



Between two unions: Europeanisation and Scottish devolution

Paolo Dardanelli

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This book is the first study of Scottish devolution to adopt an explicitly comparative approach and the first to analyse the impact of the European dimension. It is based on a comparison between the 1970s and the 1990s, with focus on the March 1979 and September 1997 referendums. For each period, it investigates how political parties and interest groups perceived the UK and the EU, how they defined their interests towards them, how perceptions and interests shaped their strategies and what influence elite strategies had on mass preferences and ultimately on the referendum results.

Based on rigorous analysis of an extensive body of quantitative and qualitative sources, it identifies three key factors in the changing politics of Scottish devolution: the interaction between attitudes to devolution and attitudes to independence; the exploitation of the European context to shape perceptions of independence and a gap between support for self-government; and the referendum vote. On these findings, it builds a ground-breaking argument that challenges the widespread thesis that support for devolution was a consequence of the 'democratic deficit' created by eighteen years of Conservative rule. It shows that the key factors accounting for the different results of the two referendums were a change in attitudes to independence and the use of the European dimension in determining them, rather than the 'democratic deficit'. The book thus presents an entirely original explanation of Scottish devolution and sheds light on one of the most contested questions in contemporary politics: whether European integration leads to fragmentation of its constituent states.

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