

Devolution and Constituency Association Adaptation: Labour and the Conservatives in Scotland and Wales

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Abstract

The constituency associations of the UK's statewide parties have played important roles in those parties' adaptation to devolution in Scotland and Wales. What we lack, however, is an analytical framework to describe and account for the development of these associations in multi-level contexts. This paper presents such a framework. I develop a continuum of constituency associations that ranges between unitary and separated archetypes, with associations' placements determined by national-regional linkages through structures, personnel, resources, and activities. The paper concludes by outlining the organisational, political, and institutional influences that shape constituency associations' adaptation to devolution.

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Introduction

Much of the academic literature on political parties situates their organisations within a strictly unitary institutional context. With some exceptions (for example, Dyck, 1992), it is only recently that political parties have come to be analysed within multi-level institutional settings, with attention focussed on party organisational responses to the adoption of devolved institutions and regional legislatures. Thorlakson (2009) and Deschouwer (2006: 294) frame this as a question of ‘vertical integration’: when parties organise at two or more levels, what are the mechanisms (if any) through which these two components of the party are coordinated? Others explore the extent of organisational regionalisation within multi-level systems (for example, Moon and Bratberg, 2006). Regionalisation involves a loosening of strict organisational hierarchies within parties in order to grant sub-national organisations the autonomy and freedom necessary to respond to distinctive regional demands. Carty argues that the resulting stratarchical ‘franchise parties’ are defined by a trade-off between the central party—which is responsible for crafting broad national themes—and the regional or local organisations, which are tasked with adapting those themes to particularistic regional or local tastes (2004). Regionalisation therefore allows statewide parties to respond to distinctive regional patterns of partisan competition involving single-level or ethnoregional parties, which inevitably challenge the national parties’ ethnoregional credentials’ (Biezen and Hopkin, 2006: 15).

Britain’s statewide national parties in Scotland and Wales—faced with ethnoregional competitors in the forms of the SNP and Plaid—have coped with devolution through organisational regionalisation, with power and autonomy devolved to the sub-national organisations. Laffin, Shaw, and Taylor report considerable freedom subsequently granted to the Scottish and Welsh Labour, particularly with respect to candidate selection, policy formulation, and campaigning (2007), and Bratberg confirms that both Labour and the Conservatives have adopted stratarchical organisational forms in these three key areas (2009). The result is that the regional branches of the statewide parties have substantial freedom to organise themselves in idiosyncratic ways and to respond to distinctive sub-national challenges.

This paper picks up on this previous research by exploring a largely unexamined aspect of the statewide parties’ organisational adaptation to multi-level politics. It asks: how have the constituency-level organisations of the Labour and Conservative parties adapted to devolution? Britain’s statewide parties extend a fair degree of autonomy to their constituency associations, particularly with respect to local organisational norms and candidate selection, and so it is reasonable to expect organisational variation in constituency associations’ responses to devolution.¹This paper draws on the relevant literature, comparative studies of local party organisations in federal states, and preliminary interviews with local party officials to construct a framework for analysis of constituency associations in post-devolution Scotland and Wales.

The paper proceeds as follows. I begin by outlining the roles and functions of constituency associations, and demonstrate how those associations are oftentimes quite autonomous from the wider parties. Constituency associations continue to play important roles and carry out crucial functions for Britain’s statewide parties, and so it is necessary to briefly outline these functions and situate these association within the broader party structures. A conceptual model for describing the multi-level aspects of constituency associations is then proposed, and several factors influencing the development of these organisations are presented.

¹The terms for these organisations are Constituency Labour Parties and Constituency Conservative Associations. I use the terms ‘constituency party’ and ‘constituency association’ interchangeably throughout this paper.

The Roles of Constituency Parties

Scholars have for some time emphasised the decreasing utility of party members and the local organisations they staff. Falling party membership numbers, a decline of linkages between parties and citizens, wholesale professionalisation of parties, and the newfound reliance of parties on the state rather than members for funding all suggest that local organisations present more difficulties than benefits to parties (Mair and van Biezen, 2001: 10-13; Panebianco, 1988: 262-274).

In response to these arguments, a new scholarly ‘revisionist school’ has emphasised the benefits that party members and strong organisations in the constituencies can provide for parties and their candidates (for example, Clark, 2004). Scarrow (1996) provides a comprehensive list of the benefits that members provide. These are:

- *Labour benefits*: the local party membership provides a pool of volunteers to work during election campaigns;
- *Financial benefits*: constituency party organisations maintain local memberships that in turn are willing to contribute funds; they also hold fundraisers and other events where money is collected;
- *Outreach benefits*: constituency organisations are well placed to reach out to local populations and expand the party’s local base of members;
- *Innovation benefits*: by enrolling members, constituency organisations can nurture the development of ideas that are translated into policy introduced at party conventions;
- *Personnel benefits*: constituency organisations may provide personnel to run as candidates or fill party offices;
- *Legitimacy benefits*: finally, constituency organisations help to establish the local legitimacy of political parties.

Many aspects of the structure and operation of British parties’ constituency associations indicate that they fulfill the functions listed above with a significant degree of autonomy from their parties’ central offices. Recent developments have tended to confirm the local autonomy of the statewide parties’ constituency associations. In particular, the major parties’ longstanding decentralised candidate selection methods equip the constituency associations with a significant power that they are ready and willing to defend (Denver, 1988).

Russell (2005: chapter 9) outlines a series of reform proposals aimed at updating the practices and cultures of the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs). The cumulative effect of these reform programmes has been the stripping away or dispersal of some CLP powers. Most importantly, party candidates are now selected by the constituency membership as a whole rather than by the CLPs’ small General Committees (although these committees shortlist approved candidates) and new members can purchase memberships from the central party rather than the CLPs. Despite these reforms, local resistance has thwarted more ambitious reform efforts, with the result that Labour’s National Executive Committee has for the most part resigned itself to local variation and now encourages “local innovation” amongst the associations. The result is that the structures and certainly the cultures of CLPs have come to differ depending on the strength of the local Labour Party; the size of the local membership; whether a Labour MP is present; and whether the constituency is urban or rural (Russell, 2005: 231).

Conservative constituency associations have also maintained autonomy, but in this case local autonomy and power is well-entrenched. The party is indeed not a single entity, rather consisting of three distinctive organisations: the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations

(which includes the party's constituency associations), the Conservative Central Office, and the Conservative parliamentary party. This separation was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in a 1982 ruling (Whitely et al., 2002: 20). Most importantly, members of Conservative constituency associations have been generally free to select their own candidates from a list compiled by the central party office.

One consequence of local autonomy is that constituency associations have the autonomy and power to informally structure and conduct themselves for the most part as they wish, which accords with a stratarchical conception of political party organisation (Eldersveld, 1964). Indeed, CLPs are now encouraged to experiment with different forms of organisation in response to unique local conditions. The question is whether constituency associations in Scotland and Wales are taking advantage of this autonomy in order to organise themselves between the national and regional levels in distinctive ways.

Constituency Parties in Multi-Level Context

How can the organisations of constituency associations be understood in multi-level context? Constituency associations may be distinguished from one another on the basis of the number and strength of linkages between organisations at the national and regional levels. We can conceive of three archetypes. First, *unitary* constituency associations are those that organise and contest elections at both the national and regional levels. Second, *integrated* constituency parties are those where the national and regional organisations are distinctive but nevertheless share important structural and/or personnel linkages between the two levels. Finally, *separated* constituency parties are those that are distinctive and that are not linked whatsoever between the two levels.

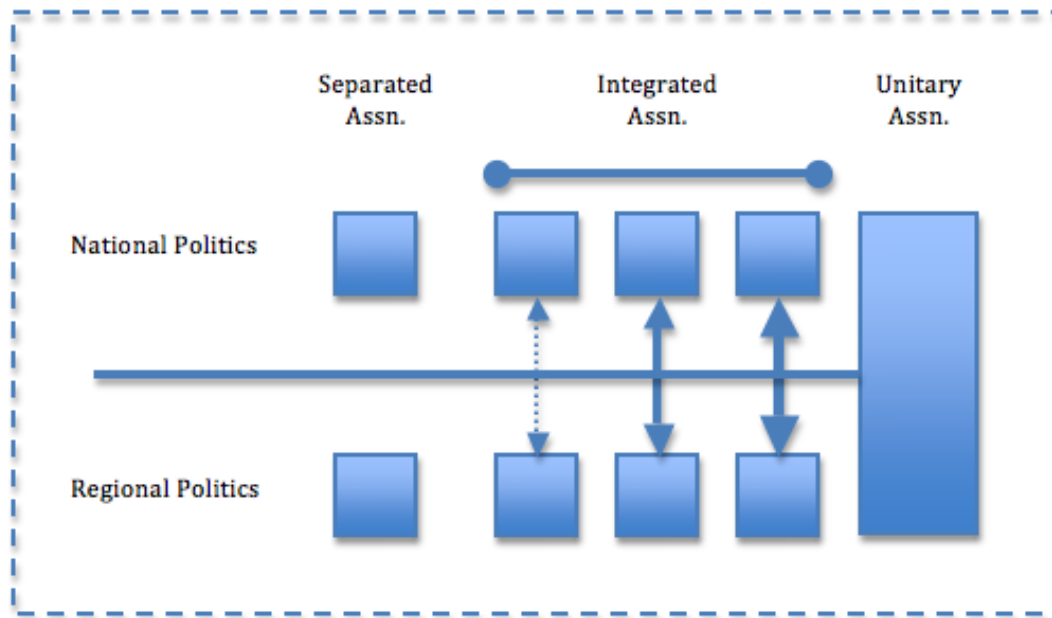
These archetypes constitute points on a continuum that ranges between unitary constituency associations on the one hand and separated associations on the other. Some integrated organisations have substantial ties between the two levels, while others maintain fewer linkages. This understanding of party organisations follows the approaches of Dyck (1992) and particularly Thorlakson (2009), who both sought to categorise political parties on the basis of organisational linkages between the national and regional levels. Figure 1, which adapts Thorlakson's continuum of overall party organisations in multi-level states (2007: 7), illustrates this continuum.

Four indicators determine the placement of constituency associations on this continuum. These are structures, personnel, resources, and activities.

The first indicator is constituency structures. The question is whether local structures encompass both the national and regional levels or whether some (or even all) aspects of the organisation have come to focus on a single level. Unitary party structures exist where the parties' associations have maintained pre-existing structures but have adapted them to a new level of partisan competition. Integrated structures also span the national and regional levels but to a limited extent, while separated organisations exist at only a single level.

Following devolution, the Labour and Conservative parties were presented with the opportunity to simply adapt constituency structures in order to perform their functions at both the national and regional levels. The result was unitary structures. Over time, however, some of these organisations have separated some aspects of their organisations from one another—in other words, they may have moved left along the continuum illustrated in figure one. In the case of CLPs, for example, the question is whether the party structures in each of the constituencies—the general committees, executive committees, branches, and affiliated youth, ethnic, and womens groups—continue to carry out their functions at both levels, or whether parallel structures have developed at the other level. In practice, however, these structures may be more resistant to devolution than the other aspects of the associations.

Figure 1: Linkages between national and regional constituency associations



The second indicator is personnel. Identical personnel in unitary associations carry out their assigned tasks at both the national and regional levels. However, this changes as associations move left on the continuum. Integrated associations may share many personnel, but also have members that are committed to one level over the other. Separated associations are staffed by single-level activists: partisans committed to only a single level of partisan competition. Since party activists can more easily adjust their participation between the two levels than party structures can be altered, distinctive personnel at the two levels may differentiate even formally unitary associations.

Federalism provides opportunities for local activists to focus their energies on one level over the other in response to myriad incentives, particularly their own personal goals as activists (see, for example, Bruce and Clark, 1998). Activists may be equally committed to their parties at the national and regional levels and therefore participate with zeal at both levels. But federalism also allows activists to prioritise their participation at one level over the other, such as by contributing ongoing efforts to the association at one level but putting in only minimal effort in campaigns at the other level. Activists may also simply refuse to participate at one level or the other. When they are present, these single-level activists play an important role in differentiating national from regional constituency associations. It is likely that many activists in Scotland and Wales, presented by devolution with new opportunities to focus their activism on the level that is of the greatest importance to them, are participating in different ways at the two levels. The result is diversity in the forms of constituency associations that operate in those regions.

Activists who involve themselves in constituency associations and campaigns may also do so in different parties at the two levels. Federalism provides activists with the opportunity to participate in an inconsistent manner, and many activists in other federations take the opportunity to do so (Koop, 2008: 41-42). Differences in the statewide parties' vote shares between national and regional elections suggests potential for activist participation in different parties at the two levels, particularly in national parties for Westminster elections and one of the ethnoregional parties for regional elections (Jones and Skully, 2006: 179). In all these cases, the participation of activists in national and regional constituency associations holds consequences for how those associations

function. The structures of associations may come to reflect the behaviours of their elites, and so national statewide associations may become separated from regional counterparts if many of their elites in the constituencies support the SNP or Plaid at the regional level.

The resources of constituency associations must also be taken into account. Unitary associations draw on a common pool of funds to support activities and candidates at both the national and regional levels. Unitary associations do not therefore discriminate between national and regional politics when raising money; instead, it is assumed that local elites will allocate funds between the two levels where they are most needed. In contrast, separated associations raise and spend their own money. Separated associations therefore provide donors with the freedom to target their money at either the national or regional level. Donors committed to Scotland or Wales can target their contributions towards separated regional associations in their constituencies. Separated constituency associations may therefore be empowering for these donors, and advantageous for the separated regional associations, as regional elites are in a good position to tailor their appeals to Scottish and Welsh donors.

The introduction of a new level of partisan competition raises the possibility that traditional donors will be unable to support campaigns at both levels. New campaigns require funds to function effectively, and donors may as a result end up splitting their traditional contributions between the national and regional levels. Unitary associations may have to make due with what they have and allocate their funds accordingly between national and regional events and campaigns. However, separated national and regional associations may in fact enter into competition with one another for the limited funds available, adding a whole new dimension of intra-party conflict between the two levels.

Constituency associations marshal resources besides money, especially during election campaigns. Clark reports that most constituency campaigns in the 2003 Scottish elections made regular use of computers, election software, and computerised election registers (Clark, 2006: Table 1). Of course, constituency campaigns marshal ‘traditional’ resources as well, particularly hardware and, crucially, membership and volunteer lists. These resources are all available to be used in both national and regional elections, and unitary organisations deploy these resources at both levels. However, constituency parties that are separated may not allow resources to be used at both levels, reinforcing the separation between them. When separated national and regional organisations maintain distinctive membership lists, for example, those organisations necessarily draw on different bases of donors and campaign volunteers.

Finally, the activities of unitary, integrated, and separated constituency associations differ from one another. Constituency associations can play particularly important roles as ‘partisan ambassadors’ to the communities by providing a friendly local face for the party (Scarrow, 1996: 42). The question, however, is whether the statewide parties can do so effectively within the context of unitary constituency associations. Instead, the regional organisations of the Labour and Conservatives parties may be hosting more of their own events in order to reach out to citizens and emphasize their autonomy from national politics. Doing so allows the regional branches of those parties to maximise the benefits of maintenance events without the negative connotations of being too clearly attached to Westminster.

Taken together, these four indicators can be marshaled to place constituency associations on the continuum illustrated in figure 1. A key point is that individual associations may differ on these four indicators. Unitary local structures in a particular seat, for example, may remain, but personnel may focus on one level or the other, and their deployment of campaign resources is likely to reflect this. The question then is what factors are responsible for variation in constituency association adaptation to devolution.

Influences on Constituency Parties

Local autonomy means that local activists are for the most part free to determine how their constituency associations are structured and function between the national and regional levels. Why might some associations remain strongly unitary whereas others evolve integrated or even separated forms? This section specifies six influences on how associations are organised between the two levels.

Table one summarises six influences that contribute to the differentiation of constituency association:

Table 1: Separating influences on constituency organisations

1.) Stratarchical Party organisations
2.) Distinctive National and Regional Demands and Competition
3.) Conflicts between MPs and MSPs
4.) Nonconcurrent National and Regional Elections
5.) Distinctive National and Regional Constituency Boundaries
6.) Distinctive National and Regional Electoral Systems

The first factor influencing the development of constituency associations is the nature of the wider organisations within which they exist. Parties characterised by clear, hierarchical patterns of authority tend to impose particular forms of organisation in the constituencies. This encourages the development of unitary or strongly integrated constituency associations, as the party adapts old organisational solutions to new institutional realities. On the other hand, parties characterised by looser, stratarchical organisational arrangements provide their constituency associations with significant freedom to structure themselves in different ways. In these cases, constituency parties may adopt separated structures when doing so makes sense within the context of their own communities. Bratberg argues that both Labour and the Conservatives have assumed regional stratarchical forms in three key aspects of their organisations: candidate selection, manifesto formulation, and financing of electoral campaigns (2009: table 2). However, the longer tradition of constituency autonomy entrenched in the Conservative Party as well as the greater ease with which that party adapted to devolution (likely because of its non-incumbent status (Fabre 2008)) suggests that Conservative associations are less likely to have remained unitary.

The nature of the demands facing parties in national and regional elections also influences the development of constituency associations at the two levels. When national and sub-national parties face similar demands and make similar appeals to their respective electorates, then there is little incentive for constituency associations to disentangle their organisations. However, when these demands and therefore appeals differ substantially, those organisations find it more difficult to service both the national and regional parties as well as support candidates at the two levels. This is especially true when the demands facing national and regional associations conflict. In these cases, some measure of separation is likely to result as local elites struggle to adapt to conditions that are inhospitable to unitary constituency parties.

The SNP and Plaid have special advantages in regional elections, especially since these ethno-regional parties are likely to be ideologically heterogenous and therefore difficult to pin down on a range of issues (De Winter, 1998: 208-209). While statewide parties are altogether reluctant to position themselves on centre-periphery issues (Masseti, 2009: 513), the presence of the SNP and Plaid means that Labour and the Tories must to a certain extent tailor their appeals to the regions. This is the dilemma identified by a Welsh Labour official interviewed by Laffin et al.:

It's always an internal debate in the party about whether Welsh Labour can ever win by being more Welsh or should they just try and be more Labour. There's on school of

thought that says you can never out-nat the Nats, so the thing is to go on your Labour credentials (2004: 56).

The official perfectly illustrates the regional pressures imposed on the statewide parties by the SNP and Plaid. Labour and Conservative constituency associations may feel pressure under such circumstances to become more Scottish or Welsh and to focus exclusively on the regional level, with separated organisations resulting. This pressure to separation is most intense in constituencies where the ethnoregional parties are strongest.

The orientation of MPs and MSPs² may also shape constituency associations. Associations and MPs in the UK tend to stand further apart than is the case in Australia and certainly Canada. However, elected officials in Scotland and Wales may still be in a position to encourage or discourage separation of constituency associations. This is more true of representatives with long histories in the constituencies and when they have constructed strong relationships with members of the associations. When MPs and MSPs come into conflict with one another, unitary organisations may be placed in a delicate position between the two. In such cases, separation of national and regional organisations may occur informally as personnel take one side or the other, and focus their subsequent efforts accordingly. MPs and MSPs may also reserve whole sections of local organisations for themselves. This pressure to separation is most likely to manifest itself in terms of personnel.

Research on the constituency services provided by MPs and MSPs appears to rule out such conflict, as most MPs report co-operative working relationships with MSPs (Russell and Bradbury, 2007: Tables 6 and 7). Inter-election constituency work, however, is quite different from re-election campaigning. Since it is clear that strong constituency parties can have significant electoral benefits for incumbents, MPs and MSPs may wish to have organisations that are committed exclusively to their own re-election efforts. In the same way that most MPs do not share staff with regional counterparts, so too may they be unwilling to share partisan supporters, and may demand those supporters' primary loyalty (Russell and Bradbury, 2007: 111). The result is that incumbents may encourage the development of separated constituency associations committed solely to their own interests.

Another reason for this preference on the part of incumbents is the 'elected-out' phenomenon experienced by many local campaigners (Koop, 2008: 77). While work on constituency associations typically involves a steady, non-intensive amount of effort, this changes in election campaigns when local volunteers are called on to commit long hours to the candidate. Federalism, by adding another set of election campaigns in addition to other party activities, can quickly tire out party workers. This is exacerbated in the UK given that partisans may also support candidates in partisan local elections as well as in elections to the European Parliament. Incumbents may fear that this point of exhaustion will be reached amongst local activists just prior to their own re-election campaigns. The result is that some incumbents may wish to reserve a section of the local organisation for their own exclusive use.

Finally, there are three institutional features of UK federalism that influence the development of unitary, integrated, and separated constituency associations. The first of these is the timing of national and regional elections (Deschouwer, 2006: 296-297). Concurrent elections place severe burdens on local organisations, as they are responsible for carrying out their duties simultaneously in two distinctive contexts. Since constituency parties must perform their duties simultaneously in a single short period of time, it makes sense to have a common organisation to coordinate efforts and resources at both levels. Simultaneous elections therefore contain incentives for the maintenance of unitary constituency parties.

In contrast, nonconcurrent elections impose different timetables and thus different demands on national and regional candidates and their supporters, and separated constituency organisations

²I use 'MSP' to refer to regional members from both the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh National Assembly.

may make sense within such an institutional context. The longer the wait between national and regional campaigns, the more free sub-national candidates and elites are to focus on distinctively regional issues without distractions from the campaign at the other level. Neither Scottish nor Welsh elections are held concurrently with Westminster elections, suggesting that constituency associations in both regions face institutional incentives to separation.

A question of great importance for constituency parties is whether national and sub-national constituency boundaries are identical or distinctive. When constituencies are identical, unitary associations are able to perform their national and sub-national roles within the same geographic spaces. Since national and sub-national constituencies are identical and therefore contain the same groups of personnel, activists are able to work with one another on activities and election campaigns at both levels. In these cases, constituency associations service the same populations and encounter the same geographic challenges at both levels. The result is that identical constituency boundaries facilitate the development of unitary constituency associations. In contrast, when national and sub-national constituencies are distinctive, then it is more difficult for the national organisation to transpose its efforts to the regional level. Instead, national activist bases are split up into sub-national constituencies, and the national associations must find ways of supporting several rather than only a single MSP. In these cases, the regional parties ultimately have to find their own organisational solutions to local challenges, and separation may ultimately result.

Following devolution, constituencies in both Scotland and Wales were identical to Westminster seats. This is starkly different from the experiences of Canadian parties, where national and provincial constituencies have never had identical boundaries. Distinctive national and provincial boundaries in Canada have necessitated the maintenance of formally separate national and provincial constituency associations (Perlin, 1980: 22). However, provincial constituency redistributions in the province of Ontario were formally linked to national redistributions in 1996, with the result that national and provincial seats in that province are now for the most part identical (Courtney, 2001: 184). Common constituency boundaries in Ontario have assisted in the reintegration of national and provincial constituency associations (Koop, 2008: 204-206). Whereas national and provincial constituency associations had previously been separated, identical boundaries have allowed associations at both levels to coordinate their election and inter-election activities. The New Democratic Party has even begun to elect joint executives—equivalents of the CLPs' executive committees—to conduct the business of integrated national-provincial associations. The Canadian experience suggests that common constituency boundaries contribute to the maintenance of unitary constituency associations in Scotland and Wales, whereas distinctive boundaries are conducive to separation between the two levels.

The Scotland Act 1998 attached the composition of sub-national to national constituencies, with the exceptions of the Orkney and Shetland seats. But when it became clear that the number of Scottish Westminster seats (and therefore Holyrood constituencies) would decline following a subsequent Boundary Commission review, the Scottish government undertook a study of the possibility of delinking Holyrood from Westminster constituencies (Scotland Office, 2001). In their interviews with Scottish MPs, Bradbury and Russell found significant opposition to the ending of constituency coterminosity. Much of this opposition was rooted in fears of how the change would impact party organisations in the constituencies (2005: 27-28). Whereas identical constituencies had previously provided a geographic basis for both national and sub-national party organisation in the constituencies, the end of coterminosity meant that the parties would be forced to maintain overlapping activist bases and party structures within different contexts at the two levels. The result was likely to be substantial duplication of efforts between the two levels. They note, "...representatives of all parties expressed concerns that this will create confusion amongst activists, and require them to attend yet another meeting, at a time when activism is already on the decline" (2005: 27).

There was also concern amongst MPs that the end of coterminosity would require the develop-

ment of distinctive campaign organisations for Westminster and Scottish elections, and discourage the participation of activists in different campaigns at the two levels. Furthermore, the inclusion of several Scottish seats within the boundaries of national constituencies means that MPs are more likely to have partisan opponents as MSPs, straining relations between representatives at the two levels (McEwen, 2005: 131). The presence of several MSPs within national constituencies increases potential for conflict between MPs and MSPs, as well as for MSPs hoping to construct single-level, personalized organisations in the ‘little fiefdoms’ that are their small sub-national constituencies. The result is that it is much more difficult for constituency associations to remain integrated when they must cope with the existence of several sub-national constituencies within the national seat.

This is not the case in Wales. Both Scotland and Wales employ additional member electoral systems in regional elections. However, Wales’ single-member constituencies remain identical to those employed in Westminster elections. It is therefore likely that the composition of regional constituencies in Wales is more conducive to the maintenance of unitary constituency associations than that of Scotland’s constituencies. Further study could exploit this key institutional difference between Scotland and Wales as a natural experiment in order to explore the impact of coterminosity on constituency party organisations.

Finally, the presence of different electoral systems to elect representatives at the national and sub-national levels presents difficulties to the maintenance of unitary constituency associations. When electoral systems differ, then constituency organisations must develop different strategies at the two levels in order to successfully support candidates. The result is that national and regional parties may develop their own constituency organisations in order to specialise in supporting candidates in the lead-up to and during very different types of campaigns.

While regional elections in Scotland and Wales are conducted with proportional representation systems, both systems have elements of constituency representation, diluting the potentially separating impact of different electoral systems at the two levels. However, the dominance of Labour in Scotland’s constituencies means that Conservative associations are re-tooling themselves to focus primarily on electing regional list candidates. Indeed, Clark finds that Conservative associations were most likely to invest effort into electing list candidates (2006: 96). The result is that Conservative associations must now organise to support constituency candidates during Westminster elections and regional list candidates during Scottish elections. Since these efforts require different forms of organisation and take place in different geographic areas (constituencies versus regions), Conservatives face electoral system incentives for the development of separated national and sub-national associations in order to contest these different sorts of elections.

Conclusion

This article has developed a conceptual framework useful for describing and explaining the organisations and behaviours of the statewide parties’ constituency associations in post-devolution Scotland and Wales. These associations can best be understood as existing on a continuum ranging from fully unitary to fully separated organisations on the basis of their structures, personnel, resources, and activities. The placement of constituency associations on this continuum can be traced back to political, institutional, and local factors.

The identification of unitary and separated constituency associations has consequences for the scholarly understanding of party organisational adaptation to devolved institutions, of which Scotland and Wales provide excellent laboratories. Several scholars have explored whether devolution has been accompanied by regionalisation of the parties’ organisations (e.g. Laffin and Shaw, 2007; Moon and Bratberg, 2010). But constituency associations have generally been left out of these analyses. By developing strataarchical intra-party relations and maintaining the autonomy of their constituency-level organisations, the wider parties have allowed those organisations to adapt to a

range of local incentives within multi-level context. As a result, some constituency associations have maintained their unitary structures and behaviour while others have separated. Still others have developed integrated organisations with important but not complete linkage between the national and regional levels.

Through strataarchical organisational arrangements, the central parties have downloaded responsibility for adaptation to devolution to the constituencies, where local elites have taken on the challenge of developing (or maintaining) local solutions to the dilemma of party organisation in multi-level context. Constituency party adaptation should therefore be understood as a key component of the parties' overall adaptation to devolution.

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