Territorial politics in the United Kingdom after devolution and regional reform: whither relative tranquillity and the suspended revolution?

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Introduction

One of the principal reforms of the system of government under the Blair Governments was the devolution of power from Westminster to a set of elected meso-level institutions representing the UK's distinct territorially recognised assets: a Parliament for the nation of Scotland (1999); an assembly for the principality of Wales (1999) and an assembly for the province of Northern Ireland. At the same time in England, by far the largest and most populous nation within the UK, the Blair Governments placed a focus on the development of regional governance. Regional development agencies were established in all nine English regions. In London this was accompanied by an elected Greater London Authority, although in other regions indirectly elected regional assemblies were developed in the absence of support for elected institutions. The policy of devolution and regional reform was historically significant for its potential implications for the governance of individual territories, the politics of the UK as a whole, and for the UK's place in the European trend towards the re-valorisation of sub-state territorial units in contemporary state development. The nature, origins and implications of devolution and regionalism have inspired a considerable research literature, embracing both territory-specific and comparative research. This paper seeks to provide a perspective that seeks to take stock of the Blair Government's devolution and regional policies in the round: to contribute to an appreciation of both the achievements and legacy of the Blair era.

The paper is in three sections. Section one provides a context to analysis; it outlines conceptual and historical assumptions framing our understanding of territorial politics in the UK; the pressures for change in the second half of the twentieth century; the stated

goals of the Labour party in opposition in proposing devolution and regional reform; and a theoretical consideration of the criteria by which the Blair Governments policies and their impact can be assessed. Section two considers the approaches adopted in introducing devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and regional reform in England over the period 1997-2007. Section three then considers the implications of these reforms for territorial politics in the UK. Overall, the analysis is influenced by the aim to explore further the concepts and interpretation of UK territorial politics pioneered by Jim Bulpitt in the contemporary analysis of post-devolution UK (Bulpitt, 1983; Bradbury, 2006). This approach helps to understand the context to the Blair Governments engagement with territorial questions, and how they set about their programme of reform. In assessing the implications of devolution during the Blair era for future central government policy this approach also helps to challenge tendencies in the literature to criticise the Blair Governments either for their perceived lack of genuine respect for autonomist pressures (see, for example, Nairn, 2000; Rawlings, 2003) or from a UK-wide perspective, their perceived negligence in the manner in which devolution and regional reform were introduced and developed in their early years (Trench, 2004; Jeffery & Wincott, 2006 & Jeffery, 2007).

Devolution, Regionalism and UK territorial politics in context

Bulpitt defined 'territorial politics' as 'that arena of political activity concerned with the relations between the central political institutions in the capital city and those interests, communities, political organisations and governmental bodies outside the central institutional complex, but within the accepted boundaries of the state, which possess, or

are commonly *perceived* to possess, a significant geographical or local/regional character' (Bulpitt, 1983, 52). This means that territorial politics is concerned with the relations between the UK centre and any political units that are territorially defined outside the centre. This suggests a major focus on the relations between the centre and those territories where in Rokkan and Urwin's (1982) terms territorial and membership space were less congruent than others, namely the political communities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, it also promotes an equal interest in relations between the centre and England, either in terms of its regional and local communities or as a stateless nation.

We should first focus on clarifying the main historical events and trends that create a framework for understanding territorial politics in the UK. Originally, the UK came together on the basis of a series of unions of England as the base nation with Wales, (1536), Scotland (1707) and Ireland (1800), revised to Northern Ireland (1921). Constitutionally, the UK governmental system rested on the sovereignty of the UK parliament, and there were a number of ways in which a British political system, based on British-wide parties, and a UK system of government were developed in the years after union. Having said this, we should remember that relations between the political centre at Westminster and the political communities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland always embraced a number of expressions of territorial differentiation. In Scotland this was reflected in the original conditions of the Act of Union. From the late 19th century this was furthered by the governmental and political trends that grew up around the introduction of the Scottish Office as a territorial office of central government.

The idea of the territorial office of state was replicated in Wales in 1964. The politics of Northern Ireland were of course most marked of all, resting on a continued division of unionism and nationalism, closely related in turn to the schism between protestant and catholic religion. In England, territorial politics based on regions or the nation was by far the least marked. While there have always been strong cultural loyalties to local and some regional identities, there was little in the way of political movements. England became a nation melded in its identity to that of Britain. During the 20th century, and largely as a result of the development of the Welfare state, there merely emerged a disparate swathe of regional field offices of central government and adhoc agencies.

The nature of the UK's territorial composition meant that the politics of territorial identity was always at the very least a latent feature of the state's politics. Nationalists expressed the desire to re-unite Northern Ireland with the rest of Ireland, and in Scotland and Wales the desire for independence. However, in the period after 1921 the UK centre did not seriously entertain the promotion of any of these nationalist projects. Instead, the granting of more political rights associated with national identities became associated with the policy option of devolution. This is an explicitly constitutional and legislative act which involves 'the transfer to a subordinate elected body, on a geographical basis, of functions at present exercised by ministers and Parliament' (Bogdanor, 1992:2). While this does not theoretically compromise the legal sovereignty of Parliament or the political imperative to sustain the unity of the UK state, devolution has been seen as a means of accommodating what Gladstone famously characterised as 'local patriotism' to the maintenance of the UK state. Nevertheless, despite consideration of 'home rule' in

Scotland and Wales in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the devolution debates of the 1960s and 1970s leading to referenda in 1979, prior to the 1998-1999 reforms, devolution had been employed only in Northern Ireland in the period 1921-1972.

In reflecting on the reform options for England, it has become commonplace recently to talk in terms of English regional devolution. Yet the term 'devolution' should only be properly used in relation to the option of creating an English Parliament or assembly, to which in constitutional terms the power to make primary or secondary law is devolved from Westminster. When analysts considered the regional question in England during the 20th century they more properly talked in terms of the development of regionalism, which was treated as a governmental process involving the 'formulation of public policy for, and the administration of policy in, large geographical units consisting usually of a number of neighbouring counties defined by geographical, sociological, administrative and political criteria' (Smith, 1964: 2). This may involve the development of an elected tier of government but not necessarily so; even if it does, it will focus on the development of executive capacity and not compromise the legislative powers of central government. In practice the development of English regionalism was frustrated by on the one hand the power of central government and on the other by county and urban government. Only for a relatively brief period between the mid 1960s and 1979 when regional planning councils were created across England was their experimentation with this kind of reform, and after 1979 Mrs Thatcher's first government soon put a stop to that.

Such was the backdrop to the modern era of UK territorial politics. By the mid 1990s, however, arguments for devolution and regional reform across the UK were much more forcefully put (for a fuller discussion of pressures for regional decentralisation see Keating, 1998). In the case of Scottish and Welsh devolution, there were three powerful cases. First, devolution was argued for as an appropriate response to national identity claims, against a backdrop of long-term critiques of the UK state, Imperial and relative economic decline and the rights of small nations in modern Europe generally, and within the EU specifically. Second, devolution was argued for on more immediate democratic grounds; that the experience of the Thatcher and Major Governments 1979-97 revealed the extent to which Scottish and Welsh interests and rights to representation could be overridden by a central UK government essentially elected on English votes and pursuing an unpopular form of neo-liberal state reform. Devolution could become the focus of a more inclusive and participatory form of governance, that in turn more effectively responded to local circumstances. Third, there was an instrumental case; that devolution would create strategic institutions that were functional to the promotion of Scottish and Welsh interests in a single European market, the creation of more co-ordinated economic development and spatial planning policies; and the representation of Scottish and Welsh interests in an increasingly multi-layered order of governance in the European Union. Of course, there was some convergence among all pro-devolutionists about the importance of all of these purposes. At the same time there were fundamental disagreements between pro-devolution nationalists who perceived devolution as a stepping stone to the identity claim of independence and those who were essentially revisionist Unionists,

seeing devolution as an essential element of better government for Scotland and Wales, but within a general decentralising vision of a reconstructed UK state.

In Northern Ireland, national identity claims, democratisation and instrumental purposes all played a role, but the significance of identity claims to the purpose of devolution were much sharper on all sides of the debate. For nationalists, devolution and the development of a North-South dimension to the governmental architecture was intended to be a stepping stone to a united Ireland; for unionists, devolution was a means of consolidating Northern Ireland's place in the union on a basis that was legitimate with both communities. In the case of England, instrumental purposes were ultimately the only basis for reform that had an influence. This reflected the fact that the momentum for territorial reform really only came at the elite level, and then primarily among institutional political and policy elites. Its consequence was that the reform movement in England focused on developing functionally useful regional governance; only for some did this necessitate elected regional government. Arguments for English national devolution or an English dimension to UK territorial government were virtually non-existent.

Arguments for reform were compounded by the actions of Blair's immediate predecessors in government. The approach of the Thatcher-Major Governments was to oppose devolution in Scotland and Wales, and support it only in Northern Ireland because of the special circumstances of sectarian inter-community violence. They were also opposed to the development of elected regional government. That said, there were

important differences between the Thatcher and Major periods. In particular, the Major Governments sought to find means to appease Scottish and Welsh identity claims within the existing UK system of government, celebrating the Union and promoting the roles of the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees within the House of Commons. Equally, the Major Government made more effort to achieve power-sharing devolution in Northern Ireland. With the Irish Government it issued the Downing Street Declaration in 1994, each state declaring their intention to renounce their selfish claims on Northern Ireland. The Major Government developed talks with Sinn Fein. In England, again in 1994 the Major Government introduced the Government Offices for the Regions (GORS) as a means of integrating the field operations of central departments.

Such measures had some effect. In the 1992 general election Scottish opinion appeared to check slightly in the intensity of desire for more far-reaching constitutional change. In 1994 there were paramilitary ceasefires on both sides in Northern Ireland. Yet, the Major strategy still appeared too little too late to have a fundamental impact on opinion in Scotland; in Wales a policy of territorial management was blown out of the water by the two years of John Redwood's ill-considered appointment as Welsh Secretary; in Northern Ireland the Major Government's support for the Unionist line that there should be no talks without IRA decommissioning led to republican frustration, the end of the IRA ceasefire and the stalling of the peace process; in the English regions the GORs were seen essentially as instruments of central control.

Consequently, in exploring the historical context to the Blair Governments engagement with territorial politics there were two principal points to emphasise. First, the territorial dimension was of long-standing integral importance to UK politics and therefore required attention in any overall government strategy. Secondly, in the recent past pressures for territorial reform had grown considerably and despite the intentions of the Major Governments to attend to the controversies of UK territorial politics, the legacy bestowed to the Blair Governments was one of inflamed territorial politics in each part of the UK, and the immediate problems of the failed policies of the Major Governments.

What approach did the Blair-led Labour Party develop in opposition to respond to these problems? Blair did not start with a blank piece of paper as he inherited a set of commitments in the Labour Party. Debates in the Scottish Labour Party had very decisively swung opinion in favour of devolution. Participation in the Scottish Constitutional Convention after 1989 also tied the development of Labour proposals into a broader front of opinion in favour of constitutional change. In 1995 the final report of the SCC was published, basically representing an agreed set of proposals between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Blair's hands were less tied in Wales than in Scotland, but here the clear support of John Smith, Blair's predecessor, for the development of devolution proposals left its legacy. From 1992 Ron Davies as shadow secretary of state organised moves towards a compromise in the Welsh party between strong advocates and sceptics that also resulted in proposals by 1995, albeit for secondary legislative devolution rather than the primary legislative devolution envisaged for Scotland. On Northern Ireland, Blair inherited a policy strongly sympathetic with Republican

arguments for gradual UK disengagement. Kevin McNamara, the party's spokesman took a position strongly critical of the Major Government's apparent prioritisation of Unionist interests. In England, policy was not developed. There remained advocates in the party of English regionalism, led by John Prescott, Blair's deputy leader and the author of the early 1980s alternative regional strategy, but such views had not yet defined policy.

It remains unclear whether Tony Blair himself was a principled advocate of devolution. Accounts of the 'court life' of Blair's premiership appear to indicate that he was not proactive on the matter and consequently devolution should not generally be seen as an integral part of the New Labour project as Blair himself defined it. Rather it should be seen as a policy pushed into the Blair programme by a variety of pressures. James Naughtie's *The Rivals* (2001) reveals the extent to which at the heart of Blair's party leadership and premiership was in fact an approach based on sharing power with Gordon Brown, and for Brown, devolution for Scotland was a non-negotiable part of the Labour Government's programme. It followed that if devolution was to be the policy for Scotland it should be for Wales. Blair had a more instinctive support for devolution in Northern Ireland, but he was profoundly uncomfortable with the Party's apparent bias in its sympathies with moderate nationalism. Alistair Campbell's recently published diaries confirm that Northern Ireland policy was more directly influenced by the New Labour project, championed by its four key authors – Blair, Gordon Brown, Peter Mandelson and Campbell – and the desire to move the party to a more centrist position generally and a more even-handed honest broker role in territorial politics. John Prescott, as deputy

leader was also in a position to press the case of regional reform in England (Campbell and Stott, 2007).

On this basis it is probably more accurate to suggest that except in the special case of Northern Ireland, Blair instinctively was of a piece with former Labour leaders like Neil Kinnock in not being a natural supporter of devolution. Other things being equal, a New Labour project would have been a British-wide one. Rather it was the case that the Blair leadership was penetrated by powerful representatives of territorial interests, notably Brown and Prescott, to ensure that devolution and regional reform became a policy more broadly applied. That Blair still had to wrestle with the issue before satisfying himself that it was consistent with his broad ambitions for a Labour Government is reflected in Campbell's note that having been to dinner with Roy Jenkins, the Liberal Democrat Peer and biographer of Gladstone, Blair appeared to have accepted the utility of a devolution policy in terms of the idea that 'power devolved was power retained'. Whatever aspirations there were for devolution out in the country, in Number 10 Downing Street it was ultimately intended to conform to assumptions of state stability.

Consequently, in the years 1994-1997 Blair confirmed his party's support for devolution and regional reform, producing a much more coherent and positively promoted set of policies than had been the case in the 1970s. At the same time they were clearly influenced by elements of caution and Burkean instincts to reform to conserve. Proposals for devolution developed in the Scottish and Welsh parties were endorsed; however, Blair insisted that they should be enacted only after gaining a mandate in separate referendum

votes. Partly, this was to avoid alienating any potential voters in the 1997 general election by promising a separate vote on devolution, but partly it was to require pro-devolutionists to seek a broad consensus in gaining legitimacy for the new institutions. On Northern Ireland, Blair replaced McNamara with Mo Mowlam, and defined Northern Ireland policy as one that would be largely free of party politics; Labour would support the Major Governments strategy of engaging with both unionism and radical republicanism in seeking power-sharing devolution, and indeed aspire to a detached high ground whenever Major's Conservative appeared too close to the Unionists. In each case devolution was intended to give expression to identity politics, improve governance and allow some latitude in political and policy choices; but it was expected that as power was devolved it would rebind the ties of the UK. Even in Northern Ireland Blair did not expect Irish reunification in his lifetime. In opposition, the Labour Party addressed England by suggesting that its governmental and functional needs would be better met by the introduction of regional development agencies and the introduction of regional chambers that in time, if popularly supported, could develop into elected regional government. It was hoped that devolution would not raise the English question too strongly and that such regional reforms would answer any pressures from that direction (see Bradbury and Mawson, 1997).

Obviously, the electoral landslide of 1997 and subsequent election victories in 2001 and 2005 meant that the Blair Governments saw much of their plans to fruition. Before discussing how this was done and with what implications, it is important to be explicit about the theoretical considerations which frame analysis and help to make sense of the

Blair record and legacy in this area. Jim Bulpitt's *Territory and Power*, published in 1983, suggested a number of arguments about UK central government management of territorial politics in the past. The suggestion here is that these arguments can provide a more systematic framework for reviewing UK central policies and can be taken forward in to analysis of the Blair period. Let us be clear first about Bulpitt's prospectus of assumptions about UK central governments in dealing with the issue of territorial politics.

First, the UK centre was a reluctant imperialist within the British Isles; its primary aspirations were global in scale and focused on high levels of success measured in economic, trade and strategic terms. Secondly, the UK having come together, while the centre sought territorial stability it did not wish to devote high levels of resource to its management. Consequently, except for selective central intervention, the centre sought strong local elite collaborators to whom effective responsibility for peripheral governance could be delegated. Third, as far as central governments were concerned UK territorial politics worked best when they were able to set the broad parameters for government and public policy across the state, and peripheral governors, whilst asserting some autonomy, governed successfully broadly within this framework and without causing the centre undue hassle. The classic expression of this structure of territorial politics was the 'dual polity' that persevered between the 1920s and 1960s: while central governments managed empire, a global trading policy, macro-economic policy and a welfare state, beyond the gates of Westminster and Whitehall, the protestant-led Stormont Parliament managed government in Northern Ireland, while keeping the lid on territorial disputes,

and the agents of administrative devolution and local government effectively managed many of the routine affairs of Scotland, Wales and England.

In Bulpitt's terms, however, the UK as a state, the high aspirations of central governments and a structure of territorial politics that combined limited difference with political stability were all highly vulnerable. The UK always had the potential to be 'the Balkans of Western Europe'. Bulpitt considered the potential for peripheral dissidence to be always potentially high and both Bulpitt and Derek Urwin (1982) considered political devolution a huge threat to the stability of the UK, in creating centrifugal dynamics that could undermine the state. It was to be avoided if at all possible, and only endorsed in the limited context of Northern Ireland because of the intensity of the territorial problems that had been experienced in the early 20th century. This meant in Bulpittian terms the territorial management of UK central governments up until the late 20th century had tended to put a high priority on two objectives. First, it had not sought uniform state consolidation for fear of peripheral backlash but instead a *relative tranquillity* in territorial politics; to allow the pursuit of high global state objectives while sustaining state territorial stability at home. Second, it was conditioned by awareness that industrialisation and urbanisation in the 19th century had generally unleashed the forces of social and economic change. As part of this, concerted territorial challenges had been unleashed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By the mid 1920s, except in the case of Ireland these challenges had receded. But for Bulpitt this was no more than a *suspended revolution* in the territorial politics of the UK. The question was if such challenges came again, and even if home rule or devolution had to be granted could

fundamental change still be avoided. Failure to sustain a relative tranquillity and the suspended revolution in territorial politics threatened state break up, or in order to preserve the state a reduction in central governments' global ambitions in order to become more immersed in domestic territorial politics, accepting the need to govern with high levels of inter-territory divergence and political instability.

Bulpitt ended his analysis by observing that in the second half of the 20th century it is evident that both the UK's relative decline and the efforts made by successive governments, notably the Thatcher Governments, to modernise the UK and arrest decline, placed huge pressures on relative tranquillity in UK territorial politics. The ratchet for UK central government was now to find some accommodation between state modernisation and reconfigured territorial stability. In reviewing the period after Bulpitt's work it is clear that Mrs Thatcher was an unquestionable failure in trying to do this. She barely tried. The Major Governments attempted to combine continued modernisation with a commitment of resources to resettle territorial politics within an essentially unreformed governmental system. This failed too. In this context, while it is clear that the Blair Government's commitment to devolution sprang from the influence of peripheral voices at court, we should see the character of Blair's personal approach to territorial politics betraying somewhat similar motives to Major; simply, the New Labour project had a revised approach to modernisation, and within that it had accepted the fact that an attempt had to be made to resettle territorial politics with the additional ratchet of devolved institutions. Indeed, the apparent circumstances of Blair's perception of the problems of territorial politics and stated goals in introducing devolution chime

remarkably well with Bulpitt's articulation of the underlying problematic of territorial politics for government from the Centre, the vulnerability of the state that made territorial reform highly likely and the concerns of the centre in managing any such reform and its consequences.

Consequently, in framing analysis and seeking to make sense of the Blair record and legacy in the area of territorial politics, it appears reasonable to adopt explicitly Bulpittian categories of analysis and criteria for success: how can our understanding of the introduction and development of devolution and regional reform be assisted by an awareness of centre ambitions to re-settle territorial politics and regain a relative tranquillity in centre-periphery relations not seen since the 1960s; and how successful were the Blair Governments in achieving the ambition of sustaining an essentially suspended revolution in territorial politics. In assessing this approach, it should be recognised from the start that such a project was inherently problematic, given the potential implications of devolution and regional reform for increasing rather decreasing territorial controversies. How did the Blair era fare?

The Blair Governments' policies on devolution and regional reform

In assessing the Blair Governments policies on devolution this section reviews seven issues: the original devolution settlements in 1997-99; the institutional design of the devolved institutions; public finance and inter-governmental relations; party management and intra-party relations; approaches to public policy; post-1999 constitutional development; and approaches to reform in England. Let us look at each in turn before

viewing their content in terms of Bulpittian prescriptions for centre ambitions in territorial management (for a fuller discussion of reform policies and their implications see Jeffery and Wincott, 2006; Trench, 2007; and Bradbury, 2007, forth).

First, all three of the devolution settlements were introduced in the period 1997-1999. It is important to note that devolution was introduced on an asymmetrical basis. The Scottish Parliament received primary legislative powers in all areas outside of those specifically reserved for the Westminster Parliament. This meant the Parliament gained the power to amend or overturn existing legislation in a wide range of domestic policy areas as well as legislate on new areas that came up and were outside Westminster's reserved areas. The Parliament was reliant on a block grant from Westminster for its annual expenditure but it did have the power to vary the level of income tax from the UK level by plus or minus 3p in the £. In contrast the National Assembly for Wales received secondary legislative powers on an itemised basis under specific policy headings. This meant that the Assembly had the power to pass statutory instruments and take executive decisions under specified existing primary law made at Westminster, and as revised under new primary law made at Westminster. It did not have the power to amend primary law or to act outside statutory powers specifically listed in the 1998 Government of Wales Act. The Assembly was also reliant on a block grant from Westminster for its annual expenditure, and did not have fiscal powers of its own. Devolution in Northern Ireland was different again. The Northern Ireland Assembly received a mix of primary legislative and executive powers and was equally reliant on a block grant from Westminster for its expenditure. The basic institutional structure, however, was highly

distinctive in including a North-South Ministerial council, necessitating its operation in a number of agreed areas of policy, as well as a British-Irish Council, providing for meetings between the UK and Irish governments and representatives of all of the devolved institutions. The 1998 Belfast Agreement stipulated that all three institutions had to be operational, or they all fell together.

Second, the character of devolution and internal institutional mechanisms of the devolved institutions was also developed from the start on a highly varied basis. In Scotland devolution was to the first minister, as the leader of Her Majesty's Government in the Scottish Parliament. In Wales devolution instead was to the Assembly as an institution. The Government of Wales Act at root was based on the concept of the Assembly as a corporate body; consequently, assembly ministers (originally termed secretaries) received their powers only at the delegation of the assembly as a whole. In both countries, mixed member proportional electoral systems, using simple plurality constituency seats and regional lists, were adopted under the stated aims of making the new institutions more representative and encouraging more inter-party co-operation. That said, in Scotland the proportion of list seats was 44%, virtually guaranteeing that no party unless it won something around 50% of the vote would win a majority in the Parliament. Meanwhile in Wales, the proportion of list seats was only 33%, and the expectation of the Labour Party was that in normal times, their long-standing domination of constituency seats would still give them a majority. Nevertheless, in both Scotland and Wales preparations for devolution focused on introducing standing orders and institutional arrangements that tried to put some flesh on 'new politics'; in the main this sought to enhance the powers of

committees in reaction to the perceived more party-based adversarial politics of Westminster.

In Northern Ireland, these issues were dealt with again in even more distinctive fashion. At the heart of the operation of the assembly was the need for all members to designate themselves as unionist or nationalist or neither. Devolution was then made to a diarchy of first minister and deputy first minister, comprising the nominees of the unionist and nationalist blocs, and the executive was then composed on a proportional basis between the different parties. Voting in the assembly was also defined according to rules that built in the need for unionist and nationalist consent. Such arrangements suggested that Northern Ireland devolution was expected to operate a consociational form of democracy as opposed to the majoritarian form in Scotland and Wales. With the added North-South and East-West institutions, this was characterised as consociationalism plus. Northern Ireland was also distinctive for adopting the STV electoral system, as well as a wide range on institutional features consistent with the needs of power sharing.

Third, the Blair Governments had to attend to the issue of relations with the devolved institutions. Government relations with these different experiments in devolution were in the first place simply to support their stable introduction. This involved somewhat different timescales. The introduction of devolution in Scotland and Wales were relatively straightforward. Following successful referenda in 1997 the first elections were held in 1999 and each four years since. In contrast, in Northern Ireland, despite a 'yes' referendum in 1998, the implementation of the Belfast Agreement was beset by

difficulties arising from tensions between unionist and nationalist parties, largely over differences in interpreting their obligations, and unionist demands that the IRA decommission its weapons and support the forces of law and order. The Assembly went through a period of halting existence until its most lengthy suspension between 2002 and 2006. The Blair Government, in concert with the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland parties, nevertheless, stuck with the aim of re-convening power-sharing devolution and ultimately secured a breakthrough following the St Andrew Agreement in late 2006. By this time IRA decommissioning had been acknowledged; Sinn Fein declared its support for the police and the Democratic Unionist Party agreed to go into power sharing government. In May 2007, a DUP-Sinn Fein led executive finally appeared to bear out the Governments aim to see a locally agreed approach to devolution in place, at least for the foreseeable future.

The Blair Governments then put in place a machinery of inter-governmental relations that in most important respects endured until 2007. On the key issue of territorial finance, the decision was taken to continue with the system of allocating territorial finance on a block grant basis that had pertained with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices in to the way in which the devolved institutions would receive their money. The population and expenditure based Barnett formula was also retained as a basis for determining block grant allocations. In the circumstances of reasonably buoyant public finances, favourable comprehensive spending reviews and a new round of EU regional funding, public finance allocations to the devolved institutions were in practice very favourable during the Blair years.

The unity of the British civil service was retained, and new memorandums of understanding and concordats were introduced as a basis of working relations between civil servants. The Northern Ireland civil service had long been separate, although senior officials continued to observe developments in the British civil service very closely. At the political level, territorial secretaries of state with cabinet rank were retained with a small staff to manage the political relations between central government and the devolved institutions. From 2003 these positions were continued but in the case of Scotland and Wales were now to done on a part-time basis by cabinet ministers who happened to be from Scotland and Wales but who were in the cabinet to undertake another brief. The Joint Ministerial Council was established as a basis for ministerial-level discussions between central and devolved ministers, and the judicial committee of the Privy Council was given the role of arbitrator of any disputes that occurred. In practice, early initiatives in central government to set up staff units with an explicit brief on devolution were relatively quickly downgraded, and the operation of MOU and concordats entered the informal dealings of civil servants across the UK rather than creating any sort of formal framework for relations as if between different governments. Similarly, the formal machinery of ministerial relations was barely used and there were no notable disputes. A culture of regular but informal relations between ministers of territorial offices as well as other central departments and those of the devolved administrations was no doubt helped by Labour ministers being in office at both the UK and Scottish/Welsh levels up to 2007.

Fourth, there was also the issue of the Blair premiership's interest in party terms in inter-governmental relations and the political management of the new devolved institutions. In Northern Ireland, this took a distinctive course in that there were no state-wide parties. Ideally, the Blair premiership sought to deal with and build up the relatively moderate unionist and nationalist parties, the UUP and the SDLP, but there was always an awareness that Sinn Fein had to be carried for any developments to occur. As time went on, it was clear that electoral trends in the two community blocs moved in favour of the more hard-line parties, the DUP and Sinn Fein. While this suggested that gaining a compromise that included DUP leader, Ian Paisley, would be difficult, the Blair strategy ultimately was agnostic on which parties were being dealt with as long as they could be trusted to lead their communities in accepting whatever deals were agreed to get the assembly up and running and maintain relatively stable governance.

In contrast in Scotland and Wales, there was an immediate vested interest in securing Labour party success. The approach of Blair and the British Labour leadership to the first elections in 1999 was to have extensive involvement. This covered an actual or perceived strong role in leadership and candidate selection, manifesto development and management both of electoral strategy and campaign. However, after 1999 this close interest subsided. In Wales the retreat of the central party was strongly associated with Welsh party resentments at having Alun Michael 'imposed' as their leader, and the unexpectedly poor result in the 1999 Assembly election. The Scottish and Welsh Labour parties gained much greater autonomy over leadership and candidate recruitment procedures, party branding, manifesto and policy development and campaign direction.

Given the debacle of 1999, the party in Wales arguably made more use of this autonomy to rhetorically assert 'Welsh Labour' and the 'clear red water' between its politics and that of Blair's New Labour. But in neither Scotland nor Wales in the 2003 elections was the hand of the Blair leadership present. Only in the Scottish Parliament election in 2007 did the Blair leadership noticeably intervene in devolved Labour politics. Faced with polling evidence that suggested the SNP could become the largest party, both Blair and Gordon Brown took a high profile role in supporting the Scottish Labour campaign.

Fifth, the Blair Governments also had to develop an approach to the programmes and policies developed by the devolved administrations. This was also generally permissive. There were points of friction. For example, the Scottish Parliament's headline grabbing decisions to adopt different policies on student funding in higher education and care for the elderly very clearly cut across UK Labour Government policies in these areas. In each case, the Treasury made it clear that there would be no additional funding from central government to pay for these policy choices; they would have to be honoured through reorienting budget expenditure on other items. Equally, the divergence in approaches to the National Health Service and problems in health care performance in Scotland and Wales both caused Labour MPs considerable anxiety in the run up to the 2005 UK general election. In the main, however, the Blair Government at the UK level was not perceived to interfere in the policies pursued by the Labour and coalition administrations in Edinburgh and Cardiff. In the Scottish case there was a clear legislative autonomy to pursue whatever policies they wished to within the competences and finances they had. In the Welsh case, primary legislation drawn up in Westminster

generally left discretion in its implementation in Wales. The Welsh Assembly was successful in bidding for Welsh-only bills or bill clauses at Westminster to introduce such measures as distinctive approaches to NHS organisation and the post of a children's commissioner, subsequently replicated across the UK. The Scottish Executive also regularly used Sewel Motions at Westminster to gain the application of England and Wales primary law to Scotland on issues where powers were in fact devolved but the Executive wished to opt in to the UK level legislation. At such times the devolved institutions appeared to enjoy the best of both worlds.

Sixth, the Blair Governments then faced the issue of further constitutional development. The significance of this issue was circumscribed to some extent by the relative lack of immediate pressures. In Scotland, for example, while debates emerged primarily about further fiscal powers it did not develop into a concerted campaign. Only in 2005-2006 did Jack McConnell, the then Labour First Minister, feel sufficiently pressed to say that Labour would consider the matter internally. Even then, the conclusion was that the Scottish Labour Party would go into the 2007 election pledged to maintaining the status quo. In Northern Ireland, the DUP campaigned for the abandonment of the Belfast Agreement, but ultimately the Blair Government was faced with the pressure of finding a compromise between such DUP demands on the one hand and those of Sinn Fein for the application of the Agreement in full on the other. The resulting St Andrews Agreement focused on the political compromises of agreeing to share power by the DUP and agreeing to support the police by Sinn Fein, but essentially became a reassertion of the Belfast Agreement with some revisions, originally arrived at in the so called

comprehensive agreement of December 2004, which reassured unionists on the controls to be placed on such matters as individual ministerial behaviour. In neither Scotland nor Wales were the Blair Governments concertedly pressed to reopen the devolution settlements of 1997-99.

In Wales there was more pressure for change. As a result of the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition arrangements in 2000 a commission was appointed to look into both the powers and electoral arrangements of the assembly. The Richard Report, published in 2004, advocated a move towards primary powers and a switch to an STV electoral system. The pressures on the Blair Government that arose from this were, however, very limited. Essentially, a response was fashioned within the Wales Labour Party, led by Rhodri Morgan, the Assembly First Minister, and Peter Hain, the Secretary of State, which resulted in the Government of Wales Act 2006. This reflected well the consensus that the concept of the Assembly as a corporate body should be abandoned and devolution instead should be to the First Minister, who was then accountable to the Assembly. Arrangements were made to apply the general principle of Henry VIII powers of discretion in implementing Westminster legislation in Wales, a new fast track procedures for using orders in council to give the Assembly powers in new areas, and to allow for a referendum on primary legislative powers if there was a 2/3 majority in the Assembly and Westminster agreed. Only on the issue of retaining the existing electoral system, with the revision of allowing only single candidacy for constituency or list seats but not both, rather than moving to STV was Labour's response significantly out of step with the ambitions of the Richard Report. It is not apparent that Blair was that closely

involved with this. The development of devolution in Wales had clearly proved to be more of 'a process than an event' than in other parts of the UK, but its substance in the 2006 Act was a revision of the 1998 Act rather than any root and branch departure. Any move to primary powers would have to await a further referendum.

Finally, it might be expected that the Blair Government would be exercised over the implications of devolution in creating an English question. To answer any English resentment, as we have seen, the Labour party had fashioned an approach of regional reform while in opposition. This was duly implemented after 1997 with the creation of regional development agencies, regional chambers and in London a new greater London authority with an elected mayor. Central department relations with the structures of regional governance were characterised by more routine central interventions, but noticeably when referenda for elected regional government were promised in the North-East, North-West and Yorkshire and Humberside, they had to be abandoned in the latter two because of the low levels of support recorded in opinion polls, and in the North-East when the referendum was held in November 2004 there was a devastating defeat. A more concerted campaign for a different deal for England was promoted in the 2005 General Election and after by the Conservative Party. This raised the significance of the perceived unfairness of the West Lothian Question, and the need to develop some way of allowing only English MPs to vote for laws only affecting England in the House of Commons. The Conservative party more generally saw English regional institutions as an expensive expansion of government. Latterly, public opinion polls and UK press coverage has raised the spectre of English resentments at devolution, notably on the

different deal for university students north and south of the Scottish border with England. In response to these pressures, the Blair Government basically remained fairly resolute. In offering referenda on elected government it basically tested the waters of what English regional publics really wanted; in concluding that this went a step too far, they nevertheless sustained the more developed structures of regional governance as a reflection of what political and policy elites in the English regions wanted. They refused to give any oxygen to the raising of English resentments by addressing a political debate about the rights of England. In a speech in early 2007 Lord Falconer, the secretary of state for constitutional affairs, resolutely ruled out any response to the campaign for English votes for English Laws, or potentially an English Parliament, stating that giving succour to English nationalism was the clearest way to destabilising the Union.

Taking all of these issues together, the approach of the Blair Governments appears to have been characterised by four principal features. First, there was an emphasis on not providing a prescription of devolution that could in any way be defined as a central imposition; devolution was done on an asymmetrical basis precisely because each set of proposals was designed by political actors within the respective territories. The Blair Governments essentially implemented what had been agreed within the respective territories and therefore carried a territorial legitimacy. In constitutionally developing the devolved institutions and their powers thereafter this approach of following 'local origination' was maintained. Secondly, in developing a system of financial and administrative inter-governmental relations, the Blair Governments leant heavily on the traditional 'automasticities' of the pre-devolution era: the financial rules of the Barnett

formula and the bureaucratic rules of civil service ethos as they had embraced territorial departments. They were revised for a new era but did not require any programmatic engagement with devising new systems, which might necessitate problematic discussions of first principles regarding the rights of distinct political institutions. Thirdly, the Blair Governments in its 'party' face embarked on central intervention only selectively, primarily in the start-up phase of devolution in Scotland and Wales and in moments of possible territorial crisis such as in Scotland in 2007. Otherwise, substantial latitude was given to Scottish and Welsh party organisations and devolved executives to follow their own wishes within the powers provided for them under devolution. In this light, such interventions as did occur, appeared more like occasional gunboat diplomacy that evidence of a systematic intent to meddle in devolved affairs. Finally, English regional reform obviously did constitute a desire to respond to an English case for better governance and public policy, and to dissipate any resentment about devolution elsewhere in the UK. But at root, the Blair Governments prioritised the preservation of the union over giving succour to an English nationalism that might itself inspire separatist desires in England or in turn inspire separatist pressures elsewhere.

This assessment of the Blair Governments record is generally consistent with the application of a Bulpittian rationale to use devolution to resettle territorial politics, and in its management to try and facilitate a stable duality in political activities at the UK and devolved levels. Devolution, of course, presented much more difficult circumstances for central government to stay out of close territorial management if it was to retain state stability, but in this period it would appear that the Blair Governments sought to pull the

trick off; granting the new devolved elites a relative autonomy to manage their own affairs thus retaining their own autonomy to focus on the main high ambitions of the New Labour Project and the UK's global roles. While there were problems, primarily in making the historic achievement of power-sharing devolution in Northern Ireland, the Blair Governments in the early years of devolution at least successfully stuck to the employment of 'traditional' centre autonomy methods to attempt to manage the potentially deeply disruptive influence of devolution on UK territorial politics in such a way as to allow the UK centre to get on with its main preoccupations. Such an approach was intent on re-establishing a relative tranquillity in territorial politics and maintaining the suspended revolution, thus keeping a genuine need to reorder the priorities of UK central government off the agenda. The question of course is how successful such an approach can be judged to have been by the time Tony Blair left office.

The impact of devolution and regional reform on UK territorial politics

In assessing the impact of devolution on territorial politics there are many relevant indicators. Three relate to measuring achievements against original purposes: the extent to which devolution and regionalism reflect identity claims, progress democratisation, and meet the instrumental purposes of better governance. Others focus on the development of inter-governmental relations and relations within multi-level governance; public opinion, territorial and state loyalties, elite opinion, territorial and state loyalties, constitutional development, the response of England to devolution and regionalism, and in turn the impact of English politics and policy on devolution and regionalism, the

nature and implications of policy variation, and the extent and character of territorial political mobilisation.

Empirical evaluation of impacts tends to lead to the conclusion that territorial politics after devolution has indeed mainly been characterised by stability and tranquillity relative to the pre-1997 period (see again Jeffery and Wincott, 2006; Trench, 2007; Bradbury, 2007 forth). Events in 2007 right at the end of the Blair Governments have potentially cast such findings in a new light. The 2007 elections in Scotland and Wales both put nationalist parties into government. The accord in Northern Ireland following the St Andrews Agreement resulted in Sinn Fein going into government with the full acceptance of the DUP. It is difficult at this point to judge how significant these developments are. They may all suggest the potential for transformative political change. However, in Scotland and Wales, for example, the arrival of nationalist parties in government may be better seen primarily in terms of swing of the pendulum politics against Labour, the relative weakness currently in these two countries of the Conservatives, and the necessity of semi-proportional electoral systems requiring coalition politics. In Northern Ireland Sinn Fein's position is heavily constrained by the opposing pressures of the DUP. Evidence-based analyses of the Blair legacy still primarily stress continuity and relative stability in state territorial politics, with a raised eyebrow to the implications of 2007. .

Interpretations of these findings and prognoses for the future, however, run along a number of different lines. These can be broadly characterised into two groups. First, there are autonomist critiques that highlight the highly conservative nature of the

devolution settlements, and, set against expectations of greater change, the very limited impacts that have occurred since 1999 (see for example, Nairn, 2000, Rawlings, 2003). Campaigns for a proper 'modernisation' of territorial politics have crystallised in Scotland in a case for a financially autonomous/responsible Parliament and with the SNP in government the beginnings of a debate about independence; in Wales for an end to the 'demeaning second class settlement' that resulted in an assembly in 1998; and in England the need for regional democratisation and an end to the co-ordination problems that arise from there being three agencies in each region. Of course, autonomists consider the future of devolution and regionalism from a perspective of seeking to exploit opportunities where they arise.

Secondly, there are broadly liberal reformist analyses that from a UK-wide perspective characterise devolution as an expression of a constitutional tradition consistent with gradual British political development. It provides for considerable continuity in governmental practice but at the same time provides a safety valve for significant change. Analysts highlight the development already of variations in party systems, voting behaviour and policy variation across the UK as significant demonstrations of the greater dynamism that territorial reform has already stimulated in regional capacity and as laboratories of experimentation the knock-on effects the devolved institutions are having on the general state of the UK. Such analyses, nevertheless, generally emphasise the adhoc and un-co-ordinated nature of the Blair Governments reforms, and that the problems of this approach were generally hidden from view during the Blair era because of Labour power at UK and devolved levels, a relatively strong economy and the fact of

the devolved institutions being at an early stage of development. At some point a more formal approach is required, which appears to coalesce around the likelihood of the UK embracing a more formal set of federal arrangements (see, for example, Trench, 2004, Jeffery, 2007; Jeffery and Wincott, 2006)).

Of course, it might be expected that autonomists would press for more not less change. From the perspective of UK central government the second strand of analysis is more pertinent. The case for the Blair legacy being a problematic one on devolution has been most strongly made by Charlie Jeffery (2007). He argues that while devolution and regionalism may have been largely characterised by stability and quiescence in their first ten years, there are inevitable territorial conflicts ahead, which those in favour of more devolution and regionalism, or indeed independence can exploit, and to which those who would wish to maintain political stability in the UK need to adopt an approach of considerable vigilance. His analysis suggests that the UK's successful bedding down of devolution and regionalism largely has been the result of good fortune. From a long-term perspective there are key problems that need to be addressed if the balance of sub-state autonomy and state stability is to prosper. These revolve around: first, Labour's piecemeal development of the policy of devolution; and secondly; the manner in which it has resulted in a lopsided state. In his opinion piecemeal development has meant that has been no integrated approach to charting what devolution means for the future of the UK, meaning that it leaves a great deal of uncertainty. 'Piecemeal answers to specific empirical questions do not appear ..to provide the basis for an enduring devolution settlement' (p.95). The idea of devolution creating a lopsided state is then equally

significant for leaving England unaddressed. He concludes that England is 'not just an elephant compared to the much smaller occupants of the UK boat, but also an inadequately tethered and potentially wilful version of that beast' (p.96), further undermining the stability of future territorial politics (see also Hazell, 2006).

These problems raise seven open ended questions for resolving what he considers to be the 'unfinished business of devolution' to which he provides seven answers. These are as follows. First, he asks whether the UK's system of inter-governmental relations is fit for purpose, and responds that this is clearly not the case. There is a need to construct a more formal system of inter-governmental relations. Second, he asks what do the public want from devolution. His answer is that they appear to want devolution mixed with a stable UK, but centrifugal pressures may become stronger unless the UK develops 'a set of normative underpinnings that articulate, contain and balance the tensions between centrifugal and centripetal strands of public opinion'. Third, if such normative underpinnings are to be developed, he asks who will take on this project of explaining what the UK is for after devolution. In the run up to the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections this issue was taken up most consistently by Gordon Brown in a series of speeches articulating the values of Britishness. However, Jeffery's complaint is that this represents a very limited source of debate; there is a need for a wider debate at the UK level, covering the media, think tanks, etc if collective judgements that are there in public opinion about the need for a balance between centrifugal and centripetal pressures in the UK are to be consolidated and 'find an institutional expression' (p.100). Related to this Jeffery's fourth question concerns the limits of asymmetrical devolution. Currently,

without normative underpinnings of what the UK state is for after devolution, no clear limits are being set, creating the context for continued constitutional tinkering without reference to the broader implications for the UK as a whole.

Jeffery then asks how will the making of policy for England relate to devolution, and will spillovers from English policy destabilise devolution. He concludes that policies made in England, such as on higher education, health and immigration have had effects on what policy can be conducted in the devolved nations/regions. They can and do lead to resentments which can 'create, or reinforce, territorial lines of conflict in UK politics' (p.102). Consequently, to stabilise devolution over the long-term devolved government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland does not to be insulated from decisions for England. This requires, in particular, a focus on reforming the system of territorial finance to make it less based on expenditure decisions made in England and anchored instead on an assessment of needs in each of the territories. In such a context, the devolved institutions could more clearly make their own policy decisions related to their own needs and thus reduce these destabilising spillover effects. Conversely, Jeffery asks sixthly, what are the limits to territorial policy variation? The public apparently want uniform standards in public service and yet policy variation may over time erode a common sense of citizenship that is related to common policy entitlements. There is a need to consider instruments to set common state-wide policy standards that find a balance between these public expectations and the divergence potential integral in devolution.

Finally, Jeffery asks will territorial cleavages inevitably become subject to political mobilisation? They have not done so far largely because the Labour Party has been able to manage relationships at UK and devolved levels. Nevertheless, there are signs of a new politicisation of Anglo-Scottish rivalry and the English dog barking through the Conservative party. Without serious attention to creating better answers to the first six questions, when there is a divergence of party control between the two levels there is a serious possibility of more significant political mobilisation.

Overall, Jeffery concludes that the UK has not followed approaches adopted in other states such as Canada, Germany, Belgium and Spain that might manage the tensions between centrifugal and centripetal pressures in state development more formally and robustly over the long-term. He recommends that the UK needs to move away from its risky adhockery and to learn from comparative experience. It is in effect a statement that the UK centre under Blair has been negligent in bedding down devolution for the long-term, and in leaving a problematic legacy for his successor there is a pressing need for more formal inter-governmental relations, central intervention to create the normative underpinnings for the anchoring of devolution in a reconfigured UK state, and central intervention to clarify the financial and policy realms of central and devolved government while setting rules for the limits of divergence.

Jeffery's analysis of the Blair record and its legacy is undoubtedly useful but is open to a number of critiques if one returns to a Bulpittian reading of the historic nature of the territorial politics challenge in the UK, a reacquaintance with centre ambitions and an

appreciation of appropriate strategies for territorial management in the context of introducing devolution. This suggests a different prospectus for seeing devolution as an exercise in state modernisation that while seeking to enhance sub-state autonomy is consistent with the continuation, renewal and indeed improvement of the UK state as a whole. .

Four points deserve particular consideration. First, given the nature of territorial challenges in the UK and the inherent vulnerability of the state, recipes for the long-term central imposition of authority and prescriptions for the rules of governance in each territory is fraught with danger. Jeffery's analysis contains problematic assumptions of the containment of territorial challenges by the centre setting norms, the readiness and capability of the centre to devote resources on an extensive and long-term basis to detailed territorial management to enforce them, and of the potential for the normative underpinnings of an integrative unionism to be developed at the UK level. The Blair Governments approach to introducing devolution produced a relative tranquillity in territorial politics precisely because of its focus on local origination in each territory. From a central Whig perspective this produced adhockery and incoherence; from a Bulpittian perspective on territorial management it was a lesson in peripheralising the problems and legitimation of reform in each territory to local actors, thereby freeing the centre from the difficulties of imposing solutions but also arriving at workable answers.

Secondly, in the context of more difficult times for central government when autonomist or secessionist parties have power in the devolved institutions, the machinery of more

formal intergovernmental relations can be relatively easily re-activated. But in the face of concerns about territorial threats to the UK, it is logical that central policy should continue to seek to allow local unionist answers to these challenges, and that compromises between centripetal and centrifugal pressures within the UK are worked out not between centre and periphery but between actors within the periphery. It was very likely that such challenges should occur at some time, and it would be wrong to blame the Blair government for their relatively early arrival. Issues such as the Iraq war no doubt did not help the Labour Party in the Scottish and Welsh elections in 1997, but the ineffectiveness of the McConnell-led party in Scotland and the failures of the Morgan-led campaign in Wales bore the brunt of the responsibility. Such situations can and almost certainly will be the catalyst for the emergence of new strains of debate among pro-UK devolutionists in these countries, providing a more legitimate basis for normative underpinnings for the limits of devolution.

Third, in dealing with the lop-sided state and the English question it is questionable whether the Blair Governments could have done other than they have, without being perceived to impose other unpopular policies on England. To make a marked departure from this approach opens up many problems. To reform territorial finance onto a needs basis, rather than advantaging the devolved institutions and clarifying their policy realms more distinctly from England, is likely in each case to lead to a reduction in public finance, most markedly in Scotland. Given the size of England, it is generally unrealistic to assume that policies chosen for England are not likely to have some knock-on effect on other parts of the UK. Given this, it may be better to simply assume lop-sidedness, for

the devolved institutions to box clever on a system of territorial finance, that unreformed may advantage them, and for everyone, including the English, to accept that given that UK policy has spillover effects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, that Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs should continue to have some voting influence over decisions taken at a UK level for England.

This brings us finally, to the English question. In the original development of the Union Bulpitt assessed the English as bystanders to deals done between the UK centre and political actors in their territorial acquisitions. England was nearly always disadvantaged by these deals, but it did not matter because English interests taken on their own were well looked after, and it was felt that little encouragement should be given to English resentments. Has anything much changed? In doing the new deals of devolution, the Blair Governments sought to provide tolerable answers to the English question. To seek to provide any more serious answers may bring a more sophisticated substance to providing for England; alternatively, however, it threatens to encourage the assertion of English nationalism. Relative tranquillity in UK territorial politics always was based upon a prioritisation of British unionism over English nationalism; the same is the case now. Just as the next phase of territorial management according to a Bulpittian prescription needs to sustain the peripheralisation of territorial debates on balancing centripetal and centrifugal pressures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to territorial actors in those territories, then so too would debate of the English question be assisted by the emergence in England of unionist respondents to those voicing national resentments.

Overall, the centre clearly has had a role, and will continue to have one, in gently promoting a unionist framework, but it is one that nevertheless has needed to be respectful of devolution, developing the underpinnings of a stable UK from the bottom up, with the help in Bulpittian terms of effective 'local elite collaborators', that against further territorial challenges, simply need to become more effective. In these terms we should understand the UK as a state that historically has developed on a somewhat different basis to those which Jeffery seeks to compare the UK, and from which he suggests it should learn. The centrifugal pressures of the UK periphery are potentially very strong and strong central intervention is likely to incite more challenges not less. The UK was a reluctant domestic imperialist that only reconciled itself to this role by adopting satisficing centre autonomy strategies while pursuing higher economic and global governing aspirations. The Blair Governments implicitly followed this approach even in the context of introducing devolution and in large measure were successful in achieving a balance between greater sub-state autonomy and a relative tranquillity in the territorial politics of the state as a whole. In these terms the long awaited revolution in UK territorial politics has continued to be put off. The Blair legacy is to provide more lessons than problems in pointing to the approach to be taken to maintaining those objectives in the future. Indeed, following Bulpittian assumptions in the modern age, it is worth continuing with such strategies even, or perhaps particularly if territorial challenges become overwhelming, as UK central government, if it cannot retain an integrated state would rather have an amicable divorce and territorial stability on a transformed state basis than new enmities.

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