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Is Devolution Strengthening or Weakening the UK?

John Curtice and Ben Seyd*

The recent creation of devolved assemblies in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland constitutes the most radical change in the government of the United Kingdom since 1922, when the Irish Republic left the Union and Northern Ireland was given its own parliament. For some, their creation will demonstrate the ability of the Union to accommodate the diversity of aspirations and identities that exist within it, and thereby give it a new strength. For others, devolution is the thin end of a wedge (or, alternatively, a stepping stone) that will eventually drive the component territories of the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – apart. And, whichever argument is correct, the introduction of devolution is certainly an attempt to respond to apparent dissatisfaction with and questioning of the Union among many people living outside of England.

Whether devolution does eventually strengthen or weaken the Union will ultimately be determined in the court of public opinion. To strengthen it, the new devolved bodies need to be seen as a success by the people they seek to serve and people's sense of commitment to a sense of Britishness needs to be enhanced, as well as support for keeping Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland within the UK increased. If the devolved bodies are seen as a failure, or if they come to encourage a separate sense of identity and a taste for national independence, or, indeed, if they create a feeling of resentment in England, then the Union will undoubtedly be weakened.

Of all the recent moves towards devolution, none appears to be more momentous for the future of the Union than the creation of a separate Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. After all, Northern Ireland has experienced devolution before and the Welsh National Assembly lacks any primary legislative powers. But in Scotland, the second largest component of the United Kingdom, a parliament has been created that can pass laws across a wide range of

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responsibilities including health, education and criminal justice. In short, what for nearly 300 years had been considered to be the best way of managing the Union between Scotland and England – a single imperial parliament – has simply been overturned.

So, monitoring how people in England and Scotland are reacting to the experience of devolution is essential in forming any assessment of whether this radical constitutional change is delivering its objectives. This is the task that this chapter sets out to tackle. It examines how people both in England and in Scotland have reacted to the initial experience of devolution. What impact if any has it had so far on their national identity and commitment to the Union? What do Scots make of their new devolved institutions? And how has England reacted to the new privileges granted to its neighbour? Is there any hint of an ‘English backlash’ – for example, greater demand for similar privileges for England?

To address these questions, we have access not only to the *British Social Attitudes* survey, but also to the *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey. This was conducted by the *National Centre for Social Research* alongside its British counterpart and includes many identical or functionally equivalent questions (Curtice *et al.*, 2001, forthcoming). The *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey interviewed no less than 1,663 respondents in Scotland in 2000, thereby giving us a far more accurate and comprehensive picture of opinion north of the border than could be obtained from the 325 people interviewed in Scotland by the *British Social Attitudes* survey. In addition both the British and the Scottish survey repeated key questions that had been asked on previous surveys in England and Scotland, including the first *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey in 1999 (Paterson *et al.*, 2001).

Evaluations of devolution

We begin by asking what people in Scotland and in England have made of devolution so far. If devolution is contributing to a strengthening of the Union, we would anticipate that people would believe that creating the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh National Assembly has improved the way that Britain as a whole is governed. And certainly, so far as the Scottish Parliament is concerned, as the next table shows, over three times as many people in Scotland believe that its creation has improved the way that Britain is governed, as think that it has made things worse.

However, even in Scotland, a plurality believes that creating the Scottish Parliament has made no difference to the way that Britain is governed. Meanwhile, in England, those who think either Scottish or Welsh devolution has improved matters only just outnumber those who think it has made them worse, while a majority think it has made no difference. True, there is little sign of any ‘English backlash’, but at the same time, even in Scotland, many people are apparently not convinced that their new parliament has made much difference

Table 1 Perceptions of devolution, in England and Scotland

The way Britain as a whole is governed has been improved,	no difference,	made worse
England				
by creating Scottish Parliament	%	18	54	13
by creating Welsh Assembly	%	15	57	12
<i>Base: 1928</i>				
Scotland				
by creating Scottish Parliament	%	35	44	10
by creating Welsh Assembly	%	18	46	4
<i>Base: 1663</i>				

This conclusion is reinforced by other evidence from our Scottish surveys. At the time of the first Scottish election in 1999, we asked respondents whether the Scottish Parliament or the UK government at Westminster would come to have most influence over the way Scotland was run. About the same number of people (41 per cent) thought that the Scottish Parliament would have most influence as thought the UK government at Westminster would (39 per cent). But after their initial experience of devolution, no less than two-thirds of Scots now feel that the UK government has most influence in Scotland, while only one in eight give that accolade to the Scottish Parliament. Moreover, as the next table shows, whereas people in Scotland had a highly optimistic view of what the Scottish Parliament would achieve when they voted for it in the 1997 referendum, their expectations have now come down to earth. Overall, no less than 30 per cent think that the new parliament will *not* achieve any of the four objectives specified in the next table. While such a decline in expectations was perhaps inevitable, it does confirm the impression that many people in Scotland now appear to be wondering whether their new parliament will improve the way they are governed after all (see also SurrIDGE, 2001, forthcoming).

However, few Scots think that the new parliament will do any actual harm. Even on the issue on which they are least optimistic about the new body's ability – improving Scotland's economy – only 13 per cent think that having the parliament is going to make things worse. Rather, on most issues, Scots now simply think their parliament will make no difference either way. But while it might appear from this evidence that devolution is so far doing little to strengthen Scots' commitment to the Union, equally predictions that it would break it apart are not sustained either. At the time of the referendum, no less than 42 per cent thought that creating the Scottish Parliament would make it more likely that Scotland would eventually leave the UK, a figure that had fallen to 37 per cent by the time of the first Scottish election, and is now 27 per

cent – just barely above the 25 per cent who now think the new parliament makes it more likely that Scotland will remain in the Union.

Table 2 Expectations of the Scottish Parliament, in Scotland, 1997-2000

% saying Scottish parliament will	1997	1999	2000
Give Scotland a stronger voice in the UK	70	70	52
Give ordinary Scottish people more say in how Scotland is governed	79	64	44
Increase standard of education in Scotland	71	56	43
Make Scotland's economy better	64	43	36
<i>Base</i>	<i>657</i>	<i>1482</i>	<i>1663</i>

Source: 1997: Scottish Referendum Study.

Sources of conflict?

So far then, it appears that devolution has neither strengthened nor weakened the Union. Some critics of devolution, however, have not been so much concerned about what the Scottish Parliament might or might not be able to achieve for Scotland, but rather about the danger that it would generate conflict between Scotland and England (Dalyell, 1977). In particular, two potential flashpoints were identified. The first was whether it would be possible to sustain a situation where Scottish MPs at Westminster could vote on health and education in England, while their English colleagues no longer had any say on such matters in Scotland (the so-called West Lothian question). Second, it was argued that the higher level of public spending *per capita* in Scotland would come under closer public scrutiny, once issues of public spending were no longer settled in private around the UK Cabinet table but could be the subject of contention between the two parliaments.

At first glance, it appears from the next table that critics of devolution were correct in believing that the voting rights of English and Scottish MPs could well be a source of tension. Almost two-thirds of people in England agree that “now that Scotland has its own parliament, Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote in the UK House of Commons on laws that only affect England”. Yet, on closer examination, this issue is not clearly a source of conflict, for over half of people in Scotland also agree with the proposition. While this may be an issue that MPs themselves find difficult to resolve, especially those on the Labour benches on which most Scottish MPs currently sit, it is not one that seems likely to set the English and Scottish publics at odds with each other. Indeed, although they are more reluctant than others to see Scottish MPs’ voting rights limited, even a majority of Labour identifiers north and south of the border agree that this should happen.

Table 3 Relations between England and Scotland, in England and Scotland

	England	Scotland
Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote on English legislation	%	%
Strongly agree	18	14
Agree	46	39
Neither agree nor disagree	19	17
Disagree	8	19
Disagree strongly	1	4
<i>Base</i>	1695	1506
Compared with other parts of the UK, Scotland's share of government spending is ...	%	%
Much more than fair	8	2
Little more than fair	13	8
Pretty much fair	42	27
Little less than fair	10	35
Much less than fair	2	23
Whose economy benefits more from Scotland being part of the UK?	%	%
England's	8	43
Scotland's	37	16
About equal	39	36
Conflict between the Scots and the English is ...	%	%
Very serious	4	10
Fairly serious	16	28
Not very serious	54	53
There is no conflict	21	9
<i>Base</i>	1928	1663

Equally, there is relatively little potential for disagreement between the two publics over Scotland's share of government spending. True, two in three Scots believe that Scotland gets *less* than its fair share. But only just over one in five people in England believe that Scotland gets *more* than its fair share. Indeed, what is perhaps most striking about public opinion in England on this subject, is the low salience that it has. No less than a quarter of people in England were unable to express a view on it. Perhaps if politicians in England continue to press this issue, public opinion will become less accepting of Scotland's current financial position. But, evidently, the attempts that have been made so far by those English politicians who do feel strongly about the subject, have failed to secure much of an echo among their constituents. Moreover, there is no evidence in our survey that antipathy towards Scotland's share of public

expenditure is greater in the North of England, some of whose politicians have perhaps been the most critical of Scotland's more generous provision.

So, neither the status of Scotland's MPs nor its share of public spending seem so far at least to be likely flashpoints between the two countries – at least so far as their publics are concerned. Nor, indeed, do many people on either side of the border regard themselves as in “very serious conflict” with each other. True, only around one in five people in England and one in ten in Scotland believe that there is *no* conflict between the Scots and the English. But, in both cases, over half think that the conflict that does exist is “not very serious”. Such a view is perhaps no more than a recognition of differences of tradition and history that may, for example, be played out on the sporting field, but are also largely confined to that arena.

But if Scottish devolution so far shows little sign of generating resentment among people in England and thus conflict between them and people in Scotland, neither has it yet done much to persuade people in Scotland that they get a fair deal out of the Union. We have already seen that two out of three Scots believe that they actually get less than their fair share of UK public spending. Meanwhile, as the previous table showed, they are also inclined to believe that England gets more out of the Union economically than Scotland does – a view not shared in England. Although the proportion of Scots believing that England benefited most declined from 48 per cent at the time of the referendum to 38 per cent on the occasion of the first election to the Scottish Parliament (Paterson *et al.*, 2001), it has, as we can see, now risen once more to 43 per cent. Once again it appears that while devolution has apparently done little harm to the Union, it has not done it much good so far either.¹

Independence for Scotland?

But, of course, the acid test of whether devolution is pulling the Union apart is whether or not there has been any increase in the proportion who believe that Scotland should become an independent country outside the United Kingdom. Arguably too, the apparent disappointment with the impact so far of the Scottish Parliament only really matters if it is undermining support for the devolution project as a whole.

The next table suggests that neither of these possible developments have, in fact, so far come to pass. Support for Scottish independence did rise in the immediate wake of the referendum that voted in favour of creating the Scottish Parliament. But, at 30 per cent, the proportion of people in Scotland who now favour being an independent country, either inside or outside the EU, is little different from the 28 per cent who took that view at the time of the 1997 general election. It is certainly still a long way from comprising a majority. Similarly, support in England for Scottish independence rose between 1997 and 1999 from 14 per cent to 24 per cent, but has since fallen back somewhat to 20 per cent. At most, the creation of the Scottish Parliament has made it possible for a few more people in England to conceive of the possibility that her neighbour might become independent, rather than caused any groundswell of opinion in favour

of ejecting Scotland from the Union. We should note, however, that only a third (36 per cent) of people in England say that they would be sorry to see Scotland become independent and leave the UK. While only 7 per cent would be pleased, a majority (55 per cent) would be neither pleased nor sorry. This suggests that the amount of affective, rather than cognitive, support for the Union within England should not be overstated.

The next table also shows that a majority of people both north and south of the border continue to support the idea of a Scottish Parliament within the UK, with most of them backing the model that currently exists of a parliament with taxation powers. Indeed, in both England and Scotland such opposition as existed to the idea of creating some form of Scottish legislature is even lower now than it was at the time that Labour first came to power. In short, whatever might be thought to be its limitations in practice, devolution continues to be, in the words of the former Labour leader John Smith, the “settled will of the people”, not just in Scotland but in England, too.

Table 4 Constitutional preferences for Scotland, in England and Scotland, 1997-2000

	May	Sept		
England	1997	1997	1999	2000
Scotland should ...	%		%	%
be independent, separate from UK and EU	6		8	8
be independent, separate from UK but part of EU	8		16	12
remain part of UK with its own elected Parliament which has some taxation powers	38		44	44
remain part of the UK with its own elected Parliament which has no taxation powers	17		10	8
remain part of the UK without an elected parliament	23		13	17
<i>Base</i>	3150		2718	1928
Scotland				
Scotland should ...	%	%	%	%
be independent, separate from UK and EU	8	9	10	11
be independent, separate from UK but part of EU	20	28	18	19
remain part of UK with its own elected Parliament which has some taxation powers	44	32	50	47
remain part of the UK with its own elected Parliament which has no taxation powers	10	9	8	8
remain part of the UK without an elected parliament	18	17	10	12
<i>Base</i>	882	676	1482	1663

Source: May 1997: British/Scottish Election Study. Sept. 1997: Scottish Referendum Study.

We should not, however, assume from this that there would not be popular support for changing the *details* of the current devolution settlement. That at least appears to be the case so far as people in Scotland are concerned. We have already noted that no less than two-thirds of people in Scotland believe that the UK government at Westminster has most influence over the way that Scotland is run, not the Scottish Parliament. And, for many people in Scotland, this is a potential source of dissatisfaction. For when asked who *should* have most influence over the way Scotland is run, only one in eight say that the UK government should, while nearly three-quarters say it should be the Scottish Parliament. It will therefore come as no surprise that two in three Scots agree that the Scottish Parliament should have more powers, or indeed that this proportion has increased by ten points since 1999.

But if people in Scotland want a more powerful parliament than the one that they have seen on display so far, there is as yet little sign that people in England are clamouring to share in the experience that Scotland now enjoys. True, as the next table shows, there has been an eight point drop over the last year in the proportion of people in England who believe that there is no need for any constitutional change in England. But this has been matched by only a marginal increase in support for either an English parliament or regional assemblies – more people now simply say they do not know. Even after a year of seeing the Scottish Parliament in action, a majority of people in England were apparently still happy for decisions about their laws and public services to be made by the UK government and parliament at Westminster. Less than one in five back the idea of creating regional assemblies, the long-term policy aim of the current Labour government. Indeed, ironically, it appears that people in Scotland are rather more in favour of the idea of English devolution than people in England are themselves!

As we have already suggested, the demands by politicians and campaigners for England to be treated more equitably have been greater in some regions than others. Undoubtedly the most vociferous campaigning has occurred in the North East of England (Tomaney, 2000). Yet, while this is the one region where less than half of people want England to be governed as it is now, even there only one in four currently support the idea of a regional assembly. Meanwhile, in the southern half of England support for regional assemblies stands at only around one in six. At present, the current Labour government envisages that regional assemblies will be created where a region votes for one in a referendum. It appears that those who favour such assemblies still have much persuasion to do before they can win any such referendums.

Table 5 Attitudes towards constitutional reform for England, in England and Scotland, 1999 and 2000

	1999	2000
England	%	%
England should be governed as it is now, with laws made by the UK parliament	62	54
Each region of England to have its own assembly that runs services like health	15	18
England as whole to have its own new parliament with law-making powers	18	19
<i>Base</i>	2718	1928
Scotland		%
England should be governed as it is now, with laws made by the UK parliament		45
Each region of England to have its own assembly that runs services like health		15
England as whole to have its own new parliament with law-making powers		28
<i>Base</i>		1663

National identity

So far we have looked at recent trends in people's constitutional preferences in England and Scotland. But public support for the Union has traditionally been based on more than cognitive preference. It has also been supported by a sense of national identity, that is, a sense of feeling British. To feel British has not necessarily meant that people could not feel English or Scottish as well (Heath and Kellas, 1998). Nevertheless, British identity did provide a sense of attachment to the United Kingdom in which people in all parts of it could share. Creating separate devolved institutions in parts of the United Kingdom might serve to emphasise the differences between them in people's minds, and thus result in an increasing tendency to feel English or Scottish, rather than British. Indeed, previous research conducted at the time of the 1999 Scottish election suggests that this was precisely what was happening both north and south of the border, even before devolution was actually in place (Curtice and Heath, 2000; Paterson *et al.*, 2001).

We have two measures of national identity available to us, with which we can assess what has happened during the early lifetime of devolution. The first is the so-called Moreno scale, named after the political scientist who first used it in comparisons of Scotland and Catalonia (Moreno, 1988). Recognising the possibility that people may feel British as well as Scottish or English, it asks people to state the relative importance of these identities to them. The question

runs as follows in Scotland (and similarly in England by substituting 'English' for 'Scottish'):

Some people think of themselves first as British. Others may think of themselves first as Scottish. Which, if any, of the following describes how you see yourself?

Scottish, not British
More Scottish than British
Equally Scottish and British
More British than Scottish
British, not Scottish

As the next table shows, the results obtained by this measure suggest that the increase in feeling English or Scottish observed after the first election to the Scottish Parliament has been maintained. One in three people in England now give priority to their Englishness over their Britishness, almost identical to the proportion who did so in 1999, and up on the one in four who felt that way in 1997. Meanwhile, in Scotland, over two-thirds now feel wholly or mostly Scottish, again the same as in 1999 (though with rather more of them now feeling wholly Scottish), but up on the three in five who felt that way in 1992 or 1997.

Table 6 Moreno national identity, in England and Scotland, 1992-2000

	1992	1997	1999	2000
England		%	%	%
English not British		7	17	19
More English than British		17	15	14
Equally English and British		45	37	34
More British than English		14	11	14
British not English		9	14	12
Other		5	3	6
<i>Base</i>		3150	2718	2887
Scotland	%	%	%	%
Scottish not British	19	23	32	37
More Scottish than British	40	38	35	31
Equally Scottish and British	33	27	22	21
More British than Scottish	3	4	3	3
British not Scottish	3	4	4	4
Other	1	2	3	4
<i>Base</i>	957	882	1482	1663

Sources: 1992: Scottish Election Survey 1992. 1997: British/Scottish Election Surveys 1997.

Our second measure, which is shown in the next table, tells a similar story. Here we asked people to choose which one identity best described the way they thought of themselves.² In both England and Scotland we can see a decline in feeling British and an increase in feeling English/Scottish between 1997 and 1999. And, in both cases, that increase has more or less been sustained in our most recent surveys. Moreover, we can also see that in 1979, when Scotland failed to back devolution with sufficient enthusiasm for it to be implemented, three times as many people in Scotland felt British as do so now.

Table 7 Forced-choice national identity, in England and Scotland, 1979-2000

	1979	1992	1997	1999	2000
England		%	%	%	%
English		31	34	44	41
British		63	59	44	47
<i>Base</i>		2442	3150	2718	2887
Scotland	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish	57	72	72	77	80
British	39	25	20	17	13
<i>Base</i>	661	957	882	1482	1663

Sources: 1979: Scottish Election Survey 1979. 1992, 1997: British/Scottish Election Surveys 1992 and 1997.

So, there appears to have been some undermining of the sense of Britishness in both England and Scotland in the period since people in both Scotland and Wales decided to vote in favour of devolution.³ Moreover, in both countries it appears to be a decline that has occurred more or less evenly across all age groups, social classes and religious denominations as well as among both sexes. To that degree at least, devolution appears to have weakened the Union. However, we should bear in mind that Britishness also fell heavily in Scotland during the period after 1979 when Scotland was denied devolution. So we should be very wary indeed of claiming that the sense of Britishness would be significantly stronger now had devolution not happened.

Still, the sense of Britishness is clearly weaker than it once was. And it is also clearly much weaker in Scotland than it is in England. But what consequences flow from these patterns depends at least in part on what difference feeling Scottish, English or British makes to other social and political attitudes. If those who feel English or Scottish are largely similar in their attitudes to those who feel British, then changes and differences in national identity may have few

implications for the stability of the Union. It is to an examination of whether or not that is true that we now turn.

National identity and social attitudes

Perhaps the most obvious area where we might expect national identity to make a difference both in England and in Scotland is in respect of constitutional preferences. In the next table we show attitudes towards some of the key constitutional issues we examined earlier, broken down by a collapsed version of Moreno national identity.⁴

We find that, in Scotland, national identity does make a difference to constitutional preferences. Those who feel predominantly Scottish are not only (unsurprisingly) more likely than others to be in favour of Scottish independence, but they are also less likely to be opposed to devolution for England. They are also rather less likely to believe that Scottish MPs should not vote on English laws.

Table 8 Constitutional preference by national identity, in England and Scotland

	Predominantly English	Equally English/British	Predominantly British
England			
% who favour Scottish independence	23	17	14
% who oppose English devolution	54	52	59
% who believe Scottish MPs should not vote on English laws	69	63	66
<i>Base</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>646</i>	<i>499</i>
	Predominantly Scottish	Equally Scottish/British	Predominantly British
Scotland			
% who favour Scottish independence	37	14	7
% who oppose English devolution	41	54	55
% who believe Scottish MPs should not vote on English laws	52	50	66
<i>Base</i>	<i>1108</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>121</i>

In England, in contrast, the pattern is far more muted – if it exists at all. Those who feel predominantly English are rather more likely to favour Scottish independence, but at nine points the gap between them and the predominantly British is far less than the equivalent 30-point gap in Scotland. Meanwhile, when it comes to English devolution, there is barely any difference at all between the three categories of national identity in our table, let alone on whether Scottish MPs should vote on English laws. In other words national identity makes more difference to attitudes towards English devolution in Scotland than it does in England itself!

The same conclusion also holds for attitudes towards Scotland's share of government spending, who benefits most from the Union, and whether there is conflict between the Scots and the English. In each case, national identity makes a difference to people's views in Scotland but not in England. So while any further decline in Britishness in Scotland might pose some demands on the Union, it is far from clear that any continued rise in Englishness in England need result in any difficulty at all (Curtice and Heath, 2000).

This difference between England and Scotland in the apparent impact of national identity on attitudes is not confined to constitutional preferences. It is also evident when it comes to attitudes towards the role of government and the extent of social inequality in society. In Scotland, those who are predominantly Scottish are more concerned about social inequality and more likely to see the need for government activity to reduce it. In short, they can be characterised as more left-wing. Thus, for example, as we can see from the next table, over half of those who are predominantly Scottish believe that the government should definitely be responsible for ensuring that everyone has a job, whereas only one in three of the predominantly British take that view. In contrast in England, a person's national identity makes little difference to their views on these issues.

Table 9 Attitudes to role of government and social inequality by national identity, in England and Scotland

England	Predominantly English	Equally English/British	Predominantly British
% who say the government should definitely be responsible for ensuring everyone has a job	43	37	37
% who agree that the government should redistribute income from the better off to the less well off	41	38	35
% who agree that there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor	70	63	65
<i>Base</i>	552	571	439
Scotland	Predominantly Scottish	Equally Scottish/British	Predominantly British
% who say the government should definitely be responsible for ensuring everyone has a job	53	40	33
% who agree that the government should redistribute income from the better off to the less well off	52	43	43
% who agree that there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor	70	60	44
<i>Base</i>	1005	317	109

Again, we find a different story north and south of the border if we look at attitudes towards Europe and ethnic minorities. We might expect those who adopt an apparently narrower English or Scottish identity, rather than a broader multinational British one, to be less keen on the development of an even larger supranational unit such as the European Union, as well as being less tolerant of ethnic minorities. However, in Scotland at least, as the next table shows, there is no consistent evidence that this is the case. Indeed, if anything, those with a predominantly Scottish national identity are more favourably disposed towards the European Union than those with a predominantly British identity. The nationalist movement in Scotland has long aimed to promote a ‘civic nationalism’ rather than an ethnically based one, with both membership of the European Union and promotion of the rights of ethnic minorities in Scotland a key part of their platform. It appears that this has indeed helped to ensure that a Scottish national identity is not an exclusive one.

Table 10 Attitudes towards the European Union and ethnic minorities by national identity, in England and Scotland

	Predominantly English	Equally English/British	Predominantly British
England			
% who think the UK should leave the EU or EU powers should be reduced	63	55	60
% who would vote not to join the Euro in a referendum	70	67	65
% who say they are “very” or “a little” racially prejudiced	33	24	27
% who think equal opportunities for blacks and Asians have “gone too far” or “much too far”	48	28	36
<i>Base</i>	552	571	439
	Predominantly Scottish	Equally Scottish/British	Predominantly British
Scotland			
% who think the UK should leave the EU or EU powers should be reduced	47	52	59
% who would vote not to join the Euro in a referendum	53	56	57
% who say they are “very” or “a little” racially prejudiced	18	19	21
% who think equal opportunities for blacks and Asians have “gone too far” or “much too far”	32	29	26
<i>Base</i>	1005	317	109

In England, in contrast, feeling English is somewhat associated both with less tolerance of ethnic minorities and with opposition to further European integration. In particular, nearly a half of those who feel predominantly English say that equal opportunities for blacks and Asians have gone “too far” compared with only just over a third of the predominantly British. The relationship between Englishness and opposition to Europe is less apparent in our table because opposition is, in fact, concentrated among those who feel “English, not British” rather than among those who are “more English than British” (see also Curtice and Heath, 2000). If we look, for example, at the views of the exclusively English on the Euro, opposition is as high as 73 per cent.⁵

So we have seen that in Scotland national identity is clearly associated with constitutional preferences and also with a more left-wing stance on policy issues. In England, this is either less true or not true at all. Meanwhile there is no consistent evidence that Scottish national identity is particularly associated with a tendency to be less inclusive towards the outside world, whereas there is a hint at least that English national identity is. Evidently national identity has different meanings and implications in the two countries.

There are at least two probably interrelated reasons as to why this is so. First, national identity has been politicised in Scotland, whereas it has not been in England. In England there is little or no relationship between national identity and the party someone supports (Curtice and Heath, 2000). But in Scotland those who feel Scottish are, in particular, more likely to support the SNP and, to a lesser extent, Labour, while the minority who feel British still give significant support to the Conservatives (Brown *et al.*, 1999; Paterson *et al.*, 2001). Meanwhile the SNP is not just a nationalist party in favour of independence, but is also nowadays a left of centre ‘social democratic’ party and, as we have already noted, pro-European. This helps explain why Scottishness has not just become associated with support for independence but also with more left-wing values, while at the same time has avoided acquiring a particularly exclusive character.

Second, people in Scotland also appear to draw a sharper distinction between what it means to be Scottish and what it means to be British than people in England do between being English and being British. This is revealed by the results to a number of questions designed to measure people’s national sentiment, first for England/Scotland and then for Britain as a whole (Heath *et al.*, 1999). For example, we asked people, first whether they thought “People in England/Scotland are too ready to criticise their country”, and then whether they thought “People in Britain are too ready to criticise their country”. In each case they could respond on a scale ranging from “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly”. If people tend to give similar answers to the two questions, this suggests they draw little distinction between what it means to be English/Scottish and what it means to be British. If on the other hand they tend to give different answers, then they would appear to draw a clear distinction.

The next table shows the correlation between the answers given by people in England and those in Scotland to three similarly or identically worded questions about English/Scottish national sentiment and British national sentiment. In each case we can see that although there is a positive correlation in Scotland, it

is weaker than in England. Thus, for example, there is a correlation of 0.65 between people's views about whether people in England are too ready to criticise their country and whether people in Britain are too ready to criticise their country. The equivalent correlation in Scotland in contrast is just 0.39. Although people in Scotland do not have entirely different views about Scotland and about Britain, they do draw more of a distinction than do people in England between England and Britain. And, if people in England can see little difference between England and Britain, we should not be surprised that whether they feel English or whether they feel British makes little difference to their social and political attitudes.

Table 11 Relationship between views about England/Scotland and Britain, in England and Scotland

Correlation* between attitudes when nation = England/Scotland and nation = Britain	England	Scotland
People in (nation) are too ready to criticise their country	0.65	0.39
<i>Base</i>	1890	1635
There are some things about (nation) that make me ashamed	0.59	0.29
<i>Base</i>	1898	1642
(Nation) has a lot to learn from (other countries/ rest of Britain) in running its affairs	0.27	0.10
<i>Base</i>	1827	1613

* Kendall's tau-b.

Conclusions

These are early days for devolution. But our analysis suggests that, so far at least, both the hopes and the fears that have been expressed about the implications of devolution for the United Kingdom may well have been exaggerated. Devolution has not led to an increase in support for Scottish independence; nor does there appear to be much potential for conflict between the peoples of England and Scotland over how the relationship between the two countries should be managed, let alone signs of an 'English backlash'. While there was a decline in Britishness both north and south of the border between 1997 and 1999, our latest reading does not provide any consistent evidence of a further movement in that direction. In any event, in England at least, national

identity does not appear to have much influence on people's views on the future of the Union or indeed many other topics.

At the same time, the Scottish Parliament has yet to make much impact on people's perceptions of how they are governed. Indeed, many people in Scotland appear to feel that Westminster still has rather more influence north of the border than they had anticipated, and as a result they are hoping for a more powerful Scottish Parliament than they have seen so far. And while national identity may not currently make much difference to people's views in England, and while people in England may indeed still have difficulty in distinguishing between England and Britain, we cannot rule out the possibility that England's politicians will eventually succeed in politicising people's sense of national identity, much as it already is in Scotland. Devolution appears to have set sail on a fair wind so far as public opinion is concerned. But whether it is eventually judged a success depends on the skills and actions of the politicians who have been entrusted by the public with the task of making it work.

Notes

1. We might also note that while the proportion of people in Scotland who think that there is very or fairly serious conflict between the Scottish and the English did fall slightly from 43 per cent to 38 per cent between 1999 and 2000, the level still remains above the 30 per cent level in 1992 just after the Conservatives' fourth election victory, let alone the 15 per cent level in 1979 just after the first attempt to implement devolution failed.
2. In the 1997, 1999 and 2000 surveys, respondents were first invited to state all of the identities that described how they thought of themselves and then asked which single one best described themselves. In the 1979 and 1992 survey, respondents were only invited to name one identity. Respondents were also offered a slightly shorter list of identities in 1992, except that in 1979 the option 'British and Scottish' was offered. However, as the results in 1992 and 1997 are largely similar in each country, it appears unlikely that these methodological differences compromise our substantive conclusions.
3. The 1997 figure in Table 10.7 is from the British/Scottish Election Studies conducted in the late spring and summer of 1997 before the Scottish and Welsh referendums were held. That the Scottish referendum gave a boost to feeling a Scottish rather than a British identity amongst people in Scotland is further attested by the fact that on our forced choice measure no less than 83 per cent of respondents to the Scottish Referendum Study, conducted in the autumn of 1997, said that they were Scottish and just 13 per cent that they were British.
4. Because of the small numbers of people in Scotland who are either mostly or wholly British rather than Scottish we have combined these two categories (labelling them 'predominantly British'). To keep our analysis symmetrical, we have done the same among those who feel mostly or wholly English or Scottish.
5. It is, however, the case that the association between national identity and attitudes towards Europe, found by Curtice and Heath (2000) in 1999, is rather weaker in the 2000 survey.

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