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## Europeanisation and Party Competition on Self-government for Scotland, 1974 – 1997

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**Abstract:** This paper offers a theoretical and empirical contribution to the study of Europeanisation, from the perspective of its impact on political parties. On the theoretical side, it draws on the rational choice literature, and on the concept of heresthetic in particular, to highlight a potential effect of Europeanisation which has so far been overlooked in the literature. It builds a theoretical model of how Europeanisation can be a heresthetical tool in party competition, notably in terms of opening up a new dimension that may result in a realignment of alliances able to turn losers into winners. It then applies this model to party competition on self-government for Scotland from 1974-1997 and shows how the model can account for a dramatic reversal of fortune between the anti- and pro-devolution camps between 1979 and 1997. It concludes by relating these theoretical and empirical findings back to the debate on Europeanisation and by identifying some avenues for further research.

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## Introduction

Over the last ten years or so, students of European politics have increasingly turned their attention to the study of the so-called process of Europeanisation. This is defined as the impact that European integration has on structures and processes at the domestic level. In other words, how the EU influences 'policies, polity and politics' in its member states. While the concern with the impact of EU membership on domestic structure is not in itself new, Europeanisation constitutes now a recognisable sub-field, with its body of literature and an increasingly sophisticated theoretical framework. However, scholars working within this sub-field have so far focussed primarily on 'policies' as opposed to 'polity and politics' and have privileged some theoretical approaches over others. As a result, important dimensions of the process of Europeanisation and the theoretical tools that may be appropriate to study them have yet to be adequately addressed in the literature. This applies in particular to the impact of Europeanisation on political parties in general and on the patterns of competition between them in particular. The purpose of this paper is thus to contribute to a broadening of the Europeanisation research agenda by exploring its applicability to the analysis of party competition - i.e. 'politics' - on regional self-government - a key aspect of 'polity' - approached from the perspective of the rationalist approach to politics.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 defines the nature and scope of the Europeanisation research agenda, briefly reviews the existing literature and points out unexplored areas. It then introduces the concept of heresthetic drawn from the rationalist literature and shows its analytical potential in accounting for important aspects of the Europeanisation dynamics. On that basis, it builds a rationalist conceptualisation of Europeanisation and argues for its applicability to the study of party competition, notably in terms of opening up a new dimension that may result in a realignment of alliances able to turn losers into winners. Section 2 applies this model to party competition on self-government for Scotland from 1974-'79 and shows how the model can account for a dramatic change of outcome between 1979, when devolution was rejected in a first referendum, and 1997, when devolution was endorsed in a second referendum. Section 3 then brings together the theoretical and the empirical parts of the article and draws some lessons for the debate on Europeanisation and the different theoretical frameworks with which to approach it. The last session summarises the argument and concludes by identifying some avenues for further research.

## 1 Theoretical framework

### *Europeanisation*

Although the subject-matter of Europeanisation is as old as the process of European integration and *ante litteram* Europeanisation studies already appeared as far back as the early 1970s<sup>1</sup>, the term itself has only recently gained wide acceptance in the discipline. This is because for a long time most students of European integration focused on the building of the 'top level' of the EU in Brussels and only recently have scholars turned their attention and their efforts towards systematically exploring the impact integration has on the states. Not surprisingly for a newly-conceptualised sub-field, semantic confusions and conceptual contestations have been evident in the debate on Europeanisation so far.<sup>2</sup> In particular, as Buller and Gamble have pointed out, it is important to distinguish between Europeanisation as a process and as an outcome.<sup>3</sup> However, it is probably fair to say that over the years the sub-field has strengthened its theoretical foundations as well as accumulated a respectable corpus of empirical investigation and is now fully accepted as a research programme focussed on the 'domestic impact' of European integration.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean, of course, that the existing literature has explored all the theoretical implications of Europeanisation, let alone exhausted the scope for empirical analysis of its unfolding and the present paper sets out precisely to do so with regard to party competition on self-government for Scotland.

The most elaborate theorisation of Europeanisation, put forward by Börzel and Risse, sees it as a phenomenon generated by a 'misfit' between the properties of the EU system - be they in the field of policy, politics or polity - and the properties of the domestic system. This misfit produces pressures for change at the domestic level which constitute opportunities and constraints for domestic actors as they affect both the distribution of resources among them as well as their norms and identities. Depending on the institutional properties of the domestic system - e.g. number of veto players - and the strategies of domestic actors, the impact of Europeanisation can vary widely - from a high degree of convergence to no significant change to even forms of 'backlash'<sup>5</sup>.

Börzel and Risse are careful not to tie the study of Europeanisation to a single epistemological paradigm and they explicitly identify two 'pathways' - one 'rationalist', the other 'sociological' - through which Europeanisation can produce itself. Nonetheless, they still approach Europeanisation as a 'top down' process putting pressure on domestic actors to adapt. This approach limits the applicability of the Europeanisation framework for it neglects what could be termed the 'bottom up' dynamics whereby domestic actors exploit the European dimension - notably the properties of the EU system - to strengthen their positions

in the domestic game, even in the absence of specific pressure exercised top-down by the EU. This is particularly so in the case of political parties engaged in some form of competition primarily over office or policy or a combination of the two.

Though, as mentioned above, the broad remit of the Europeanisation sub-field is meant to cover, in principle, polity and politics as well as policies, most of the work carried out under the aegis of Europeanisation has *de facto* been concerned with policy matters and administrative structures rather than constitutional issues and party competition. This has also meant that the historical institutionalist approach has been dominant and a lot of emphasis has been placed on the concepts of 'path dependency' and 'goodness of fit'. While these elements are essential for the study of continuity and change in public policy, they are not the appropriate conceptual tools to address the strategic use of Europeanisation as an additional dimension to party competition at the domestic level. In order to capture this aspect of Europeanisation, a rationalist perspective is most fruitful and the concept of heresthetic in particular.

### ***Heresthetic***

Heresthetic is a term invented by William Riker, the founding father of the rational choice school in political science, to refer to the actions political actors take in order to "structuring the world so you can win".<sup>6</sup> Riker made clear that heresthetic was much more than just rhetoric as actors need more than rhetoric to win political games. As he pointed out, "typically they win because they have set up the situation in such a way that other people will want to join them - or will feel forced by circumstances to join them - even without any persuasion at all".<sup>7</sup> In other words, heresthetic is essentially the art of strategic manipulation of political situations by goal-orientated actors pursuing their objectives. This is particularly relevant for actors who face an unfavourable distribution of forces with their opponents and thus expect to lose in a given political game. As Riker put it, "for a person who expects to lose on some decision, the fundamental heresthetical device is to divide the majority with a new alternative, one that he prefers to the alternative previously expected to win".<sup>8</sup> Hence the importance of looking at political 'losers' for it is indeed defeat or the prospect of defeat that concentrates their minds into devising heresthetical strategies to transform "the situation from unfavorable to favorable".<sup>9</sup>

for their preferred decision in the face of a distribution of preferences stacked against it, given that "the choice of a group is certainly not independent of the process by which it was chosen".<sup>10</sup> Strategic voting, on the other hand, tends to be used by actors who do not have access to agenda control and have therefore to rely on strategic voting to obtain the outcome they prefer in the presence of an unfavourable distribution of preferences and/or decision-making procedure. Of the three, the third one - manipulation of dimensions - is arguably the most important and certainly the most relevant for the purpose of this paper. As Riker put it,

"often it is difficult to control the agenda or to vote strategically, especially as the equilibrium winner has a substantial majority. But the number of dimensions can always be used to upset an equilibrium, provided the heresthetician is clever enough to find the correct dimension to use. This, no doubt, is why manipulation of dimensions is just about the most frequently attempted heresthetical device, one that politicians engage in a very large amount of the time...Most of the great shifts in political life result from introducing a new dimension".<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, the power of this heresthetical device reside in the fact that "manipulation works even though those who are manipulated know they are being manipulated because, once a salient dimension is revealed, its salience exists regardless of one's attitude toward it".<sup>12</sup> As Shepsle pointed out, though, while this strategy is always available in principle, the degree to which it can be put into practice also depends on the rules of political competition and on the salience of the new dimension to voters.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Europeanisation as a Game of Heresthetic***

On the basis of the above concepts derived from the rational choice approach, it is possible to build a conceptual model of Europeanisation as a game of heresthetic. In this model, Europeanisation is a strategy employed by political actors to manipulate the dimensions of a given political issue and heresthetically transform a situation from unfavourable to favourable. It is thus a process rather than an outcome; a process through which political actors exploit the European dimension - with its opportunities, incentives and constraints - to secure their objectives at the state or regional level. Rather than on the top-down pressures and the misfit between the European and the domestic structures, the focus is on the opportunities and the incentives - as well as the constraints - that the European dimension offers to strategic actors. From this perspecti

institutional set-up that redistributes power resources between actors.<sup>15</sup> Last but not least, given that European integration unfolds over time, Europeanisation can take the form of a series of iterated games whereby actors learn through trial and error how best to exploit the European dimension to maximise their power at the domestic level.

### ***Nature of Party competition***

Competition on regional self-government is a particular type of party competition, for several reasons. First of all, it is not directly concerned with office as no office payoff is immediately connected with the outcome of competition. Hence, secondly, it is *prima facie* a pure policy competition although we can expect that it is also indirectly connected with office goals. Thirdly, its salience is likely to be relatively low across the state as a whole but much higher in the region/s affected by the proposals. In the Scottish case two further elements are important. First, competition was triggered by the effective entry of a new player - perceived to be largely a single-issue actor - in the electoral market, which threatened the positions of the established parties. Second, the nature of competition was made even more peculiar by the fact that, in its crucial phases, it was decided by the outcome of referendums rather than general elections.

Following Strøm<sup>16</sup>, I assume that all parties were motivated by a mix of office and policy goals but with significant differences between them. Labour and the Conservatives were long-established dominant parties engaged in competition for office at the UK level while the SNP was a new entrant with a focus on Scotland's constitutional status. I thus hypothesise that the two main parties were primarily motivated by office goals while the SNP was primarily pursuing policy goals. Moreover, given the relative novelty of self-government as an issue dimension of party competition, I further hypothesise that parties were competing while facing uncertainties on the exact location of voters on the spectrum of constitutional preferences.

## **2 Party competition on self-government for Scotland**

Party competition on self-government in Scotland can be conceptualised as a two-shot game played between 1974 and 1997 by three main players: the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Labour party and the Conservative party. Beyond their electoral strength, these were the key players because in the course of the game each of them came to be identified with one of the three main constitutional options: independence, devolution and the status quo, respectively. The two crucial phases of this competition were the campaigns for the referendums in March 1979, when devolution failed to attract enough support to warrant the

establishment of an Assembly, and September 1997, when a Scottish Parliament was strongly endorsed. The 1979 referendum is thus the endgame of the first 'shot' while the 1997 one is the final endgame at the end of the second 'shot'.<sup>17</sup>

### **Background (to October 1974)**

Though the SNP had been set up in the mid-1930s, it only became a serious competitor to the established parties towards the end of the 1960s and a real threat since 1974. As a result, until the two general elections of 1974, self-government for Scotland was not an object of political competition and not a cleavage between the parties.<sup>18</sup> The positions of both Labour and the Conservatives were vague and non-committal. The former was for a long time sympathetic to the idea of Scottish home rule but after 1958 turned its back to it and supported the constitutional status quo.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the Conservatives had traditionally been hostile to devolution but paid lip-service to the idea of a Scottish assembly between 1968 and 1976. As UK-wide parties, they had always been, of course, opposed to Scotland's secession. The spectacular rise of the SNP radically changed the situation and created the self-government game analysed here.

### **First shot [October 1974 – March 79]**

This period is defined by the general election in October 1974, which witnessed the dramatic rise of the SNP to its historic peak, and the devolution referendum in March 1979 when proposals for a Scottish Assembly were rejected. The balance of power between the parties emerging from the election was as follows. Labour was the first party, having obtained 36.3 per cent of votes in Scotland and secured 41 MPs. The Conservatives, the second party since 1959, polled 24.7 per cent and won 16 seats. Their position was under threat from the SNP which obtained more votes than the Conservatives, 30.4 per cent, though only securing 11 seats.

Crown and within the Commonwealth but outside the European Union. Traditionally, the party intended to pursue this goal by gaining the majority of the Scottish seats in the House of Commons and, on that basis, claim a popular mandate for negotiating Scotland's secession from the UK.

If the party had a clear idea of its goal, the central problem was to go through the steps described above and, in particular, gain a majority of Scottish seats. This appeared indeed very difficult to achieve. Even after the electoral triumph in the October 1974 general election, the party still controlled only 11 out of 72 seats. In this context, the emergence of the Labour party's policy to establish a Scottish Assembly created an acute strategic dilemma. On the one hand, an assembly could be seen as providing an excellent opportunity for the party. In a purely Scottish electoral competition – such as the one for a devolved assembly – the likelihood of the party gaining a majority of seats was arguably higher than in a UK-wide competition such as for a general election. Moreover, once having obtained control of a Scottish Assembly, the party would have been in a position to claim an even stronger popular mandate for seeking secession from the UK. On the other hand, with popular support for independence still very low, there was a high risk that a devolved assembly would satisfy the Scots' demand for self-government thus depriving the SNP of its key competitive argument and making the prospect of independence an even more distant one. In other words, "that the establishment of a Scottish Assembly might satisfy the electorate sufficiently to postpone the achievement of independence indefinitely"<sup>22</sup>. In this logic, a preference for the status quo over devolution would have made sense for the party on the ground that the maintenance of the former would have been the best way of fuelling support for independence. The party was split along these two interpretations of the connection between devolution and independence into 'gradualist' and 'fundamentalist' wings. The latter shared the second view of devolution and believed that the party should stick to the traditional policy of gaining a majority of Scottish MPs, while the former had a positive view of devolution and wanted to use an assembly as a stepping stone to secession.<sup>23</sup> Though the conflict between the two tendencies was never entirely solved, the party eventually settled for the gradualist strategy and supported the devolution policy of the Labour party right up to the referendum campaign in January-February 1979.

Mindful that associating its support for devolution with the demand for independence was likely to undermine support for the former, the SNP was careful during the campaign to avoid any linkage between the assembly and secession. As a result, its pro-assembly discourse was virtually identical to that of the Labour party. In spite of this, though, the party could not hide the fact that its support for devolution was purely tactical and that its long-term strategic

goal remained secession. As seen below, this nexus between devolution and independence was fully exploited by its opponents.

### ***The Labour party***

The Labour party was directly threatened by the rise of the SNP as it was crucially dependent on the Scottish (and Welsh) seats to achieve UK-wide majorities given its relative weakness vis-à-vis the Conservative party in England. Its chances of gaining office at the UK level were thus dependent on its electoral performance in Scotland.<sup>24</sup> It decided to react to this challenge by moving closer to the SNP on the issue dimension at the heart of the threat: Scotland's constitutional status. It did so by proposing the creation of a devolved Scottish Assembly, through two white papers, an abortive Scotland and Wales bill 1976 and finally the Scotland Act 1978, which was put to the referendum in March 1979. Given that support for the peripheries vis-à-vis the centre had long been a key component of Labour's ideology, devolution could be used as a vote-seeking tactic while preserving the consistency of the party's ideological framework so as not to lose credibility.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the sound competitive rationale for embracing devolution as a tactical weapon against the SNP, the party was far from united behind the policy. A substantial minority firmly believed that devolution was fundamentally misguided as, far from stopping the SNP, it would fuel support for it and for independence. With the help of the Conservative opposition, Labour rebels secured an important, if partial, victory: making implementation of devolution subject to a referendum result in which 40 per cent of the electorate voted in favour.<sup>26</sup> The insertion of the 40 per cent clause altered the rules of the game and had far reaching consequences for the outcome of the first shot. A second, and even more crucial, consequence was a result of the fact that the Labour party had developed its devolution policy as a reaction against the SNP. This made it impossible for the party to conduct a joint campaign for a Yes vote with the Nationalists and led to fragmentation and infighting within the Yes camp. At the roots of this there was the link between devolution and secession; more specifically, the party was trapped in the structural contradiction of advocating devolution as an antidote to secession while the dominant perception was that it was rather a stepping-stone to it.

### ***The Conservative party***

The Conservatives were less dependent on the Scottish seats than Labour but the SNP rise and Labour's reaction were nonetheless a competitive challenge for them. The party thus sought to develop a strategy to counteract this challenge. In the early phase of the 1974-79 parliament, still under the leadership of Edward Heath, the party maintained its support for

the idea of an indirectly elected assembly to which it had committed itself in the manifesto for the October 1974 general election. After 1976, under the new Thatcher leadership and in the context of the increased salience of devolution, the Conservative party adopted a three-pronged strategy. First, it continued to support the principle of devolution though without defining the exact type of devolution envisaged. Second, it opposed the policy of the Labour government on the ground that it represented a flawed model that would produce over-government and put the unity of the UK at risk. Thirdly, but most importantly, it exploited the tensions and the contradictions within the pro-Assembly camp to open a new dimension to the policy of self-government, effectively turning it into a choice between the status quo and secession. If in the earlier phase the party's support for devolution was intended as a competitive weapon against the SNP, after 1976 the party decided to compete primarily against Labour and its devolution policy. In May 1978 the party decided to "campaign vigorously for a No vote in the referendum"<sup>27</sup> and, despite some minor defections, it allied itself with the business organisations to fight against the assembly in the campaign.

### **First endgame [March 1979]**

At the time of the first referendum, the game was structured as a competition between devolution and the status quo as responses to the threat represented by the SNP and its policy of independence. Because of the SNP's tactical decision to support devolution, the Yes camp was divided and ridden by mutual suspicion and hostility while the No camp had a strong common denominator in its defence of the unity of the UK. Indeed, conflict intensity was actually higher within the Yes front than between the latter and the No front<sup>28</sup>. All the players in this game were uncertain as to the distribution of constitutional preferences among the voters but, on the basis of opinion surveys, tended to believe two things and to develop their strategies accordingly: that there was majority support for devolution in parliament and among Scottish voters but strong opposition to secession.<sup>29</sup> In a straightforward parliamentary or popular vote, devolution was thus likely to succeed. The challenge for the No camp was thus to turn that unfavourable situation into a favourable one. They decided to play two heresthetical cards. The first one was manipulating the rules of the game by, as seen above, making devolution subject to a referendum vote and one with at least 40 per cent of the electorate in favour. The second, and crucial one, was increasing the dimensions of the game by focusing on the linkages between devolution and independence and effectively turning the game into a choice between the status quo and secession, a choice they knew they would win. Indeed, in the months between the assent to the Scotland Act and the referendum, the No camp increasingly focused their discourse against devolution on the issue of the break up of the UK. Their heresthetical manoeuvres paid off

handsomely. Despite more than 60 per cent of the voters did indeed support devolution, only 33 per cent of them voted Yes in the referendum and the evidence shows that the key determinant of a No vote by those in favour of devolution was fear of secession.<sup>30</sup> Through the defeat of the devolution proposals – and, indirectly, of independence – the outcome of the first shot was thus the constitutional status quo and a triumph for the Conservative party.

### **Realignment [May 1979 – August 88]**

This period is defined by general election in May 1979 which saw both the defeat of the Labour party - and, by implication, of its devolution policy - and a serious setback for the SNP and the latter's adoption of the new policy of 'Independence in Europe' at the party congress in August 1988. In this period, the positions of the parties – SNP and Labour, in particular – changed significantly and prefigured the patterns of competition prevailing in the second shot. For these reasons, I call it a phase of realignment.

After the 1979 *débâcle* and a subsequent deep crisis, from 1983 onwards the SNP set out to revise some of the more radical aspects of its platform under the new leadership of Gordon Wilson. The overriding objective was to 'mainstream' the party in order to widen its electoral appeal and increase support for its core policy. In order to do so, the SNP did not abandon its central objective of Scotland's independence but it radically modified the external context in which independence would take place. While up to 1983 the party had been deeply hostile to the EU and committed to Scotland's withdrawal from it, it started to slowly but radically revise this position and moved towards making membership of the EU the cornerstone of its self-government policy. By 1988, this led to the adoption of a policy of 'Independence in Europe' based on secession from the UK but continued membership of the EU as an additional member state.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the results of the referendum and of the general election of 1979 and the subsequent decline of the SNP, the Labour party maintained a commitment to a directly elected assembly in both the 1983 and 1988 position and a  
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the Scotland Act 1978 but support for the principle of devolution and adopted a position of complete rejection of self-government for Scotland. For most of the 1980s, however, the issue of self-government was virtually removed from the political centre stage in spite of the fact that the continuous erosion of support for the Conservatives in Scotland was attributed by many to their position on self-government. From 1988 onwards, however, the issue was to return and forced once again the party to compete on this issue dimension as well.

### **Second shot [August 1988 – September 97]**

This second phase of the self-government game was opened by the adoption of the 'Independence in Europe' policy by the SNP and closed by the second referendum in September 1997. In this phase, the politics of self-government for Scotland was deeply Europeanised.

The balance of power within the Scottish party system had changed considerably between the 1970s and the 1990s. The main change was the accelerated decline of the Conservative party which went from being the second party in Scotland to being the fourth. In 1997, its share of the vote had declined below 20 per cent and the party lost all of its MPs. The SNP rose to become the second party and, to a large extent, the effective opposition to the Labour party. The latter increased its already dominant position and in the 1997 general election conquered 56 seats and 45.6 per cent of the vote

### ***The SNP***

With the adoption of its 'Independence in Europe' policy, the SNP set out explicitly to take advantage of the opportunities and incentives that the EU system was offering in order to increase the appeal of independence at mass public level. The party exploited three aspects of the European dimension in particular. First, it used the link between independence and the process of European integration to remove the negative connotations of secession and legitimise it through linking it to a 'progressive' movement. By so doing, it reduced the symbolic costs of secession. Secondly, it exploited the advantages offered by the single market in order to claim that its new policy eliminated the economic costs of secession. Thirdly, the party exploited the EU's institutional bias in favour of the smaller states to argue that the European Union was a much more favourable political framework for Scotland than the British union. With this policy the party believed it had devised a "first class way of pushing the advantages of political independence without any threat of economic dislocation".<sup>32</sup> Up to 1992, the party was confident its new policy would prove to be a vote winner, expected a breakthrough in the general election and maintained a strongly

antagonistic attitude towards devolution and the Labour party. When it was invited to join the Scottish Constitutional Convention, it turned down the offer for fear that independence would lose visibility within a project focussed on devolution.

After the disappointing performance in the 1992 general election, however, the party came to realise that despite the effort to moderate its image and to increase the appeal of secession, the prospect of achieving independence from the constitutional status quo remained a distant one. It was thus facing again the dilemma of what policy to adopt towards devolution

and fought the 1992 and 1997 general elections and the 1997 referendum campaign on a platform of total opposition to devolution. This radicalisation of their position isolated the Conservatives within Scottish society and, coupled with the low profile adopted by the business organisations, led to the party fighting the No-No corner of the 1997 referendum campaign in almost complete isolation. As in 1979, the party tried again to exploit the linkages between devolution and secession but this tactic failed to resonate with the electorate. Support for devolution held steady throughout the campaign and turned into a large Yes vote in the referendum. This was largely a result of the fact that, with the Europeanisation of the self-government issue, by 1997 most voters preferred independence to the status quo.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the Conservatives failed to adopt a European profile for their policy and failed to engage their opponents on the European dimension to Scotland's constitutional status. The Conservative strategy in the period 1988-97 can be understood in two ways. Either as a rational attempt to exploit a perceived gap between support for self-government at the elite and popular levels by offering a clear alternative to the devolutionist consensus in the hope of replicating the 1979 success or as a defensive 'ideological' retrenchment to preserve party unity.

latter. By so doing it also acted as a factor of unity within the self-government camp despite the latent tension between its two main parties. Second, within this pro-self-government front, by making independence more appealing and therefore raising support for it, it strengthened the position of the SNP, making it a more dangerous rival for the Labour party but also an indispensable partner in the battle against the status quo. The *rapprochement* between Labour and the SNP can thus be explained by the fact that the former's position was by then closer to the latter's than to the Conservatives<sup>35</sup>. This shift had been produced by the competitive dynamics unleashed by the SNP's move to the centre implicit in its decision to place independence in the context of the EU. The SNP's move shifted the preference distribution at public level towards the 'Independence in Europe' option and threatened to polarise competition between the latter and the status quo leaving the assembly option looking like an 'empty centre'<sup>36</sup>. The Labour move can thus be seen as an attempt to move as closely as possible to the SNP's position, in order to regain the centre ground, without going beyond the party's 'region of acceptability'<sup>37</sup>. This tactical alliance between the SNP and Labour was greatly facilitated by the fact that a crucial new dimension had been added to the game; a new dimension which was providing common ground for the Yes camp and putting its opponent at a structural disadvantage.

### **3 Contribution to the debate on Europeanisation**

The case of party competition on self-government for Scotland presented above illustrates an important aspect of Europeanisation: the exploitation of the European dimension for strategic partisan goals. This aspect can manifest itself in the absence of specific top-down pressures to adapt exercised by the Union level onto the state and regional levels. It is thus an actor-centred manifestation of Europeanisation.<sup>38</sup> In order to capture its dynamics, I have employed the concept of heresthetic derived from the rational choice literature. One aspect of heresthetic, in particular, ideally describes the use of Europeanisation identified in this paper: the increase in dimensionality in order to manipulate a political situation. Through the exploitation of the European dimension, actors are able to re-shape the balance of forces and the patterns of competition at the domestic level. In Riker's words, "heresthetically manipulating the perception of the issue and simultaneously and opportunistically searching for allies"<sup>39</sup> so that "formerly unsympathetic competitors wish to stand with the erstwhile disadvantaged".<sup>40</sup> This is precisely what the SNP and Labour did in order to neutralise the Conservative exploitation of the fear of secession and turn the 1979 defeat into the 1997 success.

This case also indicate that Europeanisation can operate in two broad direction. One is from the Union down to the state and regional levels, the other is across states and regions belonging to the Union. The SNP's and Labour's exploitation of the European dimension, respectively, illustrate these two directions. The SNP played primarily on what could be

practice the first of these terms has attracted the overwhelming majority of studies conducted so far leaving the latter two largely un-explored. Political parties and the effect Europeanisation can have on competition between them, in particular, have been largely neglected.<sup>43</sup>

This paper addresses precisely such aspects of politics and polity, focusing on a case of party competition on constitutional reform. It does so with the help of the Rikerian concept of heresthetic. On that basis, it proposes a model of Europeanisation characterised by the exploitation of the European dimension to re-shape patterns of competition at the domestic level. This corresponds to what Riker referred to as the heresthetical device of 'increasing dimensionality'. It then tests the model on the case study of party competition on self-government for Scotland from 1974-1997 and shows how such use of the European dimension produced a dramatic re-shaping of the balance of forces and the patterns of competition between the parties and led to a very different outcome in the 1997 referendum compared to the one in 1979. This paper thus shows that Europeanisation matters to party competition and can do so in ways which lend themselves to be analysed from the perspective of the rationalist literature on heresthetic. Applying these approaches and concepts to other cases of party competition appears to this author as a promising way to contribute to our understanding of the domestic effects of European integration.

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- <sup>12</sup> Ibidem (151)
- <sup>13</sup> See Shepsle (2003: 311)
- <sup>14</sup> On the logic of two-level games, see Putnam (1988).
- <sup>15</sup> See Tsebelis (1990: esp. 13, 111).
- <sup>16</sup> See Strøm (1990) and Strøm and Müller (1999).
- <sup>17</sup> This empirical section draws on Dardanelli (2005).
- <sup>18</sup> Given space limitations, it is not possible to give the reader an adequate background to the events analysed here, see Bogdanor (1999) for an excellent introduction.
- <sup>19</sup> See Keating and Bleiman (1979: 146-7).
- <sup>20</sup> This interpretation was first put forward by Jaensch (1976: 307, 318-9).
- <sup>21</sup> Less than 40 per cent of SNP identifiers supported secession in 1979, see Dardanelli (2005: 64). On the determinants of the vote for the SNP in the 1970s, see Miller et al. (1977).
- <sup>22</sup> Macartney (1981: 18).
- <sup>23</sup> On the conflict within the party on devolution before and after the referendum, see Kauppi (1982: 333-4).
- <sup>24</sup> See Bennie et al. (1997: 46) and Meguid (2001).
- <sup>25</sup> See Jones and Keating (1992).
- <sup>26</sup> See Bogdanor (1980).
- <sup>27</sup> See Mitchell (1990: 88).
- <sup>28</sup> See Perman (1979: 55-7).
- <sup>29</sup> By and large, these interpretations did reflect public opinion, see Dardanelli (2005: 62-74).
- <sup>30</sup> Ibidem
- <sup>31</sup> For a fuller analysis of the Europeanisation of the SNP, see Dardanelli (2003).
- <sup>32</sup> In the words of the party leader, Gordon Wilson, quoted in Lynch (1996a: 38).
- <sup>33</sup> See Dardanelli (2005: 124).
- <sup>34</sup> On the fact that retrenchment on the status quo was not a rational strategy for the Conservatives in the 1990s, see Burch and Holliday (1992: 388, 395).
- <sup>35</sup> See also Geekie and Levy (1989) and Newell (1995: 73, 79).
- <sup>36</sup> On the shift in the preference distribution, see Dardanelli (2005: 120-30). The SNP can thus be seen as an 'influential party' in the sense employed by Ward (2000: 11-2), i.e. a party able to influence voters' preferences. It should be noted, though, that the party was more successful in raising support for independence than in attracting votes for itself.
- <sup>37</sup> On Labour's bid to reconquer the middle ground, see also Newell (1995: 73 and 89) and Lynch (1996b: 3); on the concept of 'zone of acceptability' in party competition, see Iversen (1994: 162).
- <sup>38</sup> For a conceptualisation of the actor-centred approach applied to multi-level governance, see Marks (1996), for application of the concept to a series of case studies, see Fallend et al. (2003).
- <sup>39</sup> Riker (1986: 40).
- <sup>40</sup> Ibidem (34).
- <sup>41</sup> See Marks (1992) on this point.
- <sup>42</sup> See Green Cowles and Risse (2001: 220).
- <sup>43</sup> Although Mair (2000) is a notable exception.