

Beyond the Demand Side:
The Effects of Multi-Level Governance on Regionalist Movements
in Europe

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Abstract

In this paper, I evaluate whether regional citizens are more likely to support greater autonomy because they find the idea of an independent region within Europe to be more viable. The devolution referenda in Scotland in two distinct time periods provide a quasi-experiment in which to explore this observable implication. In the first referendum, a slight majority voted for devolution but the margin was not enough to overcome the electoral threshold set by Westminster. In 1997, though, the result was overwhelmingly pro-devolution. I argue that the fear of independence, coupled with a preference ordering where the second choice for devolution supporters was the status quo, explained the strategic voting behavior in 1979. Increased support for independence, as both a first and second option for Scots, fuelled the dramatic increase in sincere voting for devolution in 1997. I also presented evidence to support the contention that European integration, especially the Scottish National Party's successful framing of the EU as a mechanism to reduce the costs of secession, contributed to this increase in support for independence in the 1997 referendum.

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1 Introduction

With a stunning regionalist party election win in Scotland recently, the United Kingdom appears ever closer to fragmenting. Though an independent Scotland is by no means a foregone conclusion, this outcome is certainly more plausible than it was 10 years ago, when devolution occurred, or 35 years ago, when the United Kingdom discovered oil in Scottish waters, leading to a short, but dramatic, increase in support for the Scottish National Party.

In the ethnic politics literature, cultural heterogeneity is the leading explanation of regionalist or autonomy movement support. But in this case, that factor is held constant over time. Two other factors, though, are not: decentralization and supranational integration. These two aspects of multi-level governance may provide some leverage on the rise in Scottish support for independence.

In this paper, I introduce a research design to study the effects of decentralization and integration on regional citizens' attitudes toward independence. I also provide some preliminary evidence on the link between the EU and the Scottish autonomy movement. I evaluate whether regional citizens are more likely to support greater autonomy because they find the idea of an independent region within Europe to be more viable. The devolution referenda in Scotland in two distinct time periods provide a quasi-experiment in which to explore this observable implication. In the first referendum, a slight majority voted for devolution but the margin was not enough to overcome the electoral threshold set by Westminster. In 1997, though, the result was overwhelmingly pro-devolution. With public opinion surveys from each referendum available, I evaluate whether deeper European integration increased Scottish support for autonomy, in both attitudes and voting behavior, by making an independent Scotland a more viable prospect for Scots.

In the logic of the optimal size of states model (Alesina and Spolaore 2003), European integration decreases the necessity of traditional large states, thereby making smaller more homogeneous states more viable. Therefore, the EU may be an unwitting ally of sub-national groups against central governments. For this theory, then, deeper integration leads to more sub-national mobilization in the form of support for regionalist political parties. In earlier work (Jolly 2006), I demonstrated that deeper integration does in fact increase both the probability of regionalist political parties competing in national parliamentary elections and their vote shares once they enter competition. But that research demonstrated the descriptive inference, that European integration increases support for

sub-national or regionalist political parties, but could not justify the causal mechanism, namely that it is in fact the viability logic that drives this relationship.

First, I introduce the theories that explain why European integration and decentralization should be expected to increase support for independence among regional citizens. Second, I outline the research design to test these theories, focusing especially on the preliminary evidence on European integration. In this section, I also explain why the Scottish devolution referenda are an appropriate research domain. Among the observable implications, Scottish citizens should be more supportive of European integration in 1997 than 1979 and they should also be more favorably disposed to independence. In addition, the distribution of supporters should change, as well, with capitalists more likely to support devolution in the context of a more viable Scotland. Third, I discuss previous attempts to explain why devolution failed in 1979 but passed in 1997. In the fourth section, using data from the 1979 Scottish Election Study and the 1997 Scottish Referendum Study (Miller and Brand 1981; Jowell, Heath and Curtice 1998), I demonstrate that voters support devolution at higher rates, in terms of voting behavior, and they also have much more favorable attitudes toward independence from the United Kingdom, albeit within the European Union, in the survey data. This finding provides further support for the conclusions in earlier work (Jolly 2007) that it is in fact the increased viability associated with European integration that encourages support for autonomy in Scotland.

2 Multi-Level Governance and Regionalist Movements

2.1 European Integration and the Optimal Size of States

Theoretically, the European Union makes smaller states more viable by diminishing the advantages of larger state size (Alesina and Spolaore 1997, 2003; Bolton and Roland 1997). In the past, “[t]he types of arguments used against minority nationalist and regionalist demands have often centered around the impracticalities of upsetting administrative and political traditions constructed around central institutions” (Lynch 1996, 12). Thus, for regionalist political entrepreneurs, European integration increases the credibility of demands for greater autonomy and therefore individual support for self-government.

Following Alesina and Spolaore’s size of nations argument (1997, 2003), I argue that the Euro-

pean Union decreases sub-national dependency on the nation-state in both economic (e.g. international trade and monetary policy) and political terms (e.g. defense, foreign policy, and minority rights). In other words, the European Union system of multi-level governance increases the viability of smaller states, thereby creating additional incentive for citizens to support devolution or even independence. For economists, the theoretical result is a smaller optimal size of states in Europe under the umbrella of the European Union and a system of free(er) trade (Alesina and Spolaore 1997; Alesina and Wacziarg 1998; Alesina, Spolaore and Wacziarg 2000; Wittman 2000; Casella and Feinstein 2002; Alesina and Spolaore 2003). Thus far, though, many of the empirical implications of these theoretical models have largely remained untested.

According to Alesina and Spolaore, then, the optimal size of a state “emerges from a trade-off between the benefits of scale and the costs of heterogeneity in the population” (2003, 175). Via membership in the European Union, the advantages of large states vis-à-vis small states are diminished.¹ But the key cost of a larger state, namely heterogeneity of preferences, remains. Political economists find that economic growth and public policies suffer with greater ethnic heterogeneity (Easterly and Levine 1997).² A government of a homogeneous population tends to be more successful at public policies because the day-to-day lives of the people are more similar (Tilly 1975, 79), while larger, more heterogeneous, states are less efficient at public good provision (Bolton, Roland and Spolaore 1996, 701). Due to this comparative advantage, European regions may see themselves as more capable of providing sustained economic growth than the traditional nation-states (Newhouse 1997, 69), yielding political separatism as an unintended consequence of economic integration (Alesina and Spolaore 1997, 1079).

2.2 Decentralization

Surprisingly, decentralization is not often included in studies of regionalist movements in Europe, either parties or public support, despite its importance in the broader ethnic conflict literature

¹In historical terms, several factors encouraged economically larger states (Alesina and Spolaore 2003), including economic market size, economies of scale for public goods, insurance against asymmetric regional economic shocks, and security. For each of these factors, the EU has reduced though certainly not eliminated the advantage of large states vis-à-vis small states. See Alesina and Spolaore (2003) or Jolly (2006) for more on this logic.

²The argument put forth by the economics literature on ethnic heterogeneity and economic growth implies that the disadvantages associated with preference heterogeneity, measured by ethnic fractionalization, outweigh potential benefits from diversity, such as cross-cultural learning, innovation, or creativity. The point is debatable, from either (or both) a normative or empirical perspective. But dealing with that issue would be a separate research enterprise than the current one.

(Lijphart 1977; Horowitz 1985; Hechter 2000). This neglect may be attributed to the tendency of this work to focus on one country, one region and even one time period, rather than a broader comparative view. Regardless, theories abound to explain how decentralization affects autonomy movements.

Michael Hechter argues that when a central government is responsive to the demands of regionalist groups vis-à-vis devolution, it reduces the incentive to support autonomy (2000, 122). In other words, the central government might try to undercut a burgeoning sub-national movement by providing a degree of decentralization. But the effect of decentralization is non-linear in this logic. Some degree of decentralization may subvert regionalist supporters, but too much may simply exacerbate matters. Contrary to the goals of central elites, devolution could succeed in “whetting [regionalist party leaders’] appetites for even greater powers and privileges” (Hechter 2000, 140). For instance, devolution might provide them experience at lower levels of government that increases their likelihood of success at higher levels (Brancati 2004, 2). More significantly, greater devolution undoubtedly increases the resources available to these leaders, which could be used to lower the costs of collective action. Thus, political decentralization may decrease electoral support for regionalist political parties up to a point. Beyond this threshold, though, decentralization may actually increase electoral support for regionalist political parties.

A competing, and perhaps more straightforward, logic also exists. At low levels of devolution, decentralization does not satiate the appetite of proponents of regional autonomy but in fact may increase opportunities for regionalist political entrepreneurs to gather support. But at a certain level or threshold, the regional proponents achieve their goals and there is reduced demand for this particular form of political representation. Thus, a non-linear prediction remains but in the opposite direction: the relationship between decentralization and regionalist party incidence would be increasing at low levels of decentralization and decreasing at higher levels. The key difference is whether low or high levels of decentralization are sufficient for satiating regionalist demands. This is an empirical question, and one which the Scottish experience over the last decade allows. I am currently gathering survey data taken over the last decade, which will provide some leverage on this question. I return to this point in the conclusion.

3 Observable Implications for the Optimal Size of States Logic

The size of states theory hinges on rational behavior by two sets of actors, sub-national political elites and citizens. For the optimal size of states logic to be the causal mechanism for the empirical relationship between integration and regionalist parties, sub-national political elites must perceive the changing political opportunity structure and support European integration, in part as an ally against the central state. Using expert surveys of regionalist political party positions, I conclude that regionalist political parties are in fact supportive of European integration, over time, space, and issue area (Jolly 2007). In tracing the official party positions of the Scottish National Party, in particular, I find that European integration becomes an integral component in their strategy and rhetoric for independence.

In addition to elites, citizens must perceive that European integration changes the political opportunity structure in favor of sub-national regions. If so, then public opinion among regionalist supporters should also shift in favor of European integration. In the specific case of the two Scottish devolution referenda, both the Labour party and the Scottish National Party became increasingly supportive of European integration during this period. For these party supporters, especially, I expect more support for European integration in the 1997 surveys than in 1979. Alternatively, if Scottish citizens do not show support for European integration, then it will cast some doubt on the optimal size of states logic being the causal mechanism.

More significantly, the revised political opportunity structure should affect attitudes toward independence within Scotland. An observable implication of the optimal size of states logic is that citizens perceive greater viability of an independent small country within the European Union than outside. In 1979, not only was European integration itself at a less developed stage, but the Scottish National Party did not yet see the EU as a potential partner in making its case for independence. By 1997, as shown in the tracing of the Scottish National Party (SNP) official party positions (Jolly 2007), the Scottish National Party framed the EU as an integral component of its “Independence in Europe” policy. In part, Scottish National Party elites intended this strategy to demonstrate that Scotland would be a viable independent country apart from the United Kingdom. If the optimal size of states logic explains the relationship between European integration and regionalist political parties, then I would expect to see more Scottish citizens view independence as a viable option in

1997 than in 1979. Further, the distribution of supporters should change, as well, with capitalists more likely to support devolution in the context of a more viable Scotland.³ In the next section, I briefly discuss the background of the devolution referenda in Scotland, paying particular attention to why this is a valuable research domain for testing this causal mechanism.

4 The Scottish Referenda on Devolution

In order to test these observable implications, I focus on the Scottish case. In addition to the significance of the recent decentralization in the United Kingdom, Scotland presents a unique opportunity to test the main alternative causal mechanisms. First, Scotland is a region in Western Europe with a long and rich tradition of a regional autonomy movement. Second, the referenda on devolution at two different points in time provide an opportunity to analyze both attitudes toward autonomy and how those attitudes are translated into votes on devolution, as well as their change over time. Comparing the failed referendum in 1979 to the successful 1997 vote yields variation in both the dependent variable and the explanatory variable of interest (Dardanelli 2001, 2). Further, the questions available in the 1979 and 1997 surveys allow exploration of the European Union's role in determining attitudes toward self-government.

In both 1979 and 1997, the Labour party introduced a referendum for Scottish citizens to decide whether a Scottish Parliament would be established. While a majority of voters supported devolution in both referenda, it failed in 1979 due to the “Cunningham amendment,” which stipulated that devolution must not only achieve a majority of support among voters but also meet at least a 40% threshold of the entire potential electorate (Harvie and Jones 2000, 115). In other words, abstention served as a de facto ‘No’ vote.⁴ Unsurprisingly, as a result of the threshold, the referendum failed in 1979 and, after the Conservatives won that year's general election, the government promptly removed devolution from the agenda.

During the 1997 general election campaign, Labour, under Tony Blair, promised another ref-

³As one observable implication of the optimal size of states logic, this finding alone would not ‘prove’ the theory is right. But finding the opposite would certainly cast some doubt on the theory's applicability in Scotland.

⁴This poison pill, “a brilliant act of anti-democratic political manipulation” (Mitchell 1996, 47), influenced the outcome of the referendum as well as perceptions about the outcome. When newspapers referenced the vote, they gave the result as percentages of the electorate and not actual voters. So instead of a 52%–48% outcome in favor of devolution, it appeared that only one-third of Scots supported devolution (Pittock 2001, 123). Indeed, even Scottish voters saw the result as indicative of a negative result (Mitchell 1996, 46–47).

erendum on devolution. Labour supported a referendum rather than simply legislating devolution for multiple reasons. Uncertain of their eventual Parliamentary majority from the 1997 general election, they feared a difficult parliamentary battle over devolution as they faced in the 1970s. Also, a referendum could secure decentralization in the face of future Tory governments. Presumably, if devolution were granted after a referendum, then only a referendum could reverse the decision (Taylor, Curtice and Thomson 1999, xxv-xxvi). Labour also used the referendum to avoid association with the potential higher taxes of a Scottish Parliament, the so-called Tartan tax. The two-part referendum asked voters to first choose whether to support a Scottish Parliament and then decide whether the Parliament should have tax-varying authority. The 1997 version of the devolution referendum passed by large majorities in every district in Scotland (Taylor, Curtice and Thomson 1999, xxvii). Considering that during both years Scottish citizens claimed to support devolution, the positive outcome of the devolution referendum in 1997 compared to the negative outcome in 1979 yields a puzzle. In the next section, I consider the alternative explanations for the different outcomes and then explain why the European Union is a significant factor.

5 Similar Preferences, Different Outcomes?

Since at least 1947, a majority of Scots have consistently supported devolution in opinion polls.⁵ In 1979, in fact, 61% of respondents in the Scottish Election Survey supported self-government, with 54.1% in favor of devolution and 6.9% supporting independence (Miller and Brand 1981). Yet, despite this consistent support of devolution in theory, a plurality of respondents in that same poll either voted ‘No’ or favored the ‘No’ position, with 44.7% against the referendum and only 38.1% in favor. Table 1 demonstrates the gap between respondents who claimed to favor devolution yet opposed the referendum.⁶

Respondents at either end of the spectrum, either in favor of the status quo or in favor of independence, vote consistently either for or against the referendum in both surveys, though they do become more entrenched in 1997. But a slim majority of those respondents who favor devolution

⁵In a 1947 survey, over three-quarters of Scots supported a Scottish parliament. In 1949, a Scottish Plebiscite Society poll in Kirriemuir in Angus found that 23% were in favor of an independent Parliament, 69% supported a Parliament to deal with Scottish affairs, and only 5% favored the status quo (Mitchell 1996, 149).

⁶See Appendix A for question wording. All analyses were done with Stata9.

Table 1: Attitudes and Actual Voting Positions on Devolution in 1979 & 1997

	<i>Voting Positions</i>						Change in Yes
	1979		(N)	1997		(N)	
	Yes	No		Yes	No		
<i>Devolution Attitudes</i>							
Status Quo	11.1%	79.9%	(189)	4.0%	92.1%	(126)	-64.0%
Devolution	54.1%	39.3%	(394)	86.2%	9.0%	(289)	59.3%
Independence	80.0%	12.0%	(50)	94.0%	3.5%	(232)	17.5%
Don't Know	8.3%	14.6%	(96)	34.5%	17.2%	(29)	315.7%
All	38.7%	44.7%	(729)	71.3%	22.9%	(676)	84.3%

actually supported the referendum in 1979 while the vast majority of citizens in favor of devolution actually supported the referendum in 1997. Explaining this gap is essential to understanding why the referendum failed in 1979 but passed in 1997.

Alternative theories abound to explain why the referendum had such different outcomes in 1979 and 1997, including campaign coordination, support for (or opposition to) the Labour government, or resentment against the Conservative party, which governed the United Kingdom for eighteen years despite never winning the popular vote in Scotland (Taylor, Curtice and Thomson 1999, xxiv). Compared to 1979, though, the 1997 vote was nearly consensual (SurrIDGE and McCrone 1999, 44). As Table 2 demonstrates,⁷ nearly every social group supported devolution in 1997 except Conservative party supporters and those who self-identify as primarily British. Several observations emerge from this table. Certain categories with relatively soft levels of support in 1979, such as Scottish self-identifiers, Labour supporters, and working class citizens were much more supportive in 1997, with 76.2%, 85.4%, and 77.5% in favor respectively. Respondents in several categories shifted from the ‘No’ to the ‘Yes’ side, including the Liberal Democrats and the middle class.

The viability theory predicts that the distribution of supporters should change as well. If independence is a more viable option economically, then capitalists in particular will be more favorably disposed to independence. For example, traditionally in the Basque country, the middle class and

⁷National identities were drawn from questions 66a and 66b in 1979 and X6a and X6b in 1997. I drew class identity from questions 62a and 62b in 1979 and 29a and 29b in 1997. Finally, party identification is given in questions 54a and 54b in 1979 and X5a and X5b in 1997. For each identity question, the respondent had an option to self-identify and then, if no choice was made, a follow-up question asked the respondent which option they would choose if forced (Miller and Brand 1981; Jowell, Heath and Curtice 1998).

Table 2: Referendum Positions in 1979 & 1997, By Group Identity

	1979			1997			Change
	Yes	No	(N)	Yes	No	(N)	in Yes
<i>National Identity</i>							
British	28.8%	63.0%	(257)	41.3%	53.3%	(92)	43.4%
Scottish	51.3%	39.7%	(380)	76.2%	18.1%	(554)	48.4%
Other	14.0%	14.0%	(93)	73.3%	20.0%	(30)	424.6%
<i>Class Identity</i>							
Middle Class	29.6%	62.5%	(152)	55.8%	41.0%	(156)	88.4%
Working Class	46.5%	44.1%	(458)	77.5%	17.3%	(457)	66.6%
Other	20.2%	24.4%	(119)	65.1%	19.0%	(63)	222.7%
<i>Party Identity</i>							
Conservative	19.2%	66.9%	(239)	22.0%	71.5%	(123)	14.1%
Labour	45.1%	37.2%	(288)	85.4%	10.1%	(336)	89.2%
Liberal Democrat	40.0%	48.0%	(75)	62.7%	37.3%	(51)	56.9%
SNP	77.2%	7.6%	(79)	94.3%	3.3%	(122)	22.1%
Other	31.3%	35.4%	(48)	74.7%	22.7%	(44)	52.7%
All	38.7%	44.7%	(729)	71.3%	22.9%	(676)	84.3%

Note: The 'Yes' and 'No' categories include respondents who either voted for or did not vote but favored that position in the referendum.

the lower clergy have been the most ardent supporters while industrialists, fearing the economic disruption that may result from independence, have been less supportive of Basque nationalism (Linz 1973; da Silva 1975, 241). But capitalists or industrialists should be more supportive of autonomy if the European Union provides more economic security than independence without such a union. Thus, I expect a new “bourgeois regionalism” should emerge in response to the changing economic context (van Houten 2003, 10). Table 2 demonstrates that such a shift occurred in Scotland. A mere 30% of the middle class supported the referendum in 1979, while over 56% favored devolution in 1997. Hence, this finding provides additional evidence for the theoretical argument regarding the optimal size of states.

Even respondents in those two categories on the ‘No’ side in 1997, Conservatives and British self-identifiers, were more likely to support the referendum in 1997 than 1979. Further, fewer respondents self-identify as either of these two categories in the latter referendum, further diminishing their significance in the outcome. The Conservative party fell from nearly a third of the respondents in 1979 to 18% in 1997, and from nearly as strong as Labour to basically level with the Scottish National Party. Similarly, over one-third of respondents primarily self-identified as British in 1979 but that number fell to 14% in 1997.

Thus, Table 2 demonstrates the outcome of the devolution referendum went from highly contested in 1979 to nearly consensual in 1997. But in both cases, a majority of Scots claimed to support devolution. What explanations might account for this disconnect? Paolo Dardanelli introduces several explanations prevalent in the literature (2005, 321-3). First, the actual content of the devolution package was more contentious in 1979, with the First-Past-The-Post electoral system perceived as heavily Labour-biased. Further, the 1997 referendum focused on the powers that remained with Whitehall rather than which powers went to Scotland (Harvie and Jones 2000, 186). The observable implications of the Labour bias logic are that non-Labour party supporters would be expected to be anti-devolution while Labour party supporters would be supportive (Dardanelli 2005, 322). But in fact, apart from Tory supporters, who were strongly anti-devolution in each referendum, Liberal Democrats were slightly less supportive of devolution than Labour supporters while SNP supporters were much more favorable. Also, Labour supporters themselves were split, with a plurality—not a majority—in favor of devolution.

Second, many scholars point to Scotland’s increasingly strong sense of being a perpetual polit-

ical minority in the United Kingdom as the reason devolution gained support from 1979 to 1997 (McCrone and Lewis 1999, 18). Basically, Scotland voted for Labour in every general election from 1979 to 1992, but the Conservatives won in the rest of the United Kingdom and therefore governed, leaving the Conservatives increasingly unpopular in Scotland (Mitchell et al. 1998, 178). These anti-Tory sentiments could potentially fuel pro-devolution sentiment. If true, then Scots, especially non-Conservatives, should be less satisfied with the United Kingdom and devolution should be a higher priority for citizens. But Scottish nationalists are actually more satisfied in 1997 than 1979 and the issue of self-government is no more or less salient, casting some doubt on this hypothesis (Dardanelli 2005, 323).

The third main explanation is the (lack of) coherence and effectiveness of the pro-devolution campaign. In 1979, the political parties, especially Labour, sent mixed signals to the electorate, with a faction of the Labour party opposing the referendum with a “Labour Vote NO” campaign (Denver 2002, 830). Further, little cross-party coordination existed among the ‘Yes’ campaign, with as many divisions among the pro-devolution parties as between them and the anti-devolution campaign. A Labour party official disdainfully stated that Labour would not be “soiling our hands by joining any umbrella Yes group” (Mitchell et al. 1998, 167). In all, the ‘No’ campaign in 1979 was more effective in terms of funding, coordination, and campaigning than the ‘Yes’ campaign (Mitchell 1996, 163).

In 1997, on the other hand, the pro-devolution parties, Labour, Liberal Democrats, and the Scottish National Party, supported a double ‘Yes’—for a Scottish Parliament and for tax-varying authority—and coordinated their campaign as “Scotland FORward” (McCrone and Lewis 1999, 24). In doing so, they sent clearer messages to their party supporters as to their constitutional preferences. In the 1997 campaign, 90% of Labour party and 86% of Scottish National Party supporters knew their party favored devolution (Denver 2002, 830). The pro-devolution campaign also successfully convinced businesses that devolution was not a threat to their livelihood, undercutting a major supporter of the ‘No’ campaign in 1979 (Mitchell et al. 1998, 175). Finally, the ‘Think Twice’ campaign against devolution, led by the Conservative party, lacked sufficient resources or supporters to oppose the devolution referendum (Mitchell et al. 1998, 174). Thus, the strength and coordination of the campaigns clearly shifted in favor of a ‘Yes’ vote. But, this explanation still has some difficulty explaining why so many Scots voted against devolution even though they favored

the concept in surveys (Dardanelli 2005, 323).

6 Devolution Attitudes and Referendum Behavior

The gap between supporters of devolution and supporters of the devolution referendum in 1979 is stark. Table 1 demonstrates that only 54% of those who claim to support devolution actually favored the ‘Yes’ position on the referendum in 1979 while 86% of devolution supporters voted ‘Yes’ in 1997. Supporters of the status quo and independence were both strongly in the ‘No’ or ‘Yes’ camps, respectively, in each of the campaigns. So, the shift among devolution supporters in actual voting behavior explains much of the difference between the 33% increase in support of the referendum between 1979 and 1997. In Table 3, I present the actual ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ positions and the expected positions based on attitudes toward devolution.

Table 3: Expected and Actual Voting Positions on Devolution in 1979 & 1997

	1979			1997		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
Actual	38.7%	44.7%	16.6%	71.3%	22.9%	5.8%
Expected	60.9%	25.9%	13.2%	77.1%	18.6%	4.3%
Difference	-22.2%	18.8%	3.4%	-5.8%	4.3%	1.5%

Note: Expected ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ based on attitudes toward devolution, with self-identified supporters of self-government, i.e. devolution or independence, counted as Expected ‘Yes’ and status quo supporters counted as Expected ‘No.’

In both 1979 and 1997, fewer Scots supported the referendum than expected from their attitudes toward devolution. But the gap diminished significantly. In 1979, 61% claimed to support self-government but only 39% either voted for or favored the devolution referendum. Only 6% fewer Scots favored the ‘Yes’ position in 1997 than expected from their attitudes. In addition, by 1997, attitudes toward devolution had crystallized to a degree that significantly fewer respondents did not have an attitude on devolution (17% compared to 6%). As discussed above, though, explaining this discrepancy between self-identified supporters of self-government and those who actually voted for the referendum is critical.

Paolo Dardanelli argues that preference orderings are the key to understanding this gap between expected and actual behavior in the failed referendum vote of 1979 (2001, 2005). Whereas attitudes about devolution, independence and the status quo can be kept conceptually distinct in surveys, the preference ordering actually affected voting behavior (Dardanelli 2005, 326). For instance, if a citizen preferred devolution to the status quo, then observers would expect that citizen to vote for the referendum. But if that citizen preferred the status quo to independence, and expected independence to be a likely outcome of devolution, then the citizen would be more likely to oppose the referendum. In other words, if citizens perceive a high probability of devolution leading to independence, then the referendum vote appears to be a choice between the status quo and independence rather than status quo and devolution (Dardanelli 2001, 10). And voters in both referenda thought that independence was a likely outcome of devolution (Dardanelli 2005, 326). This perception provided reason for citizens with this preference ordering to strategically oppose rather than sincerely support the referendum.

To determine the distribution of voter preferences I reconstructed the preference orderings in Table 4 using a series of questions in the 1979 survey which asks respondents to rank each constitutional option from highly unfavorable to very much in favor.⁸

Table 4: Preference Ordering on Devolution in 1979

1st Preference	2nd Preference				(N)
	Status Quo	Devolution	Independence	Don't Know	
Status Quo	-	78.3%	0.0%	21.7%	(189)
Devolution	59.4%	-	25.1%	15.5%	(394)
Independence	4.0%	80.0%	-	16.0%	(50)
(N)	(236)	(188)	(99)	(206)	

Not surprisingly, Scots who favored the status quo preferred devolution as their second best alternative. Similarly, nationalist Scots, or those who chose independence as their first preference,

⁸To extract a preference ordering for 1979, I used the attitude toward devolution question above to determine first preference then turned to the follow-up questions [v323-v327] (Miller and Brand 1981), which asked the respondent to say whether they were very much in favor of (or against), somewhat in favor of (or somewhat against) each constitutional option. Knowing each respondent's first preference, I evaluated which constitutional option they favored second best and created an index variable for the various preference orderings. For example, if a respondent favored the status quo, I determined whether they ranked independence or devolution higher. If the respondent ranked devolution higher, then I coded them as Status Quo > Devolution > Independence. In the case of ties, I coded the respondent as don't know. Coding is available upon request.

much preferred devolution to the status quo. These preference orderings yield little explanatory power, though, for respondents in both categories are strongly in their respective camps regardless of their second preference.

But as Dardanelli contends, for devolution supporters, the second preference may be critical in determining behavior on the referendum (2001, 9). Devolution supporters who consider independence their second best preference should be supportive of the referendum because even if independence is a likely outcome of devolution, it is preferable to the status quo. Table 4 shows that only 25% of the devolution supporters share this preference ordering. But devolution supporters who fear independence and favor the status quo over independence should be more skeptical of the referendum (Dardanelli 2005, 9). A majority of Scots with devolution as their first preference consider the status quo to be their preferred alternative. Table 5 shows the referendum positions of devolution supporters split by their second preferences.

Table 5: Referendum Positions in 1979, By Preference Ordering

	Yes	No	(N)
Devolution > Independence > Status Quo	75.8%	18.2%	(99)
Devolution > Status Quo > Independence	44.9%	49.6%	(234)
All Devolution Supporters	54.1%	39.3%	(394)

Note: Excluded from the two preference ordering calculations are respondents who “Don’t Know” their second preference or their referendum position. This discrepancy explains why the percentages and Ns do not add up to 100 and 394, respectively.

Table 5 clearly demonstrates that those who favor devolution over independence over the status quo supported the referendum by a large majority while those devolution supporters who favored the status quo over independence were actually slightly opposed to the referendum.⁹ Combined with the consistent opposition of status quo supporters, the divided cohort of devolution supporters contributed to the gap between expected and actual support for the referendum.

⁹In Table 5, respondents who said they voted for the referendum and those who said they did not vote but favored the ‘Yes’ Position are included. The ratios are similar if abstentions are excluded from the analysis, with the Devolution > Independence > Status Quo group voting for the referendum 85% of the time and the Devolution > Status Quo > Independence group split evenly between a negative and favorable vote.

Because the Parliament instituted the threshold on the referendum vote in 1979, abstentions acted as de facto votes against devolution. The preference orderings of these respondents show them to be much more likely to favor the status quo as either their first or second choice. Unsurprisingly, 46% of abstentions did not know their attitude toward devolution. But 40% favored the status quo as their first (16%) or second best constitutional option (24%). Only 14% favored independence as their first (4%) or second favorite option (10%). The abstentions, therefore, provide further support that those who feared independence or at least considered it their least preferred constitutional option did not support the referendum, yielding a cumulative negative vote on devolution in 1979.

By 1997, preference orderings shifted to a degree that the majority of citizens either favored independence as their first or second most preferred constitutional option. Table 6 shows first and second preferences among Scots in 1997.¹⁰

Table 6: Preference Ordering on Devolution in 1997

1st Preference	2nd Preference						(N)
	Status Quo	<i>Parliament</i>		<i>Independence</i>		Don't Know	
		No Tax	Tax	in EU	from EU		
Status Quo	-	60.3%	11.9%	5.6%	0.0%	22.2%	(126)
<i>Parliament</i>							
No Tax	30.6%	-	43.6%	8.1%	3.2%	14.5%	(62)
Tax	12.8%	31.3%	-	29.1%	5.7%	21.1%	(227)
<i>Independence</i>							
in EU	2.9%	4.1%	54.9%	-	26.6%	11.6%	(173)
from EU	0.0%	5.1%	32.2%	52.5%	-	10.2%	(59)
(N)	(53)	(159)	(156)	(109)	(61)	(138)	

As in 1979, status quo supporters favor devolution over independence by a large margin. Within the devolution options, they prefer the weaker devolution option, sans tax-varying authority, to the option that eventually won. Similarly, nationalist Scots clearly preferred devolution to the status quo. But as in 1979, these preference orderings hardly matter as over 90% of respondents in each category either favor or oppose devolution, respectively.

¹⁰For 1997, the preference ordering was much more straightforward than in 1979 because the survey asked a follow-up question [21b] to the attitudes toward devolution question that asked respondents to list their second most preferred constitutional option (Jowell, Heath and Curtice 1998).

But whereas devolution supporters in 1979 preferred the status quo to independence, the majority of devolution supporters preferred independence to the status quo in 1997. Excluding the alternative devolution option, for those who favor a Scottish Parliament with tax-varying authority—which comprises 78% of the devolution cohort—independence is the preferred second option. For those who favor the weaker devolution option—22% of the devolution cohort—more prefer the status quo to independence, but there are significantly fewer respondents in this category. Further, 65% of those devolution supporters that preferred the status quo as their second option still supported the referendum. Overall, 86% of those who favor either type of devolution either voted for or favored the referendum.

Another significant shift is evident in the tables above. In 1979, a majority of respondents claimed to support devolution as their most preferred constitutional option, with a sizeable group favoring the status quo and a very a small minority favoring independence. By 1997, this distribution of first preferences changed dramatically. Support for the status quo and devolution decreased 7% and 11%, respectively, while support for independence increased 28%. I present this data in Table 7.

Table 7: Attitudes on Devolution in 1979 & 1997

	1979	1997	Change
Status Quo	25.9%	18.6%	-7.3%
Self-Government	60.9%	77.1%	16.2%
<i>Devolution</i>	<i>54.1%</i>	<i>42.8%</i>	<i>-11.3%</i>
<i>Independence</i>	<i>6.9%</i>	<i>34.3%</i>	<i>27.5%</i>
Don't Know	13.2%	4.3%	-8.9%
(N)	(729)	(676)	

Note: The Self-Government category includes the Devolution and Independence questions.

Significantly, the increase in support for independence occurs across all party groups. Only 4% of Labour party supporters favored independence in 1979 while 36% did so in 1997. For Scottish National Party supporters, independence became the most preferred option, increasing from 35% to 72%. Even 6% more Conservatives supported independence in 1997 than in 1979. Because many

respondents believe independence is a likely consequence of devolution, the increased support for independence as a first option significantly affected the outcome of the 1997 referendum. But this finding only raises another question: why is independence so much more popular in 1997 than 1979?

7 European Union and Attitudes Toward Independence

As Table 1 shows, Scottish nationalists, or those who claim independence as their most preferred constitutional alternative, are highly likely to support the devolution referendum. Further, as Table 7 shows, Scots are much more likely to support independence in 1997 than in 1979. Drawing from the optimal size of states argument, I contend that Scots perceive independence to be more viable in 1997 due to European integration. If true, I will find evidence for several observable implications.

First, Scots should be more likely to support European integration. I previously showed that political elites frame the European Union as a mechanism to achieve independence without economic upheaval (Jolly 2007). In other words, European integration increases the viability of Scotland as an independent country. Thus, nationalists should perceive the European Union more positively in 1997 than in 1979.

Among all Scots, support for European integration increased 25% from 1979 to 1997 (Miller and Brand 1981; Jowell, Heath and Curtice 1998), while support for European integration among all Europeans dropped nearly 14% (Schmitt and Scholz 2005).¹¹ Within Scotland, supporters of the status quo remain more skeptical, with only a 13% increase in support for the European Union. But nationalists are much more favorably disposed to European integration. Only 13% of Scottish National Party supporters thought the European Union was a ‘good thing’ in 1979, but 48% did so in 1997.¹² Similarly, 34% more nationalists thought the EU was a ‘good thing’ in 1997 than 1979. This trend follows the rhetoric of the Scottish National Party, which shifted from being anti-

¹¹According to the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File, which compiles and standardizes the many individual Eurobarometer surveys, approximately 58% of Europeans surveyed thought the EU was a ‘good thing’ in 1979 (58.9% in Eurobarometer 11 and 57.9% in Eurobarometer 12), while 50% or fewer respondents thought it was a ‘good thing’ in 1997 (48.2% in Eurobarometer 47, 48.6% in EB 47.1, 47.2% in EB47.2, and 50.8% in EB48) (Schmitt and Scholz 2005).

¹²In 1997, the survey asked the standard Eurobarometer question about European integration that is commonly used in analysis of support for European integration (Gabel 1998; Brinegar, Jolly and Kitschelt 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005): whether the respondent thinks the EU is a ‘good thing,’ a ‘bad thing,’ or neither [eugood]. In 1979, the survey asked respondents to score the Common Market on a ten-point scale [v467]. Following Dardanelli (2005), I standardized this variable to compare to the 1997 version by grouping 0-3 as bad for Scotland, 4-6 as neither good nor bad, and 7-10 as good for Scotland.

integration to supporting the European Union specifically as a lever against the United Kingdom, and suggests the citizens caught the cue sent by party elites.

Second, support for independence should be related to European integration. As shown above, Scottish National Party officials used the European Union to diminish fears of economic displacement associated with independence (Harvie and Jones 2000, 152; Pittock 2001, 127). Further, Dardanelli argues that attitudes toward the European Union actually determine perceived costs of secession (2005, 328). Thus, increased support for European integration implies lower costs of secession, or increased viability of independence. And, in fact, Table 7 demonstrates clearly that it is the “Independence in Europe” option that drives the increased support for independence. Fewer respondents conceive of independence outside of Europe as a viable option. The existence of the EU as an alternative political opportunity structure, though, allows citizens to favor independence much more strongly, either as a first or second option. By convincing its supporters that the European Union was a ‘good thing,’ the Scottish National Party shifted the debate over self-government itself, making independence a more reasonable option and increasing support for devolution in the referendum in the process (Dardanelli 2001, 14). In addition, the shift in bourgeois support for independence, as shown so clearly in Table 2, demonstrates that capitalists see less to fear in devolution, and by extension independence, in 1997. The recent election campaign in Scotland, which exhibited much business support for the Scottish National Party, is yet another sign in this direction.

8 Discussion

Using the 1979 Scottish Election Survey and the 1997 Scottish Referendum Study, I evaluated why the referendum failed in 1979 but passed in 1997 despite having a majority in favor of devolution in both years. The fear of independence, coupled with a preference ordering where the second choice for devolution supporters was the status quo, explained the strategic voting behavior in 1979. Increased support for independence, as both a first and second option for Scots, fuelled the dramatic increase in sincere voting for devolution in 1997. I also presented evidence to support the contention that European integration, especially the Scottish National Party’s successful framing of the EU as a mechanism to reduce the costs of secession, contributed to this increase in support for

independence. These findings suggest that the optimal size of states logic, in terms of the increased viability of an independent Scotland, is at work at the individual level. In the future, the dual trends of deeper integration at the supranational level and fragmentation at the traditional state level will continue to affect the United Kingdom, along with other European Union member states.

On explaining support for devolution, in attitudes and behavior, though, much work remains to be done. In particular, I am collecting data, from the British Election Survey and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, that will give me additional purchase. With more time-series data on this question, I plan to establish a policy mood variable for independence in Scotland. Drawing insights from work in American politics (Erikson, Mackuen and Stimson 2001), I will utilize the existing survey data to track attitudes toward independence at the aggregate level in order to test the institutional hypotheses more carefully. Not only will this method give more purchase on the link between European integration and independence, but it should yield insights on decentralization as well.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

For 1979, I use the following questions to determine actual voting positions:

“30a. Did you vote in the recent Referendum on Devolution for Scotland?

IF YES Did you vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’?

IF NO Did you favour the ‘Yes’ side or the ‘No’ side?” [v315]

For 1997, I use the following questions:

“6a) The questions asked in the Referendum are set out on this card. How did you vote on the first question?” [refvote]

If the respondent did not vote, the survey followed up with this question:

“7a) The questions asked in the Referendum are set out on this card. If you had voted, how would you have voted on the first question?” [nvrefvote]

For both questions, I group spoiled ballots, would not vote, refused to answer, and don’t know into the don’t know category. In Table 1 and other tables in this chapter, actual voting numbers include those who either voted for or favored (or voted against or opposed) the referendum in the ‘Yes’ (or ‘No’) category.

To determine attitudes toward devolution, I used the following question on the 1979 survey:

“3la) Here are a number of suggestions which have been made about different ways of governing Scotland. Can you tell me which one comes closest to your own view?

1. No devolution or Scottish Assembly of any sort.
2. Have Scottish Committees of the House of Commons come up to Scotland for their meetings.
3. An elected Scottish Assembly which would handle some Scottish affairs and would be responsible to Parliament at Westminster.
4. A Scottish Parliament which would handle most Scottish affairs, including many economic affairs, leaving the Westminster Parliament responsible for defence, foreign policy and international economic policy.
5. A completely independent Scotland with a Scottish Parliament.
8. DK” [v322]

Following Dardanelli (2005), I group “No devolution” and Scottish Committees as status quo and the Scottish Assembly and Scottish parliament options as devolution.

For 1997, I use the following survey question:

“21a) Which of these statements comes closest to your view?

1. Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK and the European Union.
2. Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK but part of the EU.

3. Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has some taxation powers.
4. Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has no taxation powers.
5. Scotland should remain part of the UK without an elected parliament.
8. (Don't know)" [srrefvw1]

For Table 1, the two independence and two devolution options are combined. All questions and survey responses are drawn from the 1979 Scottish Election Study and the 1997 Scottish Devolution Study (Miller and Brand 1981; Jowell, Heath and Curtice 1998).

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