45%	53%	44%	53%	42%	47%	44%	58%	49%
only some of the time	13%	15%	35%	29%	35%	32%	38%	35%	40%	25%	31%
almost never	3%	2%	10%	5%	12%	5%	11%	8%	8%	3%	6%
N	645	1430	1594	1564	1623	1475	792	1493	1545	1455	1443
Correlation with constitutional preference	.414**	.151**	.136**	.165**	.176**	.149**	.141**	.075**	.083**	.111**	.161**
Wales											
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
just about always	24%	25%	NA	12%	NA	13%	NA	NA	NA	19%	NA
most of the time	45%	45%		49%		53%				54%	
only some of the time	26%	26%		32%		28%				24%	
almost never	5%	5%		7%		6%				3%	
N	621	760		1044		967				869	
Correlation with constitutional preference	.388**	.229**		.149**		.200**				.170**	

Sources: Own elaboration based on Jones, et al. (2004), Jones, et al. (2000), Jones & Phillips (2009), Jowell, et al. (1998), National Centre for Social Research (2002b, 2004a, 2004b, 2009), National Centre for Social Research, et al. (2001) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010) Constitutional preferences have been coded as: 1=independent, 2=devolution with taxation powers, 3=devolution without taxation powers, 4=no devolution. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

In order for this effect to emerge, the region itself however needs to be perceived as a more capable representative of the people than the central level. Prior to devolution, the vast majority of respondents in Scotland and Wales indicated that they would trust an elected country-level body to work in the interest of their country most or all of the time (see Table 6.11). In both countries, this belief was strongly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy. In Scotland in particular, the early years of devolution seem to have produced some popular doubts regarding the democratic benefits of decentralisation. Simultaneously, the strength of the association between trust in the devolved government and support for regional autonomy declined. The most likely explanation for this phenomenon seems to be that popular trust in a hypothetical regional body was relatively strongly influenced by constitutional preferences prior to devolution. Once the performance of the devolved institutions could be judged in practice, this effect presumably became less pronounced.

Despite this downwards adjustment in the democratic legitimacy of the region, the majority of voters in Scotland and Wales continue to trust the devolved institutions to work in the interest of their country most or all of the time and such beliefs have remained strongly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy. Especially when compared to the prevailing level of trust in the centre (see Table 6.8), this suggests that the regional scale does enjoy sufficient democratic legitimacy to allow perceived democratic deficits at the centre to translate into support for further decentralisation.

6.3.2. Democratic regionalism in post-devolution England

Based on the available evidence, I would argue that devolution has done little to redress the potential for democratic regionalism in Scotland and Wales. Simultaneously, the current asymmetric system is increasingly creating democratic grievances with the centre in much of England. Although Labour's devolution programme for Scotland and Wales was accompanied by a commitment to decentralisation in England, Greater London currently remains the only English region represented by a directly elected regional body.

While this reform was presented as part of the Government's devolution programme, the Greater London Authority was established to address a very different set of problems. Whereas the 1997 Labour manifesto explicitly linked devolution to Scotland and Wales to the need to suppress secessionism and maintain the Union, the proposals for London were contained under the header of "Good local government"(Labour Party, 1997). The subsequent Labour Government green paper argued that the existing arrangements in London had proved incapable of dealing with pressing local issues (Department Of The Environment Transport And Regions, 1997). In this context, it was argued that the creation of a directly elected strategic authority and Mayor would help to streamline the current arrangements and address these democratic deficits.

During the debates surrounding the Greater London Authority (Referendum) Bill, opposition parties called for a two-question referendum separating the creation of a directly elected mayor from the establishment of an elected regional assembly (Hansard (Commons), 10th November 1997, vol. 300, cols. 668). The 1997-2001 Labour Government however enjoyed a large enough majority in the House to fend-off such attempts to change the decision-making rules. A single question referendum was held on the 7th of May 1998. This poll returned a comfortable majority in favour of the Government's original proposals for a Greater London Authority, made up of an elected Mayor and a separately elected assembly. The Annual London Surveys that have been conducted since the establishment of the Greater London Authority however suggest that the Conservative Party might have been right in arguing that there was no real demand for an elected assembly.

Table 6.12 Satisfaction with the work of the Greater London Assembly and the Mayor

Share of respondents who answered 'Don't Know', when asked about the responsibilities of the Mayor and the Greater London Assembly (GLA)										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010
GLA	42%	59%	54%	57%	40%	35%	37%	38%	49%	43%
Mayor	16%	23%	18%	19%	12%	8%	9%	7%	22%	24%
Satisfaction with the performance of the Greater London Assembly										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010
Very satisfied	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Fairly satisfied	17%	15%	8%	11%	16%	18%	17%	21%	17%	14%
neither	39%	35%	31%	33%	37%	31%	39%	37%	23%	32%
fairly dissatisfied	4%	7%	6%	5%	6%	7%	7%	8%	7%	4%
very dissatisfied	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	1%	1%
Don't Know	36%	37%	50%	47%	35%	38%	30%	29%	51%	48%
Satisfaction with the performance of the Mayor										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010
Very satisfied	5%	6%	4%	7%	6%	7%	7%	8%	5%	5%
Fairly satisfied	25%	29%	23%	28%	33%	30%	29%	36%	25%	21%
neither	20%	31%	29%	28%	27%	26%	28%	23%	26%	40%
fairly dissatisfied	5%	9%	14%	11%	12%	13%	13%	14%	9%	8%
very dissatisfied	3%	5%	13%	10%	9%	11%	13%	8%	3%	3%
Don't Know	23%	19%	17%	17%	14%	12%	9%	10%	32%	23%

Source: (BMG Research, 2009, 2010; MORI Social Research Division, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)

From the outset, there has been considerable confusion regarding the powers and responsibilities of the Greater London Assembly (GLA). Ten years on, a significant minority within the population remains unsure about its role and satisfaction with the performance of the GLA continues to be very limited (see Table 6.12). By comparison, popular knowledge and satisfaction with the performance of the Mayor of London has been more pronounced. Nonetheless, the replacement of Ken Livingstone by Boris Johnson in 2008 has been accompanied by a marked increase in the share of respondents who indicate that they are unsure of the responsibilities of the Mayor and unable to say whether they are satisfied with his performance.

As will be further elaborated in chapter 7, this may be seen as a reflection of the personality-driven nature of the Mayor contest and the strongly personal mandate this produces.

Taken together, this suggests that the region itself enjoys a relatively limited degree of legitimacy as an alternative space of democratic representation. Simultaneously, there is little reason to assume that democratic grievances with the centre will be significantly more prevalent in Greater London than in the other English regions. Throughout the post-war period, voting patterns in Greater London have been relatively close to the UK average (see chapter 3). As noted, the 2010 results signify a partial break from this trend, as Labour support in Greater London proved more robust than in other English regions. Nonetheless, there has been a notable shift towards the Conservatives, with 35 per cent of voters supporting this Party in the recent general elections. This remains well above the share of the vote received by Conservative candidates in Scotland and Wales, or indeed the North East of England. I would therefore argue that devolution is unlikely to be accompanied by a marked rise in democratic regionalism in this area.

Despite efforts to extend devolution to selected English regions, elected regional bodies have not been established in the rest of England. There are significant differences in regional voting patterns, but opinion polls consistently suggest that demand for democratic devolution to the regional level remains very limited in England. Partially this may reflect the fact that the majority of English respondents trust the UK government to work in the interests of England as a whole most or all of the time (see Table 6.13). Interestingly, the survey conducted in the context of the planned 2004 devolution referendums in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the North West produced very different results at the regional level. Only around 30 per cent of the respondents in these three regions felt that the UK government could be trusted to work in the interest of their specific region most or all of the time (see Table 6.13). In addition, a substantial minority indicated that the central government could almost never be trusted to work in the interest of their specific region.

Table 6.13 Trust in UK government to work in the interest of country/region (2000-2007)

England			
	2001	2003	2007
just about always	9%	7%	8%
most of the time	50%	48%	46%
only some of the time	34%	36%	36%
almost never	7%	10%	10%
N	2644	934	811
Correlation with support devolution to English Parliament	-.144**	-.144**	-.200**
Selected English regions (2004)			
	North East	Yorkshire	North west
just about always	3%	2%	2%
most of the time	27%	26%	24%
only some of the time	51%	54%	54%
almost never	20%	17%	21%
N	729	378	344
Correlation with attitude to devolution	.160**	.109*	.206**

Sources: own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2003, 2005, 2009) and Rallings (2006). Constitutional preferences have been coded as: in favour an English parliament=1, in favour of regional devolution or centralised system=2. The second correlation is based on the coding: strongly favour of regional devolution=1, generally favour=2, no preference=3, generally against=4, strongly against regional devolution=5. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

Paradoxically, mistrust in the central government was associated with less, rather than more, favourable attitudes towards elected regional assemblies in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the North West. This finding stands in stark contrast with the results in Scotland, Wales, and England. The available survey evidence suggests that this result is not driven by a general lack in trust in government at any scale (see Table 6.14). Although the share of the population that would trust an elected regional assembly to act in the interest of the region all or most of the time was below the level recorded in Scotland and Wales at the time of the 1997 devolution referendums, the level of trust in the regional scale was very similar to that recorded in the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (see Table 6.11). Trust in the regional scale was in turn positively correlated with support for devolution across all three regions.

In this context, the most probable explanation for the positive correlation between trust in the UK government and support for devolution seem to be that the perception that the centre cannot be trusted to work in the interest of the region negatively affected people's opinion regarding the rationale behind and ultimate effect of the government's proposals.

Table 6.14 Trust in elected regional assembly to work in the interest of the region

Selected English regions (2004)			
	North East	Yorkshire	North West
just about always	9%	12%	11%
most of the time	38%	45%	42%
only some of the time	38%	31%	38%
almost never	14%	11%	9%
N	626	318	254
Correlation with attitude to devolution	.422**	.274**	.198**

Source: own elaboration based on Rallings (2006). Constitutional preferences have been coded as: strongly favour of regional devolution=1, generally favour=2, no preference=3, generally against=4, strongly against regional devolution=5. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

Unfortunately, similar surveys have not been conducted in other English regions. The remainder of this section will therefore have to focus on England as a whole. The available survey evidence consistently shows that the vast majority of English voters believe that devolution to Scotland and Wales has made little or no difference to the way Britain is governed (see Table 6.15). Interestingly the relationship between the perceived effects of devolution elsewhere on the way Britain is governed and the constitutional preference for England itself seems to have change over time. At the start of the period, those who felt that devolution improved the way Britain was governed were significantly more likely to favour some form of devolution for England than those who felt that it had made the government of Britain worse. The 2007 results suggest that this linear relationship has recently disappeared.

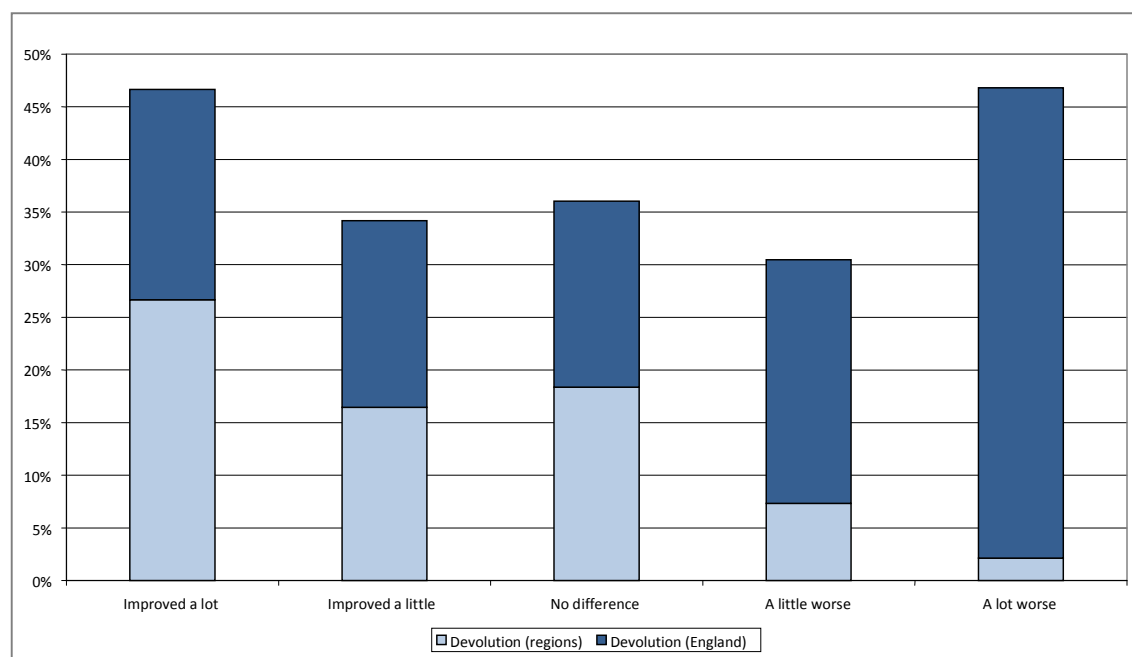
Table 6.15 English views on impact of devolution to Scotland and Wales on the government of Britain as a whole (2000-2007)

Has creating the Welsh Assembly improved the way Britain as a whole is governed, made it worse, or made no difference?					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2007
Improved a lot	2%	1%	NA	1%	1%
Improved a little	14%	12%		9%	11%
No difference	65%	76%		81%	70%
A little worse	10%	6%		5%	10%
A lot worse	5%	2%		2%	5%
Too early to tell	4%	2%		2%	3%
N	1674	2355		1552	716
Pearson Correlation with support for devolution to region or England	.106**	.087**		.087**	-.009
Has creating the Scottish parliament improved the way Britain as a whole is governed, made it worse, or made no difference?					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2007
Improved a lot	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Improved a little	17%	15%	18%	12%	11%
No difference	61%	71%	63%	77%	65%
A little worse	10%	7%	8%	5%	12%
A lot worse	5%	3%	4%	2%	7%
Too early to tell	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%
N	1693	2422	1654	1601	728
Correlation with support for devolution to region or England	.123**	.089**	.090**	.102**	.015

Sources: own elaboration based on (National Centre for Social Research, 2002a, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009). Constitutional preferences have been coded as: In favour of English parliament or regional devolution=1, In favour of a centralised system=2. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

Closer inspection reveals that a U-shaped relationship might be emerging, with support for devolution highest amongst those who feel that devolution has made the government system either a lot worse or a lot better (see Figure 6.2). In addition, those who feel that devolution has made the way Britain is governed a lot worse are likely to favour devolution to the country level rather than the region. By contrast, those who feel that devolution has been an improvement remain relatively evenly split across the two options. This suggests that democratic deficits at the centre, rather than an increase in the perceived legitimacy of the region or the country, may be driving the rise in support for devolution in England.

Figure 6.2 Support for devolution according to the perceived effect of the creation of a Scottish Parliament on the way Britain is governed (2007)



Source: Own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2009)

The primary democratic grievance associated with asymmetric devolution is the so-called West Lothian question (Curtice, 2006; Curtice, 2010; Sandford, 2002; Tomaney, 1999). This refers to the anomaly that MPs representing constituencies in the devolved areas can vote on matters that will never directly affect their constituents in the House of Commons.

Surveys evidence suggests that the majority of the people in England indeed perceive the current system as unfair (see Table 6.16). Respondents who felt more strongly that Scottish MPs should not be allowed to vote on laws that only affect England were also more likely to favour devolution to England over the status quo or devolution to the regions. Over time, this association has increased in strength. This would suggest that the reluctance to address the West-Lothian question is gradually creating support for an English Parliament.

Table 6.16 The West-Lothian question in English public opinion

Now that Scotland has its own parliament, Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote in the House of Commons on laws that only affect England				
	2000	2001	2003	2007
Agree Strongly	20%	22%	25%	29%
Agree	50%	44%	44%	42%
Neither	20%	20%	19%	18%
Disagree	9%	12%	10%	10%
Disagree strongly	1%	1%	2%	1%
N	1551	2040	1347	641
Correlation with support for Devolution to England	.090**	.095**	.127**	.228**
Correlation with support for devolution to region or England	.053*	.025	.047	.114**

Sources: own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2002a, 2003, 2005, 2009) In the first correlation, constitutional preferences have been coded as: In favour of English parliament =1, In favour of regional devolution or a centralised system=2. In the second, constitutional preferences have been coded as: In favour of English parliament or regional devolution=1, In favour of a centralised system=2. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

The shift in power at the centre is likely to strengthen popular calls to adjust the procedures in the House of Commons to the realities of asymmetric devolution in the coming years. During the first decade of devolution, the party that secured the majority of Scottish and Welsh Westminster seats has also been dominant in much of England. As a result, Scottish and Welsh MPs have rarely been pivotal to the outcome of the decision-making process. Notable exceptions to this trend have been the creation of NHS foundation hospitals in England and the so-called 'top-up' fees paid by English students in English universities (Russell & Lodge, 2006). These policies were highly controversial within the Labour Party and both attracted considerable backbench rebellions. Under these circumstances, the historically high degree of party loyalty amongst Scottish and Welsh Labour MPs proved instrumental to the passing of the legislation.

While these two incidents did focus public attention on the West-Lothian question, the relative infrequent occurrence of such clashes of English, Scottish and Welsh preferences has until recently limited the salience of the issue. The results of the 2010 general elections however emphasised that the voting powers of Scottish and Welsh MPs can have a very profound effect on policy making at the centre. While the Labour Party has remained the dominant party in Scotland and Wales, the Conservatives now control 56 per cent of the English seats at Westminster. If the West-Lothian question had been resolved through the creation of an English Parliament or an system of 'English votes on English Laws', the Party would therefore have had the power to unilaterally effectuate policy changes across the range of policy areas currently devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Under the present system, Conservative policies that are carried by a majority of English MPs can however be defeated due to the voting behaviour of MPs from devolved areas that will never be directly affect by the proposed changes. This may in turn strengthen English support for reform.

6.4.Economic regionalism

Traditionally, devolution has primarily been presented as a way to recognise and protect the rights of minority identity groups, as well as improve the democratic representation of regional electorates. More recently, it has been argued that decentralisation may also create an economic dividend (Keating, 1998a; Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2005). The fiscal federalism literature has long suggested that decentralisation could enhance government efficiency (Brennan & Buchanan, 1980; Musgrave, 1959; Oates, 1972; Tiebout, 1956). More recently, economic geographers have argued that economic competitiveness has increasingly become dependent on local and regional factors during the present age of economic globalisation (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Scott, 1998; Storper, 1997). Taken together, this has encouraged academics and policy makers alike to argue that devolution may help to promote regional growth and prosperity, by empowering regional communities to tailor public goods and services to local needs. The extent to which devolution indeed produces an economic dividend in practice has however been widely questioned; while some empirical studies find a positive relationship between decentralisation and economic growth (Akai & Sakata, 2002; Iimi, 2005; Lin & Liu, 2000), others find a negative correlation (Zhang & Zou, 1998; Zhang & Zou, 2001), or no significant relationship at all (Davoodi & Zou, 1998; Woller & Phillips, 1998).

Despite the mixed empirical evidence, the New Regionalism discourse has had a clear impact on policy-making. As a result, centrally-led policies aimed at promoting prosperity and regional equality are increasingly being replaced by programmes that seek to encourage economic efficiency and growth through regional empowerment (Keating, 1998a; Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2004). New Labour's decentralisation agenda was very much part of this general trend. While the devolution of powers and resources to Scotland and Wales was primarily aimed at removing the threat of secessionism, it was argued that the reform was likely to also benefit the two countries economically (Goodwin, Jones, & Jones, 2005; Raco, 2003).

Similarly, both the early plans to create an elected Greater London Authority and the policy document setting out Labour's decentralisation agenda for the rest of England suggest that devolution is likely to encourage the emergence of more competitive and resilient regional economies (Labour Party, 1996a, 1996b).

When the Labour Party came to power in 1997, it swiftly followed through on its commitments to economic decentralisation. In Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater London, elected regional bodies assumed responsibility for most areas of economic development. In the rest of the country, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were created. Partially this decentralisation of powers to the English Regions aimed to counter the perception of a so-called 'Celtic Advantage' (Morgan, 2006). Particularly in the poorer regions in the North of England, there has been a longstanding suspicion that Scotland and Wales have been able to derive economic benefits from their exceptional position within the central system. By coupling its devolution agenda elsewhere with a decentralisation of regional policy in the remaining English regions, the Labour government no doubt aimed to placate these grievances. This section will argue that it actually succeeded in this goal to some extent, not because decentralisation has indeed yielded observable economic benefits, but rather because the reality of devolution seems to have weakened popular belief in the so-called economic dividend of decentralisation. Instead, popular discontent has been focussed around the distribution of public expenditure across different areas.

6.4.1. The economic dividend of devolution

Prior to devolution, the majority of Scottish respondents and a substantial share of those in Wales anticipated that the proposed decentralisation of powers and resources would improve the economic situation of their respective countries. This perception was in turn strongly correlated with support for greater regional autonomy. While popular opinion in Wales has remained relatively stable, the reality of devolution seems to have made Scottish respondents considerably less optimistic regarding the economic benefits of devolution. While the perceived economic effects of devolution continue to be correlated with support for regional autonomy, the correlation coefficient has decreased following devolution (see Table 6.17). As was argued in the section on democratic regionalism, the most likely explanation for this trend would seem to be that constitutional preferences were quite strongly influencing popular perceptions of the likely effects of decentralisation prior to devolution. The partial decoupling of the perceived economic effects of devolution from support for further decentralisation and secession, together with the emerging consensus that devolution has made little to no difference to the economic situation, suggest that changes in support for greater autonomy will not be primarily driven by economic factors in the post devolution era. In Wales in particular, the realisation that devolution is unlikely to harm the Welsh economy may however facilitate the mobilisation of other grievances in a regionalist way.

Table 6.17 Perceived effects of devolution on the local economy (Scotland, Wales and selected English regions)

Scotland					
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2003
a lot better	17%	7%	5%	6%	5%
a little better	46%	40%	33%	39%	32%
no difference	26%	40%	49%	46%	50%
a little worse	10%	11%	11%	8%	9%
a lot worse	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%
N	652	1366	1547	1525	1407
Correlation with constitutional preference	.601**	.335**	.294**	.299**	.377**
Wales					
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2003
a lot better	8%	N/A	N/A	4%	5%
a little better	33%			31%	32%
no difference	44%			57%	56%
a little worse	13%			6%	5%
a lot worse	3%			2%	2%
N	618			1026	921
Correlation with constitutional preference	.491**			.247**	.304**
Selected English regions (2004)					
	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber	North West		
a lot better	5%	4%	1%		
a little better	25%	38%	36%		
no difference	45%	44%	46%		
a little worse	17%	12%	13%		
a lot worse	8%	3%	3%		
N	648	336	275		
Correlation with constitutional preference	.574**	.418**	.393**		

Sources: Own elaboration based on Jones, et al. (2004), Jones, et al., (2002), Jowell, et al. (1998), National Centre for Social Research (2002b, 2004a, 2005), National Centre for Social Research, et al. (2001) ,and Rallings (2006). Constitutional preferences have been coded as: 1=independent, 2=devolution with taxation powers, 3=devolution without taxation powers, 4=no devolution. ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

In England there is similarly little evidence that the work of the RDAs or the reality of devolution elsewhere has convinced the general public of the economic need for further decentralisation. In the three English regions pre-selected for a referendum in 2004, the vast majority anticipated that devolution would make little or no difference to the state of the regional economy (see Table 6.17). Across the board, those who were more sceptical about the economic benefits of decentralisation were also less inclined to support devolution to their region. The direction of causality between these two variables is however difficult to determine. Evidence from the Scottish and Welsh case suggests that, in the absence of actual devolution, constitutional preference may to a large extent be driving the perceived economic effects of greater regional autonomy. Whether this effect was indeed equally strong in the English regions is however debatable. Unlike their Scottish and Welsh counterparts in the 1990s, the respondents in the 2004 regional referendum study had been able to evaluate the effects of devolution in other regions for several years. Apparently the developments in Scotland and Wales did not convince the majority of the population that the economic dividend of devolution would be sufficiently large to justify the creation of an elected regional assembly.

6.4.2. The fiscal dividend of devolution

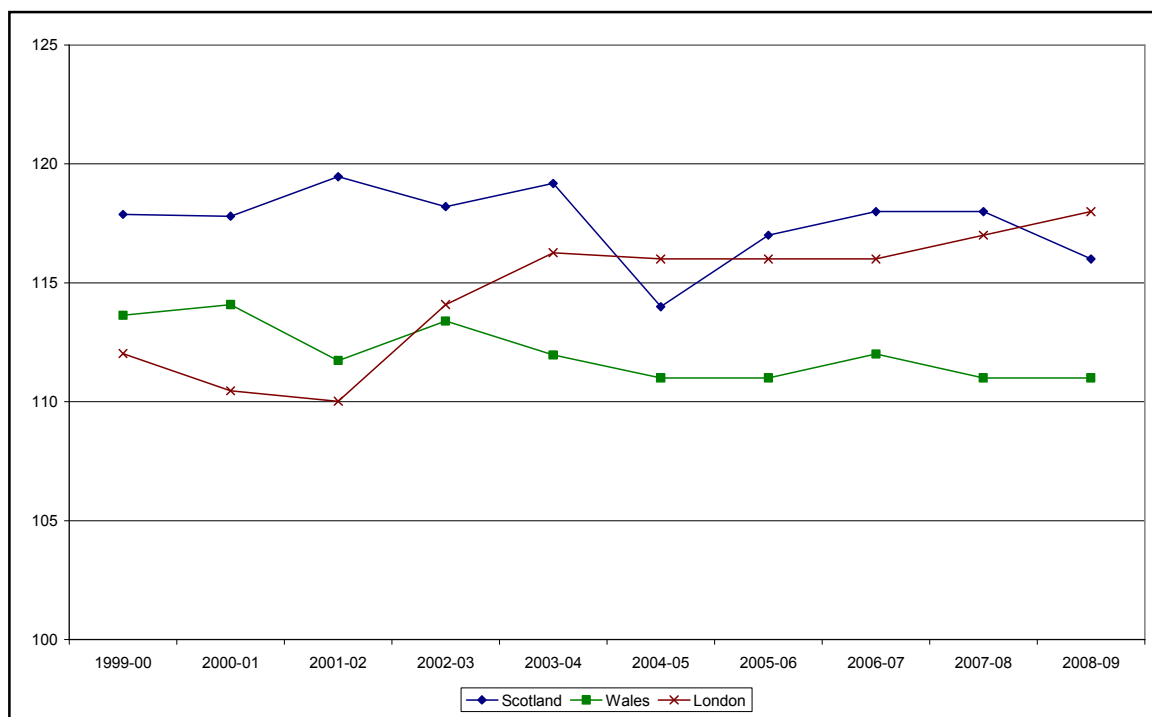
Even if devolution does not create a more vibrant and prosperous regional economy, it may still produce a dividend for devolved areas in the form of additional public spending. As will be shown in chapter 7, the establishment of an elected assembly or parliament provides regional elites with a highly legitimate platform through which to engage in negotiations with the centre. This may in turn enable devolved areas to extract additional resources from the centre (Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2003). This may be perceived as unfair in areas that do not currently have the institutional capacity or bargaining power to pursue similar strategies. If devolution is indeed found to produce a fiscal dividend, this may therefore enhance popular support for elected regional bodies in devolved and non-devolved areas alike.

Within the current system, the ability of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly to use their newfound powers to extract additional rents from the central government is formally limited by a formula-based funding system. Since 1978, most changes in the public spending allocation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are directly linked to changes in spending on comparable services in England through a population-based system often referred to as the Barnett formula (for more information on the mechanics of the Barnett formula see H. M. Treasury, 1999). As a result, the share of the devolved budget formally subjected to intergovernmental bargaining is relatively limited. In addition, the link of the formula-based element of the budget to changes in English spending levels, rather than absolute expenditure, should over time lead to a convergence of public expenditure per head across the four countries. As a result, this system should theoretically limit both the fiscal dividend of devolution in the devolved areas and the potential for economic grievances in England.

Evidence from the pre-devolution period however suggests that the effect of this formula-based system has been less than uniform. While there have been some signs that public expenditure in Wales is slowly converging towards the English average, no such trend can be discerned in Scotland. This has been taken as evidence that areas with stronger bargaining powers can extract additional resources from the centre, even if the bulk of the resource allocation is officially governed by a transparent formula (McLean & McMillan, 2003). In this view, a credible threat of secession, alongside a long history of administrative devolution, gave Scottish elites both the institutional capacity and the legitimacy to protect the country from the brunt of the so-called Barnett squeeze. While identifiable need may arguably be greater in Wales than in Scotland, less well-developed institutions and more limited popular support for independence put this country in a considerably weaker bargaining position. As a result, the country was not able to avoid a decline in its relative public expenditure position to the same extent as its Scottish counterpart.

Although small adjustments were made to the funding system following devolution, the Barnett formula continues to formally govern the majority of changes to the block grant in Scotland and Wales. In Greater London, the creation of a devolved administration has not been accompanied by a shift to a similarly formula-based funding system. Instead, resources are allocated through a mixture of ad hoc grants and assessments. Theoretically this should give the Greater London Authority more opportunities to use its bargaining power to extract rents from the central government than its Scottish and Welsh counterparts. Recent trends in public spending seem to concur with this perspective (see Figure 6.3). Over the last decade, London's relative expenditure position has improved markedly. By contrast, per capita expenditure levels in Wales have continued to marginally converge to the English average. In Scotland, trends are more mixed, but overall the country's relative position has declined between 1999/2000 and 2008/2009. This would suggest that, although the system may provide some room for bargaining, the Barnett formula does considerably reduce the potential for regional elites to use the devolved institutions in order to extract additional resources.

Figure 6.3 Trends in identifiable public expenditure on services per head in the post-devolution period (Indices, UK=100)



Sources: (H. M. Treasury, 2005, 2009)

The fact that the establishment of the Greater London Authority has been accompanied by a notable improvement in the relative public expenditure position of Greater London has not received much popular attention in the post-devolution era. Rather the public debate has been centred on the appropriate levels of public spending for Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales. Public spending per head has traditionally been higher than the English average in both of these countries. The benign explanation of this difference would be that this reflects a relatively high level of identifiable need, as well as the fact that public goods and services may be more costly to provide in some areas. On the other hand, there has been a longstanding suspicion in parts of England that the relatively favourable expenditure position of Scotland in particular reflects preferential treatment (see chapter 3).

Due to data limitations and measurement issues, it is impossible to directly test whether the current allocation of resources accurately reflects the needs of the different regions and countries within the UK. In order to gain some insight into the relationship between relative need and public spending, I will follow McLean and McMillan's (2003) suggestion to use residency-based gross value added (GVA) per capita levels as a crude proxy for need. This approach is based on the assumptions that a lower GVA per capita is associated with higher incidences of poverty and therefore greater need for government spending. If the allocation of resources indeed accounts for the relative needs of each region, relative identifiable public spending per capita should be negative correlated with residency-based GVA per capita under these assumptions.

Table 6.18 Pearson correlations between relative identifiable public expenditure on services per capita and residency-based GVA per capita.

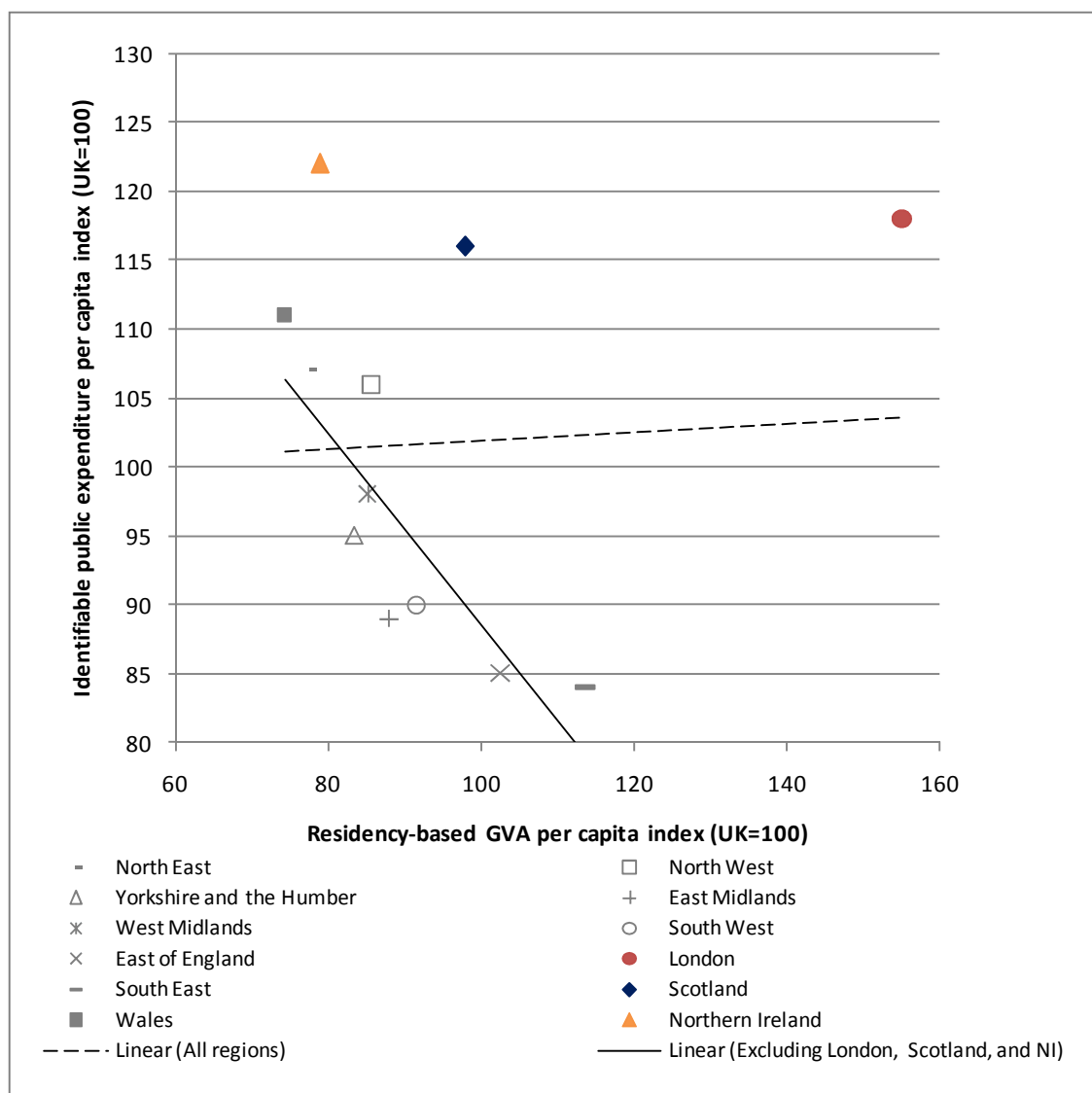
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
All	-.265	-.308	-.327	-.227	-.141	-.083	-.050	-.026	.023	.042
Excluding Greater London, Scotland and Northern Ireland	-.863**	-.869**	-.893**	-.850**	-.874**	-.873**	-.877**	-.849**	-.852**	-.850**

Source: own elaboration based on (H. M. Treasury, 2005, 2009; Office for National Statistics, 2009b) ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level (Pearson two-tailed)

Table 6.18 reports the correlation coefficient between relative GVA per capita levels and relative public spending from 1999 until 2008. If we include all Government Office regions in the analysis, the relationship between GVA and public expenditure is not significant in any of these years. Towards the end of the period, the correlation coefficient even acquires the opposite sign. As Figure 6.4 shows, this finding is primarily driven by three outliers; Greater London, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If we exclude these three regions from the analysis, we do consistently find a significant negative correlation. This suggests that, contrary to public perception, the current level of public expenditure in Wales is largely in line with its relative needs.

Scotland and Greater London however each receive a share of public spending that is considerably more substantial than would be anticipated on the basis of their relative position in terms of GVA per capita.

Figure 6.4 Residency-based GVA per capita and public expenditure per capita (2008)



Sources: Own elaboration based on H. M. Treasury (2009) and Office for National Statistics (2009b)

Despite these findings, the perception that the country remains relatively underfunded continues to be a source of discontent in Wales. In 2007, the Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition government tried to address this issue by establishing an independent Commission into the current system of funding and finance for Wales. In its first report, this Commission sought to demonstrate that Wales had indeed been subjected to the so-called Barnett squeeze. In order to make this point, it argued that a focus on identifiable regional expenditure underestimates the extent to which Wales has been negatively affected by the Barnett formula. By restricting the analysis to those functions that are funded via the Welsh Assembly, the Commission produced a much more dramatic picture of Welsh public spending converging towards the English average (Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, 2009: 23). Applying the funding criteria used in English regions to Wales, it further argued that Wales remains moderately underfunded compared to similar English regions.

In its final report, published in July 2010, the Commission concluded that the funding arrangements for Wales were in urgent need of reform (Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, 2010). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the recommendations of the Commission centred on the need to replace the Barnett formula with a needs-based funding system. In addition, the report argued that the Welsh Assembly should acquire limited taxation powers and the right to borrow in order to finance capital expenditures. So far there has been little suggestion that the central government intends to accommodate any of these demands in the near future (see chapter 7 for a full discussion). Especially at a time when the legitimacy of the centre is already challenged by unpopular spending cuts, the reluctance to address this longstanding concern may result in considerable economic grievances. To what extent this is likely to create support for greater decentralisation however remains to be seen. As in the pre-devolution period, public expenditure in Wales continues to outstrip tax revenue (Oxford Economics, 2007). As a result, fiscal devolution would not necessarily be beneficial to the country.

In Scotland by contrast the effect of greater fiscal autonomy on the country's finances remain a point of contention. If we adopt the same approach to tax allocation across all British regions, Scotland continues to be subsidised by the rest of the UK (Oxford Economics, 2007). However, if one accepts that the revenues related to the North Sea operations should predominantly be allocated to Scotland, relative tax revenue per head may in fact exceed relative public expenditure per head. Whether or not fiscal autonomy is beneficial to Scotland therefore greatly depends on the delineation of the tax base. This may in turn explain why surveys find that English and Scottish respondents have very different views on the fairness of the current levels of expenditure in Scotland (see Table 6.19).

Table 6.19 Perceived fairness of public spending in Scotland (Scotland and England, 2000-2009)

Scotland							
	2000	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	
much more	2%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%	
a little more	8%	8%	9%	8%	14%	12%	
pretty much fair	29%	39%	36%	35%	42%	43%	
a little less	36%	34%	37%	35%	29%	32%	
much less	25%	16%	15%	19%	11%	10%	
N	1584	1504	1398	1409	1353	1344	
Correlation with constitutional preference	-.230**	-.244**	-.287**	-.151**	-.248**	-.253**	
England							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2007	2008	2009
much more	11%	12%	12%	12%	21%	28%	26%
a little more	17%	19%	19%	18%	22%	26%	29%
pretty much fair	57%	58%	57%	59%	49%	42%	41%
a little less	13%	10%	10%	10%	7%	3%	4%
much less	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%
N	1412	2102	2220	1403	658	753	727
Correlation with support for English Parliament	.055*	.042	.051*	.057	.124**	.139**	.171**
Correlation with support for devolution to region or country	-.013	-.007	-.026	.058	.047	.104**	.074

Sources: own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2004a, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011), Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2009, 2010) For Scotland, constitutional preferences have been coded as: 1=independent, 2=devolution with taxation powers, 3=devolution without taxation powers, 4=no devolution. In the first correlation for England, constitutional preferences have been coded as: In favour of English parliament =1, In favour of regional devolution or a centralised system=2. In the second, constitutional preferences have been coded as: In favour of English parliament or regional devolution=1, In favour of a centralised system=2.

In Scotland, the perception that the country is receiving less than its fair share of public spending has consistently been associated with greater support for independence and devolution. Between 2000 and 2009, the share of Scottish respondents who felt that their country received less than its fair share of public spending has however declined from 61 to 42 percent. This suggests that devolution has helped to redress Scottish grievances in this respect. In England, the opposite trend can be discerned. In 2000, 28 percent of respondents in England felt that Scotland received more than its fair share of public spending. By 2009, this had increased to 55 percent. In addition, discontent with Scotland's relative public spending position has become increasingly associated with support for devolution in England. As was the case with the democratic deficits caused by devolution, the mounting grievances with the regional distribution of public spending seem to be primarily leading to support for the establishment of an English Parliament, rather than elected regional assemblies. As this support for English devolution seems to be primarily related to comparative grievances, a reform of the funding system for Scotland could well prove sufficient to placate these demands.

At the time of writing, such a proposal has been put before parliament in the form of the 2010-2011 Scotland Bill. Introduced on St. Andrew's day 2010, the Bill is primarily a response to the recommendations produced by the independent Commission on Scottish Devolution (Commission on Scottish Devolution, 2009). As such it has been primarily designed to address Scottish concerns with the initial devolution settlement (see chapter 7 for details). Nonetheless, former Scottish Labour Leader, Wendy Alexander, has argued that the reform will also help to partially address English grievances by increasing the financial accountability of the Scottish Parliament (Alexander, 16 June 2010 : 13). To what extent this will indeed be the case remains to be seen. Especially since the 2011 Scottish Parliament election returned a majority SNP government, it seems unlikely that the fiscal provisions under the eventual Scotland Act will redress Scotland's relatively favourable public spending position (see chapter 7 for further discussion).

As a result, there is little reason to believe that the proposed increase in fiscal autonomy for Scotland will have any notable impact on discontent in England. Simultaneously, the accommodation of Scottish demands may lead to comparative grievances in Wales. Taken together, this suggests that the proposed reform may help to stem support for full independence in Scotland, but will do little to redress calls for further decentralisation in England and Wales.

6.5.Conclusion

Following two decades of Conservative government, the return to power of the Labour Party in 1997 heralded a period of rapid policy change. While the devolution project will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the main legacies of the 1997-2001 Labour government, the ultimate effect of this change in the government system on the future of the Union remains to be seen. Ten years on, the available survey evidence suggests that decentralisation has so far been accompanied by a strengthening of popular support for further devolution in both Scotland and Wales. By contrast there is little to suggest that this trend has been accompanied by a rise in secessionism. In England, popular support for regional autonomy has historically been limited. Opinion polls suggest that the experience of devolution elsewhere initially produced a modest rise in support for devolution to the English regions. This shift in popular opinion however did not prove robust. Following a brief return to the pre-devolution constellation of preferences, more recent surveys suggest that support for an English Parliament is on the rise. Interesting as these trends are, they tell us little about the dynamics of devolution and how this influences popular opinion on decentralisation and secession. In order to gain a better insight into these developments, this chapter examined how devolution has affected the perceived legitimacy of the central and regional level in terms of identity, democratic representation and economic growth and equity. Trends in these areas in turn allow us to identify the mechanisms through which devolution is influencing support for greater autonomy.

New Labour's devolution project was presented as part of the administration's efforts to construct a new, modern form of Britishness. It was hoped that formally

acknowledging the multinational nature of the UK through devolution would stem calls for full independence and induce a stronger sense of loyalty towards the British state. Survey evidence however suggests that devolution has done little to strengthen the underlying sense of Britishness in Scotland and Wales. Simultaneously, the change in the government system has encouraged a stronger focus on the country identity in England. At face value, these findings seem broadly in line with the literature that argues that devolution tends to strengthen regional identities, while undermining loyalties to the central level (Dikshit, 1975; Kymlicka, 1998; Lustik, et al., 2004; Roeder, 1991). It however needs to be noted that devolution has been associated with an immediate step change in Britishness, rather than a perpetual decline of the overarching identity (Curtice, 2006). In addition, survey evidence suggests that the regional and the British identity remain nested feelings of belonging for most respondents across England, Scotland and Wales. I would therefore argue that the re-articulation of feelings of belonging shortly after the establishment of the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament has not created real opportunities for purely identity-driven regionalism.

As argued in chapter 3, the regionalist revival the 1980s and 90s was also not driven primarily by identity factors. Instead the emergence of Conservative predominance on the back of English votes, and the related feelings of non-representation in Scotland and Wales, lay at the heart of popular demands for greater autonomy. The eventual accommodation of these demands coincided with a shift of power at the centre. Despite the continuous dominance of the Labour Party at the central level, trust in the central government has not improved during the first decade of devolution. Moreover distrust in the central government has continued to be strongly correlated with preferences for stronger regional autonomy.

In this context, the recent return of a Conservative-led government at the centre is likely to re-ignite old grievances. Simultaneously, devolution has created well-established regional bodies of democratic representation in the form of the Scottish

Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. In this context, I would argue that the perceived democratic deficits at the centre may well translate into support for further decentralisation more easily and rapidly than was the case in the 1980s.

In England, devolution seems to have had little impact on trust in the central government. Perhaps reflecting England's dominance within the House of Commons, surveys suggest that the majority of English people have remained confident that the central government will work in the interest of their country most or all of the time. Few feel that devolution has made a significant difference to the government system. Initially, the minority who felt that devolution had improved the way the UK is governed was also more likely to favour devolution in England. Similarly those who felt that it had made the system of government worse were found to be less likely to support devolution to an English Parliament or the English regions. Recently this linear association has been replaced by a U-shaped relationship, where support for English devolution is highest amongst those who feel most strongly that devolution has either improved or worsened the government system.

Interestingly, those who believe devolution has made it worse tend to favour devolution to an English Parliament over regional devolution. This suggests that the recent rise in support for English devolution may be the result of grievances with the central system, rather than a significant rise in the perceived legitimacy of the region. Attitudes to the so-called West-Lothian question seem to confirm this perspective. While a large majority feels aggrieved with the anomalies in the current system, most would prefer to find a central solution to this problem by barring MPs from devolved areas from voting on issues that will not affect their constituencies. As the centre has proved reluctant to commit to such reforms, these grievances are however increasingly associated with support for an English Parliament.

In addition to strengthening the British identity and addressing democratic grievances, the 1997-2001 Labour government also claimed that devolution would benefit Scotland and Wales economically. Surveys however find that the public has been less than convinced that devolution indeed creates an economic dividend.

Instead the debate has been focussed on what we may call the fiscal dividend of devolution; the extent to which devolved areas are able to use their institutional powers in order to extract additional rents from the centre. Ever since a Treasury study in the late 1970s showed that public spending outstripped identifiable need in Scotland, while Wales was relatively underfunded, the allocation of resources across the different countries in the UK has been a bone of contention. With devolution, this debate has gained renewed salience. Although the system of resource allocation to Scotland and Wales formally leaves little room for bargaining, it seems that Scotland in particular has been able to use the credible threat of secession to defend its relatively favourable resource position. As a result, comparative grievances have emerged in both England and Wales. Especially in England, there is evidence that this fiscal grievance is increasingly associated with higher levels of support for the establishment of an English Parliament.

Taken together, this chapter has shown that devolution has had a mixed effect on demand for further decentralisation. While the partial accommodation of regionalist demands seems to have stemmed calls for full independence, it has done little to redress the potential for democratic grievances with the centre. Simultaneously, the devolved arrangements have created democratic grievances in England and are increasingly leading to debates regarding the allocation of public funds across devolved and non-devolved areas. As a result, devolution has been associated with a rise in support for further decentralisation across mainland Britain. The next chapter will examine how devolution has affected the way these popular preferences affect decision-making processes and policy outcomes.

7. The accommodation of regionalist demands after devolution

The previous chapter has shown that the devolution of powers and resources to Scotland and Wales has been accompanied by calls for further decentralisation, if not full secession. In addition, the asymmetric system of devolution currently in place has produced comparative democratic and fiscal grievances in areas that have traditionally not harboured strong regionalist movements. Increasingly these sources of discontent with the existing government system are associated with support for the establishment of an elected English Parliament with powers and resources that are similar to those of its Scottish counterpart. This chapter will examine how these shifts in popular opinion influence policy making in the post-devolution era.

Ron Davies famously noted that “[d]evolution is a process. It is not an event and neither is it a journey with a fixed end-point” (R. Davies, 1999: 15). In this view, an initial decentralisation of powers and resources is likely to unleash further waves of constitutional reform (Hazell, 2007). This pattern can certainly be discerned in contemporary Spain and Belgium (Agranoff & Gallarin, 1997; Hooghe, 2004; Moreno, 2001; Swenden & Jans, 2006). In Britain, the experiences have so far been more mixed. On the one hand, there have already been modest adjustments to the original ‘settlements’ in Wales and Greater London. In addition, reforms to the 1998 Scotland Act are currently under consideration at Westminster. On the other hand, the government system in much of England has remained unchanged, despite the anomalies created by asymmetric devolution to other parts of Britain.

On the basis of these developments, some have argued that devolution has unleashed a dynamic of continuous incremental adjustments to the distribution of powers and resources across different tiers of government (Hazell, 2007; Keating, 2009). While this general assertion may fit the currently available evidence in the devolved areas, there is a clear need to explore the origins of such developments in more detail. This is particularly true as the brief history of asymmetric devolution in mainland Britain suggests that it may be prudent to speak of the dynamics unleashed by devolution in plural rather than singular form.

In order to gain a better understanding of the contemporary developments, this chapter will firstly examine to what extent devolution has affected the distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers and the incentives towards regionalist accommodation. The remainder of the chapter will use these insights to make sense of developments in each of the devolved areas, before turning to the infamous ‘English Question’.

7.1. The distribution of veto powers in post-devolution Britain

Prior to devolution, the agenda-setting and decision-making powers within the British government system were strongly concentrated in the hands of a single institutional player; the House of Commons. This institution in turn tended to be dominated by a single political party. As a result, regionally-concentrated demands for greater autonomy only led to actual policy change when the party in office was willing to accommodate such demands (see chapters 4 and 5). Although the nature of the government system has been profoundly changed by the establishment of directly elected devolved bodies in Scotland, Wales and Greater London, devolution has not altered the formal distribution of veto powers over issues of constitutional importance.

As in the pre-devolution period, most changes to the devolved settlements still require a bill to this effect to be introduced in the House of Commons and passed by both Houses of Parliament. The only exception to this rule is the devolution of further legislative powers from the centre to the Scottish Parliament or the Northern Irish Assembly. As the 1998 Scotland and Northern Ireland Acts stipulate, modifications to the legislative competencies of these devolved bodies can also be made by Order in Council. Such an Order will however not be considered at a Privy Council without prior affirmation by the House of Commons. As a result, devolved administrations cannot use this instrument to force legislative devolution on an unwilling centre.

Similarly, the regions do not formally have the power to veto any changes to the devolved settlements proposed by the centre. As the devolved institutions were established on the basis of regional referendums, it would however be difficult for the centre to legitimately abolish the devolved institutions without strong proof of exceptional circumstances or a clear popular mandate to this effect. While exceptional circumstances clearly did occur in Northern Ireland (McCrudden, 2007), a similarly extreme situation seems unlikely to arise in Scotland, Wales and Greater London. As a result, the regional electorate effectively hold a veto over re-centralisation in the devolved areas. The centre's ability to unilaterally effectuate more moderate changes to the existing devolved arrangements is furthermore limited by the so-called Sewel convention. Named after Lord Sewel, who introduced it the context of the 1998 Scotland Act (Hansard (Lords), 21st of July 1998, vol. 592, cols. 791), this convention stipulates that the central government will not normally legislate with regard to devolved matters without the consent of the elected regional body. As any proposal that would change the powers and resources devolved to the regional level would fall under this convention, the devolved institutions could use this provision to put pressure on the centre to alter its proposals.

Taken together, it can therefore be argued that the regional electorates within the devolved areas and the directly-elected regional bodies representing them do enjoy some limited informal decision-making powers. They have however not gained any formal decision-making or agenda-setting powers. The logical consequence of this finding is that the effect of devolution on the dynamics of regionalist accommodation must operate primarily through the ability of regional elites to use their new-found powers in order to change the act- and outcome-based incentives faced by veto players at the central level.

Most directly, devolution can alter the outcome-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation by increasing the credibility of the threat of secession. At the central level, the number of seats assigned to each region places a natural limit on the power and influence of regionalist parties.

This inability to gain agenda-setting and decision-making powers may in turn negatively affect the electoral appeal of such parties in general elections (Duverger, 1951; Sartori & Mair, 2005). As a result, the share of the vote received by regionalist parties at general elections may not adequately reflect the true electoral appeal of their policy position. By creating regional spaces of representation, devolution provides a platform through which voters with a preference for further devolution can express their views without wasting their vote (Brancati, 2006). This may in turn expose the true level of support for devolution and secession.

In Britain, this dynamic is further heightened by the use of a more proportional electoral system at the regional level. As discussed in Chapter 4, the general elections in Britain operate under the single member plurality system commonly known as the first-past-the-post system. By contrast, the Additional Member System (AMS) used in the devolved elections allows voters to cast two votes; a constituency level vote and a regional list vote. At the constituency level, members are elected under the first-past-the-post system also employed at the central level. The regional list seats are subsequently allocated using the d'Hondt formula. As a consequence of this system, voters in areas where the regionalist constituency candidate is unlikely to win the seat can still express their opinion without wasting their vote by supporting the regionalist party through the regional list vote.

If these combined dynamics enable regionalist parties to gain agenda-setting and decision-making powers at the regional level, they can in turn use these powers to heighten the threat of secession. The primary tool available to regionalist groups in this respect is the ability to call a popular referendum on independence. Regionalist groups in Quebec have employed this tactic on numerous occasions. In 1980, the proposals of the Provincial government were firmly rejected at the polls. However, the process did trigger a federal response in the form of a debate on the need to reform the existing federal arrangements (Careless & Stevenson, 1982; Romanow, Whyte, & Leeson, 1984). For various reasons this process did not result in the anticipated change (for an analysis of the institutional factors, see Kilgour, 1983).

In 1995 the Provincial government attempted the same strategy again. This time around, it was defeated by the narrowest of margins (Watts, 1996). In response, the federal government asked the Supreme Court to look into the legality of these actions. It ruled that unilateral secession on the basis of a popular referendum was not legal under either domestic or international law. However, if a provincial referendum with an unambiguous question did return a clear majority in favour of independence, intergovernmental negotiations would have to result (Leslie, 1999). These provisions were formalised in the 2000 Clarity Act.

Although similar arrangements do not exist in the UK¹⁵, the centre would clearly be under considerable pressure to start intergovernmental negotiations if a consultative regional referendum returned a strong majority in favour of independence. By providing a legitimate platform through which to launch such a popular poll, devolution has considerably strengthened the mobilising structures available to regionalist elites in devolved areas. In order to be able to use these powers effectively, public opinion however needs to be sufficiently susceptible to this option. In other words, the extent to which the threat of a consultative regional referendum can be used to extract concessions from the centre will to a large extent depend on the legitimacy of the region relative to the central or federal level. The referendum option therefore primarily heightens the bargaining powers of regions with more pronounced support for full independence and extensive devolution.

Even in the absence of a credible threat of secession, the establishment of a directly elected regional body may still change the dynamics of regionalist accommodation by altering the act-based incentives faced by central players.

¹⁵ The Northern Ireland Act does specifically state that, if the majority of those voting in a regional referendum feel that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland, “the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament such proposals to give effect to that wish as may be agreed between Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland.”. However, under the provisions in Schedule 1, the power to trigger the referendum and set the question still formally rests with the Secretary of State.

Although many powers and resources formally remain the exclusive prerogative of the central level, it can still be beneficial for the party in office at the centre to be formally affiliated with one of the main veto players at the regional level. Especially if the party structures have remained relatively centralised, such affiliations provide the central party leadership with opportunities to secure a degree of regional policy coherence. In addition, partisan connections may allow the central government to avoid potentially damaging public confrontations by resolving intergovernmental conflicts through internal means. As a result, the main contenders for office at the central level have a clear stake in maximising the power and influence of their regional affiliates.

Under such circumstances, even a traditionally strongly centralised party may allow the regional branch to make electoral and political concessions in order to gain or retain office at the regional level (van Houten, 2009). As a result of this strategy, bottom-up demands for further decentralisation may at times be initiated by the regional branch of a central party with an outcome-based preference for the status quo. Under such circumstances, I would argue that the central party leadership faces considerable act-based incentives to at least pay lip service to such demands. Especially if the regional branch has an outcome-based preference for devolution, an outright refusal to respond to regional demands is likely to provoke considerable conflicts. Such a display of disunity can in turn damage the electoral appeal of the party, both at the regional and the central level. As a result of this dynamic, the political and electoral incentive structure at the regional level may indirectly affect the formal policy positions of the main contenders for office at the centre. This will however only heighten the likelihood of further decentralisation if the party in power at the centre also stands a good chance of gaining office at the regional level.

7.2. The dynamics of devolution in Scotland

The insights presented above can help us to develop a better understanding of the emerging dynamics of devolution in Scotland. Of the three devolved institutions created under the 1997-2000 Labour Government, the Scottish Parliament is the only one still operating under the original provisions. It has been suggested that this initial stability reflects the nature of the 1998 settlement in Scotland (Hazell, 2007; Keating, 2009). From within the perspective, the provisions under the 1998 Government of Wales Act created an unworkable half-way house. As a result, the Welsh Assembly faced strong incentives to try to renegotiate these arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity. By comparison, Scotland was offered a relatively extensive and coherent set of powers and resources from the outset. The newly-created Scottish Parliament therefore faced less immediate incentives to devote valuable time and resources to renegotiating the provisions under the 1998 Scotland Act.

While the more comprehensive nature of the initial settlement may indeed have limited calls for further decentralisation during the early years of Scottish devolution, the explanation presented above too readily glosses over the distribution of powers within the devolved institution itself. As noted in chapter 5, the institutional shape of the Scottish Parliament was strongly influenced by the intra-party agreements reached in the 1980s and 90s. In line with these agreements, the devolved elections operate under a form of proportional representation known as the Additional Member System. Under this system, 73 constituency members are elected under the first-past-the-post system and a further 56 regional members are appointed on the basis of regional party lists. As a result, the final distribution of the seats in the Scottish Parliament more closely resembles the distribution of the vote than would have been the case under the single member plurality system alone. This in turn decreases the probability of one party enjoying an absolute majority of the seats at the regional level.

A number of indices have been developed to measure the proportionality of the results produced by a given electoral system, each with their own merits and drawbacks (for a detailed discussion, see Dunleavy & Margetts, 2004). Two of the most frequently used measures are the Loosemore-Hanby Index and the Least Squares Index¹⁶. These indices are calculated as follows:

$$\text{Loosemore-Hanby Index: } D = \frac{1}{2} \sum |v_i - s_i|$$

$$\text{Least Squares Index: } LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \sum (v_i - s_i)^2}$$

where v_i and s_i refer to i th party's percentage of the votes and seats.

Table 7.1 reports the Loosemore-Hanby and Least Squares indices for the devolved elections in Scotland since 1999. For each year, the first column reports the indices based on the constituency level vote and seat shares. The second column reports the indices based on the final seat shares under AMS and the share of the vote received by each party if the constituency and list votes are combined. The third column reports the difference between the constituency level and AMS results. For each of the devolved elections both indices clearly show that the regional seats do indeed significantly increase the proportionality of the results. The magnitude of this effect decreased notably in 2007 only to rise again in 2011.

¹⁶ The main difference between the Loosemore-Hanby Index and the Least Square Index is that the former is largely insensitive to the number of parties competing. As a result, a system with a large number of parties each displaying small vote-seat differences can return the same Loosemore-Hanby Index as a system with two competing parties encountering much more substantial vote-seat differences. By squaring the vote-seat difference, dividing the sum of all such differences by 2 and taking the square root of this sum, the Least Square Index responds more strongly to a limited number of large discrepancies than a great number of small ones (Gallagher, 1991). As a result, the Least Squares Index may more accurately reflect the type of disproportionality that the AMS was designed to address. In order to further reduce the emphasis put on very small parties and independent candidates, the indices have been calculated on the basis of the vote for the four largest parties in the system combined with a fictitious fifth party representing all others.

Table 7.1 The proportionality of the constituency and final results of the devolved elections in Scotland (1999-2011)

	1999			2003			2007			2011		
	<i>Con</i>	<i>AMS</i>	<i>Diff</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>AMS</i>	<i>Dif.</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>AMS</i>	<i>Diff</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>AMS</i>	<i>Diff</i>
Loosemore-Hanby	36.0	7.2	28.8	31.0	6.8	24.2	18.6	9.4	9.2	27.2	8.8	18.4
Least Squares	29.6	6.2	23.4	24.0	5.5	18.5	15.7	6.6	9.1	22.2	7.2	15.0
Effective number of parties NS	1.8	3.3	1.6	2.2	4.0	1.8	2.7	3.4	0.7	1.7	2.6	0.9

Sources: Own elaboration based on Tetteh (2008) and BBC (2011b).

As could be anticipated, the fact that the seats distribution under the AMS more accurately reflects the share of the popular vote received by each party has in turn decreased the concentration of powers within the Scottish Parliament. Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) effective number of parties index offers an opportunity to roughly quantify this effect. This index is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Effective number of parties NS} = 1 / \sum s_i^2$$

where s_i refers to i th party's share of the seats.

The final row of Table 7.1 reports the effective number of parties in the Scotland Parliament under AMS as well as the results based on the distribution of the constituency seats only. Again the results show that the mechanics of the AMS have had the anticipated effect on the distribution of power within the Scottish Parliament. The magnitude of this effect has however been markedly less pronounced in the last two devolved elections than it had been during the early years of Scottish devolution.

Table 7.2 Constituency, regional and overall seats distribution in the Scottish Parliament (1999-2011)

	1999			2003			2007			2011		
	Con	Reg	All	Con	Reg	All	Con	Reg	All	Con	Reg.	All
Labour	53	3	56	46	4	50	37	9	46	15	22	37
SNP	7	28	35	9	18	27	21	26	47	53	16	69
Conservative	0	18	18	3	15	18	4	13	17	3	12	15
Lib-Dem	12	5	17	13	4	17	11	5	16	2	3	5
Other	1	2	3	2	15	17	0	3	3	0	3	3

Sources: Tetteh (2008) and BBC (2011b)

Taken together, this shows that the mechanics of the AMS played a particularly significant part in creating the balance of power that has characterised the Scottish Parliament between 1999 and 2007. As Table 7.2 shows, the Labour Party was able to capture the clear majority of the constituency seats in the first two devolved elections. The mechanism through which the regional seats are allocated however ensured that several other parties also acquired potential veto powers. In order to gain control over the political agenda, the Labour Party entered into a formal coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats. The resulting coalition governments enjoyed an absolute majority within the Parliament, thereby effectively rendering the other parties in the system powerless to change the status quo against the government's wishes. The policy preference of the two coalition partners therefore guided the behaviour of the Scottish Parliament as a whole during the first eight years of its existence.

As the regional branch of the central party that devised the initial legislation, the regional branches of the Labour Party initially displayed little interest in renegotiating the settlements for either Wales or Scotland. By contrast, the position of the Liberal Democrats was more strongly regionally differentiated. Faced with limited prospects of gaining office at the central level, Liberal Democrats at the central and regional level alike faced outcome-based incentives to favour devolution as a way to increase the Party's power and influence (Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006). While this led to clear commitments for further decentralisation in Wales, the Liberal Democrats initially seemed more willing to accept the existing arrangements in Scotland.

This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that the initial inertia in Scotland was at least partially linked to the relatively comprehensive nature of the 1998 Scotland Act.

It is however important to acknowledge that the differences in regional assertiveness during the early years of devolution are also the product of the distribution of potential veto powers within the devolved administrations at that time. If Labour's position in Wales has been less strongly compromised during the first devolved election, the centre would not have faced the same pressures to address the weaknesses in the initial settlement (see section on Wales for a full discussion). Similarly, developments since 2007 suggest that the Scottish Parliament would have behaved very differently if the SNP had captured the largest share of the seats in 1999 or 2003. As a result I would argue that it was Labour's ability to acquire the plurality of the seats, combined with the policy preferences of the other potential veto players in the Scottish and Welsh system, that lay at the heart of the early dynamics of devolution.

The 2007 Scottish Parliament election marked a sharp change in the dynamics of Scottish devolution. This trend was primarily the result of a marked rise in SNP support. Between 2003 and 2007, the SNP increased its share of the regional list vote by 10 percentage points, while the Party's share of the constituency level vote rose from 24 to 33 percent. As a result, the distribution of the constituency seats was significantly more proportional to the share of the constituency vote captured by each party in 2007 than it had been in the previous two devolved elections (see Table 7.1). This shift in the balance of power at the constituency level in turn enabled the SNP to narrowly capture the plurality of the seats in the Scottish Parliament (see Table 7.2). The stronger position of the SNP resulted in a notable change in the assertiveness of the Scottish Parliament, although perhaps not in the anticipated manner. While Plaid Cymru proved able to initiate credible coalition negotiations with a range of parties (see section on Wales), the SNP's uncompromising position on the constitutional issue left it relatively isolated. After failing to secure the support of the Liberal Democrats, the Party was forced to form a minority government.

From the start, this government faced unusually strong opposition from the rest of the Parliament. As McLean (2005) has shown with relation of to Westminster, the lack of an overall government majority tends to award potential veto powers to several actors at the same time. As a result, a wide range of players with different policy priorities would need to reach an agreement in order to force through a policy change against the wishes of the minority government. Since such grand coalition is difficult to assemble, the Party with the plurality of the seats generally retains its position as the main agenda-setter in the system. The situation in Scotland was different in two respects. First of all, under the AMS powers are more dispersed than generally the case under the FPTP system employed at the central level. As a result, the SNP government controlled a much smaller share of the seats than is generally the case with minority governments at the centre. In addition, the other potential veto players in the Scottish system were largely united in their opposition to the SNP's stance on independence. Taken together, this allowed an unlikely partnership between the Labour Party, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to foist policy changes on the minority SNP government.

The first act of regional assertiveness by the Scottish Parliament was therefore formally initiated by a grand coalition of opposition parties, rather than the minority SNP government. Nonetheless, the rise in SNP support played a significant role in creating this dynamic. While it was still able to capture the plurality of the seats with relative ease, the Scottish Labour Party showed little interest in accommodating popular demands for further decentralisation in Scotland. As Chhibber and Kollman (2004) argue, the emergence of stronger regional competitors however makes it more difficult for regional branches of central parties to successfully compete in devolved elections without adjusting their platforms more strongly to local preferences. In addition, the SNP's manifesto commitment to a popular referendum on Scottish independence heightened the credibility of the threat of exit.

As a result, partisan veto players with an outcome preference for maintaining the Union faced incentives to partially accommodate regionalist demands in an attempt to halt the advance of the SNP and stem popular support for full independence. In this context, both Labour and the Conservatives proved willing to make concessions.

Although officially initiated by the regional level, the centre has from the outset been keen to incorporate the resulting independent Commission into Scottish Devolution in the central state apparatus. In this context, the Calman Commission received central funding as well as secretarial support. When it produced its final report in June 2009, the centre was again keen to confirm its intention to follow-through on a number of key recommendations. Once it had stated this intention, the 2005-2010 Labour Government however seemed less inclined to pursue the agenda with any sense of urgency. Instead the Secretary of State, Jim Murphy, announced that a cross-party steering group would be formed to implement the plan and that any changes would need to be carefully phased in (Johnson, 15 Jun 2009). Despite the fact that the Calman report included a number of discrete changes that could have been implemented independently, the Labour government insisted that the recommendations needed to be treated as a comprehensive package (Gordon, 26 Jul 2009). Taken together, these actions ensured that little progress was made ahead of the 2010 general election. Given the likelihood of a Labour defeat at this election, this leisurely timetable clearly had the potential to prevent actual change from occurring. This suggests that the central government felt that it had to respond to the development in Scotland, but was actively trying to delay and minimise any actual changes to the status quo.

The exceptionally tight electoral competition at the centre meant that the 2010 general election resulted in the first hung Parliament since 1974. While the Conservative Party did acquire the plurality of the seats, it fell well short of an overall majority. Following a short period of negotiations, the Conservatives entered into a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats.

The resulting coalition agreement reaffirmed that the government would seek to implement the proposals of the Calman Commission (HM Government, 2010). A Bill to this effect was introduced in the House of Commons on St Andrew's Day 2010 (Hansard (Commons), 10th of November 2010, vol. 519, cols.69-71WS). While these actions are in line with the commitments made within during the election campaign (Conservative Party, 2010a), it is debatable whether a majority Conservative government would have felt compelled to take equally swift action on this matter. Nonetheless, the willingness of the Conservative Party to accommodate Scottish demands for further decentralisation, despite the limited electoral and political benefits associated with this strategy at the regional or central level, does suggest that devolution has altered the outcome-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation in Scotland.

Table 7.3 The constituency vote and seats distribution compared to general election results (1997-2011)

Share of the vote at the constituency-level compared to the share of the Scottish vote received in the preceding general election												
	1997	1999	Diff.	2001	2003	Diff.	2005	2007	Diff.	2010	2011	Diff.
<i>SNP</i>	22%	29%	7	20%	24%	4	18%	33%	15	20%	45%	26
<i>Labour</i>	46%	39%	-7	43%	35%	-9	39%	32%	-7	42%	32%	-10
<i>LD</i>	13%	14%	1	16%	15%	-1	23%	16%	-6	19%	8%	-11
<i>Con.</i>	18%	16%	-2	16%	17%	1	16%	17%	1	17%	14%	-3
Share of the constituency-level seats compared to the share of the Scottish seats in the preceding general election												
	1997	1999	Diff.	2001	2003	Diff.	2005	2007	Diff.	2010	2011	Diff.
<i>SNP</i>	8%	10%	2	7%	12%	5	10%	29%	19	10%	73%	62
<i>Labour</i>	78%	73%	-5	76%	63%	-13	68%	51%	-17	69%	21%	-49
<i>LD</i>	14%	16%	2	14%	18%	4	19%	15%	-4	19%	3%	-16
<i>Con.</i>	0%	0%	0	1%	4%	3	2%	5%	3	2%	4%	2

Sources: Own elaboration based on BBC (2010, 2011b) and Tetteh (2008)

In order to evaluate to what extent this recent shift in the dynamics of devolution represents a popular demand for greater autonomy, rather than an elite-driven process of decentralisation, we need to gain a better understanding of what motivated the rise in SNP support. In order to do this, Table 7.3 compares the distribution of the constituency votes and seats during the devolved elections with those in the preceding general elections. This comparison shows that the constituency level results of the first devolved election were largely in line with the outcome of the preceding general election. Scottish Labour candidates performed slightly less strongly in the constituency contests than their counterparts did in the 1997 general election. The Party nonetheless managed to capture over 70 per cent of the constituency seats in the Scottish Parliament. Similarly, the share of the constituency votes and seats captured by the SNP only marginally outweighed the Party's performance in the general election. Taken in isolation, the results of the second devolved election suggest a continuation of this trend. With the benefit of hindsight, the increasing discrepancy between Labour's share of the constituency votes and seats and its performance in preceding general elections may however be seen as an early indication of a shift in voting behaviour.

Regardless of one's interpretation of the results of the second devolved election, the 2007 and 2011 Scottish Parliament elections results clearly show that Scottish voters no longer behave in the same way in the devolved elections as they do in the general elections. The share of the constituency vote attracted by Labour and Lib-Dem candidates in 2007 was significantly lower than that attracted by their central counterparts in the 2005 and 2010 general elections. As a result, Labour in particular lost a considerable number of constituency seats in the Scottish Parliament. Simultaneously, the share of the constituency vote captured by SNP candidates started to approach the threshold at which the First-Past-The-Post system employed at the constituency level will start to work in the Party's favour. In 2011, support for the SNP in the devolved elections increased further, allowing the Party to more than double its share of the constituency seats. As in 2007, these gains were not preceded by a similar rise in SNP support in the 2010 general election.

Conversely, the Labour Party increased its share of the Scottish vote in the 2010 general election, while its Scottish counterpart made no substantial gains in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election. As a result, the Party lost over half of its constituency seats in the Scottish Parliament.

The divergence of the voting patterns in devolved and general elections can be seen as an indication that Scottish voters are increasingly basing their voting behaviour in the devolved elections on Scottish issues and realities, rather than British concerns. The prominent role of the SNP in this dynamic invites us to conceptualise these changes as evidence that the establishment of a directly elected regional body is enabling those in favour of greater regional autonomy to express their opinion through devolved elections. From within this perspective, the number of seats assigned to each region at the central level places a natural limit on the political potential of regionalist parties (Brancati, 2006). Especially in smaller regions, the resulting inability of regionalist parties to play a significant role at the central level may in turn limit the electoral appeal of such groups, even if popular support for decentralisation is high. As votes for regionalist groups are less likely to be 'wasted' in devolved elections, the establishment of a directly elected regional body may reveal the true level of popular support for devolution and secession.

The relatively strong performance of both the SNP and Plaid Cymru in the devolved elections broadly supports this hypothesis (see Table 7.3 and Table 7.7). The 2007 Scottish Election Survey (Johns, Mitchell, Denver, & Pattie, 2008) however strongly suggests that the rapid rise in SNP support between 2003 and 2007 does not primarily reflect a change in popular preferences along the constitutional dimension. As Johns et al (2009) show, voters with a preference for full independence still represent the hard core of SNP support. On the other hand, a similarly determined set of voters continue to vote against the SNP for the same reason. Neither of these groups has changed much in size between 2003 and 2007.

Instead the rise in support for the SNP seem to be primarily related to the overall negative evaluations of the Labour Party's performance at Holyrood, coupled with the perceived ability of the SNP to produce more favourable results. In particular, it seems that there is a relatively strong consensus amongst Scottish voters regarding the desired outcomes of government action. In this context, the voting patterns in the devolved elections primarily reflect which contender for office is perceived as most able to achieve those objectives. Following Stokes' (1963) famous paper, Johns et al (2009) referred to this type of party competition as valence politics.

At the time of writing, it is not possible to empirically verify whether a similar dynamic was at play in the 2011 Scottish Parliament elections. The available evidence regarding the distribution of popular preferences along the constitutional dimension however suggest that the recent changes in the behaviour of Scottish voters in devolved elections are not primarily caused by the type of position politics that underpin spatial models of party competition. Table 7.4 compares the results of a recent poll into voting intentions in the case of a referendum on Scottish independence with the responses in the post-election sample of the 2007 Scottish Election Survey. This reveals that the share of all respondents who intend to vote in favour of full independence has remained relatively stable at around 30 percent. In both samples, the majority of those who indicated that they had or would vote for the SNP did intend to vote yes in the case of a referendum. It is however noticeable that the share of SNP voters who indicated that they would vote in favour of independence is considerably lower in 2011 than in 2007.

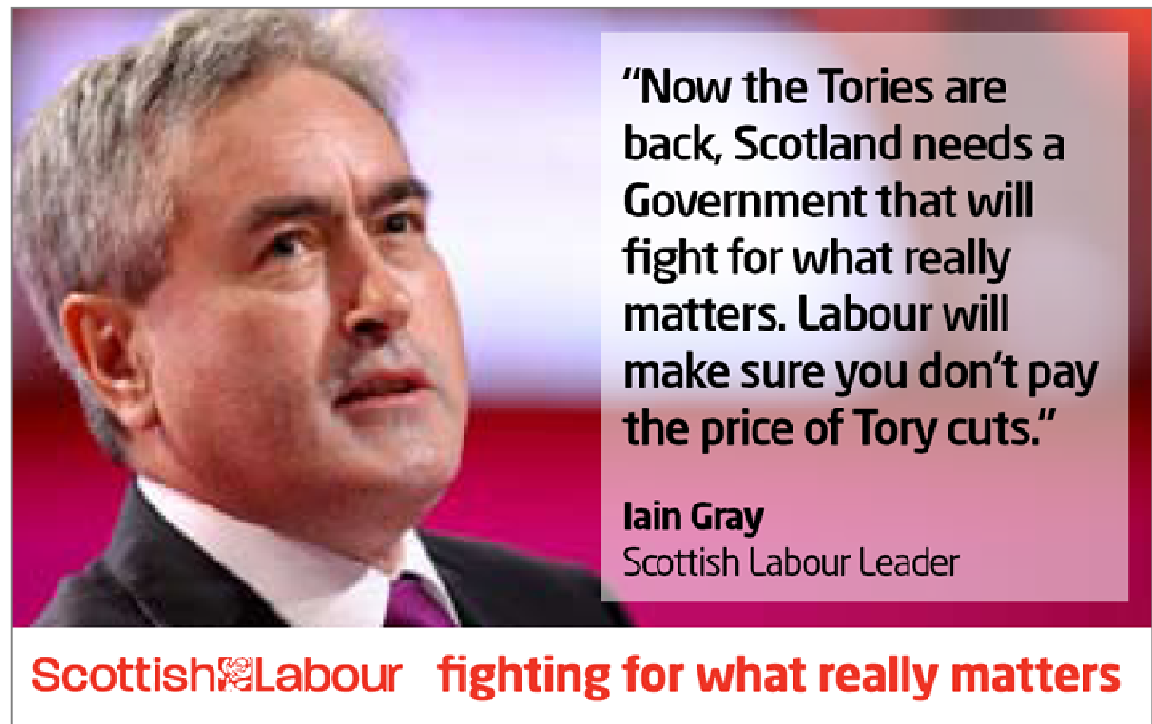
Table 7.4 Voting intention in case of a referendum on Scottish independence (2007, 2011)

	2007				2011			
	All	SNP voters			All	SNP voters (intentional)		
		Con.	Reg.	UK		Con.	Reg.	UK
Yes	31%	67%	73%	75%	28%	58%	60%	68%
No	57%	20%	15%	14%	57%	28%	28%	18%
Would not vote	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%	0%
Do not Know	11%	12%	12%	11%	12%	14%	13%	13%

Sources: R. Johns, et al. (2008) and YouGov/ The Scotsman (2011c)

Simultaneously, there are clear indications that the SNP's ability to govern was perceived relatively favourable at the time of the 2011 election. In the lead up to elections, several YouGov polls for example asked who would make the best First Minister of Scotland. In response to this question, 42 and 52 percent of respondents choose SNP leader Alex Salmond, while only 27 to 29 percent favoured Scottish Labour leader Iain Gray (YouGov, 2011a; YouGov / Scotland on Sunday, 2011b). Simultaneously, the election campaign strategy of the Scottish Labour has been widely criticised. Having achieved considerable success with a similar strategy at the 2010 general election, Labour's campaign at the devolved level initially attempted to draw primarily on anti-Conservative sentiments (see Figure 7.1). Since Labour's main rivals at the regional level are the SNP rather than the Conservatives, this could be seen as evidence that the Party continues to perceive the devolved elections as second order contests through which central level battles can be fought out. In this context, it would perhaps be unsurprising if many Scottish voters felt that the SNP would be better placed to protect Scotland from the dreaded 'Tory cuts' than the regional branch of the Labour Party.

Figure 7.1 Scottish Labour's campaign message in the 2011 Scottish Parliament Election



Source: (Scottish Labour Party, 2011)

Taken together, the available evidence thus broadly concurs with the view that the most recent surge of SNP support was again primarily motivated by valence issues, rather than shifts in popular preferences along the constitutional dimension. As Johns et al (2009) rightfully acknowledge, accepting the importance of valence politics in producing the recent shift in the dynamics of Scottish devolution does not preclude popular views on devolution from playing an important facilitating role. In fact it can be argued that devolution has become a valence issue in the eyes of many Scottish voters, as surveys consistently find that the majority of respondents would favour further decentralisation (see chapter 6 for more details). The widespread support for the referendum on independence proposed by the SNP furthermore suggests that many Scots would like the Scottish Parliament to take more decisive action towards resolving this issue (see Table 7.5). Despite the magnitude of the potential effect of such a poll on the future of Scotland, the plurality of respondents in 2007 however indicated that the SNP's campaign pledge made them neither more nor less likely to vote for the Party.

Table 7.5 Popular views on the SNP's pledge to a referendum on independence (Scottish Election Study 2007, post-election results)

Would you support or oppose a referendum on independence?		Did the campaign pledge to a referendum on independence make you more or less likely to vote for the SNP?	
Support	57%	More likely	21%
Oppose	33%	Less likely	22%
DK	10%	No difference	49%
		DK	8%
N	1553	N	1553
If there was a referendum, how would you vote if there was an additional option of more powers?			
	<i>All</i>	<i>Support referendum</i>	<i>Oppose referendum</i>
Full independence	22%	37%	1%
Further devolution	37%	41%	33%
Status quo	28%	15%	58%
DK	13%	7%	8%
N	1553	888	507

Source: Johns, et al. (2008)

When asked how they would vote in the event of a multi-option referendum on independence, the majority of respondents indicated that they would favour further devolution or full independence over the status quo (see Table 7.5). As to be anticipated, those who supported the referendum tended to have more favourable attitudes towards greater autonomy than those who opposed it. Even amongst those who favoured a popular poll, the plurality of respondents however indicated that they would vote in favour of further devolution rather than full independence. This suggests that the referendum instrument is widely seen as a way to renegotiate elements of the existing settlement, rather than a route to full independence. Nonetheless, the majority of Scottish voters do not seem fazed by the possible consequences of such a popular poll. In this context, it seems hardly surprising that Labour's attempts to turn around the disastrous 2011 election campaign by emphasising the SNP's nationalist agenda and the negative consequences of full independence for Scotland seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

Whatever the origins of the 2011 Scottish Parliament election results, the election of a majority SNP government at Holyrood seems to have created a considerable anxiety at the centre. Shortly after the elections, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, stated that the central government would not stand in the way of a regional referendum but added: ““If they want to hold a referendum, I will campaign to keep our United Kingdom together with every single fibre that I have” (PM David Cameron as quoted by Kirkup, 7th of May 2011). The following day it was announced the Scottish Parliament would be given the immediate authority to borrow up to £300 million from the Treasury (Brady, 8th of May 2011). At the time of writing intergovernmental negotiations are ongoing, but it is anticipated that further concessions will be made in the context of the Scotland Bill (2010-11) currently before parliament.

The bargaining power of the majority SNP government in this process is further heightened by the so-called Sewel convention, which stipulated that “Westminster would not normally legislate with regard to devolved matters in Scotland without the consent of the Scottish parliament” (Hansard (Lords), 21st of July 1998, vol. 592, cols. 791). As the Scotland Bill would alter the powers and resources devolved to the Scottish Parliament, it falls under this convention. As a result, a legislative consent or Sewel motion will be put to the Scottish Parliament before the bill completes its passage through the House of Lords. Although the central government formally has the power to enact the Scotland Bill without the consent of the Scottish Parliament, the ability of the SNP to unilaterally vote down the legislative consent motion puts the Party in a strong position to demand further changes.

Taken together, the history of Scottish devolution so far suggests that the creation of an elected regional body has considerably decreased the ability of the centre to ignore regional demands for greater autonomy. This effect has however been heightened by the ability of the SNP to position itself as a viable candidate for office on a range of valence issues.

If the nationalist party had proved less successful in securing the support of voters with more moderate constitutional preferences, the regional branches of parties competing at the central level would have been able to use their agenda-setting and decision-making powers to moderate popular demands. Under such circumstances, the effect of devolution on the outcome-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation would have been much less pronounced.

7.3. The dynamics of devolution in Wales

Although the National Assembly for Wales was established as part of the same drive to acknowledge the multinational nature of the British state, the initial Welsh devolution settlement differs markedly from its Scottish counterpart. While the Scottish Parliament enjoyed primary legislative powers and tax-varying powers from the outset, Wales was offered a much more limited form of executive devolution, delivered through a 60-member Assembly rather than a fully-fledged Parliament. As noted in the Scottish section, it has been argued that these discrepancies in the initial settlements caused the early differences in regional assertiveness (Hazell, 2007; Keating, 2009). While it may be true that the 1998 Government of Wales Act created an unworkable half-way house, I would argue that the power distribution within the Welsh Assembly played an equally significant role in the emergence of bottom-up demands for reform.

The Welsh Assembly currently consists of 40 constituency members elected under the First-Past-The-Post system and a further 20 regional members elected on the basis of party lists. As anticipated, the AMS substantially increased both the proportionality of the results and the effective number of parties within the system (see Table 7.6). In addition, voting patterns in the devolved elections have differed markedly from the results recorded in the general elections (see Table 7.7). The combination of these two trends has meant that the Labour Party has been far less dominant within the Welsh Assembly than most had anticipated prior to devolution.

While it was clear from the outset that the mechanics of the AMS would be likely to deprive the Labour Party of an overall majority in Scotland, the results of the first Welsh Assembly elections took most by surprise. Plaid Cymru was widely expected to benefit from the regional list system, but few had anticipated that the Party would make significant gains in the constituency contests (see Table 7.7). This “quiet earthquake” (Plaid Cymru leader, Dafydd Wigley, as quoted by Trystan, Scully, & Wyn Jones, 2003: 636) in Welsh politics however took place in the context of some highly unusual circumstances.

Table 7.6 The results of the devolved elections in Wales (1999-2011)

Proportionality of the Constitutional and AMS results of the devolved elections												
	1999			2003			2007			2011		
	Con	AMS	Diff.	Con	AMS	Diff.	Con	AMS	Diff.	Con	AMS	Diff.
Loosemore-Hanby	29.9	10.2	19.7	35.0	11.7	23.3	27.9	15.7	12.2	27.7	10.4	17.2
Least Squares	24.1	8.3	15.8	28.7	9.9	18.8	22.2	12.1	10.1	22.2	9.7	12.5
Effective number of parties NS	2.0	3.0	1.1	1.7	3.0	1.3	2.4	3.3	0.9	1.9	2.9	1.0
Constituency, regional and total number of seats won by each party												
	1999			2003			2007			2011		
	Con	Reg	AMS	Con	Reg	AMS	Con	Reg	AMS	Con	Reg	AMS
Labour	27	1	28	30	0	30	24	2	26	28	2	30
PC	9	8	17	5	7	12	7	8	15	5	6	11
Conservative	1	8	9	1	10	11	5	7	12	6	8	14
LD	3	3	6	3	3	6	3	3	6	1	4	5
Other	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Sources: Own elaboration based on BBC (2010, 2011c) and Tetteh (2008)

Table 7.7 The constituency vote and seats distribution compared to general election results (1997-2011)

Share of the vote at the constituency-level compared to the share of the Welsh vote received in the preceding general election												
	1997	1999	Diff.	2001	2003	Diff.	2005	2007	Diff.	2010	2011	Diff.
PC	10%	28%	19	14%	21%	7	13%	22%	10	11%	19%	8
Lab.	55%	38%	-17	49%	40%	-9	43%	32%	-11	36%	42%	6
LD	12%	14%	1	14%	14%	0	18%	15%	-4	20%	11%	-10
Con.	20%	16%	-4	21%	20%	-1	21%	22%	1	26%	25%	-1
Share of the constituency-level seats compared to the share of the Welsh seats in the preceding general election												
	1997	1999	Diff.	2001	2003	Diff.	2005	2007	Diff.	2010	2011	Diff.
PC	10%	23%	13	10%	13%	3	8%	18%	10	8%	13%	5
Lab.	85%	68%	-17	85%	75%	-10	73%	60%	-13	65%	70%	5
LD	5%	8%	3	5%	8%	3	10%	8%	-2	8%	3%	-5
Con.	0%	3%	3	0%	3%	3	8%	13%	5	20%	15%	-5

Sources: own elaboration based on BBC (2010, 2011c) and Tetteh (2008)

In the autumn of 1998, the Welsh Labour Party Leader, Ron Davies, had been forced to resign following a personal scandal. In the divisive Welsh leadership contest that followed, the central party leadership used its influence to ensure the victory of Alun Michael over the locally preferred candidate, Rhodri Morgan (Bradbury, Denver, Mitchell, & Bennie, 2000; Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006). This was widely perceived as an attempt by the centre to exert undue influence, leading to internal disputes and substantial negative publicity. Under these circumstances, Plaid Cymru was able to make substantial gains right across Wales (Jones, 1999b).

The results of the 2003 Assembly election suggest that the very strong performance of Plaid Cymru in 1999 was at least partially linked to internal problems within the Labour Party. Nonetheless, the nationalists have continued to capture a substantially larger share of the votes and seats in devolved elections than had traditionally been the case at the central level (see Table 7.7). Combined with the improving performance of the Conservative Party, these trends have significantly eroded Labour's traditionally strong position in Wales. While the Party secured a narrow working majority in 2003 and 2011¹⁷, it failed to surpass this threshold in 1999 and 2007. As a result, the Party has periodically faced strong political act-based incentives to increase its agenda-setting and decision-making powers by entering into a formal coalition with another party.

The history of Welsh devolution so far suggests that bottom-up attempts to renegotiate the existing provisions originate from such periods of coalition government at the regional level. In 1999, the desire to form a governing coalition with the Liberal Democrats induced the Welsh Labour Party to support the establishment of a Commission into the existing legislative and electoral arrangements as part of the coalition agreement (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000).

¹⁷ Formally a party would need to win 31 of the 60 seats in order to acquire an absolute majority in the Welsh Assembly. Once the usual party affiliations of the Presiding Officer and the Deputy Presiding Officer have been taken into account, any party controlling half of the seats does however effectively hold the majority of the votes within the Assembly.

The resulting Commission, chaired by Labour peer Lord Ivor Richard, published its final report in March 2004 (Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales, 2004). If adopted in full, the recommendations of the Richard Commission would have considerably enhanced the legislative powers and fiscal autonomy of the Welsh Assembly. The subsequent devolved election however returned a majority Labour Government, albeit with the narrowest of margins (see Table 7.6). Released from the need to form alliances, Welsh Labour showed little interest in pursuing these policy changes. This is most clearly demonstrated by the White Paper it produced in response to the final report of the Richard commission (Welsh Labour, 2004). Although this document did include a watered-down commitment to increasing the legislative power of the Assembly, it barely paid lip service to the more radical recommendations in the report. Although the process did eventually result in a modest decentralisation of powers in the form of the 2006 Government of Wales Act, the 2003-2007 Welsh Assembly government clearly used its powers to weaken rather than strengthen calls for further decentralisation.

Bottom-up pressures towards further decentralisation re-emerged when the Welsh Labour Party failed to retain its narrow working majority in the 2007 Welsh Assembly elections (see table 7.6). This time around, a rift between Labour and the Liberal Democrats created an opportunity for the nationalists to advance their agenda. Initially Welsh Labour proved reluctant to enter in a full coalition with Plaid Cymru. Instead it proposed a Stability Pact that gave the regionalist party a very limited degree of policy influence. Plaid Cymru however managed to significantly enhance its bargaining power by engaging in coalition discussions with the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. The threat of finding itself in opposition for the first time since the establishment of the Welsh Assembly proved sufficient to entice Welsh Labour to improve its offer to a formal coalition agreement.

The resulting “One Wales” agreement included a commitment to set up a second Commission into the devolution settlement (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007). Chaired by Gerald Holtham, this Commission was asked to examine the effects of the present formula-based approach and identifying viable alternative funding mechanisms (Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, 2009). Its remit explicitly included the request to consider the desirability of greater tax-varying and borrowing powers. In its final report, published in July 2010, the Holtham Commission recommends that the Barnett formula should be replaced by a needs-based funding regime (Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, 2010). In addition it made a case for the devolution of tax-varying and borrowing powers to the Welsh Assembly (Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, 2010). The regionalist influence within the governing coalition was further exemplified by its commitment to use the Assembly’s existing legislative competences to the full and work towards a successful referendum on full law-making powers as soon as practicable (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007). This poll took place on the 3rd of March 2011 and returned a majority in favour of legislative devolution (BBC, 2011a).

The most recent Assembly elections have once more returned a Welsh Labour Government with a narrow working majority (see Table 7.6). At the time of writing, it is too soon to tell how this will affected the assertiveness of the Welsh Assembly. The experiences during the first decade of devolution suggest that the Welsh Labour Party is significantly less inclined to put pressure on the centre to reform the existing arrangements when it does not have to rely on the support of others in order to remain in office. From a rational choice perspective, there are two potential explanations for this pattern of behaviour. First of all, it could be that the Welsh Labour Party has an outcome-based preference for maintaining the status-quo and only accommodates demands for further decentralisation when it faces strong act-based incentives to do so.

Alternatively, the regional branch may have an outcome preference for further decentralisation but lack the autonomy to challenge the existing arrangements against the wishes of the central party leadership. In my view, the available evidence largely supports the second hypothesis.

The Labour Party has traditionally been highly centralised. Initially, the central party leadership aimed to preserve a high degree of internal cohesion by maintaining a strong say in the regional leadership selection process and insisting that regional campaign messages should be attuned to central policies (Bradbury, et al., 2000; Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006; Shaw, 2001). In Wales in particular, such practices attracted considerable criticism. Following the disappointing 1999 election results, the regional party forced the party leader, Alun Michael, to resign. He was subsequently replaced by Rhodri Morgan in a local contest. The fact that the central party leadership made little sustained attempt to enforce the existing leadership selection criteria suggest that devolution has enhanced the autonomy of the regional branch in this respect. As discussed, the relatively poor performance of the Welsh Party in the first devolved elections, combined with the resulting need to enter into a coalition with other parties, also created substantial pressures towards programmatic changes. In the absence of such political act-based incentives, both the Scottish and the Welsh arm of the Labour Party have however been very reluctant to stand on a regionalist platform in devolved elections. Especially given the known regionalist sympathies of Rhodri Morgan, this suggests that the regional branches remain keen to avoid direct confrontations with the central party leadership. As a result, van Houten (2009) is in my view right in arguing that the external devolution of powers to a directly elected regional body has so far been associated with an internal delegation, rather than a true transfer, of power from the central party to the regional branch.

If this is indeed the correct interpretation of the past behaviour of the Welsh Labour Party, the recent shift in power at the centre may increase the assertiveness of the Welsh Assembly under a majority Labour government.

For the first decade of devolution, the Welsh Assembly has been dominated by the regional branch of the party that was in government at the centre. In this context, the central party leadership could manage regional demands for reform by putting internal pressure on the regional branch to moderate demands. Now that the Party is in opposition at Westminster, the central Labour leadership arguably faces fewer incentives to reign in the ambitions of the Welsh Labour Party in order to avoid public clashes between the central government and the devolved body. Simultaneously, the dynamics of Welsh devolution so far suggest that the absence of any formal party affiliation between the central government and the Welsh administration will significantly reduce the willingness of the central government to accommodate bottom-up demands for further decentralisation.

Despite growing popular support for devolution, the demand for independence has remained very limited in Wales (see chapter 6). In addition, Plaid Cymru support seems to have stabilised at around 20 per cent of the vote in the devolved elections. As a result, Welsh elites have not been able to draw on a credible threat of secession in order to extract further concession from the centre. In this context, the response of the central Labour Government to the findings of the Richard Commission can at best be described as a very partial accommodation of regionalist demands. As noted, there are reasons to believe that the central party leadership used its influence on the Welsh Party in order to remove some of the more radical demands in the original report from the political agenda. While the central government did respond to the subsequent White Paper produced by the Welsh Assembly government by introducing new legislation, the gradual approach to legislative devolution set out in the 2006 Government of Wales Act seem to serve little purpose other than to prevent or delay major changes to the existing settlement. Crucially, the Act made the full transfer of primary legislative powers dependent on the outcome of a popular referendum. Given the public mood in Wales at that time, this inclusion of a popular veto had the real potential to prevent the proposed transfer of legislative powers from occurring.

While the Labour Party may have been reluctant to accommodate bottom-up demands to change the initial devolution settlement for Wales, the behaviour of the 2010 Conservative-led administration suggests that this Party would have been even less inclined to devolve further power and resources to Wales. Bound by the provisions under the 2006 Government of Wales Act, the Conservative Party had little choice but to concede that it would not stand in the way of a popular referendum on legislative devolution (Conservative Party, 2010a). Both the coalition agreement (HM Government, 2010) and the 2010 Queen's speech reaffirmed this commitment. The day after the Queen's speech, the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, however announced that he believed that this poll should not take place until 2011. In previous communications with the central government, the Welsh Assembly had made it clear that it would favour a referendum in October of 2010. The government's suggestion that this date was not attainable was widely seen as a poorly masked attempt to delay the process, especially since the Welsh Assembly was not notified of the Prime Minister's announcement in advance (Shipton, 26 May 2010).

The centre was however not able to delay the poll indefinitely. As the eventual referendum returned a clear majority in favour of legislative devolution (BBC, 2011a), the central government had little choice but to concede defeat on this occasion. The government's handling of the findings of the Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales however suggests that it is not willing to make any further concessions to Welsh demands. Despite recognising the concerns raised by the Commission, the coalition agreement states that any changes in the funding position of Wales "must await the stabilisation of the public finances" (HM Government, 2010: 28). The reluctance to decentralise additional resources to Wales is further evident from the suggestion that any future change would have to be preceded by a Calman-style Commission process.

This Commission would in turn only be established once a referendum on the devolution of legislative powers had proved successful. At the time of writing, no steps have been taken to create such a Commission.

Taken together this suggests that intergovernmental relations between the Welsh Assembly and the central government may be set to become increasingly conflictual over the coming years. In the absence of strong popular demand for full independence or a sharp rise in the share of the vote attracted by Plaid Cymru, it is difficult to see what would entice a Conservative-led central administration to look favourably upon demands to increase the powers and resources of the Welsh Assembly. Simultaneously, Labour's fall from grace at the centre is likely to increase the ability of the Welsh Labour Party to voice its concerns with the existing government system in a more assertive way.

7.4. The dynamic of devolution in London

The experiences in Greater London stand out from those in Scotland and Wales in the sense that devolution has created a fairly constant bottom-up demand for further decentralisation regardless of the balance of power within the Greater London Authority. To some extent, it can be argued that this trend is a direct consequence of the institutional design of the devolved body. The GLA consists of a directly-elected mayor and a 25 member Assembly. Formally, the mayor proposes the budget and policies of the GLA, while the Assembly scrutinises the executive. In practice the powers of the Assembly are however very limited. The Assembly can only amend the budget proposed by the Mayor with a two-thirds majority. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 furthermore stipulates that the mayor is required to inform and consult the Assembly when preparing or revising the mayoral strategies, but it does not award any formal veto powers to the Assembly. As a result, the agenda-setting and decision-making powers are strongly concentrated in the hands of one individual.

Especially since the initial settlement only devolved a very limited set of powers and resources, this individual in turn faces strong incentives to use the economic and political resources available to her in order to put pressure on the centre to expand the mayoral remit.

The likelihood of bottom-up pressures towards greater decentralisation has been further enhanced by the fact that the mayoral elections have so far been dominated by personality politics, rather than party political concerns (Rallings & Thrasher, 2000). The Mayor of London enjoys the largest personal mandate of any politician in the British system. Even if the mayoral candidate is formally affiliated to a political party, this personal mandate is likely to award her a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the party leadership. The ability of the mayor to pursue her own preferences is however likely to vary depending on the extent to which she relies on the formal affiliation with and patronage of a wider party in order to gain office. In this context, the victory of Ken Livingstone as an independent mayoral candidate has played a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of devolution in Greater London.

Prior to devolution, it was widely anticipated that the Labour Party would field the last leader of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone, as its official candidate in the first Mayoral election. Important parts of the parliamentary Labour Party in particular however favoured the candidacy of the more moderate cabinet minister, Frank Dobson. In the selection process that followed, Livingstone was narrowly defeated by Dobson (White & Milne, 21st of February 2000). Running as an independent candidate, Livingstone nonetheless managed to capture the largest share of the popular vote by a considerable margin. During his first term in office, Livingstone used the resulting autonomy to publicly challenge the Labour Government in office at centre (Sweeting, 2003). Most famously, he refused to adopt the government's preferred method for financing the upgrading of London's ailing underground transportation system.

In the resulting legal proceedings, the court ruled that the Greater London Authority Act gives the Secretary of State the right to intervene if mayoral strategies are seen to conflict with national policies (Waugh & Clement, 31 July 2001). The episode nonetheless forcefully demonstrated the ability of an independently elected mayor to use his personal mandate in order to challenge the distribution of powers under the existing settlement.

While his independent status enabled him to take a more radical stance on certain topics, Livingstone was increasingly aware that it simultaneously limited his ability to successfully extract further concessions from the centre (Sweeting, 2003). In an attempt to increase his influence, Livingstone repeatedly tried to rejoin the Labour Party (Wintour, 24th of July 2002). The central Labour leadership was initially reluctant to reinstate him. Public approval of Livingstone's performance as mayor however continued to grow during his first period in office (for details, see chapter 6). In the run-up to the 2004 Mayoral elections, it became increasingly clear that Livingstone was likely to be re-elected as an independent candidate.

The prospect of another humiliating defeat at the polls proved sufficient to cause a change of heart at the top of the party. In the political shuffle that followed, Labour's official mayoral candidate, Nicky Gravon, was forced to step aside for Livingstone just ahead of the 2004 elections (van der Kolk, Rallings, & Thrasher, 2006). As anticipated, Livingstone comfortably retained his position. The Labour Party's inability to dethrone Livingstone, coupled with his formal re-affiliation with the Party, put the Mayor in a strong bargaining position. The timing of the decision to substantially increase the Mayor's powers, proposed in 2006 and formalised in the 2007 Greater London Authority Act, suggest that this allowed him to successfully extract additional powers despite a lack of popular demand for greater autonomy. Significantly, the Labour Party has made no further commitments to increase the powers of the Mayor of London or the GLA since Ken Livingstone was defeated by the Conservative Mayoral candidate, Boris Johnson in the 2008 Mayoral election.

Like his predecessor, Johnson was both a maverick within his own Party and hugely popular with the general public at the time of his election. Empirical evidence of intra-party bargaining practices is difficult to obtain. The change in the official position of the Conservative Party shortly after the 2008 elections however strongly suggests that Johnson's success in the Mayoral elections awarded him considerable bargaining powers within the Party. In the late 1990s, the Conservative Party had strongly opposed Labour's plans to create an elected mayor and Assembly for Greater London. During the debates surrounding the 2006-2007 Greater London Authority Bill, the Party again spoke out strongly against any further devolution of powers to Greater London in general and the mayor in particular (Hansard (Commons), 12th of December 2006, vol. 454, cols.751-836, Hansard (Commons), 27th of February 2007, vol. 457, cols.845-891). The Conservative opposition to further decentralisation however swiftly evaporated after the election of Boris Johnson. Following extensive negotiations with the mayor's office, the Conservative Party formally announced its intention to transfer additional powers to the Mayor of London in April 2010 (Clift, 30th of April 2010; Conservative Party, 2010b). This commitment was reiterated in the 2010 election manifesto (Conservative Party, 2010a).

As noted, the 2010 general election returned the Conservative Party to power, albeit in a formal coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Upon taking office, the Prime Minister has been swift to prepare the ground for further devolution by announcing that the Government Office for London is to be abolished and the post of Minister of London will not be maintained (Waugh, 4 June 2010). More recently, the Localism Bill (2010-11) has been introduced. Under the provisions of this Bill, the London Development Agency will be abolished, while the Greater London Authority in general and the Mayor in particular will receive additional powers in the areas of housing and regeneration. Past experiences suggest that the central government's willingness to make further concessions will depend strongly on the outcome of the Mayoral election scheduled to be held on the 3rd of May 2012.

An opinion poll conducted in March 2011 suggests that this election is likely to be a tight run race between the incumbent Conservative Mayor and Labour candidate Ken Livingstone. If Livingstone regains office, this may well result in a policy U-turn by the Conservative Party.

7.5.The English question and the elusive search for symmetry

As demonstrated in the previous sections, democratic devolution has supplied regional elites in devolved areas with highly legitimate platforms through which to pursue their objectives. Simultaneously, the analysis in chapter 6 suggests that the potential electoral costs associated with accommodating the resulting demands for further autonomy may be increasing. Prior to devolution, offering greater powers and resources to Scotland and Wales in particular had the potential to create electoral gains amongst the regionally-concentrated pro-devolution minority, without significantly influencing the voting behaviour of the majority of voters in the rest of the country. As the previous chapter has shown, the reality of asymmetric devolution has however raised public awareness of regional inequalities in funding positions and systemic anomalies in terms of democratic representation. This has in turn created increasingly prominent comparative grievances, particularly in respect to Scotland's relatively favourable position. In this context, granting further powers and resources in response to regionalist pressures risk aggravating English sensitivities. If such grievances become sufficiently salient, this may in turn create a substantial electoral backlash.

Initially Labour's response to the so-called English Question was focussed on the decentralisation of powers and resources to the English Government Office Regions. The essence of this policy was developed while the Party was still in opposition (Labour Party, 1995, 1996a; Regional Policy Commission, 1996). It was designed to reverse what was seen as a tide of centralisation that had engulfed Britain under three consecutive Conservative Governments (John, Musson, & Tickell, 2002).

Once in office, the Labour government swiftly set about implementing the economic elements of its decentralisation agenda through the establishment of Regional Development Agencies. The centre however proved far less inclined to actively pursue its manifesto commitment to “introduce legislation to allow the people, region by region, to decide in a referendum whether they want directly elected regional government” (Labour Party, 1997). Partially this reluctance may reflect the fact that opinion polls consistently found that there was no real popular demand for democratic devolution to the English regions (see chapter 6). Labour’s initial inertia can however also be related to the constellation of preferences within the Labour Party itself. While the responsible Secretary of State, John Prescott, strongly favoured the idea, many within the Party remained unconvinced of the benefits of elected regional assemblies in England (Tomaney, 2002). Crucial, it seems that the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was amongst those who were less inclined to support the policy.

The fact that the commitment to elected regional assemblies was explicitly reaffirmed in the 2001 election manifesto (Labour Party, 2001) is in part a testament to Prescott’s personal perseverance and influence. However, the emergence of elite pressures from within the Northern regions in particular also made it more difficult for the central government to completely abandon the cause of regional devolution in England. From the early 1990s, the Campaign for a Northern Assembly had proved influential in shaping Labour thinking on the English question. When Labour came to power in 1997, the government’s formal commitment to elected regional assemblies sparked the establishment of Constitutional Conventions in several other English regions (Sandford, 2009a). Although these Conventions yielded only informal influence, their very existence made it impossible for the government to silently retreat on its 1997 manifesto commitments.

Following Labour's convincing re-election in 2001, progress on English devolution remained slow. The publication of a White Paper in May 2002 was followed by the necessary legislation a year later. After consulting with key stakeholders, the government announced that referendums would be held on the 4th of November 2004 in the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber only. Amidst reports that public support for the government's proposals was dwindling, the referendums in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber were officially postponed for technical reasons. The only remaining poll in the North East resulted in a decisive defeat (Sandford, 2009b). On a turnout of almost 48 per cent, 78 per cent of those who voted rejected the government's proposals. Following this rejection, the government announced that it no longer had any immediate plans for democratic devolution to the English regions.

Apart from the failed regional devolution project, the Labour Party has made few attempts to address the anomalies produced by asymmetric devolution during its time in office at the centre. Despite increasing popular discontent with the existing funding regime in England and Wales (see chapter 6 and Table 7.8), the Party has not sought to address these concerns in a systematic way. In addition, three consecutive Labour Governments have shown little willingness to resolve the mounting democratic grievances amongst English voters. While the 2005 Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) Order brought Scotland's seat share at Westminster in line with its population size, the government did not choose to use this opportunity to do the same for Wales. Similarly, no attempt was made to redress the systemic anomaly that allows MPs from devolved areas to vote on issues that will never affect their constituencies.

Table 7.8 Views on the share of public spending received by Scotland (Column percent)

Views in England												
	2000			2003			2007			2009		
	All	Lab	Con	All	Lab	Con	All	Lab	Con	All	Lab	Con
Much more	11%	10%	16%	12%	10%	14%	21%	17%	31%	26%	24%	31%
A little more	17%	16%	19%	18%	18%	22%	22%	24%	23%	29%	31%	36%
Fair	57%	55%	55%	59%	61%	55%	49%	50%	41%	41%	41%	30%
A little less	13%	16%	9%	10%	10%	7%	7%	7%	4%	4%	3%	4%
A lot less	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
N	1412	589	433	1403	539	409	658	232	217	727	191	239
Views in Scotland												
	2000			2003			2007			2009		
	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP
Much more	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	4%	5%	2%	3%	4%	3%
A little more	8%	8%	4%	9%	7%	3%	14%	14%	9%	12%	13%	7%
Fair	29%	33%	15%	36%	43%	26%	42%	46%	31%	43%	44%	34%
A little less	36%	36%	44%	37%	34%	46%	29%	25%	41%	32%	30%	40%
A lot less	25%	23%	37%	15%	14%	23%	11%	10%	17%	10%	9%	16%
N	1584	593	312	1398	456	245	1353	455	330	1344	373	307

Sources: Own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2009, 2011) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2009, 2010)

In the area of public spending, this inertia may reflect the consequences likely to be associated with accommodating English preferences. As noted in chapter 6, English voters are increasingly feeling aggrieved by Scotland's relatively favourable public spending position. While this discontent seems most pronounced amongst Conservative identifiers (see Table 7.8), survey evidence suggest that the majority of Labour identifiers now also feels that Scotland is receiving more than its fair share of public spending. Although the share of Scottish respondents who feel that their country receives less than its fair share of public expenditure has declined in the post-devolution period, few are willing to accept that Scotland is currently receiving more than its fair share. In addition, the majority of SNP supporters and around 40 percent of Labour identifiers continue to feel that their country is already short-changed under the existing system (see Table 7.8).

In this context, any electoral gains associated with accommodating English grievances are likely to be outweighed by the backlash such a policy is likely to create in Scotland. Although discontent with the current allocation of resources is increasingly associated with support for devolution in England (see chapter 6), the issue is likely to carry much greater salience in Scotland. If the Barnett formula would be replaced by an objective needs-based system, this would have a very immediate and negative effect on public spending in Scotland. By contrast such a move would in itself have no direct impact on the resources allocated to English public services. Given Labour's continued reliance on Scottish seats, this difference in issue salience means that ignoring the demands of the English majority may well be less damaging electorally than flouting Scottish preferences. In addition, any central effort to reduce public spending in Scotland is likely to increase popular support for greater fiscal autonomy. This may in turn benefit the SNP in the devolved and general elections alike and put further pressure on the centre to devolve additional powers. In this context, maintaining the status quo in terms of resource allocation can be seen as an important part of the centre's attempts to control the secessionist threat in Scotland and safeguard the Union.

By contrast, the Labour Party's refusal to address the so-called West-Lothian question seems more strongly motivated by self-interested outcome-based incentives. As

Table 7.9 shows, the vast majority of English voters support the statement that Scottish MPs should not be allowed to vote on English issues in the House of Commons. Although Conservative voters tend to feel more strongly about this issue than Labour identifiers, addressing the West-Lothian question clearly has the potential to create electoral gains in England. Although a substantial minority of Scottish voters disagrees with the idea that the voting right of Scottish MPs should be restricted, surveys suggest that few feel very strongly about this issue.

Taken together, this suggests that accommodating English grievances by curbing the voting rights of Scottish MPs at Westminster could be a vote-maximising strategy. In the long term however, the negative consequences of this option in terms of the power and influence of the Labour Party at the central level would be substantial.

Table 7.9 Views on the West-Lothian question in England and Scotland (Column percent)

Scottish MPs should not vote on English issues in the House of Commons												
Views in England												
	2000			2003			2007					
	All	Lab	Con	All	Lab	Con	All	Lab	Con			
agree strongly	20%	14%	31%	25%	21%	35%	29%	26%	43%			
agree	50%	52%	51%	44%	44%	40%	42%	42%	37%			
neither	20%	22%	12%	19%	21%	14%	18%	18%	10%			
disagree	9%	11%	5%	10%	12%	10%	10%	14%	9%			
disagree strongly	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%			
N	1551	618	473	1347	481	410	641	226	202			
Views in Scotland												
	2000			2003			2007			2009		
	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP	All	Lab	SNP
agree strongly	15%	13%	14%	14%	14%	12%	14%	11%	15%	16%	11%	23%
agree	44%	43%	46%	36%	35%	42%	39%	38%	43%	33%	34%	36%
neither	18%	18%	18%	28%	30%	27%	26%	27%	23%	29%	27%	21%
disagree	20%	22%	15%	17%	17%	15%	18%	21%	15%	17%	22%	16%
disagree strongly	4%	4%	7%	5%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	7%	4%
N	1376	515	276	1301	424	226	1283	439	294	1284	348	280

Sources: Own elaboration based on National Centre for Social Research (2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2009) and Scottish Centre for Social Research (2005, 2009, 2010)

Labour has traditionally been disproportionately dependent on Welsh and Scottish seats (see chapter 4). In the post-devolution era, Scottish and Welsh MPs have continued to account for between 19 and 26 percent of the Parliamentary Labour Party (see Table 7.10). By contrast, less than 3 percent of the Conservative MPs represent constituencies in either of these two countries. As a result, the Conservative's share of the English seats has been consistently higher than the Party's overall share of Westminster seats.

Conversely, Labour's share of the English seat has been similar to or below the Party's seat share in the UK as a whole. In addition, party discipline amongst Scottish and Welsh Labour MPs has traditionally been relatively high (Russell & Lodge, 2006). In this context, accommodating English grievances by offering 'English votes on English Laws' would mean stripping a relatively loyal part of the Parliamentary Labour Party of its voting rights in devolved matters while simultaneously increasing the relative voting power of the Conservative Party. These outcome-based incentives to ignore English calls for reform are further enhanced by the fact that many prominent Labour politicians, including the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, represent Scottish or Welsh constituencies. From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that Gordon Brown argued against the policy, which he claimed would create two classes of MPs (Hansard (Commons), 3rd of July 2007, vol. 462, col. 818).

Table 7.10 Differences in reliance on Scottish and Welsh seats (1997-2010)

	Scottish and Welsh seats as % of the Parliamentary Party		Share of the UK-wide and English seats at Westminster			
	Labour	Conservative	Labour		Conservative	
			UK	England	UK	England
1997	22%	0%	63%	62%	25%	31%
2001	22%	1%	63%	61%	25%	31%
2005	19%	2%	55%	54%	31%	37%
2010	26%	3%	40%	36%	47%	56%

Sources: own elaboration based on BBC (2010) and Rallings & Thrasher (2007)

Since coming to power following the 2010 general election, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition has proved more inclined to address the West-Lothian question. Throughout the post-devolution era, the Conservative Party has argued that MPs representing constituencies in devolved areas should not be allowed to vote on issues that will not directly affect their constituents (Conservative Party, 2001) (Conservative Party, 2005: 22; 2010a).

As the discussion above shows, this policy would enhance the Party's power at the centre. The results of the 2010 general election most clearly illustrate this. Although the Conservatives failed to win an overall majority, they do command 56 per cent of the English seats (see Table 7.10). The Conservative's current coalition partner is however relatively reliant on Scottish and Welsh seats. As a result, the Liberal Democrats face few outcome-based incentives to support the solution proposed by the Conservatives. In their 2010 manifesto, the Liberal Democrats instead reiterated the intention to deal with the English question in the context of a federal Britain (Liberal Democrats, 2010: 92). As a compromise, the resulting coalition agreement states that the government "will establish a commission to consider the 'West Lothian question'" (HM Government, 2010: 27). When this commission stage will take place and whether it will indeed lead to any change in the status quo remains to be seen. The prominence of the issue in the previous election manifestos of both parties, as well as its inclusion in the coalition agreement, however suggests that the government does have a genuine interest in trying to resolve this issue.

By contrast, there has been little suggestion that the administration intends to redress Scotland's relatively favourable expenditure position when it implements the Calman proposals. Instead the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been given the opportunity to delay their shares of the UK spending cuts until the next budget year. This option is not open to any of the English regions. Especially in the current climate of deep and painful cuts in public spending, these actions are likely to increase comparative grievances in England. The fact that a central government dominated by the Conservative Party would be willing to risk an English backlash in order to appease Scotland is the strongest demonstration to date that the devolution process has increased the bargaining power of this country vis-à-vis the centre. In this context the salience of English grievances would have to increase considerably before decisive action is likely to be taken to address this aspect of the English Question.

7.6.Conclusion

The post-devolution period has been marked by a number of further adjustments to the original devolution 'settlements'. While these constitutional developments have been duly noted in the academic literature, there have so far been few attempts to analyse the origins of the emerging patterns of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation. This chapter has sought to show that the approach developed in chapter 2 can help us to develop a better understanding of these dynamics. In particular, it was argued that a formal veto player analysis reveals that the creation of directly elected regional bodies for Scotland and Wales has not changed the formal distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers over matters of constitutional importance. Instead, devolution has altered the act- and outcome-based incentives faced by parties competing for office at the central level.

The experiences in Scotland so far broadly concur with the hypothesis that devolution tends to increase bottom-up pressures towards further decentralisation by providing regional parties with opportunities to gain office at the regional level. The mechanisms through which this effect occurs are however different from those suggested by authors like Chhibber and Kollman (2004) and Brancati (2006) (2008). While the SNP has made considerable advances in devolved elections, its share of the vote during general elections has remained fairly stable. Regional pressures towards further decentralisation therefore have not emerged as a consequence of a devolution-driven regionalisation of the British party system. Rather, the SNP has been able to use its strong position at the regional level to increase the credibility of the threat of secession. This has in turn strengthened the incentives to accommodating Scottish preferences faced by central level veto players with an outcome-based preference for maintaining the Union.

The ability of the SNP to significantly enhance its performance at the regional level was in turn only partially related to the distribution of preferences along the territorial dimension.

There are strong indications that the behaviour of Scottish voters during devolved elections is increasingly driven by valence politics, rather than the positional issues upon which spatial models of party competition are based. The existence of a fairly strong popular consensus regarding the goals of government at the regional level, couple with the perceived ability of the SNP to deliver these social and economic objectives, allowed the Party to capture the support of voters with more moderate preferences along the constitutional dimension. As a result, the behaviour of the SNP does not conform to van Houten's (2007: 563) prediction that "the inclusive voter support that a regional party strives to mobilize can put constraints on the type of competencies it claims for the region and, thus, on the challenge it poses for the centre". Instead the SNP was able to present itself as the primary representative of the region's interests along a range of valence issues, including but by no means limited to the constitutional question.

By contrast, Plaid Cymru has proved less able to capitalise on the strengthening of regional mobilisation structures. While the Party has consistently performed better at the regional scale than it traditionally does at the central level, it has not been able to capture the plurality of the seats within the Welsh Assembly. Together with the much more modest level of popular support for full independence, this has severely limited the credibility of the threat of exit. In this context, central concessions to regional demands for further powers seem to be primarily driven by act-based incentives. The emergence of distinct voting patterns at the devolved level, combined with the mechanics of the AMS, have meant that the Welsh Labour Party has at times been forced to form a coalition with another party in order to remain in office at the regional level. Given the preference constellation of the other parties within the Welsh party system, this has produced strong political act-based incentives to make concessions along the constitutional dimension at the regional level. Under such circumstances, the central Labour leadership has proved willing to allow the Welsh Party to adopt a more regionalist stance.

When faced with the regional pressures towards further regionalisation this invariably produced, the central Labour Party in turn proved willing to at least pay lip service to such demands.

Given the importance of intra-party dynamics in the accommodation of Welsh demands for greater autonomy, it is perhaps unsurprising that the change of power at the central level has resulted in a hardening of the centre's line vis-à-vis the region's demands for further powers and resources. As was the case in the pre-devolution period, the central Conservative Party leadership faced few internal or external act-based incentives to accommodate Welsh demands for further decentralisation. In the absence of a credible threat of secession, it is therefore able to largely ignore Welsh preferences for further decentralisation. Taken together this suggests that devolution has somewhat increased the bargaining power regionalist groups in Wales have at times when the central and the regional level are both Labour-dominated but the Welsh Labour Party does not enjoy a working majority. During other periods, the establishment of a directly elected regional body merely allows regionalist groups to more strongly voice their concerns with the existing government system. While this may help to mobilise popular support for further decentralisation, it seems unlikely that this will lead to rapid and far-reaching changes in the devolved settlement.

A similar dynamic of devolution has emerged in Greater London, albeit for very different reasons. Given the limited powers of the Assembly and the absence of a credible threat of public disorder, the personal clout of the Mayor is the only real instrument of influence available to the Greater London Authority. By concentrating the agenda-setting and decision-making powers in the hands of one directly elected individual, the 1999 Greater London Authority Act encouraged the emergence of a highly visible figurehead of devolution with a strong incentive to expand his or her personal power and prestige.

The personality-driven nature of the Mayoral elections enhanced both the autonomy of the Mayor and the bargaining powers vis-à-vis the central leadership of the party to which he or she is formally affiliated. This combination of factors has meant that (a) bottom-up demands for further devolution have been strongly concentrated on the Mayoral remit and (b) such demands only tend to be accommodated when the Mayor is both highly popular and formally affiliated with the party in government at the centre. These dynamics seem unlikely to change in the near future unless the centre decided to notably increase the powers of the Assembly and/or the Mayoral politics become more strongly influenced by party-political concerns.

The devolution of powers and resources to Scotland, Wales and Greater London has thus produced regional institutions with very different degrees and types of bargaining power. Simultaneously, the lack of devolution to the rest of England has meant that the majority of the electorate in mainland Britain does not enjoy any form of regional representation. As the previous chapter showed, democratic anomalies within the current government system and disputes regarding the allocation of public resources across regions are increasingly leading to grievances in the non-devolved areas. In the absence of elected regional bodies, these sources of discontent are however scarcely finding political expression. This in turn gives political elites at the central level the opportunity to ignore those demands that would be electorally damaging in devolved areas or disadvantageous for the Party itself. This situation seems unlikely to change unless grievances with the asymmetric system of devolution become salient enough to significantly affect the behaviour of English voters in general elections.

8. Conclusion

This study set out to examine both the origins of regionalism and the conditions under which such spatially-concentrated demands for greater regional autonomy are likely to lead to change in the government system. While the contemporary revival of regional autonomy movements and the simultaneous tendency towards greater government decentralisation have received considerable academic attention, these literatures did not produce a coherent theoretical account of these two interrelated but distinctive trends. In this context, this study has aimed to make a contribution to the literature by combining the tentative inductive hypotheses emerging from empirical case studies with insights from the largely theoretical literatures on political legitimacy and policy change. The usefulness of the resulting framework was demonstrated by applying it to post-war mainland Britain. To an extent this re-examination of the contemporary history of regionalism and devolution summarised a range of rather well-known historic facts and trends. The primary goal of the empirical chapters was however to show that the theoretical explanations developed in chapter 2 can indeed help us to qualify and challenge the conventional wisdom in important ways.

The first part of this chapter will briefly summarise the main theoretical and empirical contributions of this study. The second part identifies a number of interesting areas for future research.

8.1.Main contributions

8.1.1. The importance of legitimacy grievances with the territorial state

Despite Rokkan and Urwin's (1982) early insistence on the importance of devoting equal attention to central factors, much of the literature on regionalism has remained strongly focussed on regional trends and realities. Contemporary challenges to this approach have in turn been largely preoccupied with the influence of globalisation and European integration on the potential for regionalist mobilisation (Dardanelli, 2005; Jolly, 2007; Keating, 1995). While this research focus may well represent a long-overdue move away from the state-centric approaches that still characterise much of the social sciences (Agnew, 1994; Taylor, 1996), it risks drawing our attention away from the legitimacy deficits at the centre that have created the opportunities for regionalism in the first place. This study has sought to bring the territorial state back into the analysis by explicitly conceptualising regionalism as the partial rescaling of legitimacy from the central or federal level to the regional scale.

The literature on social movements has long argued that, in order for successful mobilisation to occur, "people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem" (McAdam, et al., 1996: 5). If we apply this insight to regionalist mobilisation, popular support for greater regional autonomy can only emerge when (1) the legitimacy of the centre is challenged in some way and (2) the regional scale is seen as a more legitimate or capable representative of the people in this respect. From this perspective, the regionalist revival in the post-war period can theoretically be based on two rationales. First of all, new challenges to the legitimacy of the territorial state may have encouraged a regionalist revival in areas that have traditionally enjoyed a high degree of regional legitimacy. Secondly, an increase in the legitimacy of the region as an alternative scale of government may have created support for decentralisation in areas where the legitimacy of the state has traditionally been compromised.

While these two dynamics need not be mutually exclusive, drawing this distinction provides us with theoretically-grounded ideal types through which to re-examine the origins of popular demands for greater autonomy in different regions and time periods. In order to empirically apply this perspective, the concept of political legitimacy however needs to be operationalised.

8.1.2. The role of economic, democratic and identity-based factors

While the literature on regionalism and devolution frequently draws on the concept of political legitimacy, what makes the exercise of power at different geographical scales legitimate is seldom discussed in great detail. This study has sought to address this gap in the literature. Approaching the issue from a descriptive rather than a prescriptive point of view, Max Weber's (1978) definition of legitimacy as the belief in legitimacy is taken as a starting point. In line with Beetham's argument, I however contend that the exercise of power at a particular geographical scale "is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be justified in terms of their beliefs" (Beetham, 1991: 11). Drawing primarily on the work of Easton (1965) and Scharpf (1999), Chapter 2 in turn identifies three main sources of beliefs in legitimacy within established democratic societies; output-oriented or specific support, input-oriented or democratic legitimacy, and a sense of community or shared identity.

Together with the proposition that regionalism constitutes a response to a perceived central legitimacy deficit which could be redressed through collective action at the regional scale, this multi-faceted concept of legitimacy in turn allowed us to identify three ideal types of regionalism. Within this tripartite typology, the term identity-based regionalism was reserved for calls for autonomy that originated from the perception that the state identity is irreconcilable, or in some way at odds, with the imagined community at the regional level. In addition, calls for decentralisation may also emerge when the central government system is seen as inadequately responsive to the needs and wants of the population and decentralisation is perceived as a viable solution to this democratic deficit.

I have chosen to refer this type of support for devolution as democratic regionalism. Finally, it was argued that grievances with the outputs produced by the centre, coupled with the perception that decentralisation would improve the economic situation of the region and/or allow residents to enjoy the same public goods and services at a lower cost, can give rise to economic forms of regionalism.

By applying this typology to post-war Britain, this study has shown that this approach not only encourages us to devote equal attention to regional and central developments but also helps us to distinguish the root causes of regionalism from the wider range of enabling factors. Chapter 3 for example drew attention to the role played by the weakening of some of the main markers of the British identity during the 1950s and 60s within the subsequent change in the relative importance attached to state-wide and regional feelings of belonging in Scotland and Wales. Simultaneously, it was argued that the perceived conflicts between the regional 'us' and the British 'other' were too limited and stable over time to explain the subsequent waxing and waning of support for greater regional autonomy. Instead a structured comparison with the developments in various English regions revealed that the existence of an imagined regional community, and the formal and informal regional mobilisation structures that tend to accompany historically-grounded spatial identities, facilitated the mobilisation of other grievances along territorial lines in Scotland and Wales.

The first regionalist revival in the 1960s and 70s coincided with the worsening of the relative and absolute economic position of Britain and the re-emergence of the North-South divide. Across the UK, these economic woes were accompanied by a growing discontent with the performance of the main contenders for office at the central level. In Scotland, these grievances were associated with a marked rise in popular support for greater regional autonomy. By contrast, English and Welsh voters predominantly expressed their discontent by shunning the Labour Party and the Conservatives in favour of the Liberals.

Chapter 3 argued that this regional variety in the popular response to very similar central grievances reflected both the differences in the perceived economic legitimacy of the region and the strength of regional mobilisation structures. In Scotland, the rise in the economic legitimacy of the region following the discovery of North Sea oil enabled pre-existing regionalist groups to mobilise economic sources of discontent and the related democratic grievances along territorial lines. In Wales, the lack of a similar boost to the fiscal position of the region, coupled with the greater economic dependence on England, made it more difficult to pursue a similar strategy. In the North of England, the potential for economic regionalism was further reduced by the relative weakness of the formal and informal mobilisation structures at the regional level.

By contrast, I have argued that the second regionalist revival primarily occurred as a consequence of new challenges to the democratic legitimacy of the central state. Despite the fact that some regions did display fairly distinctive voting patterns throughout the post-war period, the existence of a relatively balanced two-party system at the central level and the related periodic alternation of power long limited the potential for democratic regionalism. In the late 1970s, a prominent shift in the voting behaviour of some English regions however produced a lengthy period of Conservative predominance. While this created substantial grievances across much of the North of England, mobilising these democratic grievances along territorial lines again proved difficult. By contrast, the pre-existence of characteristic regional voting patterns in Wales and the increasingly distinctive behaviour of Scottish voters proved conducive to democratic regionalism in these identity-rich regions.

By applying the same typology to the post-devolution situation, chapter 6 in turn demonstrated that the proposed typology not only enables us to gain a better understanding of the contemporary history of regionalism, but also allows us to explore the relationship between the partial accommodation for regionalist demands and future calls for further decentralisation and secession in more detail.

In particular, I argued that the potential for purely identity-based regionalism remains limited in mainland Britain. By contrast, the devolution of powers and resources to Scotland and Wales seems to have done little to remove the democratic grievances with the centre that lay at the heart of the regionalist revival in the 1980s and 90s. Simultaneously anomalies in the current system of representation under asymmetric devolution have created new sources of democratic grievances in England. Survey evidence in turn suggests that the reluctance of the centre to deal with these issues through central reforms is gradually increasing the perceived desirability of more symmetric devolved arrangements. Economically, the reality of devolution seems to have dampened hopes that decentralisation can help to promote economic growth and prosperity. The perceived fiscal dividend of devolution may however prove a potent source of economic regionalism in the post-devolution period.

8.1.3. The usefulness of a veto player approach

This study not only examined the origins of regionalism, but also explored under which circumstances such popular demands for greater regional autonomy were likely to lead to an actual rescaling of powers and resources from the central or federal level to the regional scale. In this context, it was argued that a careful analysis of the formal distribution of veto powers represents a useful first step in analysing the patterns of policy stability and change. While many of the existing studies into regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation implicitly develop veto player arguments, the reluctance to explicitly state and justify the proposed distribution of veto powers that underpins these analytical narratives both obscures the argument and make them more difficult to test and challenge empirically. Using the British case as an example, this study has sought to demonstrate that a more formal approach can help us to further our understanding of these processes, even in a context where veto powers tend to be strongly concentrated in the hands of a single partisan veto player.

It can be argued that the usefulness of the veto player approach in explaining the patterns of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation in Britain is at least partially accidental, as one of the main decision-making moments took place during an exceptional period of minority government at the centre. Even if we exclude this period from the analyses, I would argue that the veto player approach is useful as it forces us to re-evaluate the role of a range of influential groups and institutions within the agenda-setting and decision-making process. In particular, this study has shown that the leadership of the party that wins the plurality of the seats at the central level can usually be identified as the only veto player within the system. Crucially, devolution has not significantly changed the formal distribution of veto powers in areas of constitutional importance. As a result, I argue that the patterns of regionalist accommodation in Britain are primarily guided by the act- and outcome-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation faced by the two main contenders for office at the central level. This in turn shifts the research focus from the developments in the House of Commons and the outcome of regional referendums to the origins of the formal policy positions of the Labour Party and the Conservatives and how these shaped their subsequent behaviour within the legislative arena.

8.1.4. The role of act- and outcome-based incentives

One of the primary problems we face when trying to uncover the origins of patterns of regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation is that we cannot directly measure the preferences of the main actors within this system. Instead, the beliefs that underpin their actions will have to be at least partially inferred from the very behaviours that we are trying to explain. As a result, the validity of our arguments will hinge strongly on our ability to justify the preferences we attribute to those with agenda-setting and decision-making powers. In my view, much of the contemporary literature on devolution devotes too little attention to this important aspect of validation.

This study has sought to show that devoting greater attention to the origins of the formal policy positions of partisan veto players can significantly enhance our understanding of the mechanisms through which popular demands for greater regional autonomy can lead to actual policy change.

Loosely based on the work of Blau (2008), chapter 2 developed a typology of the outcome and act-based incentives to support or oppose devolution faced by instrumentally rational political elites. In line with the conventional wisdom, it was argued that the outcome-based incentives faced by partisan veto players are shaped by the level at which they compete for office. This relationship is however not as straightforward as is often assumed. Central players with an ideological or self-interested preference for maintaining the unity of the existing state may for example support devolution because they believe that the partial accommodation of regionalist demands will reduce calls for full secession. Similarly, devolution can be seen as a viable strategy to increase the power and influence of a player currently competing at the central level if the party he or she represents persistently attracts a large share of the regional vote, whilst simultaneously having relatively poor prospects of forming part of the state-wide government (O'Neill, 2003).

Applying these insights to the British case challenges the conventional perspective on the period of non-decision between 1970 and 1974. The lack of decision-making, despite the fact that the governing party made a clear manifesto commitment to devolution, is often taken as evidence that the formal policy position of the Conservative Party was purely based on electoral incentives (Gamble, 2006; Mitchell, 1990). The available evidence however suggests that the Declaration of Perth was strongly guided by the ideological beliefs of the then party leader, Edward Heath, who saw devolution as a way to deal with the rising nationalist threat in Scotland. If we accept this perspective, the decision not to place the devolution issue on the parliamentary agenda may well have been guided by the preference constellation within the Parliamentary Conservative Party, rather than the feebleness of the origins of the original policy commitment.

Alongside the outcome-based incentives towards regionalist accommodation and non-accommodation, political elites will also face a distinctive set of act-based incentives to formally support or oppose change. First of all, it was argued that the formal policy position of a partisan veto player is likely to be shaped by electoral considerations. As popular demands for greater regional autonomy tend to be spatially concentrated (Sorens, 2009), the direction and size of the electoral incentives faced by partisan veto players will to an extent depend on the geographical context in which they compete and the regionalisation of the vote. Paradoxically, differences in issue salience may however mean that central or federal players competing within a relatively nationalised party system do at times face electoral incentives to accommodate the preferences of a regionalist minority against the wishes of the majority of the voters in the rest of the country.

This more elaborate examination of the structure of electoral incentives in turn changes our perspective on the period of decision-making in the late 1970s. The available evidence suggests that the commitments to Scottish and Welsh devolution within the October 1974 Labour manifesto were strongly motivated by electoral incentives. On the other hand, the spatial concentration of popular demands for greater regional autonomy in Scotland and parts of Wales, coupled with the popular opposition to the policy in the rest of Britain, meant that the proposed form of asymmetric devolution represented a minority preference even amongst Labour voters. While the existing literature primarily links this trend to the electoral threat posed by the SNP and to a lesser extent Plaid Cymru, this study qualifies this perspective by arguing that differences in issue salience played a crucial role in shaping this dynamic. Specifically, it was argued that the Labour leadership sought to accommodate the views of those Scottish and Welsh voters for whom the territorial dimension had become salient to influence their voting behaviour in general elections.

This in turn presents a new and in my view very plausible explanation for the inclusion of a manifesto commitment on Welsh devolution, despite the fact that survey evidence suggested that this option might not be preferred to the status quo by a majority of the Welsh electorate.

Once elected, a partisan actor may in turn face political act-based incentives to adjust her formal policy position in order to secure the support of a crucial coalition partner and thereby gain or retain office at the regional or central level. As the veto powers within the British system tend to be strongly concentrated in the hands of a single partisan veto player, these incentives have been less crucial in shaping the dynamics of regionalist accommodation than for example in Belgium or Italy. In the 1970s, the tight electoral competition at the central level, coupled with the divisiveness of the devolution issue within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the general decline in party discipline, however did produce additional veto players within the system. Cabinet papers from the late 1970s suggest that the introduction of regional referendums was primarily motivated by the desire of the minority Labour government to resolve the emerging legislative deadlock in a way that would allow it to continue to draw on the support of the regionalist parties in the case of a no-confidence motion.

As the issue of 'home rule' had only recently re-emerged, popular opinion however proved relatively susceptible to campaigning efforts. Together with the fact that the elections campaign commitments had been primarily guided by the preferences of a minority for whom the issue was highly salient, this proved sufficient to allow the No campaign to prevent change in Wales. In Scotland, the so-called Cunningham amendment is widely blamed for the failure of the devolution legislation. By formally identifying the various veto points within the decision-making path, this study was however able to show that the House of Commons retained the final veto position. The results of the 1979 referendum simply required the government to lay a repeal order before parliament.

Given the fact that the majority of those who voted did favour devolution, the government could have legitimately asked the parliament to vote down this order. This course of action was not taken because informal enquiries by the whips showed that the Labour leadership would not be able to muster sufficient backbench support for such a move to succeed.

Finally, this study has argued that the external outcome and act-based incentives outlined above are accompanied by a distinctive set of internal considerations. In line with Grofman's (2004) argument, it was argued that policy autonomy of political elites is constrained to some extent by the constellation of preferences within the party to which they formally belong. As in the electoral arena, it was argued that the strength of the internal act-based incentives to support or oppose devolution are shaped both by the size of the pro- and anti-devolution factions within the party and the salience attached to the issue by each group. Based on these propositions, I argue that a lack of internal cohesion on the devolution issue allows political elites to respond quite strongly to changes in the external act- and outcome-based incentives to oppose or support devolution. As the issue is increasingly absorbed within the party system, the ability of the leadership to go against the dominant view within the party will decline.

In Britain, the influence of internal incentive structures on the patterns of regionalist accommodation is most strongly illustrated by the difference in policy autonomy of the Labour leadership during the main decision-making periods within the post-war, pre-devolution period. In the 1970s, the relatively recent re-emergence of the devolution issue, coupled with the lack of internal consensus regarding the appropriate policy response to this trend, allowed Harold Wilson to dictate the terms of the debate. As argued the party leader used this autonomy to secure the vote of the regionalist minority in the context of tight electoral competition at the central level. By contrast, Tony Blair was personally unconvinced that the external act- and outcome-based incentives were persuasive enough to maintain the Party's longstanding commitments to Scottish and Welsh devolution.

The emergence of a more cohesive internal party position, coupled with the salience attached to the issue by a relatively powerful pro-devolution lobby, however strongly constrained the ability of the party leader to adjust the formal policy platform to these personal beliefs and preferences. Faced with these conflicting external and internal incentives, it would seem that Blair devised a mixed policy strategy which allowed him to enjoy the act-based internal benefits, whilst simultaneously minimising the likelihood and extent of policy change by insisting on explicit manifesto commitments to include pre-legislative referendums within the decision-making path. While the Labour leader may have underestimated the appetite for fiscal devolution in Scotland, weaker popular support for decentralisation meant that this strategy nearly achieved the desired effect in Wales.

Taken together, this re-examination of the contemporary history of regionalist accommodation in Britain demonstrated that a more intricate understanding of the incentives faced by partisan veto players can help us to qualify and challenge elements of the conventional wisdom. As was the case with the typology of regionalisms, the approach also enabled us to explore how the establishment of elected regional bodies is likely to influence the dynamics of regionalist accommodation in the future. Most directly, decentralisation can change the pattern of policy change by awarding veto powers to regional actors. The British case however demonstrates that devolution can also unleash further changes of constitutional importance by changing the act- and outcome-based incentives faced by the existing veto players.

Drawing on the contemporary developments in Scotland, Wales and Greater London, I have shown that this effect is however far from uniform. In particular, it was argued the effect of devolution on the credibility of the threat of secession primarily works through the ability of a regional body to call a consultative popular referendum on independence.

As a result, the outcome-based incentives faced by partisan players with a preference for maintaining the unity of the existing state will only be significantly affected by devolution if popular support for extensive devolution and independence is substantial and regionalist groups are the primary agenda-setters and decision-makers at the regional level. While this dynamic has not emerged in Wales and Greater London, the recent developments in Scotland suggest that the threat of a referendum does allow regional elites to extract additional powers and resources from the centre. Crucially, the greater overlap of the formal policy positions of the main contenders for office at the centre suggests that this has dampened the influence of the electoral geography of the UK on central party positions.

In the absence of a credible threat of exit, it was argued that devolution primarily affects the incentives faced by central veto players through the benefits derived from simultaneous office holding at the regional level and the internal bargaining power enjoyed by regional elites as a result of this dynamic. Drawing on the developments in post-devolution Wales and Greater London, it was shown that this logic encourages the central government to at least play lip service to bottom-up demands for further decentralisation originating from a devolved administration that is led by its regional subsidiary. At times when there is no formal partisan connection between the regional and the central government, the incentives towards regionalist accommodation faced by the centre however remain similar to the pre-devolution situation.

Difference in popular preference structures, institutional arrangements and electoral dynamics have thus meant that the asymmetric devolution of powers and resources to Scotland, Wales and Greater London has produced regional institutions with very different degrees and types of bargaining power vis-à-vis the centre. Simultaneously, it was argued that the lack of devolution to the rest of England has meant that the English sources of discontent with the current system of asymmetric devolution do not find political expression easily.

This in turn allowed political elites at the central level to prioritise party-interests and demands from devolved areas over the preferences of the English voters. As a result, it seems unlikely that the main contenders for office at the centre will be inclined to propose a comprehensive solution to the English question in the near future.

8.2.Areas for future research

The primary aim of this study was to develop a theoretically-grounded approach to regionalism and regionalist accommodation that could be applied to a variety of contexts. The logical extension of this work would therefore be to demonstrate that this approach can also help us to make sense of contemporary developments in other democratic countries. The typology of regionalisms proposed in this study helped to re-examine the contemporary history of regionalism in Britain. This analysis revealed that, although regional factors were important in shaping the popular response to general sources of discontent, the regionalist revivals during the post-war period have been primarily caused by the emergence of new and the deepening of pre-existing grievances with the centre. It would be interesting to see to what extent this pattern is mirrored within other advanced democratic societies. The British case suggests that our understanding of 'traditional' cases of regionalism in identity-rich regions, such as Flanders in Belgium and Quebec in Canada, can be greatly enhanced by a stronger focus on state-wide trends and factors. In addition, it would be fascinating to re-examine seemingly defiant cases, such as the Northern League in Italy, through this perspective.

Extending the analysis to countries like Italy, Belgium and Canada would in turn introduce a range of new electoral and institutional settings. The actor-based rational choice approach to regionalist accommodation proposed in this thesis was deliberately developed to cope with this variety in a structured way. From a veto player perspective, more proportional electoral systems and federal arrangements tend to increase the number of veto players within the system (Tsebelis, 2002).

Drawing on lessons from German federalism and European integration, Scharpf (1988) has famously argued that the direct involvement of member governments in constitutional reform decisions can lead to a 'joint-decision trap' within which self-interested bargaining practices either prevent change from occurring or leads to sub-optimal compromises. The recent difficulties in the government formation process in Belgium in turn suggest that more proportional electoral systems may produce a similar type of legislative paralysis under certain circumstances.

These legislative dynamics are however not just a function of the formal distribution of agenda-setting and decision-making powers. Rather, I would argue that it is the incongruence, or difference, in the preferences of the various veto players within the system that shapes the likelihood of constitutional change. As in the British context, examining the act- and outcome-based incentives to support or oppose further decentralisation faced by different types of veto players is therefore likely to produce interesting insights. In addition, the existence of more frequent and readily visible bargaining processes opens up new routes for enquiry. Within European integration studies, it has for example been argued that political elites can increase their bargaining powers within treaty negotiations by arguing that their hands are tied by the constellation of preferences within their home Parliament and/or the views of the voters within their country (Hug & König, 2002; König & Finke, 2007; Milner, 1997; Pahre, 1997). Similarly, it has been suggested that heads of state have used the 'constraints' they face at the European level to silence domestic objections to further integration at times (Moravcsik, 1998). Extending this study to countries like Canada, Belgium and Italy would allow us to test to what extent Schelling's (1960) paradox of weakness indeed has an influence on policy stability and change within systems that also include veto players who primarily represent one particular region.

With a few adjustments, the framework presented in this study could also be used to shed new light on processes of globalisation and international integration. As noted in the introduction, regionalism and decentralisation are often seen as part of a wider process of rescaling from the territorial state to geographical entities “below, above, beyond, or between entrenched geopolitical boundaries” (Brenner, 1999:40). Particularly in the European context, the transfer of powers and resources to regional institutions above the state has received extensive attention across a range of academic disciplines. This thesis has drawn quite extensively on these literatures. In particular, the multifaceted concept of legitimacy proposed in this study was strongly influenced by the research into the political legitimacy of the European Union (EU) (Beetham & Lord, 1998; Scharpf, 1999). Similarly, the decision to examine regionalist accommodation through a veto player perspective was partially inspired by the use of this method within the literature on European integration (for example see Tsebelis, 1994; Tsebelis & Yatağan, 2002).

Although our knowledge of European integration is in many ways much more advanced than our understanding of the related process of decentralisation to regions below the territorial state, I still feel that the framework of regionalism developed in this study could make a contribution in this field. In particular, I would like to join Mansfield (2005) in arguing that much of the literature on globalisation and European integration still seems to be locked in an either/or debate. From within this perspective, these processes are either profoundly and relentlessly reducing the importance of the territorial state as an economic actor, locus of identity, and scale of representation (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Marks, Hooghe, & Blank, 1996), or the state remains the primary level through which the exercise of power is legitimised and international structures like the EU merely represent vehicles through which the state fulfils some of its roles (Moravcsik, 1998). By stressing that popular support for the rescaling of government results from the interaction between the perceived legitimacy of the territorial state and an alternative scale of representation, the framework proposed in this study could partially redress this false dichotomy.

9. Bibliography

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