



Future Identities: Changing identities in the UK – the next 10 years

DR8: National Identity and Constitutional Change

John Curtice

**National Centre for Social Research
Strathclyde University**

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on national identity and constitutional change. It was commissioned to address the following questions on behalf of the Foresight project

How might devolution (and other possible constitutional changes) affect notions of identity in the next ten years? How might changes in the EU (and internationally) affect notions of identity in the next ten years?

In addressing these questions this paper focuses primarily on (i) national identity and (ii) the implications of the pattern of national identity for how people think the UK should be governed. Those who share in common an adherence to a particular national identity often share too a willingness to accept the authority of a particular state and an associated set of governing arrangements. Conversely, those who do not share a common national identity often disagree about the state to which they would prefer to belong. Thus the presence or otherwise of a common national identity may be regarded as central to the prospects for stable, legitimate government, in the absence of which it may be difficult for government to achieve much at all.

The paper does two things. First of all, it examines what impact, if any, the constitutional changes that have actually taken place in recent years have had on national identity. Thereafter it considers the apparent implications of our findings for what might be expected to happen during the next ten years.

Constitutional change – or indeed any other form of change – can potentially have two very distinct impacts on national identity. The more obvious is that it induces a change in the incidence of adherence to a particular national identity; people might, for example, become more likely to regard themselves as British. However, the implications of any such development for policy makers depends on the degree to which adherence to a British identity is inked with a particular set of preferences as to how the UK should be governed – such as, whether or not Scotland should become an independent country, or whether the UK should continue to remain part of the European Union. Thus to assess the significance of any changes in the incidence of national identity, we need also to look at the relationship between national identity and constitutional preferences.

At the same time, however, we need to be aware that the presence and strength of any link between national identity and constitutional preference is not necessarily immutable. Rather than simply affecting the incidence of adherence to a particular identity, constitutional change might instead help bring about a change in the views of those with a particular identity as to how they should be governed. For example, those who feel Irish or Scottish might become less inclined to feel that their distinctive sense of national identity should necessarily be reflected in distinct or separate political institutions. Any such change could have profound implications for any attempt to secure a constitutional settlement that has widespread legitimacy. Thus as its second task this paper also looks at whether recent constitutional change has had any discernible impact on the relationship between national identity and people's preferences for how they should be governed.

We begin by describing briefly the key constitutional changes that have occurred within the UK and within the European Union in the last two decades or so. In so doing we outline what impact these developments might have been expected to have had on national identity and its relationship with people's constitutional preferences. We then turn to our empirical analysis and

examine how far these expectations have been realised in practice, before considering the apparent implications of our findings for policy making in the next ten years.

2. Constitutional Change in the UK

There is no doubt that national identity and the relationship between it and people's constitutional preferences is of particular interest and importance in the UK. The state consists of three separate nations, England, Scotland and Wales, together with a fourth territory, Northern Ireland, that was separated from the remainder of Ireland when it left the UK in 1922. The links between the UK's four components have been in place for a long time – Wales was fully incorporated with England as long ago as the early 16th century, Scotland opted to join the Union in 1707, while the whole of Ireland did so in 1801 after having already long been one of the territories claimed by the English crown. Nevertheless, important differences have persisted. All four have their own distinct religious settlement. Meanwhile, Wales has its own indigenous language that is still quite widely spoken (and is now officially recognised), Scotland has its own legal system, while, following the 1922 settlement Northern Ireland has always had its own separate system of devolved government. Such differences would appear to signal the potential for debate and controversy about how each of part of the UK should be governed.

Such debate has certainly become commonplace in recent years. It has proved most obvious and pressing in Northern Ireland, where disputes about how the territory was and should be governed occasioned serious civil strife over a thirty year period, beginning in the late sixties. Some, many of them from families that could trace their origins back to Scotland and who maintained the Presbyterianism of their forefathers, were very keen to remain part of the UK, albeit with a substantial measure of devolution. However, others, almost all of an Irish and Catholic background, wanted Northern Ireland to leave the UK and become part of an independent, united Ireland (Fahey *et al.*, 2005). Meanwhile, in both Scotland and Wales the late sixties saw nationalist parties become notable electoral forces for the first time, and in both cases this nationalist movement aspired to their country becoming an independent state, separate from the rest of the UK (Lynch, 2002; McAllister, 2001).

In all three cases this debate and controversy resulted in the late 1990s in substantial constitutional change. New forms of devolved government were introduced, each of them an attempt to recognise the presence of distinct national identities and constitutional preferences while maintaining the framework of a single UK state. Between them they potentially provide valuable insight into the possible impact that constitutional change can have on the incidence and character of national identity.

In Scotland a new devolved Parliament was created in 1999 with primary law making powers over most domestic affairs other than taxation and welfare benefits. In Wales a new devolved Assembly was established; initially this body only had secondary legislative powers, but it too has evolved into a body with primary legislative powers for the (rather narrower as compared with Scotland) areas for which it is responsible. Thus, in both cases the country now has its own devolved government responsible to a separately elected body instead of, as previously, a territorial central government department accountable to the UK Parliament at Westminster. Meanwhile, although as we have already noted Northern Ireland had enjoyed devolution as long as 1922, in 1998 a new devolution settlement was agreed that afforded much greater recognition and protection of the rights and aspirations of the province's minority nationalist/Catholic community. After many fits and starts, in 2007 the new settlement finally secured the assent and full participation of all of the principal political parties in the province, with governmental office as well as legislative seats being shared proportionally between those parties.

Thus, for the first time ever since being part of the UK Scotland and Wales now have their own distinct *national* political institutions. These institutions could potentially be regarded as symbols of a distinctive sense of national identity, and thereby perhaps serve to underpin and promote adherence to that identity. In short, we might anticipate that the advent of devolution may have served to increase the proportion of people in those two parts of the UK that feel Scottish or Welsh respectively, while the proportion who acknowledge they are British has fallen. Meanwhile, we might wonder what implications any such development might have had on support for even more radical constitutional change, and above all on support for leaving the UK and becoming an independent state. Certainly the electoral success of the Scottish National Party in devolved elections in 2007 and 2011 means that people in Scotland are now to be given the opportunity in autumn 2014 to say whether or not they wish to leave the UK.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland now enjoys a very different form of devolution than it did previously. It is one that was agreed by and has secured the full participation of Sinn Fein, a nationalist party that would ultimately prefer a reunited Ireland and which once was the political wing of the principal organisation fighting for an end to British rule in the province during the thirty years of 'Troubles', the Irish Republican Army. At the same time the Republic of Ireland has dropped its claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland. We might wonder whether these developments have served to reduce the number of people in the territory who regard themselves as Irish, or at least to have reduced the level of support for a united Ireland amongst those who still say they are Irish. At the same time, the new devolution settlement is one that now sees Protestant politicians of all hues sharing power with nationalist politicians, a development that perhaps might instigate less of an insistence amongst Protestants on asserting a distinctive sense of Britishness, replaced perhaps by a greater sense of a Northern Irish identity that might be shared in common with some Catholics.

England has witnessed much less in the way of constitutional change, at least so far as new forms of territorial government are concerned. The only developments of note were the (re-)introduction in 2000 of a form London-wide government, in the form of a Mayor and Assembly, and an attempt to enhance the visibility and accountability of local government by introducing directly-elected Mayors more widely, an initiative that, however, was repeatedly rejected by local voters and is currently in place in only 17 local authorities. Meanwhile, an attempt at introducing a limited form of elected regional government was halted when the first such proposal was rejected by voters in the North East in 2004 (Sandford, 2009).

However, we should not presume that constitutional change elsewhere in the UK has simply passed voters in England by. The creation of distinct national political institutions in Scotland and Wales may have served to make people in England more aware of the distinction between Britain and England, and thus perhaps more likely to say they were English rather than British. Some might have been prompted to wonder too whether England should not have its own national political institutions – or at least ask whether MPs from outside of Scotland should now be able to vote on laws that only apply to England. Or we might wonder whether, despite the outcome of the 2004 referendum, people have become more aware of having a distinctive regional identity that they would like to see expressed politically. In short we should investigate whether the advent of devolution elsewhere has had an impact on identity in England too, and whether expressions of English identity have come to be associated with a distinctive outlook towards how their country should be governed.

3. Developments in Europe

As well as being a multi-national state the UK is itself a member of a multi-state community, the European Union (EU). EU law can take precedence over any law passed in the UK, and in some areas EU legislation can be passed even though it might have been opposed by some member countries. Membership thus implies a willingness to accept the right of EU institutions to make laws that apply to the UK, a willingness that might be thought to be more likely to be forthcoming if someone acknowledged an adherence to a European identity either instead of or alongside any national identity they might have. Meanwhile, we might wonder whether the presence of EU institutions serves in the long term to promote such an identity.

The UK's membership of the EU has been long standing, dating as far back as 1975. However, during the last two decades there have been a number of important constitutional and other changes to the European Union. First, its membership has more than doubled in size, from 12 countries in 1990 to 27 now, not least as a result of the admission of formerly communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe, a change that has inevitably reduced the influence of any one single country within the organisation. Meanwhile following this expansion of membership, in 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon was (controversially) ratified and adopted, a treaty that made changes to the EU's decision-making procedures that were widely portrayed as representing a further strengthening of the Union's collective decision-making powers (Kirkup and Waterfield, 2009; Hitchens, 2009).

Second, from 2002 onwards many countries in the EU adopted a single currency, the euro. Having one's own currency is often regarded as symbolic of independent statehood, and a country's coins and notes typically bear symbols that resonate with the relevant national identity. Meanwhile, the full implications of having a single currency – a need to underpin it with fiscal transfers across and co-ordination between states – have become apparent in recent years in the wake of a sovereign debt crisis in a number of Eurozone countries. Although the UK has not adopted the euro, the currency's recent difficulties have been widely publicised and have had an impact on UK economic activity.

The UK has long appeared to be a relatively reluctant member of the EU, having initially refused to become a founder member in 1957. We thus might wonder whether the expansion of EU activity, together with the subsequent difficulties of the euro, has served to further persuade those with a strong sense of British identity - and who accordingly have always been relatively reluctant to accept any limitation on the UK's ability to make its own laws - that the UK should have as little to do with the EU as possible, including perhaps contemplating the possibility of withdrawal. Any such development would clearly limit the ability of any future UK government to accede to further transfers of power to the EU especially as under recently passed UK law, any such transfer can only take place following an affirmative vote in a UK-wide referendum. Indeed it might help generate political pressure for a referendum on whether Britain should leave the EU.

4. Data

Data on the incidence on national identity and on its relationship between national identity and constitutional preference has to be obtained from social surveys. If we are to assess whether any changes have occurred over time this data needs to have been acquired in a consistent manner. This means that not only do we need access to surveys that have been conducted on a reasonably regular basis, but also that these surveys should have on each occasion (i) administered the same question(s) about national identity(ies), (ii) asked the same question(s) about constitutional preference, and (iii) been conducted using the same methodological approach. If these conditions are not satisfied we cannot be sure that any differences we find are not the product of changes in methodology rather than evidence of changes in the incidence of national identity or in its strength of association with constitutional preference.

Fortunately, we are largely able to satisfy these conditions. NatCen Social Research's *British Social Attitudes* survey (BSA), conducted annually using the same methodology based on probability sampling and face to face interviewing, has since the late 1990s regularly included largely unchanged questions on national identity and on attitudes towards how England should be governed (Ormston. 2012). However, although BSA is a Britain-wide survey, the numbers of respondents it interviews in either Scotland or Wales is too small to provide reliable estimates for those parts of the UK separately. Thus BSA is only used here to look at the evolution of attitudes in England, and the figures quoted from the survey exclude those living in Scotland or Wales.

North of the border, following the advent of devolution in 1999 NatCen Social Research instigated a new social attitudes survey, the *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey (SSA). Conducted in much the same way as BSA, SSA's annual surveys have consistently tapped both national identity and attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed, asking exactly the same questions from year to year (Curtice *et al.*, 2009; Curtice and Ormston, 2012). This provides us with a robust time series for Scotland. Wales is not so well served, but NatCen Social Research did conduct a number of occasional face to face probability surveys in the country between 1999 and 2007 (Curtice and Seyd, 2009), while thereafter the same questions about national identity and constitutional preference have appeared in a number of subsequent ad hoc surveys (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2012; Boon *et al.*, 2012) - though it needs to be borne in mind that these later surveys were either administered over the telephone rather than face to face or else via the internet to non-probability samples of respondents.

The BSA surveys do not cover Northern Ireland at all. However, in 1989 an annual *Northern Ireland Social Attitudes* survey (NISA) was inaugurated, again using much the same methodological approach as BSA (Robinson *et al.*, 1998). This survey was succeeded in 1998 by the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* (NILT) (Lloyd *et al.*, 2004). This survey, conducted in much the same manner as NISA, continued to ask regularly many of the same questions about national identity and constitutional preference as first appeared on NISA. Between them these two surveys provide us with a firm foundation with which to ascertain trends in national identity in that part of the UK.

BSA contains some limited information about the incidence of a European national identity and about attitudes towards Europe, but the latter information in particular has not been collected regularly in recent years. By far a better source is the survey commissioned twice a year in all member states, the Eurobarometer (EB). This survey, consistently conducted face to face with a probability sample of respondents has regularly asked questions that tap the incidence of

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European identity, together with questions on attitudes towards both the UK's membership of the EU and the distribution of powers between the EU and its member states.

5. Trends in National Identity

5.1 England

Since the late 1990s the British Social Attitudes survey has measured people's national identity on a regular basis in two ways. In the first instance the survey has simply presented people with a list of all those identities associated with one or more parts of Great Britain and/or Ireland and invited them to state which, if any, best describes how they think of themselves. Respondents could, if they wished, choose one more than one identity. As we might anticipate, in practice most people in England choose English and/or British, and in Table 1 we just show the proportions selecting these two options, together with the proportion that named both of them.

Table 1: Trends in Free Choice National Identity, England 1996–2011

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English	52	50	55	65	59	63	57	59
British	71	68	70	71	67	67	73	70
Both	29	26	34	44	35	39	37	38
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English	55	60	67	57	60	59	50	61
British	69	70	68	68	67	67	69	66
Both	33	38	45	34	38	37	29	37

Source: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only), except 1997: British Election Study

Two key points are evident. First, adherence to both identities is commonplace. Typically well over half say they are English and consistently well over half indicate they are British. At the same time, although the figure has varied from year to year, it would appear that at least a third of people in England readily acknowledge both identities. It is thus unsurprising that it is often felt that people in England do not readily distinguish between the two identities.

Second, however, it would appear that a British identity is somewhat more likely to be acknowledged than an English one. The difference between the proportion mentioning the two identities has sometimes been very small, but it has never been the case that more people have said they are English than said they are British. At face value at least, this would not appear to be an unfavourable environment for the maintenance of the Union.

Even so, we might wonder whether there has been some tendency for an English identity to have been more popular since the advent of devolution in 1999. Between 1996 and 1998, the proportion saying they were English ranged between 50% and 55%; thereafter it only fell below 55% on one occasion, in 2010. Whether indeed there is any evidence of such a development

becomes clearer if we look at the incidence of the two identities that we obtain once we require those who chose more than one identity to name just one. This is shown in Table 2, where we also have access to a substantially earlier reading – for 1992 – obtained by that year’s British Election Study (conducted by NatCen Social Research using much the same methodology as that used on BSA; see Heath *et al.*, 1994), where respondents were required in the first place to chose just one identity.

Table 2: Trends in Forced Choice National Identity, England, 1992-2011

	1992	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English	31	34	33	37	44	41	43	37	38
British	63	58	55	51	44	47	44	51	48
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
English	38	40	47	39	41	41	34	42	
British	51	48	39	47	45	46	52	43	

Sources: 1992 and 1997: British Election Studies; 1996, 1998-2011: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

Here we can see quite clearly that whereas between 1992 and 1998 the proportion saying they were English was never higher than 37%, thereafter it only fell below that level on just one isolated occasion – 2010. Equally, before 1999 the proportion saying they were British never fell below 51% (and in 1992 had been as high as 63%), while thereafter it again only ever exceeded that figure once – in 2010. It would seem that ever since Scottish and Welsh devolution have been in place that people in England have been somewhat more inclined than before to regard their English identity as more important to them than whatever sense of British identity they might have. That said, however, there is no consistent evidence that this development has continued apace since 1999, while overall it certainly cannot be claimed that people in England are now more likely to assert an English identity than they are a British one.

Given, however, that it is evidently the case that many people in England acknowledge to some degree at least being both British and being English, it might be though inadvisable to place too much reliance on a question that forces people to chose between them. Perhaps we might acquire a more nuanced and more accurate picture of the relative levels of adherence to the two identities if we adopt a different approach. One such approach is to administer the so-called Moreno question (Moreno, 1988), a question first devised for use on surveys in Spain where, as in the UK, the coincidence of strong regional/national identities and a state-wide Spanish identity is a notable feature of the social landscape (Moreno *et al.*, 1998). Respondents are asked to choose which of the five following options, each representing a different balance between the two identities, English and British, best describes how they think of themselves:

- English, not British
- More English than British

- Equally English and British
- More British than English
- British, not English

Table 3 shows the responses that have been obtained on those occasions when this question has been administered to all BSA respondents living in England. It would seem to support our suggestion that since 1999 people have been somewhat more willing to assert an English identity than they were before. In 1997 just seven per cent said that they were ‘English, not British’, whereas since then the figure has oscillated between 16% and 19%. Note, however, that when asked in this way, we find that people appear to be rather more likely to regard their English identity as more important to them than any British identity, rather than vice-versa, though in truth consistently by far the most common response is that both are equally important. Further analysis indicates that the reason for the apparent disparity between the picture presented by the two questions is that, when forced to choose, those who say they are ‘equally British and English’ are more likely to say they are British than English (Curtice, 2011). It would seem that while there is a minority of people in England who would wish to assert an exclusively English identity, a minority that may now be somewhat bigger than before, for many being English is something that sits easily with and is encompassed within a sense of being British too.

Table 3: Trends in Moreno National Identity, England 1997-2009

	1997	1999	2000	2001	2003	2007	2008	2009
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English not British	7	17	18	17	17	19	16	17
More English than British	17	14	14	13	19	14	14	16
Equally English and British	45	37	34	42	31	31	41	33
More British than English	14	11	14	9	13	14	9	10
British not English	9	14	12	11	10	12	9	13

Source: 1997: British Election Study; 1999-2009 British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

Still, we should note that BSA last administered the Moreno question to all those living in England in 2009, and we might wonder whether there have been any developments since then. It seems not, however. The 2011 survey did administer the Moreno question to all those respondents in England who had been born in England. Unsurprisingly, the group is a little more inclined to prioritise an English identity than are all those living in England. However, at 36% the proportion who in 2011 said that they were ‘English, not British’ or ‘more English than

British’ was little different from the 35% figure registered in 2008 amongst those who were identified in that survey as having been born in England.

So, the advent of devolution in Scotland and Wales may have had some impact on the incidence of national identity in England (see also Curtice and Heath, 2009; Curtice, 2011). Since 1999, it appears that rather more people have been inclined to regard themselves as above all English rather than primarily British. However, even if that is the case, there is no evidence that any such process has continued in train thereafter, while for many people being British and being English are two identities that fit together with ease.

What, though is crystal clear is that an English and/or a British identity is more firmly embedded in the hearts and minds of more people than is any sense of being someone who lives in one of the regions of England, such as the North East or Yorkshire (Curtice and Sandford, 2004). As Table 4 shows, typically around half of people living in England deny that they think of themselves in that way at all, or else do not feel any pride at all in being such a person. In contrast, just one in ten or so actually deny they are British or take no pride in being so, while only around one in six say the same so far as being English is concerned.

Table 4: Regional and National Pride, England, 1999-2007

Government Office Region	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2007 %
Very proud	22	24	22	23
Not at all proud/don't think of self in that way	52	52	48	46
English	1999 %	2000 %	2003 %	2007 %
Very Proud	44	44	43	42
Not at all proud/don't think of self in that way	15	17	15	18
British	1999 %	2000 %	2003 %	2007 %
Very Proud	43	44	41	39
Not at all proud/don't think of self in that way	8	10	10	10

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey (respondents living in England only)

Equally, there is little evidence that people are more likely to feel a sense of identity with their local area than they are with their country, be that England or Britain. Here our evidence comes not from BSA but from the Home Office Citizenship survey (Attwood *et al.*, 2003), which on three occasions asked respondents how strongly they felt they belonged to their immediate ‘neighbourhood’, their ‘local area’ (that is the area within a 15-20 minute walk), and to Britain as a whole. As can be seen in Table 5, on each occasion only around a third said that they belonged ‘very strongly’ to their neighbourhood, while even fewer said the same of their local area. In contrast around half said the same of Britain, while on the one occasion (in 2003) when they were asked separately about England, again around half (53%) said that they belonged very strongly. In general, it seems that in England neither regional nor local identity is capable of providing a strong foundation on which to rest claims for territorially distinctive government.

Table 5: How Strongly People Feel They Belong To Different Geographies, England, 2003-8.

% say belong very strongly to			
	Neighbourhood	Local Area	Britain
2003	30	25	48
2005	32	23	50
2008	37	30	46

Source: Home Office Citizenship Survey (respondents living in England and Wales)

5.2 Scotland

Much the same information on the incidence of national identity is available for Scotland as we have seen is available for England (Curtice *et al.*, 2009). Respondents to SSA have regularly been asked to indicate which ones of a set of identities applies to themselves, which single one best describes themselves, and to respond to a Moreno question where the options invite people to state what balance of being Scottish and being British best describes how they think of themselves.

Table 6 shows how many people have said they were Scottish, how many said they were British and how many said they were both when invited to state which of a set of identities associated with Great Britain and Ireland best described themselves. As in England it would appear that at least a third or so of people spontaneously acknowledge having a dual identity, in this case being both British and Scottish. However, in contrast to the position in England there is no doubt that British is the less popular of the two identities. Whereas around a half of people north of the border acknowledge a British identity, over four in five say that they are Scottish.

Table 6 Trends in Free Choice National Identity, Scotland, 1997-2011

	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish	82	84	87	86	83	84	83
British	52	47	52	50	55	58	52
Both	38	35	43	41	43	47	38

	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish	85	84	80	82	82	85
British	52	43	47	46	49	53
Both	43	33	33	36	37	44

Source: 1997: Scottish Election Study; 1999-2011: Scottish Social Attitudes

The predominance of a Scottish identity over a British one is even more apparent when respondents are asked to choose just one identity. As Table 7 shows, when that is done nowadays no less than three-quarters still say they are Scottish while rather than less than one in five say they are British. Evidently, while it may be the case that many people north of the border are willing to say they are British, for most this is very much a secondary identity in their hearts and minds.

Table 7 Trends in Forced Choice National Identity 1974-2011

	1974	1979	1992	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish	65	56	72	72	77	80	77	75
British	31	38	25	20	17	13	16	18
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish	72	75	79	78	72	73	73	75
British	20	19	14	14	19	15	19	15

Source: 1974-97: Scottish Election Study; 1999-2011: Scottish Social Attitudes

However, what we should also note is that there is no consistent evidence that the advent of devolution is responsible for this state of affairs. By the time the Scottish Parliament first met in 1999, as many as 77% said, when forced to choose, that they were Scottish. At 75%, the most recent reading in 2011 is no higher. What does appear to be true from the evidence that can be gleaned from similarly conducted surveys undertaken on the occasion of some UK general elections prior to the advent of devolution is that, while already the predominant identity in the 1970s, identification with being Scottish became even more popular – and with being British less so - during the 1980s (Brown *et al.*, 1999; Curtice *et al.*, 2009). In so far as there has been a link between constitutional change and national identity in Scotland it seems to have been one in which the creation of distinctive national political institutions north of the border was an acknowledgement of an existing distinctive sense of identity that was already almost ubiquitous in its incidence – and not one in which constitutional change has occasioned a change in the distribution of national identity.

Table 8 Trends in Moreno National Identity, Scotland, 1992-2011

	1992	1997	1999	2000	2001	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish not British	19	23	32	37	36	31
More Scottish than British	40	38	35	31	30	34
Equally Scottish and British	33	27	22	21	24	22
More British than Scottish	3	4	3	3	3	4
British not Scottish	3	4	4	4	3	4
	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish not British	32	33	27	27	28	29
More Scottish than British	32	32	30	31	30	33
Equally Scottish and British	22	21	28	26	26	23
More British than Scottish	4	4	5	4	4	5
British not Scottish	5	5	6	4	4	5

Source: 1992, 1997: Scottish Election Study; 1999-2011: Scottish Social Attitudes

This picture is confirmed by Table 8, which shows how people in Scotland have responded during the course of the last twenty years to the Moreno question. Between 1992 and 1997, the proportion saying that they were, 'Scottish, not British' increased from 19% to 32%. Thereafter the figure has oscillated around 30% or so, with no discernible trend. At the same time, while the pattern of responses confirms that over half of people in Scotland acknowledge both a Scottish and a British identity, few regard themselves as more British than Scottish.

5.3 Wales

As we noted earlier, the evidence on the incidence of identity that is available for Wales is sparser than that for either England or Scotland. However some information is available for all three of the different ways of measuring identity that we have identified, enabling us to compare the position in the country with that elsewhere in Great Britain.

First of all we can see from Table 9 that, in similar vein to the position in both England and Scotland, at least a third or so of people in Wales are readily willing to acknowledge both a Welsh and a British identity. Being British and being Welsh are not necessarily regarded as in conflict with each other.

Table 9 Trends in Free Choice National Identity, Wales, 1997-2007

	1997	2001	2003	2007
	%	%	%	%
Welsh	73	67	70	67
British	67	60	56	58
Both	45	40	34	33

Source: 1997: Welsh Referendum Study 1997; 1999: Welsh Assembly Election Study; 2001-2007 Wales Life and Times Surveys

However, Wales is dissimilar to both England and Scotland so far as the incidence of different identities is concerned. In contrast to the position in England, slightly more people choose Welsh as at least one of their identities than choose British. However, the imbalance between the two is not as large as it is in the equivalent figures for Scotland. Thus, although in similar fashion to the position in Scotland those who claim both identities are more likely, if forced to choose, to say they are Welsh than say they are British, this still means that only somewhat over half of people in Wales say they are Welsh, as opposed to the three-quarters or so in Scotland who say they are Scottish. Welsh may be the more popular identity in Wales, but it does not have the near ubiquitous character that feeling Scottish has north of the border.

Table 10 Trends in Forced Choice National Identity, Wales 1979-2011

	1979	1997	1999	2001	2003	2007	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Welsh	59	63	57	57	60	56	53
British	34	26	31	31	27	32	29

Source: 1997: Welsh Referendum Study 1997; 1999: Welsh Assembly Election Study; 2001-2007 Wales Life and Times Surveys; 2011: Welsh Referendum Study 2011 (Pre-wave)

A similar picture emerges when a Moreno type question is asked. As Table 11 shows, around two in five say they are either Welsh and not British or else that they are more Welsh than British – clearly less than the around three in five who give the equivalent response in Scotland, but somewhat higher than the one in three who do so in England. Thus however the issue is addressed, it appears that while somewhat fewer people acknowledge some kind of British identity in Wales than do so in England, that identity is still relatively widely acknowledged, albeit often in tandem with a Welsh identity.

Table 11 Trends in Moreno National Identity, Wales 1997-2012

	1997 %	1999 %	2001 %	2003 %	2007 %	2011 (1) %	2011 (2) %	2012 %
Welsh, not British	17	17	24	21	24	19	17	21
More Welsh than British	26	19	23	27	20	19	19	17
Equally Welsh and British	34	37	28	29	32	30	30	35
More British than Welsh	10	8	11	8	9	8	8	8
British, not Welsh	12	14	11	9	9	20	20	17

Source: 1997: Welsh Referendum Study 1997; 1999: Welsh Assembly Election Study; 2001-2007 Wales Life and Times Surveys; 2011 (1) Welsh Referendum Study 2011 (Pre-wave); 2011 (2) Welsh Election Study 2011 (Post-wave); 2012: Silk Commission Survey

However, what we should note above all from all three measures is that there is no consistent evidence of any long-term trend in the incidence of national identity in the country. Neither the initial introduction of the Assembly in 1999 nor the subsequent gradual increase in its powers appears to have engendered any increase in adherence to a distinctive national identity as opposed to a British one. As in Scotland it appears that the introduction of distinctive national political institutions has had no discernible impact on people's sense of the country to which they belong.

5.4 Northern Ireland

The regular measure of national identity available from the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey is different to that collected on the three survey series for Great Britain that we have been examining. It requires respondents to choose between one of just four identities, British, Irish, Northern Irish and Ulster. The pattern of response to this question has obtained ever since the first reading in 1989 is shown in Table 12. Here we discover that whereas in the rest of the UK, nearly everyone acknowledges one or other of just two identities, in Northern Ireland three identities are relatively popular – only Ulster is relatively unpopular. That said, it is also the case that British is quite clearly the most common of the three identities.

But perhaps not quite so common now as it once was. Up to and including 2004, the proportion saying they were British was, with just one exception, always above 40%. Subsequently it has consistently been below 40%. At the same time, up to and including 2004 the proportion saying they were Northern Irish was never higher than 25%; since then it has never been below that figure. So in contrast to the position in the rest of the UK, it looks as though constitutional change has been accompanied by a change in the incidence of identities, and that some of

those who previously said that they were British are now inclined instead to say they are Northern Irish.

Table 12 Trends in Forced Choice National Identity, Northern Ireland, 1989-2010

	1989	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996	1998 (1)	1998 (2)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
British	44	43	48	46	43	39	41	51
Irish	25	24	22	25	28	28	27	25
Northern Irish	20	18	17	20	21	25	23	17
Ulster	7	11	10	6	8	7	6	4
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003(1)	2003 (2)	2004	2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
British	45	49	42	45	41	46	48	39
Irish	29	22	27	28	27	28	27	28
Northern Irish	19	20	23	19	24	18	21	27
Ulster	4	5	5	4	4	5	3	3
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010			
	%	%	%	%	%			
British	39	38	37	35	37			
Irish	28	29	26	32	26			
Northern Irish	26	26	29	27	29			
Ulster	4	3	4	2	3			

Source: 1989-1995: Northern Ireland Social Attitudes; 1996-2010: Northern Ireland Life and Times except 1998 (2) Northern Ireland Referendum and Assembly Election Study, and 2003 (2) Northern Ireland Assembly Election Study

As we suggested earlier, national identity is strongly linked to religious identity in the province – and especially so since the advent of the Troubles (Coakley, 2007; McAuley and Tonge, 2010). In the most recent survey, over four in five of those who say they are British also claim adherence to a Protestant denomination, while equally over four in five of those who say they are Irish also say that are Roman Catholic. It thus should come as little surprise that when on a couple of occasions NILT did administer a national identity question that allowed people to choose more than one identity, hardly anyone (for example, 3% in 2003) laid claim to being both British and Irish. Equally on the one occasion that NIILT has asked the Moreno question, in 2007, only 17% said that they were equally British and Irish, a noticeably lower figure for adherence to two identities equally than recorded in any other part of the UK during the last decade. Different national identities do not overlap each other in the province in the way that they do in the rest of the UK – rather they are widely regarded as being in opposition to each other.

Given this backdrop, the recent change in the incidence of British and Northern Irish identity is of particular interest. Before 2005 a claim to a Northern Irish identity was rather more likely to be made by Catholics than Protestants – in 2001, for example, the relevant figures were 26% and 17% respectively. However, as we might anticipate from what we have seen so far, the recent increase in then proportion saying they are Northern Irish has occurred primarily amongst Protestants. As a result Northern Irish now appears to be an identity to which those of both religions are equally willing to lay claim. Thus in 2010, for example, the 26% of Catholics who said they were Northern Irish was more than matched by the 29% of Protestants who did so. In short, the rise in the proportion who say they are Northern Irish also seems to signal something of a reduction in the degree to which national identity is one of the foci of disagreement between the province's two communities.

How far, though can this change be ascribed to constitutional change in the province? Certainly the initial restoration of devolved government in 1998 did not bring about any change in the incidence of national identity. But given the stalled nature of that reintroduction, that perhaps is not surprising. On the other hand the change in the distribution of national identity predates the eventual full restoration of devolved government backed by all the province's political parties in 2007. Evidently that on its own was not responsible either. What may be true is that the advent of talks between the parties in the period before 2007, talks that unlike those that took place before 1998 secured the full participation and eventual agreement of all the principal Unionist parties to share power with Nationalists, may have encouraged some Protestants to feel that they were now part of a new Northern Ireland. If that interpretation is correct, it would suggest that the key driver of change was not constitutional change per se, but changes in the attitudes of political parties towards such a change.

6. European Identity

We now turn from the relative incidence within each of the four territories of the UK of feeling British as opposed to other identities to the degree to which people in the UK as a whole are willing to acknowledge a European rather than or alongside a British identity, and whether there is any evidence that recent developments in the EU have been accompanied by any change in the overall popularity of European identity. Our first piece of evidence – for Great Britain as a whole (excluding Northern Ireland) - comes from the BSA free choice national identity measure that we have previously introduced. In Table 13 we show the proportion of people who nominated European as one of the identities that they acknowledged in response to that BSA question. As we can see, consistently around one in eight have done so, far fewer than acknowledge a British or indeed an English identity. Feeling European is apparently very much a minority identity in the UK – and one that shows no sign of becoming more commonplace over time.

Table 13 Trends in Free Choice European Identity, Great Britain, 1996-2011

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
European	10	9	12	17	11	12	12	12
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
European	11	12	16	12	14	12	11	12

Source: British Social Attitudes

A second measure of willingness to acknowledge a European identity (and one that is available for the UK as a whole) is available from a Moreno type question that has occasionally been included on the European Commission's Eurobarometer survey. This asks people whether for the immediate future they regard themselves as 'British only', 'British and European', 'European and British' or 'European only'. Table 14 shows that commonly over half of people in the UK reject any notion of being European, even one that is secondary to being British. Meanwhile amongst those who do acknowledge some kind of European identity, only a handful indicate that that identity is more important to them than their British identity. Those in the UK with a strong sense of a European identity are rare indeed.

Table 14 Trends in Moreno European Identity, UK, 1992-2010

	Spring 1992	Autumn 1993	Autumn 1994	Spring 1995	Autumn 1995	Autumn 1996	Spring 1997	Spring 1998	Autumn 1998
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
British only	54	59	49	53	57	60	57	60	62
British and European	35	29	34	32	30	26	29	25	27
European and British	4	4	7	6	4	6	3	5	4
European only	4	3	6	6	6	5	6	5	5
	Autumn 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Autumn 2001	Autumn 2003	Spring 2004	Autumn 2004	Autumn 2005	Spring 2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
British only	67	64	62	70	62	62	55	63	70
British and European	23	27	27	22	28	27	35	31	24
European and British	3	4	3	3	5	4	5	2	2
European only	3	2	2	2	3	4	2	1	2

Source: Eurobarometer

Moreover, there is no indication from this measure either that a European identity is becoming any more widespread. If anything, the opposite may have happened. Between 1992 and 1996 typically somewhat over 40% acknowledged some kind of European identity. Since then that figure has only been reached on one isolated occasion. Given its timing, however, it is not immediately obvious this apparent change is tied to any particular constitutional development.

7. National Identity and Constitutional Preference

We now turn from trends in the incidence of national identity to the link between national identity and people's views as to how they would prefer to be governed. To what extent does people's sense of national identity affect those views, and is there any evidence that constitutional change may have been accompanied by a change in the degree to which those with different national identities disagree about how they should be governed?

7.1 England

Table 15 shows how those in England who (when forced to choose) say they are British and those who say they are English have responded when asked to choose between three different ways in which England might be governed – by a separate (devolved) English parliament, by having a regional assembly in each of the government office regions in England, or by rule from Westminster as at present. As we might anticipate, the idea of having an English parliament is somewhat more popular amongst those who say they are English, but the difference is a relatively small one. Moreover, although support for an English parliament has increased somewhat (as support for regional assemblies has decreased) there is no consistent evidence that the difference in support between those who say they are English and those who claim to be British has become any wider (Curtice, 2011). Thus in 1999, when devolution was first introduced in Scotland and Wales, those who said they were English were only seven points more likely to support the idea of an English parliament than were those in British, while in the most recent survey in 2011 the equivalent figure, at eight points, is almost identical.

Table 15 Constitutional preferences for England by Forced Choice National Identity, England, 1999 – 2011

Which would be best for England?	1999		2003		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
England governed as it is now (laws made by the UK Parliament)	67	60	52	49	69	50	56	45	58	45	57	48	58	53
Each region of England to have its own assembly (runs services like health)	14	15	27	24	12	16	14	16	12	17	12	15	13	11
England as whole to have its own new parliament with law-making powers	14	21	16	23	11	27	22	34	23	34	21	29	22	30

Source: British Social Attitudes (living in England only)

Still perhaps we might find that national identity makes more of a difference to the views that people express when we ask them about an issue that taps more directly into the unfairness that it is sometimes argued has been generated by the current asymmetric devolution settlement. Thus, in Table 16 we look at the relationship between national identity and whether people agree or disagree that Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote on laws that only affect England, given that English MPs no longer have any say in devolved Scottish legislation (Conservative Democracy Task Force, 2008). In truth this proves to be a popular sentiment irrespective of people’s sense of national identity. Consistently a majority of those who say they are British as well as those who opt to indicate they are English agree that Scottish MPs should not be allowed to vote on English laws. True, the proposition is even more popular amongst those who say they are English than it is amongst those who say they are British, but once again the difference proves to be no more than a small one.

Table 16 West Lothian Question by forced choice national identity, England, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007, 2010

Now that Scotland has its own parliament, Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote in the UK House of Commons on laws that only affect England.	2000		2001		2003		2007		2010	
	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.	Brit.	Eng.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree/agree	64	67	54	63	56	65	60	67	64	77
Neither agree nor disagree	19	18	21	15	20	20	17	14	18	11
Disagree/strongly disagree	10	7	15	9	12	7	12	6	9	6

Source: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

It thus appears that in England people’s sense of national identity makes little difference to how they think they should be governed, and that the advent of devolution elsewhere in the UK has not made any difference to this pattern. Much the same also appears to be true of whether or not they feel much sense of identity with the region in which they live. Thus, for example, on the 2003 survey just 16% of those who said they were ‘very proud’ of being someone from their particular region favoured the creation of a system of regional assemblies across England as a whole, a figure that was no higher than that obtained amongst those who said they did not regard themselves as having a regional identity at all (or at least had no pride in being such a person) (Curtice and Sandford, 2004). Meanwhile we can but note that unfortunately there does not appear to be any England-wide evidence on the degree to which attitudes towards the idea of a directly elected Mayor is linked to people’s sense of local identity.

7.2 Scotland

The advent of devolution in Scotland has not ended the debate about how the country should be governed. Indeed, following the success of the SNP in winning an overall majority in the devolved Scottish Parliament, the country now faces the prospect of a referendum on whether or not it should leave the UK. We thus might well wonder whether these developments have been accompanied by an intensification of the link between national identity and constitutional preference, as those with a strong Scottish identity have come increasingly to feel that their country should become independent.

Table 17 Support for Independence by Moreno National Identity, Scotland, 1999-2011

% prefer independence	1999	2003	2005	2007	2011
Scottish not British	44	47	51	40	49
More Scottish than British	26	22	34	34	32
Equally Scottish and British	10	8	20	8	12
More British than Scottish	4	4	15	8	10
British not Scottish	8	9	22	10	9

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

Those with a strong Scottish identity are certainly more likely to back independence than are those who do not. Yet as Table 17 shows, even amongst those who say that they are Scottish and not British, only around a half or so say that they prefer independence to either devolution or else no parliament at all. While a strong sense of Scottish identity may more less a necessary condition of support for independence it is evidently far from being a sufficient condition (Curtice and Ormston, 2012).

Moreover, there is no consistent sign that those with a strong sense of Scottish identity are gradually becoming more distinctive in their views. Constitutional change has, it seems, had no discernible impact on the degree to which those with a Scottish identity feel that their distinctive identity should be reflected in independent political constitutions. To that extent the political implications of national identity have proven remarkably immutable.

7.3 Wales

As we have noted when it was first established the National Assembly of Wales did not have any law making powers. As a result the constitutional debate in the country has been as much about whether that body should come to have the law making, and perhaps even the taxation powers, already enjoyed by the Scottish Parliament as it has been about whether Wales should become an independent country (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2012). We thus might anticipate that for those with a strong Welsh identity achieving that objective might have been more prominent in their minds than independence. Thus in Table 18 we show for each category of the Moreno scale how many people with a particular identity have indicated support for a Parliament with full law making (and some tax raising) powers as well as how many said that they would prefer Wales to become independent.

Table 18 Constitutional Preference by Moreno National identity, Wales, 1999-2011.

% favour	Welsh, not British	More Welsh than British	Equally British and Welsh	More British than Welsh	British, not Welsh
1999					
Independence	22	12	4	10	4
Parliament	37	35	27	22	17
<i>Total</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>21</i>
2003					
Independence	27	10	11	8	7
Parliament	36	45	31	37	22
<i>Total</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>29</i>
2007					
Independence	20	9	7	10	12
Parliament	48	48	40	19	32
<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>44</i>
2011					
Independence	42	13	5	9	4
Parliament	35	46	37	23	23
<i>Total</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>27</i>

Source: 1999: Welsh Assembly Election Study; 2001-2007 Wales Life and Times Surveys; 2011: Welsh Election Study 2011 (Combined Waves)

Those with a strong sense of Welsh identity are certainly more likely to back having a relatively powerful Assembly. Thus those who say they are Welsh and not British have consistently been more likely to support independence, though with one exception, to which we will return, this figure has not approached anything like that found amongst the equivalent group in Scotland. Meanwhile whereas a half or more of those with an exclusively or predominantly Welsh identity support having a parliament with law making powers, if not indeed an independent one, the equivalent figure amongst who regard themselves at least much British as Welsh is less than half.

However, again there is little consistent evidence that the link between national identity and people's views about how Wales should be governed has changed since the advent of devolution. True, support for a body that at least has law making powers has increased since 1999, but that increase appears to have occurred more or less irrespective of people's sense of national identity. Thus, for example, between 1999 and 2007 there was a 13 point increase in support for having a devolved law making parliament amongst those who said they were more Welsh than British, a figure that was more than matched by a 15 point increase amongst those who said they were British and not Welsh. The increase in popular support for a more powerful Assembly that occurred once the Assembly was up and running was, it seems, not driven by any intensification of a particular wish amongst those with a Welsh identity to see their identity reflected in their country's governing arrangements.

Still, it will be noted that in the most recent reading in the table, for 2011, support for independence is markedly higher than it had been before amongst those who say they are Welsh and not British, whereas no such trend is apparent amongst those with any sense of British identity. This might be thought to mark an intensification of the link between national identity and support for independence in particular. However, considerable caution should be exercised before coming to that conclusion. First, we should note that not only does the 2011 reading come from an internet survey, but also the figure could only be obtained by linking data across two different waves of a panel study. As a result of this methodological distinctiveness, we might wonder whether those in this survey with a strong Welsh identity are necessarily representative of all those with such an identity.

The finding is certainly not replicated by two other recently conducted surveys, albeit ones that tapped constitutional preference by offering a somewhat different set of options than those posed by the question on which Table 18 is based. The first wave of the 2011 Welsh Referendum Study (also conducted over the internet) found that only 26% of those who said they were Welsh and not British backed independence, while a telephone survey conducted on behalf of the Silk Commission reported that only 19% did so (Boon *et al.*; 2012; Wyn Jones and Scully, 2012). In the light of these readings it thus seems unlikely that in practice that there has been any marked increase in support for independence amongst those with a strong sense of Welsh identity.

7.4 Northern Ireland

As we have noted, at the heart of the constitutional debate in Northern Ireland is a debate about whether the province should remain part of the United Kingdom or whether it should become part of a united Ireland. Thus in Table 19 we show the level of support for leaving the UK (either to become part of a united Ireland or, as a few people indicated voluntarily to become an independent state) separately for the three most popular national identities, British, Irish and Northern Irish.

Table 19 Support for Leaving the UK by National Identity, Northern Ireland, 1999-2010.

% support reunify with Ireland/independent state	British	Irish	Northern Irish
1993	3	64	24
1996	4	58	28
1998	6	67	28
2000	10	78	19
2003	8	68	33
2006	8	68	34
2007	8	61	24
2008	7	56	16
2009	4	56	13
2010	5	46	17

Source: 1993, 1996: Northern Ireland Social Attitudes; 1998-2010: Northern Ireland Life and Times

As we would anticipate, very few of those who say they are British would like the province to leave the UK, whereas until recently at least a majority of those who say they are Irish have been in favour of doing so. Those adhering to the two identities have clearly had a very different outlook as to how their province should be governed. Support for leaving the UK amongst those who say they are Northern Irish is somewhat higher than it is amongst those who claim to be British, but is still far lower than it is amongst those who are Irish. Those who adhere to this identity are thus for the most part inclined to be supportive of the maintenance of the Union.

However, it will be noticed that since 2007, when the Northern Ireland Assembly finally became fully operational, support for leaving the UK has declined amongst those who say they are Irish. This would seem to suggest that this constitutional development has encouraged some of those with an Irish identity to accept Northern Ireland's continued membership of the UK. This finding does though need to be treated with some caution. Reflecting the changed political situation, in 2007, in that year the NILT survey made a significant change to its key question on Northern Ireland's constitutional status. Instead of just asking whether people preferred Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK or to reunify with the rest of Ireland, they were asked to choose between reunification, remaining in the UK but with devolution, and remaining in the UK with the province run directly from Westminster. The fact that the question now explicitly mentioned the possibility that devolution could be part of UK rule could have meant that some

respondents with an Irish identity who might otherwise have opted for reunification backed staying part of the UK instead.

Of course, even if that is the case, the finding suggests that the successful introduction of devolved government in Northern Ireland, and especially one that those from a Catholic/Irish background feels recognises their identity and interests, may contain the potential to persuade those with an Irish identity to support remaining part of the UK. Meanwhile, we might also note that, since the change in the wording of the NILT survey question, support for leaving the UK appears to have fallen further (from 61% to 46%) amongst those with an Irish identity. Indeed at 43% support remaining in the UK is now almost as high as it is for leaving. This change, unlike that between 2006 and 2007, cannot be a methodological artefact, and thus would appear to suggest that a real change of outlook has occurred amongst those who say they are Irish. However, this interpretation is heavily dependent on the picture painted by the 2010 survey, and it would be unwise to put too much reliance on the findings of a single survey. Unfortunately no NILT survey was conducted in 2011 and we will have to await the findings of the 2012 survey to see whether the 2010 finding is replicated or not.

7.5 European Union

As we would anticipate, those who deny that they have any sense of a European identity are less likely to feel that the UK’s membership of the EU is a ‘good thing’ (Carey, 2002). Indeed, amongst those who feel that way, consistently more say that it is a bad thing than a good thing, although the proportion expressing that view never approaches as much as a half. (Respondents also have the option of saying ‘neither good nor bad’, the figures for which are not shown.) In contrast amongst those who acknowledge at least some kind of European identity (albeit as we have seen from Table 14 most only do so as a secondary identity) far more say that Britain’s membership is a good thing than say it is a bad thing, although the proportion doing so appears to be quite volatile.

Table 20 Attitudes towards UK’s membership of the EU by British/European identity, UK, 1995-2010

% say UK membership	British only	At least partly European
1995		
Good Thing	23	68
Bad Thing	39	7
2000		
Good Thing	15	45
Bad Thing	30	13
2005		

Good Thing	21	58
Bad Thing	38	12
2010		
Good Thing	20	52
Bad Thing	39	16

Source: Eurobarometer

Much the same picture is painted if we examine the responses to a BSA question on how much power the EU should have given, and compare the answers given by those who in the free choice version of that survey’s measure of national identity acknowledge a European identity with those proffered by those who do not acknowledge any such identity. The former group is consistently more likely than the latter to favour either the formation of a single European state or for the powers of the EU to be increased. However, once again the degree to which this is the case has varied over time, but again not in a way that suggests the presence of any consistent secular trend over time.

Table 21 Attitudes towards EU powers by European identity, Great Britain, 1998-2008

% favour strengthening of EU’s powers/single European government	European	Not European
1998	28	15
2000	38	14
2003	45	14
2006	29	11
2008	27	10

Source: British Social Attitudes

8. Implications and Conclusion

One key finding emerges from this paper. Recent UK experience strongly suggests that typically constitutional change has relatively little impact on people's sense of national identity. All four parts of the UK have very different patterns of national identity, but those differences largely predate the advent of devolution in the late 1990s. At the same time, relatively few people in the UK have a strong European identity, but this too is nothing new.

There are but two apparent exceptions to this generalisation. First, there are some signs that the advent of devolution elsewhere in the UK was accompanied by a once and for all shift towards more people in England being inclined to regard themselves primarily as English rather than British. Second, the period that saw the onset of negotiations that eventually led to the full restoration of devolution in Northern Ireland was accompanied by a decline in the proportion saying they are British and an increase in those saying they are Northern Irish. At present, however, there is no reason to believe that this development is one that will continue further into the future.

Equally recent UK experience also suggests that constitutional change does not necessarily have much impact on the degree to which people's sense of national identity is reflected in their views as to how they should be governed. That link is, in truth, not always as strong as might be imagined in the first place. Witness, for example, the fact that even in Scotland where a referendum on independence is in prospect, only half of those with a strong sense of Scottish identity currently wish to leave the UK, while in England the link between national identity and constitutional preference is hardly apparent at all. Despite this, we have not uncovered any evidence that constitutional change has caused those who acknowledge different identities to disagree any more than they did before about how they should be governed, and to that extent at least the search for a widely supported form of government for each part of the UK has not been made more difficult. Where change in the level of support for a particular constitutional solution has occurred, it has typically done so independently of people's sense of national identity.

That said, we have uncovered one instance where there might (but only might) have been some change in the relationship between national identity and constitutional preference - that is a decline in support amongst those with an Irish identity for joining the Republic of Ireland. However, this change represents a weakening rather than a strengthening of that relationship. In so far as this means that devolution may have helped to produce somewhat greater agreement between Northern Ireland's two communities as to how the province should be governed, this will doubtless be regarded as a welcome development by many of those responsible for devolution's introduction.

Still, for the most part the most plausible prognosis for the future of national identity in the next ten years is more of the same. This implies a continuing need amongst policy makers for sensitivity to the fact that the UK is a multi-national state in each of whose component parts there is a different pattern of national identity, and where outside of England at least those who feel less British, if they feel British at all, are more likely to want their part of the UK to enjoy at least a relatively strong form of devolution if not necessarily full independence. But it also implies that introducing further constitutional change should not necessarily be regarded as an effective means of influencing the pattern of national identity or of fostering greater agreement between those with different national identities as to how they should be governed. Equally, it

also implies that introducing constitutional change is unlikely to exacerbate existing disagreement.

The prospect of little change implies too that the UK is likely to remain a relatively sceptical member of the European Union. Less than half of the UK public acknowledge a European identity at all, *let alone* a strong one, and in the absence of such a feeling there is little appetite for a stronger European Union. Now that any proposal for significantly enhancing those powers will require to be passed in a referendum in the UK, it is likely to prove difficult for any UK government to accede to such a transfer at any point in the foreseeable future.

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