Proposals to create a new Parliament in Scotland, an Assembly in Wales, an elected Mayoralty and Assembly for London and regional development agencies as precursors to assemblies in England have generated a good deal of discussion about the prospects for state and constitutional transformation in the United Kingdom. These proposals are generally analyzed in the light of distinctions between federalism and devolution or between a ‘union state’ and a unitary one.\(^1\) Most commentaries largely avoid Northern Ireland, in view of its particular problems of contested territory, identity conflicts and civil disorder.

Ireland, north and south, however, is central to historical analysis of British flirtations with federalism in times of crisis.\(^2\) But, neither in respect of Ireland nor the Empire at large, could governments contemplate what was necessary to ‘true federalism’—the division of ultimate parliamentary sovereignty, the legacy of the English Parliament to the new British Parliament of 1707. However, federalism was permitted to solve problems within the Dominions and it was hoped in 1920–22 that incipiently federal arrangements for Ireland eventually might eliminate the need for partition. In addition to the establishment of the Irish Free State and a Council of Ireland, considerable leeway—to the point of its undoing\(^3\)—was allowed to the Stormont Parliament in Belfast. But the politics of the next 50 years were inhospitable to federalism within Ireland, and that Stormont was a devolved parliament, not a federal one, was strikingly evident in 1972 when it was prorogued by Westminster.

The different circumstances under which Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales became components of a British state, and developed within its framework, are reflected in the particularities of proposed new arrangements. However, there are commonalities or, at least, matters arising from Northern Ireland’s special situation which could have implications for other parts of the UK—and vice versa. This article begins with the Northern Irish proposals and then identifies some areas of potential common interest—of which there are many more than can be included here.
Throughout the 1990s, talks about the future of Northern Ireland were predicated upon the idea that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. At times, the requirement for a three-stranded agreement seemed to be exploited in order to reach deadlock with apparent justification. Now that agreement has been reached, approved in simultaneous referendums in the north and south on 22 May 1998, and members of the new Assembly elected on 25 June that year, the interlocking of its three strands serves, in different ways, as a protection for the negotiating parties. As part of their interlocking nature, a number of key issues, such as human rights, cross the strands and are covered in the opening and final sections of the Agreement on obligations upon the Irish and British governments.

Strand One deals with arrangements within Northern Ireland—the setting up of the Assembly and the transfer to it of legislative and executive authority for matters currently dealt with by government departments and non-departmental public bodies. These matters are primarily agriculture, economic development, education, environment, financial allocations, health, housing and social services. New equality institutions are likely and other matters may be transferred at a later date. Strand One includes a number of safeguards designed to ensure that all sections of the community can participate and work together in the new institutions. It also contains provisions to protect all sections of the community by requiring Assembly legislation to be ‘equality proofed’ and to meet European Convention on Human Rights standards.

The political inclusion of ‘all sections of the community’ is institutionalized through the previously disputed device of power-sharing (though it is not called that by name). This involves the allocation of committee and ministerial offices in proportion to party strengths. In addition, there are two forms of qualified majority voting—controversial because they protect nationalists and unionists but not those who define themselves as ‘other’—for the selection of First and Deputy First Ministers, dismissal from office, standing orders, budgetary allocations and policy issues defined in advance as ‘key’. It is also reflected in the introduction of a parallel consultative chamber, the Civic Forum.

Strand Two sets up a North-South Ministerial Council and, like Strand Three, its popular legitimacy rests more than Strand One on a constitutional agreement between Ireland and the UK. This (re-)states explicitly that Northern Ireland is part of the UK. Ireland, authorized by its simultaneous referendum on 22 May, is altering its Constitution to withdraw its territorial claim over the six northern counties unless or until a majority in Northern Ireland peacefully chooses reunification. The UK undertakes that, in such event, it will give effect to that preference. The constitutional agreement and Strand Two, in combination,
were the most difficult parts of the Agreement on which to reach consensus. Both Northern Irish sides had to come a long way: nationalists from immediate reunification, a concession on sovereignty that several analysts of other contexts note is often overlooked; and unionists from opposition to a political-administrative superstructure which they believed would be a Trojan horse for a united Ireland. It reflects the wish of northern nationalists to have an authorized closer relationship with the south in a situation where there is not a majority for reunification. For unionists, Strands Two and Three enable the dismantling of the semi-covert joint secretariat set up under the hated Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985.

The existence of Strand Two reflects emergent recognition among unionists of the legitimacy of the nationalist interest in cooperation, and that for unionists, too, there are some common north-south interests. These can be promoted in the North-South Ministerial Council which, in its plenary form, will comprise representation from the Assembly, led the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and from the Irish government, led by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). It will also meet in sectoral format under the leadership of ministers from both sides according to the topics under discussion. Its scope will be determined by the competences of the administrations in Ireland and Northern Ireland and its work will be directed at economic and social matters, such as agriculture, fisheries, transport, waterways, tourism, urban and rural development, education, health, certain aspects of social security and the environment.

How this Council will work depends on a delicate balance between the neo-functionalist hopes of nationalism and functionalist preferences of unionism. In dealing with ‘matters of mutual interest’ in its fields of competence, where there is a ‘cross-border and all-island benefit’, the Council—accountable to the Assembly and the Irish Parliament—will ‘exchange information’, make ‘determined efforts to overcome disagreements’ and agree upon policies ‘for implementation separately in each jurisdiction’. These policies will be implemented by the variety of bodies necessary to the Council’s work programme, to be established by the Council in consultation with the British government and given clear remits. The Council is to be safeguarded against the immobilism of perpetual discord by the Agreement’s note that the success of the Assembly is inseparable from the proper functioning of the Council.

Taking Strands One and Two together, ‘variable geometry’ has found a something of a place in the Agreement. For several years, people have toyed with the idea that the structure of the Northern Irish economy—with features between those of Great Britain and Ireland—could imply the possibility of Northern Ireland’s being represented in the European Council of Ministers sometimes by the government of Ireland and sometimes by that of the UK. Strand One allows for more effective influence from Northern Ireland on British government ministers.
responsible for European Union matters, while Strand Two gives EU responsibilities to the North-South Ministerial Council and promises arrangements to ensure that its joint Irish-Northern Irish views are taken into account at EU meetings.

Strand Three is a major innovation to previous ideas about an east-west dimension in an agreed Ireland but resonates with the century-old idea of ‘home rule all round’ in the new context of devolved powers to Scotland and Wales, except, of course, for the fact that the superordinate unit is not one state but two. The Agreement sets up a British–Irish Council, consisting of representatives of the two governments, the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and, if they are established, regional assemblies in England. Any two or more members of the Council may enter into bilateral and multilateral arrangements with each other, independently of the Council itself. Common policies, from which there can be opt-outs, may be developed on questions of transport, agriculture, the environment, culture, health, education, EU issues and other matters of mutual interest which are within the competence of the member institutions.

There will also be a new British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference to replace the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and Conference established in 1985 in that Agreement so hated by unionists. Its decisions will be informed by consultation with Northern Irish representatives but will be intergovernmental agreements, covering all-island and cross-border matters which do not fall within the powers devolved to the Assembly. Likely topics of cooperation will be rights, justice, reconciliation and support for victims of the conflict, security, prisons and policing.

Outside Strands One to Three, it is noted that both governments are already strengthening the protection of rights and will agree upon further measures. Human rights standards are to meet those of the European Convention on Human Rights; and appropriate equivalence will be established in the two parts of the island in provisions for minorities and their languages, the status of women, and socio-economic equality regardless of class, religion, disability or ethnicity. A charter of human rights for the whole island is mooted. In the meantime, both governments will establish human rights commissions and enhance legislation in respect of other forms of equality. The British government’s establishment of new institutions and policy requirements in Northern Ireland is under way and will provide for the courts to override Assembly legislation if it contravenes the European Convention. Policing and other aspects of criminal justice in Northern Ireland are being reviewed. Both governments undertake to cooperate over decommissioning and to take independent steps to normalize security arrangements. The UK government will consult the Irish government
and Northern Irish parties about any continuing paramilitary activity and responses to it.

Asymmetries and potential cross-fertilization

There are two sides to the coincidental timing of agreement on new forms of government throughout the UK. On the one hand, the nature of the Irish question traditionally encouraged an Irish nationalist view that the resolution of Northern Ireland should be treated as a uniquely imperative and distinctive task. On the other hand, the possibility of construing renewal of devolution to Northern Ireland as part of a UK pattern of constitutional change that is both general and asymmetrical in detail makes it easier for unionists to take their place in a scheme of ‘unity in diversity’ instead of aspiring to uniformity. In allowing, or welcoming, the UK context of the Belfast Agreement as a counterbalance to the north–south dimension, the parties to it have secured a distribution of powers that may effectively be more entrenched than in Scotland and Wales— to which the former, at least, might aspire. Equally, the east to west axis of the Belfast Agreement may contribute to other UK developments, Northern Ireland being affected simultaneously by west to east influences. Not all points of interest or possible one-way or mutual effects can be discussed here: for example, how opposition will operate under the responsibility-sharing requirements of Strand One, comparative autonomies in arranging committee structures, procedural differences in the protection of human rights, or the differing futures of the three Secretaries of State. What is discussed are issues which could be highlighted by the interchanges of an active British–Irish Council: legislative competences, content and resources; ‘civic regionalism’ and local government; civil society and politics; and the connection between internal ‘subsidiarity’ and the UK’s approach to the EU.

Turning first to the relative entrenchment of distributions of powers: the distinctive involvement of two governments in the Northern Irish problem means that Northern Ireland’s new arrangements rest upon an intergovernmental agreement. If this can be equated with a treaty, it could be argued that the forthcoming distribution of power between Westminster and Belfast has similarities with divisions specified in the written constitutions of federal states. Although the Agreement makes the general proviso that Westminster’s ‘powers to make legislation for Northern Ireland’ remains ‘unaffected’, without an explicit categorical reference to reserved matters, it may be more difficult than in Scotland or Wales for devolved powers to be repatriated. The retraction of devolved powers would not merely entail consultation in Northern Ireland backed implicitly by the absolute power of parliamentary sovereignty but also the renegotiation of an intergovernmental agreement.

Contemporary Scottish commentators on the Acts of Union in the
English and Scottish parliaments insisted that their state had entered into an intergovernmental agreement, the 1707 Treaty of Union, to create a federal (by the inchoate standards of the day) a federal union. But the English view that it had to be an ‘incorporating’ one prevailed—among the Scottish Commissioners, too. It came to be accepted in Scotland, so long as the regime was ruled as a ‘union state’ not a ‘unitary’ one; that is flexibly so as to reflect and maintain differences. Renewed calls over the last three decades for reform, short of independence, have at once identified the need for self-government and accepted the sovereignty of the UK Parliament, provided it is exercised with restraint. But the weakness of ‘home-rule’, even in a ‘union state’, has begun to be attributed to parliamentary sovereignty per se, rather than its abuse, meaning to some, therefore, that what is needed is not devolution but a renegotiation of the Treaty of Union. What is taking place in Scotland and Wales, however, is devolution, albeit of a more radical kind for Scotland than before, predicated on the listing of reserved powers. The UK Parliament will remain sovereign in all matters but would exercise sovereignty by devolving certain responsibilities. Parliamentary sovereignty, unencumbered by the need to renegotiate an intergovernmental agreement, means that the only assurances for the peoples of Scotland and Wales are promises to use ‘override’ powers sparingly, arbitration by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in disputes over powers, and the Prime Minister’s expectation that the political and civic culture of Scotland, especially, will be so strong that repatriation would become inconceivable.

Distributions of powers encompass not only restraints on the centre but also the scope of influence upon it by the components. In 1707, the workload of parliaments did not extend much beyond international, security and defence matters. The absence then of a distinctive ‘States-General’ chamber (composed of the states of a federation for their common matters) and the current reasons for the West Lothian or West Belfast question (an overrepresentation and the influence of MPs from elsewhere on purely English matters) therefore did not arise. The clogging-up of parliamentary business by a growing volume of domestic policy, relating to home and Empire, occasioned discussions of increased membership to cope with the burden effectively and representatively or of devolution to remove business from Westminster. The number of Northern Irish MPs was increased when Stormont was prorogued and government conducted from Westminster. The Belfast Agreement is silent on decreasing the number of MPs in line with the re-devolution of responsibilities. However, plans for Scotland include agreement to review the size of Scottish representation at Westminster which will still deal with English, as well as British, issues and Welsh primary legislation. It might be expected that there will either be pressure on Northern Ireland to reduce its numbers of MPs or that
Scotland may cite the Northern Irish 'privilege' to justify resistance to reduction.

On the question of legislative competences, content and resources, considerable differences are proposed for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the English regions. Contrasts will be spotlighted if sub-state units, under the British-Irish Council, try to enter into formal bilateral or multilateral relations in so far as the permitted scope of agreements depends upon the respective competences of the institutions. Northern Irish and Scottish primary legislative powers contrast markedly with Wales' restriction to the passage of subordinate legislation arising from Westminster’s primary legislation and with Regional Development Agencies for which, in the first stage of English regionalization, the closest contact with 'legislating' will be consultation with local authority representatives and other regional stakeholders.

Variations in the content of legislation in different parts of the UK, while accepted positively as appropriate to the diversity of a 'union state', also give rise to criticism when rights are at stake—mainly but not wholly a matter of reserved powers in the Northern Irish context. For example, an account of British liberties, prior to devolution, suggests that inconsistencies in the categories of person protected from discrimination and in the scope of activities so regulated are bizarre. Prior to the Northern Ireland Agreement, race was added to religious and gender discrimination. Measures arising from the Agreement will extend categories of discrimination and reinforce methods to deal with all unlawful forms of inequality. But outlawing religious discrimination will not be extended on the eastward axis, except insofar as it will be covered by the European Convention on Human Rights. There are no official signs of transplanting Northern Ireland’s stronger investigatory powers and obligations on public authorities.

These issues have, however, received attention from interest groups elsewhere, as well as the EU, and may attract more in a context of greater 'trans-regional' interaction. It is also possible that Scotland may choose, in a way that has not happened before, to look to Northern Ireland for insights into sectarianism and identity politics from which it is not immune either. In the sphere of rights and identities, familiarization along the east–west and north–south axes of Northern Irish devolution may interact, bringing about some international, as well as interregional, harmonization. It has been suggested that ‘the subtlest aspect of the Agreement is its promise to entrench the identical protection of rights, collective and individual, on both sides of the present border’—in effect, promising ‘protection to Northern nationalists now on the same terms that will be given to Ulster Unionists should the latter ever become a minority in a unified Ireland.’ Moreover, ‘any united Ireland which may subsequently arrive would, besides having to observe the Britishness of the unionist community, be inextricably
linked to the constituent parts of the neighbouring island through the British-Irish Council'.

With respect to resources for policy, different patterns of political pressure caused Scotland to call for at least tax-varying powers and for Northern Ireland to reject them. More perhaps than in Wales, Constitutional reformers in Scotland now accept the implications of the democratic ‘link between elections and tax-raising’—that is, that a ‘parliament without taxation’ would be ‘unfinished business’. The absence of Welsh tax varying powers is consistent with all primary legislation remaining the responsibility of Westminster. But, despite the devolution of primary responsibilities to Northern Ireland, tax-varying powers were regarded as unnecessary or, in some unionist circles, as too radical a departure from uniformity with the UK. Thus, both Northern Ireland and Wales will depend exclusively upon the bloc grant and other statutory payments.

Scotland’s advantage under the existing allocation formula for public expenditure played a part in anti-devolutionist arguments, threats of equalization being used to undermine autonomy as a realistic prospect. But supporters of reform are themselves calling for a new needs assessment exercise that would produce fairer results and more transparency. If successful, this would challenge the assumption in the Belfast Agreement of the continued use of the existing formula. Equally, there are calls in Scotland to examine the treatment of National Lottery funds and assets financed through the Private Finance Initiative, as well as to monitor UK tax expenditures—the last of which, in particular, would undermine the perception of unfairness between Scotland and England.

The topic of ‘civic regionalism’ arises from the enduring rock upon which all discussions of self-government for Ireland, Scotland and Wales have foundered—the English Question. In addition to the legacy to Great Britain and the UK of indivisible parliamentary sovereignty, a constitutionally vexed but also popular notion, there is the practical issue of disparities in size and strength. In the context of potential ‘home rule all round’, schemes for administrative regionalization in England were proposed around 1920 but came to little until after 1960, when they resurfaced for other reasons, and again in the 1970s as a constitutional matter. But there was political opposition and ‘public apathy’ to the idea of regional self-government in England until the recent growth of concern about what, some seventy years ago, Patrick Geddes called the problem of ‘centralized government and civic regionalism’.

As noted, proposals for the English regions outside London involve two stages, the first of which is much less than the devolution conferred on Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. But the timing of their introduction owes something to the risk that northern MPs would rebel against Scottish devolution unless there were immediate plans for elected assemblies in England. Hands may be forced further by
pre-devolutionary activities which may be reinforced when the east-west axis comes into play. At the turn of the decade, reformers in Scotland were conscious of the need for alliances with the English regions.²² English regions, in the sense of local authorities cooperating as stake-holders in existing institutions, already exchange insights with Northern Irish bodies over how best to ensure that it is the regional definition of interests, rather than Westminster’s, which informs structural funding plans for the purpose of EU assistance. Wales, too, is an instructive example in this respect.²³ Whether or not increased contact with places where there is political devolution will fuel demands in England for elected regional assemblies is an open question. But the desire for greater freedom of expression of regional interests is strong, and the British–Irish Council could become a significant network for the development of those interests.

English regionalization has implications for local government, a subject untouched in the Belfast Agreement. The government assumes that a uniform system of single-tier local government would be introduced in the event of elected assemblies in England, though the assumption that single-tiers are uniformly appropriate is not shared by experts outside government.²⁴ Scotland, following the Conservative’s abolition of regional government, and Wales already have single-tier local authorities which the government expects will remain in place. But the devolved institutions of both, though to a lesser extent in Wales, will assume control for structure as well as finance—implying some freedom to modify.

Local government in Northern Ireland is quite different. When Stormont was prorogued in 1972, many responsibilities were also transferred from local councils to executive bodies which were expected to be less discriminatory. As a result, the 26 District Councils have a much smaller scope of activity than counterparts elsewhere. If one adds to that the notorious observation of a senior British politician that Northern Ireland as a whole could be administered with little more than the equivalent of an English county council, and if one bears in mind the introduction of something much more than an English county council, it is hard to ignore questions about the future structure and responsibilities of district councils, the Housing Executive and regional boards for education, libraries, health and social services.

In terms of pre-devolutionary civil society and politics, Northern Ireland and Scotland have commonalities and differences. Notwithstanding civil and political inequalities and extra-parliamentary civil disorder in Northern Ireland, both societies benefited from a ‘union state’ which left civil society intact, allowing non-violent participatory associations to flourish. However, the relationship between them and representative politics has been different because of their different political contours. In Northern Ireland, throughout the period of conflict and during the lead up to the Agreement, networks of voluntary
and community associations and the ‘social partners’ of business and trade unions negotiated the politics of everyday life with non-elected, locally based officials and, increasingly, officials in the EU. Elected politicians were much more occupied with the politics of the constitutional conflict than with strategic socio-economic policy which, elsewhere, usually involves government and its ‘social partners’. An exception lies in EU policy concerns, where the separation of participatory and representative politics and divisions between nationalism and unionism sometimes are bridged.

The previously notable absence of a business input to party politics began to change after the cease-fires of 1994, when its leaders joined with others to persuade politicians of the urgency of moving from positions in which compromise was construed as weakness to a negotiated settlement. Neither business leaders nor other groups were engaged institutionally in formulating the content of the Agreement (the Forum, set-up in parallel to the Talks, was unsuccessful as a means of incorporating extra-party opinion and bears no resemblance to anything in Scotland). But exchanges of ideas took place informally through meetings arranged by associations such as Democratic Dialogue. This contrasts strikingly with the wide swathe of civil associations and the goodly number of political parties in the Scottish Constitutional Convention and Commission whose proposals were substantially adopted in legislation. Even though the business community in Scotland chose, by and large, to act merely as observers, neutral in public comment, its leaders were there at the important formulation stage and were able to make their views known through other institutional channels.

Women are very active in civil society in Scotland and Northern Ireland but more absent from party politics in the latter than in the former. Though the ‘greatest fear’ of women in Scotland was that, having fought tirelessly for ‘a new democratic institution’ they would find themselves with one ‘dominated by the old politics’, behaviour at the Talks, and especially the Forum, showed that Northern Irish politicians can be even more hostile to women. Despite the odds of habit and culture, women from various civil associations succeeded in forming a party which won two seats at the Talks. It is plain from comments by politicians outside Northern Ireland, including Senator George Mitchell, that the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition was influential in the securing of the Agreement. Many of its aspects bear an NIWC imprint, except, ironically, the Assembly’s electoral system. In consequence of a bargain over the size of the Assembly between the two largest parties, its recommendation, partly based on proposals for Scotland and Wales, for the basic scheme to be augmented by an Additional Member System (AMS) was sacrificed. Despite what seemed at the time an even heavier defeat than that of women in Scotland over its electoral system, the NIWC again won two seats in the proportional, but non-AMS, elections to the first Assembly.
One of the most important contributions of the Women’s Coalition to the Agreement was securing the inclusion of civil society into the new political structures, through the Civic Forum. This will help to moderate the disadvantage of those preferring to designate themselves as ‘other’ because of their cross-community approaches and to reintegrate the politics of participation with the politics of representation. Successful implementation of this innovation in regional government would embody an approach recently adopted at the local level, where the distribution of special EU Peace and Reconciliation Funds is undertaken by 26 District Partnerships, a third councillors, a third from local ‘social partners’ and a third drawn from voluntary and community associations.

Had the Women’s Coalition not succeeded in winning under what had seemed a less auspicious electoral system, there might have been continuing pressure for the Additional Member elements of the Scottish and Welsh electoral systems to be used in Northern Ireland. The future of the Civic Forum seems bound to attract attention amongst active civil societies outside Northern Ireland. The District Partnerships interest the European Commission as possible models for other places. The Agreement’s mooting of another Forum to sit alongside the North-South Council is being pressed in Northern Ireland as an agenda item for the Assembly (Ireland is already familiar with consultative fora). And its failure to mention one in connection with the British-Irish Council is being described as an anomaly that ought to be corrected. If it is, this will necessitate innovations in Scotland, England and Wales.

The EU has run throughout this article. The common membership of the UK and Ireland helped them to cooperate in dealing with the disputed territory of Northern Ireland and its competing nationalisms. Experience in seeking structural and special funding from the EU played some part, though its extent is disputed, in developing cross-community approaches in civil and political society within Northern Ireland. Despite disapproval by a Secretary of State of attempts to sell a Welsh, rather than British image abroad, Wales collaborates with the most successful regions of other member states. The EU has been said to be displacing the UK as the ‘site of Scottish aspirations’ or, at least, to offer ‘considerable scope for multi-level governance’. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all have offices in Brussels, two of which are not averse to acting as unofficial embassies. All have new opportunities which, though problematic, may increase their influence on UK positions on European issues. All have opportunities to cooperate over EU interests outside conventional vertical channels—even in consultation with another state, through the North-South and British-Irish Councils. All this seems to challenge the usual claim that regions and localities in centralized states can less easily aspire to success in the EU than those in constitutionally decentralized ones because of their unentrenched powers, narrower economic freedoms and poorer institutional
infrastructures. The potential implied by these innovations might corroborate the view that the UK has rediscovered itself as a ‘union state’ after several decades of ‘unitarizing’ tendencies.

But a further point about Scotland: debate about its future in the EU is ‘intimately linked’ with that about its future in the UK\(^2\) is but the other side of the same coin of the problematic intimacy between the UK’s European Question and its inability to enshrine domestic devolution. Both are incompatible with strict adherence to the indivisibility of parliamentary sovereignty. A ‘device’ in the European Communities Act of 1972, to accommodate the reality of agreement to comply with existing and future Community ‘acquis’ (legislation, policy, practice, jurisprudence, etc.), and some public debate about the meaning of sovereignty (that it can, and has to be, exercised in a ‘pool’ with others) staved off wholesale rethinking. Conversely, whatever the ‘realities’ of domestic devolution (be it an intergovernmental agreement in one case, the strength of civic and political consciousness in another with promises by the centre of restraint) the traditional notion is restated explicitly in all proposals. But there is one twist. On the domestic front, it is the perception of diversity as a threat to the British state that has caused resistance to federalist divisions of sovereignty; on the other hand, at least amongst opponents of European integration, fear of a centrally induced homogeneity is at the root of resistance to federalism.\(^2\) Perhaps they imagine that other Europeans would abandon their constitutional traditions in favour an ‘incorporating’ union regulated by indivisible sovereignty.


4 The Agreement, signed in Belfast on 10.4.98. This is the title on its front cover. It is known colloquially as the Belfast Agreement, sometimes the Good Friday Agreement.

5 E. Meehan, ‘British-Irish Relations in the Context of the EU’, \textit{Review of International Relations}, xxxxxx. This explains the adaptation to Northern Ireland of these terms usually associated with theories of European integration and can be used in respect of references throughout this article to the EU and Northern Ireland.

6 Always a chimerical goal, even in the abstract and in the best of practical conditions; see M. Keating, ‘What’s Wrong with Asymmetrical Government?’, \textit{Regional and Federal Studies}, Spring 1998.


9 J. Kendle, op.cit. (Routledge, 1997).

10 His judgement may be supported by the fact that, while Stephen Dorrell once said that a Conservative government would repeal Labour legislation on Scottish devolution, Conservatives have retreated from this position, not least, perhaps, because of the Scottish Conservative Party; see D. Heald, N Geaughan and C. Robb, ‘Financial Arrangements for UK Devolution’, \textit{Regional and Federal Studies}, Spring 1998, p. 25.

11 J. Kendle, op. cit.
17 D. Heald, N Geaughan and C. Robb, loc. cit., p. 42.
18 J. Kendle, op. cit., p. 166.
20 J. Mawson, ibid., pp. 162 and 159.
21 J. Mawson, ibid., p. 168.
26 A. Brown, ‘Deepening Democracy: Women and the Scottish Parliament’, ibid. The whole article is relevant to the comparisons being made here; the particular quote is from p. 117.
28 W. Paterson, loc. cit.
29 J. Kendle, op. cit., p. 158.