

**Standing Up for the Nations? Devolution
and the Changing Dynamics of Territorial
Representation in the UK House of
Commons, 1992–2019**

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

- This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.
- It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.
- It does not exceed the proscribed word limit for the Politics and International Studies Degree Committee.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how MPs go about representing the United Kingdom's component territorial units in the House of Commons. More specifically, it examines how national and regional interests are fed into parliamentary proceedings, how this varies across different territorial, political and institutional contexts, and how the role of the sub-state territorial MP has evolved since the introduction of devolution in the late 1990s.

Before this project there had been no substantial study of how the UK's component territorial units are represented at Westminster for over 40 years. This is despite transformative changes to the constitutional and political environments in which MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales operate. By transferring key policy responsibilities away from the centre, devolution raised questions about the roles of MPs from the affected areas. Political divergence between the different parts of the UK has subsequently become more pronounced, and over the last decade the future of the domestic Union has become an increasingly salient issue.

A mixed-methods approach is taken, combining analysis of 6,001 parliamentary contributions with 23 interviews. It is found that MPs with constituencies in the devolved areas focus heavily on matters specific to their territorial units, and increasingly so since 1992–97. These MPs have adapted their territorially-focused roles to the changed institutional environment, for instance through positioning themselves as champions and critics of the devolved executives and legislatures. This sort of behaviour was especially widespread during the period of intense parliamentary debate about Brexit from 2016–19, although evidence of sub-state territorial representation having influenced the course of these events is limited primarily to second order issues. English MPs are also found to engage in territorial representation of areas larger than constituencies, specifically in relation to counties. However, this is a far more prominent feature of the behaviour of MPs with seats in Cornwall compared to those with seats in Yorkshire.

The trends that have been identified speak to a political sphere in the UK that is increasingly fragmented along territorial lines. These findings carry significant implications for academic literatures on parliament and territorial politics in the UK, and for our broader understanding of the UK political system. The approach and findings also have the potential to inform future research on representation of territorial units by members of legislatures in other multi-level political systems.

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One consequence of the pandemic was that, unexpectedly, most of this thesis was written from my flat in Muswell Hill, north London. A special thanks to my flatmate Frieda for her friendship, advice, pearls of 'Frieda wisdom' and – perhaps above all – for her infectious positivity.

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My dad died long before I was old enough to develop an interest in politics. However, I am certain that his encouragement to always 'plan ahead' when I was a young child embarking on homework, and the example that he set through his rigorous and dedicated approach to his own work, have been a major influence on me. I know that he would be proud of his son for completing a PhD at Cambridge, something that still seems surreal to put in words, even at this stage. I would like to dedicate the thesis to dad's memory.

Standing Up for the Nations? Devolution and the Changing Dynamics of Territorial Representation in the UK House of Commons, 1992–2019

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1. Introduction

A key function of the central legislature in a multi-level polity is to bring together representatives from the territorial units that comprise the state. This enables distinctive territorial interests to be articulated at the political centre. Moreover, state-wide parliamentary institutions can be seen as an important part of the ‘glue’ holding together otherwise geographically fragmented political systems (Watts 1996, 75). Internationally it is common for the role of ‘territorial representation’ to be bestowed explicitly on the second chamber, as with the German *Bundesrat* and Spanish *Senado* (Russell 2001). However, in the United Kingdom the only institution containing members elected from each of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is the House of Commons. This thesis is concerned with how MPs go about acting on behalf of these territorial areas, performing what academics term ‘substantive representation’ (Pitkin 1967), in the context of a state often described as ‘quasi-federal’ since the introduction of devolution in the 1990s (Bache and Flinders 2004; Bogdanor 1999a).

The principal research question is, **‘To what extent, in what ways and with what consequences are the UK’s component territorial units given substantive representation by MPs in the House of Commons?’** Chapters examine how national and regional interests are fed into parliamentary proceedings, how this varies across different territorial, political and institutional contexts, and how the role of the sub-state territorial MP has developed since devolution. A mixed methods approach is taken, combining a detailed quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 6,001 spoken contributions by MPs with 23 interviews. This enables the vast array of data contained in official parliamentary records to be utilised, while also considering less visible means through which MPs seek to represent their territorial units and incorporating members’ own perspectives into the study. Together these methods facilitate a thorough investigation into an important aspect of the representational activities of a relatively large sub-set of members of the House of Commons, which has previously been largely overlooked. The thesis is focused on the UK, but the approach taken and key findings also have the potential to inform future research on representation of territorial units by members of legislatures elsewhere.

Prior to this project there had been no major systematic study of how the UK’s component nations are given representation in the House of Commons for over 40 years (Judge and Finlayson 1975; Keating 1975, 1978; Mishler 1983; Mishler and Mughan 1978). This is despite transformative changes to the institutional and political context in which MPs operate since then, especially for

those with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Devolution has hollowed out the range of policy issues on which the Westminster parliament has competence outside England, a prospect which some predicted could lead MPs from the devolved areas to become ‘superfluous in the eyes of the people’ (Judge and Finlayson 1975, 292) or even ‘increasingly redundant’ (Keating 1978, 429). Meanwhile, recent scholarship has emphasised how the electoral and party politics of the different parts of the United Kingdom has diverged (Awan-Scully 2018; Detterbeck 2012; Swenden and Maddens 2009). This is evident not only in results of elections to the devolved legislatures, and consequently the composition of the devolved executives, but also at general elections. In 2015, 2017 and 2019 different parties secured the most votes and seats in each of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. During campaigns, parties and candidates standing in the devolved territories now often give prominence to pledges to act on behalf of their territorial units (Clark and Bennie 2016). For instance, in 2019 the Scottish National Party’s manifesto stated that ‘SNP MPs will always stand up for Scotland’ (Scottish National Party 2019, 2), Labour’s Welsh manifesto was titled *Standing Up for Wales* (Welsh Labour 2019) and the Democratic Unionist Party (2019, 4) promised to ‘speak up for Northern Ireland at Westminster’. These trends have led one leading analyst to speak of the ‘end of British party politics’ and claim, strikingly, that ‘in some respects the House of Commons increasingly resembles the European Parliament – whose members are all democratically chosen but from a disconnected series of separate national electoral contests’ (Awan-Scully 2018, 14). Despite the significance of these developments, there has not previously been a major empirical study considering their impact on what MPs from the different parts of the UK do at Westminster after being elected. This is a notable oversight. Understanding how MPs go about giving representation to their territorial units can offer important insights for those interested in the contemporary House of Commons, and the operation of the post-devolution political system more broadly.

Political and academic context

The UK is increasingly characterised as a ‘fragile Union’ (Brown 2015; Stephens 2015; The Times 2021). Scottish independence was defeated by 55% to 45% in a referendum held in 2014, a narrower margin than was anticipated when the vote was called. The following year the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) secured an unprecedented landslide of Scottish constituencies in the House of Commons, winning 56 of 59 seats. The extent of political divergence within the UK was then underscored by the result of the 2016 EU membership referendum, with the majority of voters in England and Wales supporting Brexit, while 56% in

Northern Ireland and 62% in Scotland favoured remaining in the EU. Subsequently, a prolonged period of debate about the implementation of Brexit, then tensions over aspects of the response to the coronavirus pandemic that began in spring 2020, have had a severely destabilising effect on relationships between the UK and devolved governments (Kenny, Rycroft, and Sheldon 2021). These developments have fuelled speculation both about further constitutional reform, and the possible break-up of the UK. The Scottish government claims a mandate for a fresh independence referendum (Sturgeon 2021), while there has been frequent speculation about a ‘border poll’ on Irish unification since the EU referendum (Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland 2021). In response, the Conservative-led UK government has prioritised a controversial agenda that has been described as ‘hyper-unionism’, which entails seeking to strengthen the profile and influence of central government in the territories with devolution (Kenny and Sheldon 2021b). The Labour opposition favours a more ‘federal’ constitution and, at the time of writing, is considering proposals for this advanced by a commission chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Commission on the UK’s Future 2022; Starmer 2020).

How the different parts of the UK are represented at the political centre is a highly salient question in the context of these debates. Critics of the constitutional status quo often argue that the smaller territories are poorly served by the Westminster parliament. For example the First Minister of Scotland and leader of the SNP, Nicola Sturgeon, has claimed that Westminster views Scotland with ‘utter contempt’ and that a benefit of independence would be no longer having ‘to put up with being treated like something on the sole of Westminster’s shoe’ (McCall 2022). From a pro-Union perspective a former First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, has argued that ‘politics in the UK is dominated by Westminster and the way that Westminster thinks’, and this causes ‘difficulties’ for the smaller territories (UK in a Changing Europe 2021). Meanwhile, politicians and pundits have frequently accused Westminster of treating Northern Ireland insensitively, especially since the Brexit referendum. A former advisor to a Northern Ireland Secretary has written that ‘Westminster doesn’t understand Northern Ireland’ (Meagher 2017), while a former civil servant and current member of the Northern Ireland Assembly has characterised the UK parliament as ‘oblivious’ to the implications of Brexit for that territory (O’Toole 2019). Public opinion surveys have indicated that disillusionment with the UK parliament extends to citizens in the devolved territories. Polls in 2018 found that only 10% of people in Wales, 11% in Scotland and 17% in Northern Ireland agreed that politicians in Westminster reflect the concerns of people in their part of the country (LucidTalk 2018; YouGov 2018c, 2018b). Such low levels of faith in the central legislature are likely to be one factor driving support for the break-up of the UK.

Despite the prevalence of critical claims about Westminster's treatment of the non-English parts of the UK, there has been little detailed research on how Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are given representation there since devolution. The small number of existing studies are limited in scope and mostly pre-date the constitutional and political upheaval that has affected territorial politics during the most recent decade (Birrell 2007; Gay 2003; Lodge, Russell, and Gay 2004; Masterman and Hazell 2001; Paun 2008; Russell and Bradbury 2007; Russell and Hazell 2000). Much of the wider literature in the sub-field of UK parliamentary studies takes minimal account of territorial politics, with limited recognition of distinctive features of the roles and behaviour of MPs whose constituencies are outside England. There is, for instance, very little discussion of the different political and institutional contexts in which MPs with seats in the devolved territories operate in the literature on the roles of backbench MPs (Campbell and Lovenduski 2015; Searing 1994; Shephard and Simson Caird 2018; Wright 2010). While drawing attention to the need to distinguish between groups of 'actors' within the Westminster parliament, analysis of the dynamics of parliamentary behaviour has also tended to pay limited attention to the territorial dimension. Instead this concentrates mainly on the dividing lines between government and opposition, and between frontbenchers and backbenchers (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018; Russell and Gover 2017). This has left a territorial blind-spot in the UK parliamentary studies literature. In practice, much existing scholarship focuses predominantly on the experience of the majority of MPs with seats in England, neglecting the priorities and behaviour of the minority with seats elsewhere. Given the wider context of increased political divergence between the different parts of the UK and the impact of devolution on the institutional environment in which MPs from outside England operate, this is a significant oversight.

Just as the territorial dimension to UK politics has not often been foremost in the research concerns of parliamentary studies specialists, scholarship by territorial politics specialists has rarely focused on Westminster since devolution. During this period studies of the roles and behaviour of elected politicians from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have mostly related to members of the devolved bodies (Birrell 2012; Haughey 2019; Howell 2003; Parker, Munson, and Richter 2020; Shephard and Cairney 2005). Meanwhile, research on inter-institutional relationships within the UK has mainly been concerned with direct relationships between devolved actors and the UK government, with little suggestion that backbench MPs have much involvement (McEwen et al. 2020; Swenden and McEwen 2014). The absence of much recent literature on what MPs with seats outside England do at Westminster may reflect an implicit assumption that the UK parliament no

longer has an especially important role to play in relation to these territories. However, that view overlooks that the UK's central institutions retain important responsibilities across all parts of the state, including in fields such as economic policy, immigration and trade, where policy decisions taken at Westminster may carry specific implications for different territorial areas. The UK parliament also remains the arena where key constitutional issues relating to devolution are debated, decided and scrutinised, including changes to the powers of the devolved legislatures. In certain circumstances MPs from outside England can become pivotal actors in determining the composition of the UK government and influencing the direction of public policy, most recently during the 2017–19 hung parliament when the Democratic Unionist Party entered a confidence-and-supply agreement with the Conservatives (Birrell and Heenan 2020). How MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales go about their work as elected representatives is hence still of considerable interest.

This thesis is about how the UK's component territorial units are represented at Westminster, but it also has the potential to inform a wider research agenda covering international cases and encompassing comparative research. In recent decades sub-state nationalist and regionalist political movements have been an important factor influencing the course of domestic politics in countries including Belgium, Canada, Italy and Spain (Hepburn and Detterbeck 2018). This has led both to parties that compete in only a single territory winning increasing numbers of seats in central legislatures, and to explicit representation of distinctive territorial interests and priorities becoming a more important focus for parties that contest elections state-wide (De Winter and Türsan 1998; Detterbeck 2012). Relatedly, a number of these countries have undergone similar processes of institutional decentralisation to the UK (Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel 2010). The implications of these changes for parliamentary behaviour have not yet received much attention from legislative studies scholars. Findings from the UK cannot simply be generalised, but the conclusions of this research can help to identify hypotheses that might inspire future research.

Questions addressed by the thesis

The overarching topic of how the UK's component territorial units are given representation by MPs gives rise to a series of more specific questions. Those set out here are not comprehensive, but reflect the most important lines of enquiry that run through the thesis.

1/ *What is meant by substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units, and what forms does this take in the House of Commons?* Since there have been no previous studies that systematically apply the notion of 'substantive representation' to the UK's constituent territories, two important initial questions that must be addressed are what exactly is meant by this term in the context of this research, and what forms does it take at Westminster. These are explored through the development of an original theoretical framework, which is designed to provide conceptual clarity about the precise focus of this project. The framework first establishes a broad definition of sub-state territorial representation, then sets out a typology of four specific categories of claim to represent territorial units that can be identified in contributions by MPs in the House of Commons. The design of the content analysis of parliamentary contributions is significantly informed by the framework, and its terminology is frequently referred to in the empirical chapters of the thesis. The framework is an important contribution in its own right, and is intended to help facilitate a wider research agenda relating to the themes of this project.

2/ *How have patterns of substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units changed over the period from 1992 to 2019?* This project has a strong temporal dimension. Patterns of substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units are analysed over the course of seven complete parliamentary terms, from 1992–97 to 2017–19. This enables trends over time to be identified, and the impact of the significant political and institutional changes since the 1990s on the territorially-focused behaviour of MPs to be considered. The specific timeframe was chosen so that a full parliamentary term from before devolution was included, for comparison with those post-devolution. The primary method used for capturing change over time is the extensive quantitative content analysis of contributions to parliamentary debates, while the interviews also recorded reflections from current and former MPs that noted changing dynamics. Separate chapters present findings relating to MPs that have seats in the three devolved territories and in two English counties, Cornwall and Yorkshire.

3/ *How do patterns of substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units vary between MPs with constituencies in different parts of the UK, and belonging to different political parties?* There are good reasons to expect variation in patterns of territorial representation between MPs with constituencies in the different parts of the UK, and belonging to different political parties. Charting such variation, and seeking to account for it, is an important focus within this thesis. This adds a layer of empirical depth, which enables the key drivers of temporal trends in engagement with territorial politics by MPs to be identified and the complexity of territorial representation to be captured. One particular

dimension that is emphasised is differences between the behaviour of MPs belonging to parties that compete across Great Britain (such as the Conservatives and Labour), and members of parties that compete in just one of the UK's component territories (such as the SNP, and all of the parties that have held seats in Northern Ireland since 1992). The quantitative data that has been collected allows variation between MPs from different areas and parties to be analysed in detail, including changes over time in the frequency of sub-state territorial representation and the forms such interventions take.

4/ What impact has devolution had on the roles and behaviour of MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales? The establishment of devolved legislatures in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in 1998–99 was expected to have major knock-on implications for MPs with constituencies in those areas. Evaluating what consequences devolution has had for the roles and behaviour of these MPs is one of the most important questions this thesis addresses. This includes considering how far MPs with seats outside England have adapted how they go about representing their territorial units to the changed institutional environment resulting from devolution. One aspect focused on is how far these MPs continue to engage with policy areas that have been devolved in their home territories, and what forms this engagement takes. A theme returned to at various points is interaction between politics at devolved level and at Westminster. This is analysed primarily through charting how far, and in what respects, MPs with seats outside England seek to give representation to the perspectives of devolved institutions in Commons contributions. Drawing on the interviews conducted for this project, there is also discussion of the extent to which there is co-operation between groups of MPs at Westminster and party colleagues who sit in the devolved legislatures, and in some cases serve as ministers in devolved executives.

5/ What are the consequences of the changing dynamics of territorial representation in the House of Commons? A final, overarching, question concerns the consequences of the changing dynamics of territorial representation documented in the thesis. Although not the principal focus, there is some consideration of the policy impact of territorially-focused behaviour in the House of Commons, particularly in the context of the fraught debates on Brexit that dominated the 2015–19 period. An important issue that the thesis engages with is the possible longer-term consequences of the emergence of increasingly distinctive territorial spheres at Westminster, for instance for MPs' career paths. The implications of the findings for debates about institutional reform pertaining to the representation of sub-state territories at the political centre are also considered.

Chapter-by-chapter overview

The thesis consists of nine chapters, including this introduction.

Chapter 2 situates the thesis within the context of the historical development of the UK's territorial constitution, and how the distinctiveness of the different parts of the UK has been recognised at Westminster. This includes a review of relevant literature, which identifies a notable absence of systematic research on the roles and behaviour of MPs with seats outside England in the UK parliament since the introduction of devolution.

Chapter 3 presents a framework for analysis of how territorial units at an intermediate level between constituencies and the state are represented by MPs. The case is made for focusing on substantive representation, and on representative 'claim-making', drawing on the theoretical contributions of Pitkin (1967) and Saward (2010). It is explained that, in focusing on the construction of representative claims by MPs, some aspects of this framework are grounded in the interpretive approach to the study of political institutions. A definition of sub-state territorial representation is provided, and a typology of four types of territorial claim is presented – relating to *material interests*, *public opinion*, *identity and/or culture*, and *sub-state political institutions*.

In chapter 4 the research design and methodology are outlined. It is explained that a mixed methods approach has been adopted, comprising an analysis of 6,001 contributions to House of Commons debates and 23 interviews. Each stage of the empirical research is described, and justification is offered for key methodological decisions.

Chapter 5 reports quantitative findings from the content analysis, charting trends in sub-state territorial representation by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales over the period from 1992 to 2019. Results are presented that illustrate comparisons in the extent of claims to represent sub-state territories by these MPs across different parliamentary terms, and between members with constituencies in each territorial area and belonging to different political parties. Trends in the prevalence of the four forms of territorial claim identified in chapter 3 are also analysed. The headline findings are that the overall rate of territorial claim-making has increased steadily since 1992, and that there has been a particularly notable rise in claims to represent sub-state political institutions.

Chapter 6 focuses in more detail on how MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales go about performing their territorially-focused roles. It begins by considering how MPs from these territories interpret the scope of their parliamentary work post-devolution, in terms of engagement with matters within the devolved and reserved spheres, finding considerable variation and no clearly-defined remit. The next section of the chapter discusses the development of relationships between MPs and politicians operating at devolved level. The last section emphasises the extent to which MPs increasingly refer to sub-state institutions in the Commons, including by acting as champions and critics of the devolved governments and parliaments. On the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter it is argued that MPs have successfully adapted to devolution, adopting new modes of behaviour that have enabled them to continue engaging in representation of their territorial units.

Chapter 7 is a detailed case study of how MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales sought to advance territorially-framed arguments during the fraught parliamentary debates relating to Brexit, from 2015–19. It is found that the level of sub-state territorial units was highly salient for MPs with seats outside England, with speeches displaying a particularly strong focus on the policies and powers of devolved institutions. The case study is then structured chronologically, analysing the territorially-focused behaviour of MPs in four key sets of debates. A section towards the end evaluates the overall impact of sub-state territorial representation in these debates. Policy changes in response to groups of MPs who engaged in representation of their territorial units were limited mainly to second-order issues. Nevertheless, it is argued that the Brexit years can be viewed as a significant juncture in the development of the post-devolution territorial role of MPs, given the high intensity of territorial claim-making and evidence of innovative approaches to advancing territorially-framed concerns.

Chapter 8 considers how applicable the notion of sub-state territorial representation developed in the thesis is to MPs with English constituencies. It focuses on two counties, Cornwall and Yorkshire, which are identified as ‘most likely’ cases for exploring how areas of England larger than electoral constituencies are given representation. Cornish MPs are found to be far more engaged in territorial representation at this level than Yorkshire MPs. It is suggested that the Yorkshire findings are likely to be a better indicator of the prevalence of substantive territorial representation of other English counties than those relating to Cornwall. On this basis it seems that the county level is a relevant territorial reference point for at least some English MPs, but that it forms just one layer in a complex web of territorial levels that are sometimes the subject of

substantive representation. A section towards the end of the chapter analyses calls for devolution by MPs from these territories, comparing the two county-level cases and drawing out possible explanations for the differing trajectories of devolution debates.

The five questions presented in this introduction are revisited in chapter 9. Implications of the findings for academic literature, the UK political system and debates about possible institutional reform are then discussed. Directions for future research on territorial representation of the type focused on in this project are identified, including the potential for comparative studies encompassing other multi-level states.

2. Territory, UK politics and parliament

This chapter sets out in more detail the constitutional, political and academic context within which this project is situated. It focuses specifically on the multi-national nature of the United Kingdom, and how that has been reflected in institutional arrangements and patterns of electoral competition. The chapter starts by providing a historical perspective, underlining the longstanding distinctiveness of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales within what has often been described as the ‘union state’. This background is essential to establish the relevance of the UK’s component territorial units as areas that can be expected to receive substantive representation in the House of Commons. Next, the constitutional and political implications of devolution are discussed, with particular attention drawn to developments that might be expected to have a bearing on the roles and behaviour of MPs. The remainder of the chapter reviews existing literature concerning how the UK’s smaller component territories are represented in the Westminster parliament, both pre- and post-devolution. This demonstrates that there is a body of relevant scholarship on which this thesis can build. However, major unanswered questions about the impact of developments since the 1990s are also identified.

The pre-devolution ‘union state’ and territorial politics

Following the Acts of Union the UK had a single legislature at Westminster, to which representatives from each of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were sent. The smaller nations nevertheless retained distinctive identities, and some institutions of their own. Scotland continued to have separate legal and education systems, and its own church. Many aspects of domestic administration in Ireland were still run from Dublin. The governance of Wales had been largely assimilated into England during the 16th century, but the persistence of the Welsh language and strength of religious non-conformism ensured that it too remained a distinctive cultural and political space. Significantly, many people from the non-English parts of the UK continued to view themselves as Irish, Scottish and Welsh, with these labels never fully subsumed within a pan-UK identity (Keating 2021). This balance between centralisation of political authority and retaining key underpinnings of territorial diversity is encapsulated in the idea of the ‘union state’ (Keating and Elcock 1998, 2; J. Mitchell 2009; Rokkan and Urwin 1982, 11), or more precisely the ‘state of unions’ (J. Mitchell 2010), reflecting the several separate unification processes that led to its boundaries becoming established.

The ‘union state’ was institutionalised in the structures of government through the introduction of the Scottish Office in 1885 and Welsh Office in 1965, each with responsibility for key areas of domestic policy within those territories, such as health and education (J. Mitchell 2009). The Northern Ireland Office followed after the suspension of devolution in 1972 and initially administered ‘direct rule’. Distinctive arrangements for business specific to the UK’s smaller territorial units were also introduced in the House of Commons and expanded in scope during the 20th century (Torrance and Evans 2019). A Scottish ‘grand committee’ consisting of all Scottish members was first convened in 1907, which took some stages of bills applying exclusively to Scotland (Burns 1960; Edwards 1971). From 1957 the committee stages of Scottish bills went to a Scottish standing committee containing a subset of Scottish MPs, while other functions including second reading debates for some bills were handled by the grand committee (Burns 1960). Although the grand committee rarely dealt with controversial business it was symbolically important. Edwards (1971, 322) noted that it was viewed by some MPs as ‘Scotland’s parliament’, and sometimes even addressed that way. Alongside the Scottish Office, the Scottish committees formed an important part of what Kellas (1973, 237) termed the *Scottish Political System* – a semi-detached ‘sphere’ within which many MPs with seats in Scotland specialised. A similar system of Welsh committees also developed, but these met less often since the volume of legislation applying only to Wales was small (Jones and Wilford 1986; Mishler and Mughan 1978). A Northern Ireland grand committee existed intermittently during direct rule but had a ‘very limited’ role (Birrell 2007, 299; Torrance and Evans 2019). The territorial legislative committees were complemented by scrutiny-focused select committees shadowing the Scottish and Welsh offices from 1979, as part of the wider reforms implemented at that time (Jones and Wilford 1986; Torrance and Evans 2019).¹ Jones and Wilford (1986, 6) note that the creation of such territorially-specific structures and procedures in the House of Commons usually followed demands from MPs with seats outside England, and that this approach implicitly presumed that ‘territorial politics could be managed within the framework of the Westminster Parliament’. For many 20th century MPs, arrangements of this type were seen as a way of acknowledging territorial distinctiveness while at the same time resisting calls for separate legislatures in the nations.

The respective constitutional statuses of the component territories have intermittently surfaced as a salient topic on the Westminster agenda. Ireland’s position within the Union became one of the most controversial issues in parliamentary politics during the later part of the 19th century. The

¹ A Scottish Affairs Committee also existed from 1969–72. The Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee was established in 1994 (Torrance and Evans 2019).

campaign for 'home rule' was boosted by the election of MPs who supported this proposition for the majority of Irish constituencies from 1874. This 'Irish question' divided the main British political parties over subsequent decades before Ireland was ultimately partitioned in 1921, with the south becoming independent while a 'home rule' legislature and executive were established in what became Northern Ireland (Boyce 1988). The outbreak of the 'Troubles' and subsequent suspension of the devolved institutions meant that the governance of Northern Ireland became a major issue in UK politics during the final decades of the 20th century (Catterall and McDougall 1996).

Scottish and Welsh devolved legislatures had first been suggested as part of proposals for 'home rule all round' during the crisis over Ireland (Kendle 1989). However, the campaign for these only intensified after the sub-state nationalist parties, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, achieved electoral breakthroughs at by-elections in the 1960s, then began to win seats at general elections in the 1970s. A Royal Commission on the Constitution was established, with the majority of its members endorsing devolution for Scotland and Wales (Bogdanor 1999b). The 1974–79 Labour governments attempted to introduce this but faced determined backbench opposition and were unable to secure sufficient popular support at referendums (A. Evans 2021). Pressure for constitutional reform nevertheless continued to build, with Labour's commitment to devolution solidifying while in opposition from 1979 to 1997 (Bogdanor 1999b).

Differences in party support between the component territories of the Union were evident soon after the beginning of organised party politics in the mid-19th century (Awan-Scully 2018). Pro-Home Rule MPs dominated Irish representation in the House of Commons from 1874 until partition, sitting mainly under the banner of the Irish Parliamentary Party until the republican and abstentionist Sinn Féin's landslide victory in 1918. Up to the 1970s the Northern Ireland contingent of MPs were overwhelmingly Ulster Unionists, who took the UK Conservative whip (Jackson 2011). Those MPs severed relations with the Conservatives after the suspension of devolution, and against the backdrop of the Troubles increasing numbers of politicians from other parties that contested elections only in Northern Ireland began to be elected. Welsh elections were dominated first by the Liberals, then by Labour from 1922. Until the 1960s elections in Scotland were closely contested between Labour and the Scottish Unionists, who took the Conservative whip and were integrated into the Britain-wide party in important respects (Torrance 2017).² Labour then began an extended period of dominance there. As Awan-Scully (2018, 32) has

² The Scottish Unionist Party merged with the Conservatives in 1965.

stressed, the political differences between the parts of Great Britain were relatively subtle for most of the 20th century. As late as the 1960s it was common for academics to speak of the territorial ‘homogeneity’ of the British electorate (Jennings 1968, 71). Pulzer (1967, 98) famously stated in a book on British elections that ‘class is the basis of British politics; all else is embellishment and detail’. Meanwhile, the author of a book on *The British System of Government* claimed that distinctions between the English, the Welsh and the Scots ‘do not have many political consequences’ (Birch 1967).

The significance of territory as a factor in the UK’s politics was increasingly recognised in academic scholarship from the 1970s (Bulpitt 1983; Keating 1975; Kellas 1973; Rose 1982). In the introduction to an edited collection titled *The Territorial Dimension in United Kingdom Politics*, Madgwick and Rose (1982, 1) argued that ‘[t]o understand the United Kingdom in its entirety we must[...] understand its parts – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland’, as well as the ‘institutions that unite one and one-fifth islands into a single state’. The nationalist breakthrough, and the constitutional debate that followed, had done much to undermine the previous ‘homogeneity thesis’ (Keating 1978, 409). Variation in the relative support of Labour and the Conservatives in each part of the Union also took on greater significance during the final decades of the century. At each general election from 1979 to 1997 Scotland and Wales returned clear majorities of Labour MPs, but the Conservatives remained securely in government thanks to strong support in English constituencies. That Scotland and Wales were being governed by a party that voters in those areas had repeatedly rejected was a major part of the backdrop to the eventual introduction of devolution at the turn of the millennium. By then the idea that territorial politics could be satisfactorily managed solely through arrangements within Westminster and Whitehall appeared outdated, and out of touch with popular sentiment in the UK’s smaller nations.

Devolution and political developments since 1998

Institutional arrangements

Labour’s landslide election victory in 1997 enabled Tony Blair’s government to deliver on manifesto commitments to Scottish and Welsh devolution. The first elections to the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales were duly held in 1999.³ Meanwhile, the separate but

³ The National Assembly for Wales became the *Senedd*/Welsh Parliament from May 2020. The original nomenclature is used in this thesis, since this was the formal term during the period covered.

parallel conclusion of peace talks in Northern Ireland resulted in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and the subsequent re-establishment of a devolved legislature and executive in Belfast. The three sets of devolution arrangements differed in important respects. From the beginning the Scottish Parliament had significant primary legislative powers, including in relation to key public services (Bogdanor 1999b). The Northern Ireland Assembly had broadly similar powers to the Scottish Parliament, but operated under a distinctive model designed to facilitate power-sharing between unionists and nationalists. The National Assembly for Wales originally had only executive and secondary legislative powers, with precise functions delegated piecemeal.

The development of devolution has in practice been what Blair's first Welsh Secretary described as a 'process not an event' (Davies 1999). Over time each devolved legislature has gained additional powers, through a series of separate initiatives. In Scotland a key change has been the piecemeal transfer of tax-raising powers, culminating in devolution of substantial control of income tax rates through legislation passed in 2016. There have been several significant reforms of the constitutional arrangements in Wales, including a move to primary legislative powers following a referendum in 2011 (Wyn Jones and Scully 2012). In Northern Ireland devolution has regularly been disrupted when power-sharing between the local parties has broken down, notably for extended periods from 2002–2007 and 2017–2020. Control over the sensitive issues of policing and justice was nevertheless transferred from Westminster in 2010. On paper at least, the cumulative effect of these changes has been to further hollow out the range of policy areas where the UK parliament's competence extends beyond England.

In comparison to most other large multi-national democracies, an unusual feature of the UK's devolution arrangements is the extent of constitutional asymmetry between its component territorial units (Watts 1996). As already noted, there are differences between the institutional arrangements in each of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However, the biggest asymmetry is between the areas with legislative devolution and England, which has been described as the 'gaping hole in the devolution settlement' (Hazell 2006, 1). While the other territorial units now have substantially decentralised governance, England remains 'one of the most centralised countries in Europe' (Kenny, McLean, and Paun 2018, 1). Plans to introduce regional assemblies in England failed to make progress under Labour, after a proposal for an assembly in the north east was heavily defeated in a referendum (Denham 2018). The Conservative-led governments from 2010 have since pursued 'devolution deals', involving the establishment of 'metro' mayors in primarily urban areas, in addition to the office of Mayor of London, inaugurated in 2000. However,

the powers of English mayors are not remotely similar to those of the three devolved governments and legislatures (Kenny 2021). As far as England is concerned, functions equivalent to those that have been devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales remain almost entirely within the domain of the UK government and Westminster parliament. This means that the UK's central political institutions often in practice act for England (or England and Wales) alone, with implications for the remits of government ministers and – importantly in the context of this thesis – MPs with seats in the devolved territories.

A prominent strand of academic commentary presents devolution as a radical constitutional departure. This position is particularly associated with Bogdanor (1999a, 190), who claimed that devolution was ‘turning Britain from a unitary state into a quasi-federal state, with Westminster becoming its quasi-federal parliament’. On this view the UK parliament was left as the ‘domestic parliament for England, part of a domestic parliament for Wales, and a federal parliament for Northern Ireland and Scotland’, whereas previously its domestic role extended across the UK (Bogdanor 1999a, 189). A decade after the introduction of devolution Bogdanor (2009) declared that devolution, together with other aspects of Labour’s constitutional agenda such as the Human Rights Act, had resulted in a *New British Constitution*. A similar argument was made by King (2009, 179), who asserted that ‘[m]odern British constitutional history can now be divided into two epochs, BD and AD: before devolution and after devolution’. The notion of a newly ‘quasi-federal’ state was also often cited as an important feature of the ‘multi-level governance’ framework for understanding British politics, which some claimed was superseding the traditional ‘Westminster model’ during the new Labour years (Bache and Flinders 2004; Gamble 2000; Palmer 2008). The quasi-federal characterisation of the post-devolution constitution was not universally accepted. Mitchell (2009, 2010) has been the leading advocate of seeing devolution as a more incremental change, in the context of a long history of distinctive national political spheres within the ‘state of unions’. This perspective places greater emphasis on the UK parliament’s ongoing influence on policy in the devolved territories. Writing after Brexit-related legislation impacting on devolved powers was passed despite the opposition of the Scottish Parliament, Mitchell (2018, 581) argued that such instances make ‘a mockery of claims that the UK has anything like a federal constitution’. McHarg and Young (2021) have taken a similar position, citing developments in the period since the Brexit referendum in 2016 as evidence that ‘the death of the old constitution has been greatly exaggerated’.

Over recent decades the UK has experienced twin processes that comparative scholars of multi-level politics term ‘denationalization’ and ‘reterritorialization’, as the particular contexts in individual territorial units have become a more prominent focus for citizens and political elites (Detterbeck 2012, 4; Swenden and Maddens 2009, 4). Manifestations include parties granting more autonomy to their territorial branches, increasingly distinctive electoral campaigning in each of the UK’s component territories and further divergence in the outcomes of elections. Devolution itself is not the sole factor behind these trends, but it has created the conditions for them to become more pronounced. It is the combination of these developments that led Awan-Scully (2018) to suggest that we might be witnessing the ‘end of British party politics’.

‘Denationalization’ refers to divergence in electoral outcomes in the different parts of the state (Detterbeck 2012, 4). At each of the four general elections from 2010 to 2019 different parties secured the most votes and seats in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The most substantial shift away from electoral patterns elsewhere in the UK has been in Scotland. In 2010 Labour held on to all of their Scottish seats despite significant losses elsewhere. Then in 2015 the SNP won an unprecedented landslide of 56 of the 59 Scottish seats. In 2017 the Scottish Conservatives went from one to 13 Scottish constituency seats, in an election where the Conservatives lost seats elsewhere. By this point Scotland could be described as a ‘wholly different electoral space to England’, with attitudes to Scottish independence emerging as the main factor driving voter preferences (Awan-Scully 2018, 57). The relationship between electoral trends in Wales and in England has not been severed to the same extent. While Labour has remained the largest party in Wales, seats have tended to change hands between them and the Conservatives on swings not dissimilar to those in England. Plaid Cymru have regularly won Commons seats in Wales since the 1970s, and have had a significant presence in the *Senedd*, but their support at general elections has not increased substantially since devolution. Northern Ireland has been a highly distinctive electoral space since partition. It is nevertheless worth noting Awan-Scully’s (2018, 78) observation that, in electoral terms, Northern Ireland is ‘more apart than it used to be’. Since the GFA more seats have been won by the DUP and the abstentionist Sinn Féin, at the expense of the UUP and SDLP which historically had closer connections to the UK Conservative and Labour parties respectively. The impact of ‘denationalization’ is clearly visible at Westminster in the presence of increasing numbers of MPs belonging to parties that compete in just one part of the UK, especially since the large expansion of the SNP group in 2015. While the overwhelming

majority of English and Welsh MPs belong to the main Britain-wide parties that lead the government and official opposition, most MPs with seats in Northern Ireland and Scotland are now members of smaller opposition parties. That itself can be expected to have a big impact on how MPs from those parts of the UK go about their work in parliament (Thompson 2020).

The extent of political divergence between the UK's component territorial units has also been demonstrated since 2010 through each of the UK government and the three devolved executives being led by different political parties. The Conservatives have led the UK government since then, but are yet to hold office at the devolved level. The Scottish government has been led by the SNP since 2007, while the Welsh government has been Labour-led since its establishment. When devolution has been operating, the Northern Ireland Executive has been run by a power-sharing coalition of unionists and nationalists as stipulated in the GFA. The emergence of administrations with different political and constitutional perspectives from the UK government has contributed to increasingly strained intergovernmental relationships (Kenny, Rycroft, and Sheldon 2021; McEwen 2021). This context has had significant spill-over implications for the parliamentary behaviour of MPs with constituencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which will be elaborated on in chapter 6.

Devolution has, moreover, had major consequences for how political parties organise. Although the main parties that compete across Great Britain incorporated territorial branches prior to devolution, reflecting the salience of these identities within the 'union state', these generally had little autonomy (Bradbury 2006). Apart from the Liberal Democrats, the Britain-wide parties previously had a single UK leader and developed few policies specific to the smaller nations. Devolution therefore required an initial process of creating 'new party elites' in Scotland and Wales (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, 140). Ahead of the first elections in 1999 both Labour and the Conservatives duly elected Scottish and Welsh leaders, establishing new and potentially influential powerbases within the parties. The strains that this could place on the notion of a cohesive Britain-wide party were displayed in 2000 when Alun Michael, the favoured choice of Labour's UK leadership, was replaced as head of the Welsh executive by Rhodri Morgan, who was preferred by Labour's Assembly members (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006). Morgan duly set out to establish 'clear red water' between Welsh Labour and Tony Blair's UK government, positioning the devolved party somewhat to the left and emphasising Welsh identity. After initially seeking to contain territorial differentiation, Hopkin and Bradbury (2006) have suggested that the central Labour party leadership's interest in controlling Scottish and Welsh internal party matters declined.

Additional functions, including selection of candidates and adoption of policies for devolved elections, have subsequently been decentralised (Bennett et al. 2020). Despite initial opposition to devolution, the Conservative party was also willing to embrace greater autonomy for its Scottish branch, believing a more distinctive platform could help reverse its declining fortunes in that part of the UK (Convery 2014). The Welsh Conservatives have never had the same extent of formal autonomy, but Convery (2014, 88, 90) has noted that a ‘somewhat separate Welsh party’ began to emerge after devolution and ‘in reality they have been given the same level of freedom as their Scottish colleagues in most areas’. Within a decade of devolution’s introduction, Fabre and Méndez-Lago (2009) were thus able to state that ‘[a]ll the parties have given their regional branches important powers’.

While prompted primarily by the need to contest elections at the devolved level, these changes to the structures of the main Britain-wide parties have also had knock-on implications for how general elections are contested. They have contributed to a ‘reterritorialization’ of party politics, which refers to the ‘strengthening of territorial factors in shaping competitive dynamics and party organizational strategies’ (Detterbeck 2012, 4). The Britain-wide parties began to publish separate Scottish and Welsh manifestos, in addition to their overall UK manifesto which is now aimed primarily at an English audience.⁴ Analysis by Clark and Bennie (2016) demonstrated that by 2010 and 2015 the differences were more substantial than just omitting policies that do not apply to Scotland and Wales from the manifestos issued in those parts of the UK. Scottish and Welsh manifestos were found to ‘emphasize identity more strongly’ and contain ‘distinctive proposals likely to be developed in a future Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly manifesto’ (Clark and Bennie 2016, 258, 261). Territorial differences were especially visible in 2017. Awan-Scully (2018, 10) has made the striking observation that candidates in Scotland ‘fought an election with little connection to the one occurring in the rest of the union’. This reflected the heavy focus of the Scottish campaign on whether or not a fresh independence referendum should be held, as proposed by the SNP-led Scottish government. The Scottish Conservative campaign was notable for the prominence afforded to its leader, Ruth Davidson, despite not herself being a candidate (Torrance 2020). The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, was similarly ‘front and centre’ of Labour’s campaigning in Wales (Awan-Scully 2018, 93). Welsh Labour’s manifesto, *Standing Up for Wales* (Welsh Labour 2017), was also significantly different in its presentation from the UK-wide manifesto, which Awan-Scully (2018, 95) attributes to a deliberate attempt to ‘separate the party in Wales from that in London’. These developments are of considerable significance in respect to

⁴ The Conservatives have also published a separate Northern Ireland manifesto since 2010.

the focus of this thesis. They mean that even MPs belonging to Britain-wide parties with seats in Scotland and Wales are now elected to the House of Commons on platforms tailored to these territories. This raises questions about how far the loyalties of MPs from these party groups lie with the leaderships and platforms of their territorial rather than UK-wide party organisations, and the implications that might have for their behaviour in parliament.

Parliament and territory

The remainder of this chapter discusses existing scholarship on how Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have been given representation in the House of Commons.

Pre-devolution studies

During the late 19th century and into the early 20th century distinctive territorial patterns of parliamentary behaviour were especially evident among the Irish contingent of MPs, reflecting the political situation at the time. The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) acted as a notably cohesive block, promoting policies and legislation specific to Ireland (A. T. Q. Stewart 1967; Thornley 1960). During the 1870s and 1880s these MPs pursued a policy of parliamentary ‘obstruction’, which included tabling large numbers of amendments and making long speeches as a means to ‘force Irish grievance upon the English consciousness’ (Thornley 1960, 42). These tactics were eventually countered by the adoption of new Commons standing orders, giving the government greater control over the agenda. Thornley (1960, 56) suggests that the party’s MPs nevertheless succeeded in demonstrating that they were ‘prepared to stay up all night infuriating the English’, which won ‘popular sympathy’ in Ireland. The IPP’s approach has sometimes been cited as a template to follow by contemporary SNP MPs (Crichton 2018). Around the same time Welsh Liberal MPs also organised separately within the Welsh Parliamentary Party, which became established as an ‘organ by which Welsh M.P.s could consult one another, and communicate grievances and desires to parliament and the government’ (Nelmes 1978, 482). This mobilised notably on the issue of the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales. In the 1880s and 1890s most Welsh MPs united around a ‘common political programme with disestablishment as its cornerstone’ (Nelmes 1978, 483).

Much of the existing literature on the representation of Scotland and Wales in the House of Commons dates from the 1970s and 1980s. This body of research developed in the context of

debates around the possible consequences of devolution. Against this backdrop the extent to which Scottish and Welsh MPs performed distinctive roles became a pertinent question. One feature of this literature is to emphasise the significance of the territorial committee systems that developed during the 20th century, as evidence of Scottish and Welsh distinctiveness. Judge and Finlayson (1975, 284) stressed that Scottish committees ‘occupy a great deal of the time of Scottish Members’. This reduced the time available to them to participate in UK-wide business and ensured that most ‘concentrate[d] their committee activity on Scottish Affairs’. This was substantiated by Keating (1978, 416), who analysed participation by Scottish MPs on standing committees considering bills with a UK-wide scope, finding that ‘Scottish MPs were proportionately underrepresented’. Since the Welsh committees had a lighter legislative workload these took up comparatively less of the time of Welsh MPs, who were consequently more involved in UK-wide business (Mishler and Mughan 1978).

Some of the works published on these themes pre-devolution contain analysis of contributions on the floor of the House of Commons, to assess the extent to which members had a distinctive territorial focus. This approach is broadly similar to that adopted in this thesis, although differences in the detail of the methodology mean that the results cannot be compared directly. The 1970s studies produced strong evidence of a territorial rather than UK-wide focus to the work of Scottish MPs, in particular. Analysis by Judge and Finlayson (1975) found that in the 1970–71 and February–October 1974 parliamentary sessions Scottish MPs overwhelmingly focused their parliamentary questions on ‘Scottish affairs’, defined as relating to policy areas that were expected to be transferred away from Westminster if devolution was implemented. In the short 1974 parliament 59% of questions by all Scottish backbenchers dealt purely with Scottish affairs, while in 1970–71 a random sample of 13 Scottish backbenchers devoted 70% of questions to such matters. These authors therefore concluded that Scottish MPs ‘appear primarily interested in the very subject areas’ that would have been transferred to the Scottish Assembly under the proposals being considered at that time (Judge and Finlayson 1975, 283).

Keating (1975, 1978, 411) also set out to analyse the activities of Scottish MPs and similarly found that they ‘behave in a distinctive manner’. As well as participation in standing committees, Keating (1978, 420) looked at the sponsorship of private members’ bills, finding that between 1950 and 1970 63% of those introduced by Scottish MPs and 71% of those that were successful aimed to change the law only in Scotland. It was additionally noted that Scottish MPs had a low visibility in the UK media, measured by coverage in *The Times*, compared to other MPs. However, analysis of

Commons divisions indicated that Scottish Conservative and Scottish Labour members did not vote in distinctive ways compared to their colleagues from elsewhere in the UK. Keating's overall conclusion was therefore that like 'representatives in a federal system, Scottish MPs are pursuing distinctive concerns at the Scottish level, while supporting their leaders at the national level' (Keating 1978, 427). He suggested that these findings were evidence that 'Scotland is not a fully integrated part of the U.K. political system' (Keating 1978, 427). Unfortunately there was no similarly systematic analysis of parliamentary contributions by Welsh MPs at this time, so it is less clear to what extent their parliamentary behaviour was distinctive. A lobby journalist from the *Western Mail* claimed in his memoirs that 'Wales, the Welsh, and the [Welsh] language' had been prominent in the backdrop to parliamentary debates throughout the 20th century, though also that annual 'Welsh day' debates had turned out to be a 'damp squib' and that the Welsh Parliamentary Party had fallen into decline since 1945 (Rosser 1987, 60, 62).

A different approach to analysing the extent to which Scottish and Welsh MPs had a territorial focus was taken by Mishler and Mughan (1978), who conducted 69 structured interviews in 1976 and 1977, when devolution legislation was being considered. The responses were consistent with Judge and Finlayson (1975) and Keating (1978) in finding that Scottish members 'report below-average participation in debate and question time but extensive committee activity', primarily within Scottish-focused committees (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 392). Welsh participation in House of Commons activities was, however, found to be 'considerably less parochial and nationalist-oriented' than that by Scottish members (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 392). Half of the Welsh MPs interviewed by Mishler and Mughan (1978, 393), but only one third of Scottish interviewees, said their parliamentary questions 'usually concerned broad United Kingdom or international policies and problems'. A majority of Welsh respondents considered themselves specialists in issues that were not due to be devolved, while this was true of less than one in five of the Scottish members (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 395). On the basis of their results these authors suggested that 'citizens of Scotland and Wales are ensured a comparatively high degree of legislative responsiveness to their individual needs, and substantial collective influence in policy matters of a predominantly or exclusively national (regional) character' (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 398). However, it was argued that 'the price exacted has been a substantial diminution of representation in policy matters of general concern to the United Kingdom', with these patterns 'substantially more pronounced in Scotland than Wales' (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 398). Mishler (1983, 12) complemented this work with a separate article arguing that 'the increasing political salience of Scottish nationalism had begun to undermine the class basis of Scottish party

alignments in Parliament', with a cross-cutting political cleavage relating to national identity emerging that could not easily be accommodated within the traditional two-party system. An especially striking finding was that in 1977 43% of Scottish MPs that were interviewed claimed to always perceive politics 'in terms of the conflicting interests of Scotland and Britain' (Mishler 1983, 8). This dropped somewhat, to 32%, when a further round of interviews were held in 1979, following the defeat of Labour's devolution proposals (Mishler 1983, 10).

A major policy concern of this literature was what MPs from Scotland and Wales would do were devolution to be implemented, given key aspects of their existing role would no longer be within Westminster's remit. One prediction was that they might struggle to find a role. Mishler and Mughan (1978, 403) forecast that the 'most likely answer to what Scottish and Welsh MPs will do after devolution is that most will do very little', some because they did little already and others because they would be 'unable to continue their current activities and have insufficient interest or expertise in other areas to change'. These authors went on to suggest, pessimistically, that it was probable that many of these MPs would become 'increasingly bored, frustrated and restless', eventually abandoning Westminster for 'more challenging and rewarding careers, either in the assemblies or in fields outside politics' (Mishler and Mughan 1978, 404). Keating (1978, 429) similarly thought that the 'Scottish-focused' members, which accounted for the clear majority of Scottish MPs in the 1970s, might be 'increasingly redundant' unless they could 'adapt'. Judge and Finlayson (1975) also anticipated that the role of Scottish MPs would need to change, and presented two possible scenarios. Under the first Scottish MPs would become 'national' members, 'enthusiastically' engaging with matters such as foreign affairs, defence, finance and European policy that were not devolved (Judge and Finlayson 1975, 292). In the second scenario these members would become 'lost souls', being forced to deal with UK-wide matters 'for which they have previously shown little regard' (Judge and Finlayson 1975, 292). Judge and Finlayson (1975, 292) did, however, suggest that in either scenario MPs with constituencies in Scotland might still need to 'demonstrate their "Scottishness"', given the salience of Scottish identity and the continued electoral challenge the main Britain-wide parties faced from the SNP.

A notable absence from the 1970s and 1980s literature is consideration of the roles of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland. This likely reflects the very different context in which Northern Ireland's MPs operated during the Troubles. However, it is surprising that studies of the type discussed above make no reference to Northern Ireland MPs during the period of devolution from 1921 to 1972. Norton (1996, 130) characterised the Unionist MPs that dominated Northern

Ireland representation at Westminster as a ‘distinct and largely ignored’ group. Although they took the Conservative whip, and a small handful became ministers, these MPs were not viewed as being particularly influential. Archival research has highlighted the extent of this group’s mobilisation at Westminster on some issues specifically impacting Northern Ireland, while noting that its liaison with the Stormont government was ‘ineffective’ (Jackson 2011, 472). In the context of ‘direct rule’ MPs had a role to play in scrutiny of policy relating to the territory. Nevertheless, most Northern Ireland business was administered through orders-in-council, which meant parliamentary input was limited (Birrell 2007). Hazleton (1995, 48–49) found that Northern Ireland’s MPs during this period displayed ‘parochial’ tendencies, which he considered unsurprising in a context where the ‘overriding issue is the border between North and South’ and political competition was organised around that. Interviews indicated that representation at Westminster was ‘not a high priority’, with members often opting to devote more of their time to constituency business than MPs with seats elsewhere (Hazleton 1995, 43).

Post-devolution studies

Prior to the establishment of the current devolved institutions, the implications for the central legislature were discussed less in academic scholarship than in the 1970s. This is probably explained by there not having been such prolonged debate about the detail in 1997–99, with the Blair government’s large majority enabling devolution to be implemented swiftly. Where the impact on Westminster was discussed, this was mostly within the context of broader commentary on the constitutional implications, of the type discussed earlier in this chapter. Authors contributing to those debates sometimes touched on the possible consequences for MPs with seats in the devolved territories. King (2009, 201), for instance, claimed that ‘Scottish MPs are effectively eunuchs with regard to most matters that directly affect their own constituents’, given large swathes of domestic policy had been devolved. In presenting Westminster as a ‘federal’ rather than ‘domestic’ parliament for the areas that had experienced devolution, Bogdanor (1999a, 190) also hinted at a substantial change in the roles of MPs from those territories. However, unlike King he did identify an ongoing role for Scottish MPs in relation to devolved matters, given the operation of the Barnett formula, under which the size of the block grants from Whitehall to the devolved administrations are determined by changes in public spending in England. For this reason Bogdanor (1999a, 190) argued that ‘any issue at Westminster involving the expenditure of public money must be of concern to all parts of the United Kingdom, since it might directly affect the level of the block grant going to a devolved body and therefore its level of expenditure’.

During devolution's first decade there were regular studies considering the impact at Westminster, within the *State of the Nations* volumes produced by researchers at the Constitution Unit at University College London (Gay 2003; Lodge, Russell, and Gay 2004; Masterman and Hazell 2001; Paun 2008; Russell and Hazell 2000). A common theme was to stress the absence of significant change. Following the first parliamentary terms of the new devolved institutions it was reported that Westminster 'looks much the same as it did before' (Lodge, Russell, and Gay 2004, 193). There was no immediate reduction in the numbers of members returned from the devolved territories (Johnston, Pattie, and Rossiter 2002).⁵ Question time sessions dedicated to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland affairs also continued, reflecting the continued presence of territorial offices within the UK government. Even the territorial grand committees were retained, albeit with a reduced workload.⁶ In the Commons the initial procedural response to devolution was limited to agreeing a motion stipulating that questions relating to devolved matters may no longer be tabled unless framed to meet specific criteria, essentially requiring reference to the UK government's responsibilities (Russell and Hazell 2000).⁷ Meanwhile, calls for the introduction of territorial representatives in a reformed House of Lords were not realised. This distinguishes the UK from many federal and devolved polities, which include a specific category of territorial representatives in their second chambers (Russell 2001).

In contrast to the limited impact of devolution on Commons procedure, surveys and interviews conducted by Russell and Bradbury (2007, 113) found that devolution had a 'profound effect' on the constituency roles of Scottish and Welsh MPs. This included the loss of casework relating to matters within the remit of the devolved legislatures, which survey evidence appeared to confirm had led to a drop in the overall amount of constituency work undertaken relative to MPs with constituencies in England (Russell and Bradbury 2007, 105). MPs with seats in Scotland and Wales also faced 'growing competition for local profile', especially where the local MP and member of the devolved legislature were from different parties (Russell and Bradbury 2007, 113). New

⁵ From 2005 the previous deliberate over-representation of Scotland ended.

⁶ Over time their use has declined. The Scottish Grand Committee last met in 2003 and the Northern Ireland Grand Committee in 2013. The Welsh Grand Committee met for the first time since 2018 in 2022. Since devolution they have been used mainly for general debates.

⁷ The specific criteria for a question relating to devolved responsibilities to be deemed in order were '(a) seeks information which the UK Government is empowered to require of the devolved executive, or; (b) relates to matters which: (i) are included in legislative proposals introduced or to be introduced in the UK Parliament (ii) are concerned with the operation of a concordat or other instrument of liaison between the UK Government and the devolved executive, or (iii) UK Government ministers have taken an official interest in, or; (c) presses for action by UK ministers in areas in which they retain administrative powers.' (12 July 1999, HC Deb vol. 336, col. 761).

relationships with these constituency counterparts needed to be developed, and in some cases local ‘tensions’ were reported (Russell and Bradbury 2007, 114).

The only systematic study of the parliamentary activities of MPs from the parts of the UK with devolution during this period was by Paun (2008). This author identified three possible post-devolution roles for Scottish and Welsh MPs of ‘territorial advocacy’ (focusing on reserved issues but advancing Scottish and Welsh interests in relation to them), ‘linkage’ (deepening relations with devolved governments/parliaments, and scrutinising intergovernmental relations) and as a ‘national member’ (focusing primarily on reserved matters, with no particular emphasis on Scottish and Welsh dimensions) (Paun 2008, 201). Based on analysis of the departments to which these MPs directed parliamentary questions between 2001 and 2007, and a survey conducted in 2004, Paun found some evidence of the ‘national member’ and ‘territorial advocate’ roles, but not ‘linkage’. Scottish and Welsh MPs directed more of their questions to departments dealing with reserved issues than English members, and it was noted that these appeared to be particularly concentrated on those that were responsible for matters with distinctive territorial dimensions. Although an important contribution given the absence of other post-devolution work in this area, Paun’s study had significant limitations. The author himself noted that ‘further detailed research into the content of parliamentary questions’ would be needed to get a greater sense of the extent to which ‘territorial advocacy’ took place (Paun 2008, 212). The study also covered a relatively limited time period, so could not capture the impact of changing political contexts. As Labour held the vast majority of Scottish and Welsh constituencies between 2001 and 2007 the findings related primarily to that party’s MPs. Paun (2008, 217) predicted that the extent of ‘territorial advocacy’ might well be boosted by growth in the number of SNP MPs, or by the election of a Conservative government with a majority resting principally on English seats. Both of those scenarios have since come to pass, suggesting that the picture may now be very different to the early 2000s.

There has been little new literature on representation of the UK’s component territorial units at Westminster over the past decade. A rare exception is a general overview of the work of the territorial select committees by Torrance and Evans (2019), who note that their remits have undergone ‘a process of evolution’. Evans (2019), meanwhile, has written about the development of interparliamentary relationships between the House of Commons and the devolved legislatures, including occasional joint meetings between committees. The lack of broader, and more systematic, studies of territorial representation at Westminster may reflect the continued absence of substantial procedural changes, of the type that have often inspired empirical research by

parliamentary studies specialists. The only major new Commons procedures responding to devolution since 2010 were the ‘English votes for English laws’ reforms, introduced in 2015 then repealed in 2021, which required legislative provisions applying only to England to be approved by both UK-wide and English majorities (Gover and Kenny 2018a). Despite claims that they would leave ‘two classes of MP’ (Beattie 2014), these procedures had little practical impact on the work of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, since they were still able to participate in debates and vote on all legislation.

A few recent studies have focused on the behaviour of individual party groups from the devolved areas. Thompson (2018) analysed the activities of the 56 SNP MPs elected in 2015. This work focused primarily on how the SNP adjusted to their new status as the third-largest party rather than on territorial representation, but it was noted that an especially large number of its members attended and contributed to debates ‘most relevant to Scotland’ (Thompson 2018, 453). In the context of a wider project on small parliamentary groups, Thompson (2020) has also referred to aspects of how a number of other parties that compete only in one part of the UK go about their parliamentary work. The emphasis of her study is on the organisational challenges that small size poses for these parties, and how they maximise their effectiveness in that context, without much discussion of how territorial backgrounds impact on the roles and behaviour of their MPs. Meanwhile, Gourtsoyannis (2020) has discussed the parliamentary behaviour of the 13 Scottish Conservative MPs in 2017–19. Gourtsoyannis reported that these MPs organised among themselves as a distinctive Scottish group within the Conservative parliamentary party, with fighting the SNP and protecting the Union their main priorities. He suggested that Scottish Conservatives secured some ‘retail’ victories on policies with a specific Scottish interest, such as tax relief for the oil and gas industry, but overall used their influence ‘cautiously’ and were unable to maintain cohesion on key issues such as Brexit (Gourtsoyannis 2020, 58, 70). There has also been a small literature that makes reference to the parliamentary activities of the DUP, particularly in the context of their 2017–19 confidence and supply agreement with the UK Conservative government (Birrell and Heenan 2020). As Murphy and Evershed (2020, 466) indicate, the outcome of the 2017 general election ‘propelled the DUP from the periphery to the very centre of British politics’. The party’s concerns about the impact of the proposed UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement on Northern Ireland were a prominent feature of Commons debates about Brexit (Kenny and Sheldon 2021b).

As has already been mentioned in chapter 1, the wider sub-field of UK parliamentary studies has not paid much attention to the impact of territorial politics and the devolution arrangements on the roles and behaviour of MPs. In recent decades analysis of parliamentary behaviour has focused heavily on the relationship between the legislative and executive branches. For example, Cowley (2002) documented the increasing frequency of rebellions by government backbenchers. Meanwhile, Thompson (2015) considered the impact of public bill committees on legislation and Russell and Gover (2017) analysed the various ways in which MPs are able to exercise influence during the legislative process as a whole. A common feature of these works is that none give more than passing consideration to distinctions between the behaviour of MPs with seats in England and those with seats in the devolved territories. An important theoretical contribution to this literature is Russell and Cowley (2018), which updated the classic analysis of ‘modes of executive-legislative relations’ by King (1976). These authors suggested that the election of more MPs from outside the two main parties, the introduction of departmental select committees, greater backbench rebelliousness and a more assertive House of Lords had led to major changes in the dynamics of Westminster politics since the 1970s. However, they made no mention at all of the impact of devolution or wider developments in territorial politics. This omission was understandable given the lack of systematic empirical research on which to draw, but is indicative of the wider territorial blind-spot in UK parliamentary studies. In light of the developments that have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the tendency for those writing about the Westminster parliament to overlook the territorial dimension can be seen as increasingly problematic if the aim is to analyse the behaviour of members from all parts of the UK, not just those with seats in England.

Conclusions

This chapter has situated the research agenda for this project within the context of the historical development of the UK as a multi-level state, and has positioned the thesis in relation to the most relevant existing literature on how its component territorial units are represented at Westminster. It has been shown that there is an established body of scholarship on which to build. However, the discussion has also highlighted significant gaps in this literature. Most notably, there has not been a large-scale empirical study of how far and in what respects MPs from Scotland and Wales adopt a sub-state territorial focus since the 1970s, while there has never been such a study of the behaviour of MPs from Northern Ireland. This has meant that, over two decades on from the introduction of legislative devolution, it has not been possible to provide answers to the questions

posed by authors such as Judge and Finlayson (1975), Keating (1978), and Mishler and Mughan (1978) about what impact devolution would have on the territorial roles of MPs from the affected areas. Nor has it been possible to assess empirically whether devolution has ‘very radically’ altered the role of Westminster itself in relation to sub-state politics, to the point where it has become a ‘quasi-federal’ legislature, as predicted by Bogdanor (1999a, 189). There has also been little detailed examination of the impact of political developments such as divergence in the composition of the UK and devolved governments, the election of a large group of SNP MPs in 2015 and the outcome of the 2016 EU referendum on the behaviour of MPs with constituencies in the devolved territories, despite reasons for expecting these to have contributed to a significant change in the dynamics of territorial representation. This thesis seeks to fill these gaps.

3. Representing sub-state territorial units: an analytical framework

This thesis explores how the UK's component territorial units are given *representation* in the House of Commons. Studying the representation of population groups has been a major focus for researchers specialising in legislatures, but few previous works have applied the concept to territorial areas at an intermediate scale between electoral constituencies and the state. In the absence of existing conceptual work on territorial representation of this scale, it was essential to outline an analytical framework before proceeding to devise a methodology for empirical research, in order to provide clarity about the precise focus of this research agenda. This chapter develops such a framework, in several steps. First, 'sub-state territorial representation' is defined for the purposes of this project. This requires engagement with the extensive theoretical and empirical literatures on political representation. *Substantive representation* of the relevant sub-state territorial areas is identified as the focus of the thesis and the case is made for operationalising this through analysis of *representative claim-making*. It is explained that this approach draws in some respects on the interpretive tradition in the study of institutions. The type of territorial representation that the thesis is concerned with is placed in the context of existing literature and distinguished from constituency representation. A typology of four categories of representation of sub-state territorial units is then introduced – *material interests*, *public opinion*, *identity and culture* and *sub-state political institutions*. The final section of the chapter considers the various aims that MPs might have when engaging in representational activities of this type. The framework has been devised with the UK case and the questions that this thesis seeks to address in mind, but it is intended that it can also be a standalone contribution, which may potentially inform the design of future research on parliamentary representation of territorial units across a variety of multi-level states.

Defining sub-state territorial representation

What form of representation?

As a key concept in democratic politics, representation has long been of interest to political theorists. A common theme in this vast literature is to note that 'representation' and its derivatives are used in a diverse range of political and non-political contexts (Birch 1971; Brito Vieira and Runciman 2008; Mansbridge 2003; Pitkin 1967; Saward 2010). For instance, we talk of members of an elected body as representatives, of individuals or groups representing the interests and/or opinions of some or other section of society, of a representative sample of a population and of artwork that represents some or other idea. This wide array of usages presents a challenge for

researchers wanting to address questions invoking representation. Operationalising ‘representation’ for empirical projects in practice requires distinguishing these analytically and narrowing the focus to the particular form(s) of representation that the research is concerned with.

The standard starting point for distinguishing between forms of representation remains Pitkin’s seminal *The Concept of Representation* (Pitkin 1967). The overarching definition of representation suggested by Pitkin (1967, 153) is ‘the making present in some sense of something which is not present literally’. The key contribution of her work is to give labels to four different types of representation: *formalistic*, *descriptive*, *symbolic* and *substantive*. Formalistic representation refers to usages where representation occurs as the direct consequence of a prior legitimising process, such as when we talk of members of an elected body as representatives. Descriptive representation is invoked when talking about the extent to which representatives share features of a wider population. In discussions of political representation it is particularly associated with the study of how closely the demographic composition of elected bodies reflects that of the state as a whole, for example in terms of the number of female or minority ethnic members (Sobolewska 2013; Studlar 2006). Symbolic representation refers to the form of representation that takes place when we talk about something or someone encapsulating an idea through its presence. This can be relevant in political contexts, including when we speak of the presence of individuals from particular groups or backgrounds within a political system as symbolising their integration into political life (Birch 1971; Burnet 2011; Lombardo and Meier 2016; Stokke and Selboe 2009). One of the main reasons that Pitkin’s account has endured is that she introduced ‘substantive representation’ to the representation literature. Unlike the other categories, representation is depicted as a dynamic *activity* performed by representatives (agents) on behalf of an individual or group (principals), rather than a statement of fact. To qualify as an act of substantive representation, a criterion is stipulated, that the representative should act ‘in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them’ (Pitkin 1967, 209). Responsiveness need not entail acting as a delegate would, seeking to advance the principal’s precise opinions. However, the representative should seek to advance positions that they consider to be in the principal’s interests and the latter’s views should be considered.

This thesis is concerned with *substantive representation*. This reflects the motivation for this project as seeking to address previously unanswered questions about how MPs actively go about giving representation to the UK’s territorial components in parliament. The project can be distinguished from a study of descriptive representation of sub-state territorial areas at Westminster, which might

focus on such matters as the allocation of seats to the different parts of the UK under electoral law, the birthplaces of members and the appointments of members from different parts of the UK to posts such as committee chairs. The extent of descriptive representation of sub-state territories has at times itself been salient, for instance in the context of debates about whether the non-English territories should retain their pre-devolution over-representation in terms of the number of parliamentary seats allocated to them (Johnston, Pattie, and Rossiter 2002), but falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Aspects of territorial identities and cultures may sometimes be the subject of symbolic representation. For example, members that speak a minority language associated with a territorial unit, or who wear traditional dress associated with a particular territory, can be seen an encapsulating integration of these groups into the political system through their presence. While this thesis focuses on substantive rather than symbolic representation, some of the representational acts that are discussed in the thesis may well also be interpreted as symbolic representation. This is discussed further later in this chapter, when representation of identity and culture is introduced.

Operationalising substantive representation

In deploying Pitkin's notion of substantive representation as a framework for analysing how members of legislatures go about the task of representing particular groups, this thesis sits within a well-established body of scholarship. The majority of this literature focuses on representation of women and minority ethnic (ME) populations. The motivation for much of the early work in this area was to test the 'politics of presence' hypothesis, which suggests that increased descriptive representation of a group in parliament leads to correspondingly improved substantive representation (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). Early findings indicated that significant substantive outcomes did indeed follow from greater descriptive representation of women (Lovenduski 2005; Phillips 1995; Tremblay 1998; Vega and Firestone 1995). More recently much of the research on substantive representation of women has shifted from establishing that it occurs to the 'where, how and why' (Celis et al. 2008). The literature on substantive representation of ME populations is smaller, reflecting the more recent presence in most US and European legislatures of minorities large enough to study systematically, but has grown significantly in recent years. A link between descriptive and substantive representation has again been confirmed (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Sobolewska, McKee, and Campbell 2018). Over the past decade there have been empirical studies of substantive representation of a wider range of population groups, including the working class (Carnes 2012; O'Grady 2019), poor citizens

(Lloren, Rosset, and Wüest 2016), disabled people (Chaney 2015) and people identifying as LGBT (Bönisch 2021; Chaney 2013). Somewhat surprisingly, few studies have used the terminology of substantive representation in relation to territorially-delineated populations. This probably reflects the particular analytical importance of the distinction between descriptive and substantive representation in the case of demographic groups that have historically been under-represented in descriptive terms. Nevertheless, there is no intrinsic reason why the study of substantive representation should be limited to such groups. Indeed, it is clear from the relevant sections of Pitkin (1967) that she saw substantive representation as the primary way in which politicians provided political representation to any relevant interest. Her own examples mainly relate to territorial districts and sectoral interests, not demographic groups of the type that have been the main focus of subsequent empirical studies. As discussed above, the principal justification for deploying the language of substantive representation in this thesis is to provide analytical clarity as to which particular dimensions of representation the project is concerned with.

Substantive representation has been operationalised in various ways (Kroeber 2018). Studies have focused on examining substantive representation at both the micro level (how individual members of the legislature go about representing a group) and the macro level (how a group is represented by the legislature as a whole). Within these categories approaches taken have included identifying cases where policies specifically benefitting particular groups have been proposed and/or introduced (Childs and Withey 2006; Mackay 2010); investigating the level of congruity between the opinions of citizens from the group in question and individual parliamentarians or parliaments as a whole (Dingler, Kroeber, and Fortin-Rittberger 2019; Lloren 2015); and focusing on the introduction of specific parliamentary initiatives relating to the group that is the subject of representation, such as specialist committees (Celis, Childs, and Curtin 2016; Sawyer and Turner 2016). A popular approach has been to chart the extent to which members of legislatures make reference to the interests and concerns of particular groups within parliamentary contributions (Bönisch 2021; Chaney 2015; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Tremblay 1998). This is how substantive representation is analysed in this thesis.

There has been a constructivist turn in representation research since the publication of Saward's *The Representative Claim* (Disch, van de Sande, and Urbinati 2019; Saward 2010). Saward argues that previous literature failed to sufficiently consider the key role of representatives themselves in constructing narratives about the represented and their needs. He thus presents an alternative framework, which suggests that representation is a 'dynamic process of claim-making' (Saward

2010, 3). The role of the individual engaged in substantive representation is conceptualised as presenting ‘claims’ to represent particular groups. A representative claim is defined as ‘a claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something’ (Saward 2010, 3). It is stressed that such claims are contestable: ‘There is no self-presenting subject whose essential character and desires and interests are transparent, beyond representation, evident enough to be “read off” their appearance or their behavior’ (Saward 2010, 77). While politicians may claim to have a ‘unique insight into voters’ real wants and needs’, in fact ‘they can only do so after first deploying an interpretative frame containing selective representations of their constituents’ (Saward 2010, 77–78). Saward’s argument has significant implications for the study of substantive representation, as it suggests that a politician’s engagement with issues relating to a group that is the focus of representation cannot be straightforwardly equated with advancing the objective interests of said group. These insights are especially pertinent to representation of the component parts of multi-level politics, where there are often competing narratives about the interests, policy priorities, cultures and identities of individual territorial units. Therefore, no attempt is made to identify how ‘well’ the interests or policy priorities of sub-state territories are represented in this research, as would be the case in a study focusing on policy outcomes or congruity with the opinions of citizens from those areas. Instead, the emphasis is on the input side of substantive representation – how far MPs advance the interests, policy priorities and/or recognition of culture and identity of sub-state territories *as they see them*.

By focusing on the construction of representative claims, aspects of this approach draw on the interpretive tradition, which has formed an increasingly influential strand of work in the study of political institutions over recent decades. In their seminal text *Interpreting British Governance*, Bevir and Rhodes (2003, 17) define interpretive work as examining ‘the meanings that shape actions and institutions, and the ways in which they do so’. Key interpretive works on the Westminster parliament include ethnographic studies of both the House of Commons and House of Lords (Crewe 2005, 2015) and a detailed examination of how parliamentary actors undertake scrutiny through select committees (Geddes 2020). Geddes (2020, 31) provides an account of the interpretative approach to parliamentary studies, under which analysis focuses on ‘the context in which parliamentary actors are placed in interpreting and enacting their roles’. The approach taken in this thesis places a strong emphasis on the importance of such contextual factors, in particular the prevailing political, economic and sociological dynamics in different parts of the UK, and at different points in time. The use of interviews with MPs, discussed in more detail in chapter 4,

enables MPs' own interpretations of their territorially-focused roles to be explicitly incorporated into the study.

The analysis in this thesis also presumes that the core assumptions behind the rational choice tradition in legislative studies, which suggest that parliamentary behaviour is explained by self-interest (Strøm 1997), form too restrictive a framework to satisfactorily capture the motivations of MPs. Incentives such as those resulting from the electoral cycle are clearly significant in informing parliamentary behaviour, and are acknowledged as potential factors behind some territorially-focused behaviour. However, consistent with the motivational approach' set out by Searing (1991, 1254), it is assumed that individual backgrounds, experiences and beliefs are also relevant factors in explaining how MPs behave, and that these may sometimes lead to MPs acting in ways that are not strictly rational.

While the interpretive approach to parliamentary studies has a significant influence on the theoretical framework established in this chapter, other aspects of the mixed methods approach which is adopted in the thesis sit more clearly within the positivist tradition. For instance, the quantitative comparison of patterns of territorial representative claim-making by different groups of MPs and at different points in time seeks to place a verifiable value on territorial representation. It is intended that by bringing these different approaches together this thesis can offer a deeper understanding of how MPs go about representing the UK's component territorial units than would otherwise have been possible.

This combination of a broadly interpretative conception of how representative claims are constructed and a method for identifying and tracing such claims grounded more firmly in positivism accords with the principles of the approach outlined by De Wilde (2013) in proposing 'representative claims analysis'. Representative claims analysis has since been applied in numerous empirical studies analysing claims made in both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary settings (Guasti and Geissel 2019; Heinisch and Werner 2019). Although the methodology for the empirical content analysis of territorial representative claims described in chapter 4 is tailored specifically to this project and does not follow De Wilde's prescriptions precisely, it draws inspiration from these developments in the wider representation literature.

The overwhelming focus of existing literature on representation of territorially-delineated groups in parliaments is the ‘constituency link’ between MPs and voters in their electoral districts. This is unsurprising, given the importance of constituencies to the careers and activities of members of legislatures – especially where personalised electoral systems such as first past the post are used, as in the UK (Rehfeld 2005). There is a long tradition of empirical work considering the extent to which politicians focus on the interests and opinions of voters within their districts (Chiru 2018; Giger and Klüver 2016; W. E. Miller and Stokes 1963; Wahlke et al. 1962). Notably, one recent UK study found that the frequency of mentioning ‘constituency’ or ‘constituent[s]’ in the House of Commons increased substantially between 1950 and 2019 (McKay 2020, 5–6). There has also been an extensive focus, especially in the US literature, on the practice of ‘pork-barrelling’, whereby members seek government funding for projects that will specifically benefit their district (D. Evans 1994; Ferejohn 1974; Sidman 2019). In the UK context, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987, 21) depicted MPs as ‘policy scavengers’, seeking favourable material outcomes for their constituencies. Meanwhile, researchers have documented the large amount of time that members of some legislatures spend on duties within their electoral districts, in what has been described as a ‘social worker’ role (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1979, 504, 1987; Fenno 1978; Miler 2010; Searing 1994). Evidence points to an overall growing emphasis on constituency work among UK MPs, associated with increasing volumes of casework (Campbell and Lovenduski 2015; Gay 2005; Norton and Wood 1993). However, as noted in chapter 2 this picture is more complex for MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales than for English MPs, as policy areas that would previously have generated casework have been ceded to the devolved legislatures since the 1990s (Russell and Bradbury 2007).

Rather than focusing upon electoral districts, this thesis is concerned with representation of the territorial components of a multi-level state.⁸ A key distinction here is that the type of representation that this framework is intended to capture relates to territorially-delineated sets of interests and policy preferences that are salient in their own right, regardless of the particular incentives created by electoral boundaries. Very often, as in the UK, at least some of a multi-level state’s constituent units are historic nations associated with distinctive identities, institutions and political dynamics (Keating 1998). The context within which members of legislatures might go

⁸ There are some federal and multi-level political systems, for instance Germany and Switzerland, where parliamentary constituencies and the constituent territories of the state are synonymous for all or some MPs. In these cases MPs can be expected to have an additional electoral incentive to engage with the level of the constituent units of the state.

about seeking to represent this sort of territorial unit and their motivations for doing so are thus markedly different from constituency representation. A different analytical approach is hence required.

Existing studies of representation of the component parts of multi-level polities in central legislatures mainly focus on second chambers, which typically include a specific category of territorial representatives in federal and devolved systems (Watts 1996). Russell (2001, 105) conducted a comparative study of the territorial role of second chambers, noting that where federations were created by the combination of formerly independent units it had been ‘natural to create an institution in which representatives of each of the units met together’. It was suggested that such chambers had three distinct roles: ‘representing the territories and their interests at the national level’; ‘providing a forum for the different territorial units to debate policies and agree common positions’; and ‘linking the national parliament to territorial assemblies or government’ (Russell 2001, 109). Mixed evidence was found regarding the extent to which nominally ‘territorial’ second chambers actually fulfilled these territorial remits. More recently, a special issue of *Perspectives on Federalism* has featured contributions analysing the territorial roles of second chambers in various European multi-level states (Basaguren 2018; Belser 2018; Bußjäger 2018; Niedobitek 2018; Popelier 2018). The editor noted that a common theme was the ‘absence of “true” representation of regional interests despite formal adherence to the territoriality principle’ (Gamper 2018, iv).

Perhaps because the role of representing territorial units is assigned to the second chamber in federal theory, few authors have considered representation of this level by members of lower houses. There are a handful of exceptions, all relatively small-scale studies focused on single cases. Bühlmann et al. (2010) looked into congruence between the ideological positions of citizens of different cantons and their representatives in the Swiss national legislature, finding that this was greater in cantons that returned a larger number of members. Grau Creus (2010) considered how territorial interests are represented in the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*. In a context where the second chamber has not performed its territorial role effectively, she found that responsibility for representing the autonomous communities (ACs) in Spain had fallen to nationalist and regionalist parties with seats in the lower chamber. The presence of such parties, which were often also in government in their respective ACs, provided a situation where the ‘institutional interests of the ACs could have been channelled into state-wide decision-making processes through party representation, or at least they could have been perceived as doing so’ (Grau Creus 2010, 22–23).

A few articles have examined the behaviour of sub-state nationalist *Bloc Québécois* MPs in the Canadian House of Commons. Noël (1994, 25) noted that after becoming the official opposition in 1993 the party ‘regularly raised questions of interest to Quebecers, and brought the Quebec debate on sovereignty to Ottawa’. A later quantitative study of this group’s oral questions found that they ‘rigorously defended the interests of Quebec’, with topics focused on including national unity, jurisdictional squabbles and intergovernmental relations (Young and Bélanger 2008, 504). Finally, Staehr Harder (2022) has studied the activities of members from the Faroe Islands and Greenland in the Danish *Folketing*. These members were found to focus mainly on matters of specific relevance to these territories, both in terms of parliamentary questions and committee memberships. In a separate output from the same project, Staehr Harder and West (2022) identified 8% of questions asked by Faroese and Greenlandic MPs between 2005 and 2020 as concerning the ‘actions or inactions of the members’ home government’. On this basis they suggest that these representatives sometimes engage in ‘cross-parliamentary control’, using their mandates in the *Folketing* to scrutinise sub-state institutions. The authors indicate that this mode of behaviour was not anticipated when direct representation of the offshore territories was introduced in the 1950s, but that North Atlantic MPs have ‘innovated’ in order to ‘control their home government’. As will be discussed in chapter 6, there are some parallels in the behaviour of contemporary UK MPs with seats in the devolved areas. With the exception of Bühlmann et al. (2010), these studies do not deploy the language of ‘substantive representation’, but they do all focus implicitly on how component territories of multi-level states are actively given representation in the lower chamber of the central legislature.

Definition of substantive sub-state territorial representation

The discussion in this first section of the chapter has established that this thesis is concerned primarily with *substantive representation* of the UK’s component territorial units and has made the case for operationalising this through analysis of *representative claim-making* by MPs. The type of sub-state territorial representation that the thesis is concerned with, focused on constituent units of multi-level states, has also been distinguished from constituency representation. Having taken these steps, it is now possible to propose an overarching definition of substantive sub-state territorial representation for the purposes of this research as ***parliamentary activities that explicitly seek to advance the interests, policy priorities and/or recognition of identity and culture of the territorial unit within which a member’s electoral constituency is located.*** This is deployed in the empirical content analysis to identify instances of claims to represent sub-

state territorial units. The definition is necessarily broad and is broken down into more specific forms in the typology set out below.

Typology of forms of claim to substantively represent sub-state territories

This section sets out a typology of four different forms of claim to substantively represent sub-state territories:

- 1/ Claims relating to the material interests of sub-state territories
- 2/ Claims relating to public opinion in sub-state territories
- 3/ Claims relating to the identity and culture of sub-state territories
- 4/ Claims relating to sub-state political institutions

Distinguishing between these helps to exemplify what is meant by the substantive representation of sub-state territorial units in this thesis more precisely. The typology also informs the design for the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters. The categories were initially devised inductively, based on the author's informal impression of the dynamics of sub-state territorial representation. They were then tested and refined through a pilot analysis of 315 oral contributions by MPs during the 2015-17 parliament, which confirmed that the categories capture the main strands of sub-state territorial claim-making in the UK (for details of the methodology see chapter 4). A selection of examples are cited below, drawn from the full content analysis sample, which included 6,001 contributions over the period from 1992 to 2019. These are illustrative, chosen to offer clear exemplars of each category, and in practice some sub-state territorial claims are less central to the contribution than those included here. The categories are also not mutually exclusive – there are often cases where, for example, an MP claims to represent both the material interests of a territory and a sub-state political institution within a single contribution. A final caveat is that there are inter-relationships between the forms of claim. For instance, an understanding of the distinctive identity and culture of a territorial unit may inform an MP's decision to raise its specific material interests, even where this is not made explicit.

1. Claims relating to the material interests of sub-state territories

The first category of claim to represent sub-state territorial units relates to material interests. This comprises claims that a particular policy will result in tangible beneficial outcomes for the territory in question.

This most obviously concerns economic benefits purported to result from particular policies. For example, an MP might claim that their territorial unit would benefit from the location of an organisation within the territory, from an infrastructure project being supported or from particular taxation decisions. The category also includes references to environmental or social benefits specific to the territorial unit, such as might follow from measures relating to air pollution or poverty alleviation. A further sub-category is cases where members of legislatures from one territorial area draw attention to perceived injustices in its material treatment *vis-à-vis* other territories within the state, for instance in terms of financial support from central government. In the UK context, this encompasses and often involves references to the operation of the Barnett formula.

Saward (2010, 46) notes that while politicians play an active role in constructing claims they ‘cannot simply conjure claims out of the air (or if they do they are highly unlikely to succeed)’. Claims of this sort can thus be expected to have some basis, minimally in ‘received wisdom’ or more maximally in external analysis substantiating the material benefits to accrue to the territory from a particular course of action. Nevertheless, in almost all cases such claims are part of the process of political debate. The suggestion that a particular policy or decision would materially benefit a territory is thus usually contestable.

The following two rules are applied in the content analysis to identify claims within this category:

- The member refers specifically to their sub-state territory (not only to another sub-state level such as their electoral constituency)
- The member discusses the particular material impacts of a policy or activity for their sub-state territory (whether or not they provide evidence to substantiate this claim)

Examples include:

Margaret Ritchie (SDLP; South Down, Northern Ireland): The *Northern Ireland* agri-food industry depends on exports. With the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in China this week, what further steps will the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills take in accessing new market opportunities for British and *Northern Ireland* exports? (10 November 2015, HC Deb vol. 602, col. 211)

Christina Rees (Labour; Neath, Wales): Swansea bay tidal lagoon would power 155,000 *Welsh* homes for 120 years, sustain 2,232 construction and manufacturing jobs and safeguard our steel industry. Will the Government now give Swansea bay tidal lagoon the green light and trigger the new dawn of an industry worth £15 billion to *Wales* and the UK? (8 November 2016, HC Deb vol. 616, col. 1385)

Hannah Bardell (SNP; Livingston, Scotland): Brexit is by far the greatest threat to *Scottish* farming. Given that *Scotland* has proportionately higher rates of common agricultural policy funding than elsewhere and that the types of farming that can take place in *Scotland* are very specific, will the Minister commit here and now to making sure that no subsidies to *Scotland* are cut after Brexit? (8 March 2018, HC Deb vol. 637, col. 449)

2. Claims relating to public opinion in sub-state territories

The second category of claim to represent sub-state territories in parliaments relates to public opinion. These contributions make reference to popular sentiment in the relevant territory. They draw on a different conception of the role of the representative, grounded more in what has traditionally been categorised as a ‘delegate’ view of parliamentary representation as guided by citizen preferences, as opposed to the classic Burkean view of representatives as ‘trustees’ guided by personal judgments (Burke 1775; Eulau et al. 1959, 748–49).

Claims in this category can be expected to be most common in relation to policy areas where public opinion is known to differ across a state’s component territories. Examples might include claims that the population in a particular territory supports higher public spending or lower taxation, or takes a more or less liberal view of immigration, compared to the state as a whole. In some cases there are also cultural or religious differences between sub-state territories that mean

public opinion has a particular territorial dimension. This is true of ‘conscience’ issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland, where religious beliefs play a more significant role in politics than elsewhere in the UK (C. Mitchell 2006). Claims to represent territorially-specific policy priorities can be expected to be less likely to occur in relation to more technical areas of policy on which a territorial dimension to public opinion would be more difficult for parliamentarians to ascertain (Kuklinski and Elling 1977).

The basis for claims relating to public opinion can include historic patterns of election and/or referendum results, poll findings or an MP’s own assessment of opinion in their home territory. In the UK the results of referendums at the territorial level are particularly likely to be cited. During the period covered by this study there were several referendums on arrangements for devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales that could be referred to as evidence of the state of public opinion on constitutional arrangements. Meanwhile, the referendum on EU membership in 2016 produced results that differed across the four parts of the UK, which were frequently cited during debates about the implementation of Brexit.

The following two rules are applied in the content analysis to identify claims within this category:

- The member refers specifically to their sub-state territory (not only to another sub-state level such as their electoral constituency)
- The member refers to public opinion in their sub-state territory (whether or not they provide evidence to substantiate this claim)

Examples include:

Jonathan Edwards (Plaid Cymru; Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Wales): We believe that unfinished business with the devolution settlement remains, which will come as no surprise to colleagues. Polls in *Wales* agree with us that criminal justice and policing should be devolved, as should broadcasting and financial powers. (6 September 2011, HC Deb vol. 532, col. 46WH)

William McCrea (DUP; South Antrim, Northern Ireland): May I support the visit of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to speak directly to the people of Scotland? My right hon. and hon. Friends and I, speaking on

behalf of the vast majority of the people of *Northern Ireland*, want the United Kingdom to stay together, and it is my hope that some of those who are crowing today might be disappointed after the referendum. (10 September 2014, HC Deb vol. 585, col. 906)

Ian Blackford (SNP; Ross, Skye and Lochaber, Scotland): Westminster is in chaos, but in *Scotland* we stand united. *Scotland* voted overwhelmingly to remain, and we will not allow our country to be dragged out of the European Union or brought down by this Tory Government. (16 January 2019, HC Deb vol. 652, col. 1156)

3. Claims relating to the identity and culture of sub-state territories

The third category of claim to represent sub-state territories relates to the identity and culture of the area. These claims are grounded in a belief in the importance of recognising and sometimes promoting the distinct culture and identity associated with a territorial unit. There is often cross-over with the previous categories – for instance, it might be argued that greater emphasis on a distinct identity for an area would boost tourism and hence have material benefits, or that identities are salient among the public and should be promoted for that reason. However, this is not always the case, so a separate category is justified.

One focus for claims within this category is protection of features of a territory's distinctive identity. This most obviously relates to languages spoken widely in one territorial unit but not elsewhere in the state. The main example of this in the UK is Welsh, although there are also minority languages spoken by some communities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and, within England, in Cornwall. Members of the central legislature may argue for greater prominence for teaching of the relevant language in schools and/or for increased use of the language in public information, broadcasting, cultural events and within the public sector. In some cases they might also defend the use of the language against proposals considered to be likely to lead to its use declining. Other aspects of sub-state territorial identity that representatives might focus on include the display of flags and symbols associated with the territory, and the use of territorial identities in the media and wider public sphere.

The broader culture of a territory refers to the distinctive traditions, cultural activities and history of an area. MPs might, for example, seek to secure recognition or financial support from central government for a sporting or cultural activity associated with the territory, or for commemorating

an important event or individual associated with its history. This form of representation is not always associated with policy demands, but can instead be exercised simply by a member drawing the attention of fellow MPs and ministers to a particular feature of a territory's culture or history. For instance, it is common for MPs with seats in Northern Ireland to talk about events during the Troubles and the broader history of that territorial unit.

Some of the ways that MPs may give representation to identities and cultures are better categorised as examples of symbolic rather than substantive representation. For instance, the practice whereby some Welsh-speaking MPs begin House of Commons speeches by saying '*Diolch yn Fawr*, Mr Speaker' ('thank you, Mr Speaker') symbolises a belief in the acceptability of speaking Welsh in public settings.⁹ Similarly, the wearing of kilts by some Scottish MPs at State Opening of Parliament symbolises the importance that those members afford to their Scottish heritage. However, it is only where MPs make territorial claims in relation to these identities and cultures in spoken contributions that these move into the realm of substantive representation. It is such substantive inventions, rather than the purely symbolic aspects of territorial representation, that this thesis is concerned with.

The choice of which parts of the territory's identity and culture members' wish to emphasise is not typically a disinterested judgement, but rather one which entails the choice of a narrative that aligns with their preferred vision of their territory. As with other forms of territorial representative claim, those in this category are therefore contestable.

The following two rules are applied in the content analysis to identify claims within this category:

- The member refers specifically to their sub-state territory (not only to another sub-state level such as their electoral constituency)
- The member makes reference to the identity (languages, symbols etc.) and/or culture (traditions, history etc.) of their sub-state territory

⁹ It is not permitted for MPs to make substantive speeches in languages other than English, except in the Welsh Grand Committee since 2017. However, MPs can speak a few words in another language and then immediately provide an English translation.

Examples include:

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru; Caernarfon, Wales): Cultural and linguistic diversity are to be greatly valued, so I welcome the Secretary of State's comments on the *Welsh* language, but may I press him to ensure that opportunities to learn *Welsh* are available not only in the so-called *Welsh*-speaking areas, but throughout the country? (4 February 2002, HC Deb vol. 379, col. 589)

Naomi Long (Alliance; Belfast East, Northern Ireland): The period between 1912 and 1922 was one of considerable change and turmoil, which shaped not only *Northern Ireland*, but the relationships within and between these islands. Sadly, in much the same way as post-partition politics in the Republic has been defined by the civil war, the divisions evident during that period remain to a large extent the basis of divisions in modern *Northern Irish* society. Therefore the manner in which we publicly mark those historic events, which remain both sensitive and emotive, is hugely important to preserving the current stability and, more importantly, to the building of a peaceful, stable and shared future. (7 December 2011, HC Deb vol. 537, col. 99WH)

Stephen Kerr (Conservative; Stirling, Scotland): As a young *Scot*, my pride in being a *Scot* was spurred by the great stories of our inventors, scientists and engineers. I believe it is a valid contention – one I am prepared to stand by – that the modern world was largely designed by the *Scots*. The litany of great *Scottish* contributors include James Watt, Alexander Graham Bell, John Logie Baird, James Chalmers and John Dunlop. (15 January 2019, HC Deb vol. 652, col. 360WH)

4. *Claims relating to sub-state political institutions*

The final category in this typology relates to sub-state political institutions. This primarily refers to sub-state legislatures and executives, so in the UK is relevant in the period after the (re)-introduction of devolution.¹⁰ Representative claims relating to sub-state political institutions can be seen as one way that members of the House of Commons perform a 'linkage' function, connecting Westminster to the sub-state legislatures and executives, which Paun (2008, 201)

¹⁰ A small number of claims coded within this category relate to other sub-state political institutions, such as local government where the reference is to local authorities across the sub-state territorial unit as a whole; and to electoral events at the sub-state territorial level, such as discussion of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum campaign.

hypothesised may form part of the post-devolution roles of MPs from devolved areas. This category can be broken down into three main sub-categories.

The first of these relates to the policy positions of sub-state institutions, or actors within them, and is broadly analogous to the sorts of behaviour that Staehr Harder and West (2022) identified as ‘cross-parliamentary control’. This includes MPs acting as *champions* of the sub-state executive in their area, making reference to its stances and/or achievements. This is primarily associated with members of parties in government at the devolved level. In these cases MPs can use their platforms at Westminster to speak and act on behalf of the devolved government. Activities under this heading may range from highlighting the positions of party colleagues that hold executive office at sub-state level to, more substantively, moving motions or legislative amendments drafted by the devolved government. This sort of behaviour implies a view that sub-state institutions have a legitimacy that means their perspectives should be listened to at the centre. Cases where MPs act as *critics* of devolved governments and legislatures are also included within this category. It could be argued that these are not, strictly speaking, instances of substantive representation, since the MP is not acting in accordance with the preferences of the subject. Nevertheless, it is another way in which sub-state political institutions are ‘made present’ in debate, and it was felt important to capture these cases in the analysis, as they are an important indicator of the extent to which political developments at devolved level impact on behaviour at Westminster. MPs can also sometimes act as champions and critics of the positions of sub-state legislatures, for instance where there has been a vote or committee report at sub-state level on an issue that is being discussed in the Commons. The dynamics of how MPs act as champions and critics of sub-state political institutions, and the significance of this behaviour, are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

A second sub-category relates to engagement between central and sub-state politicians, such as asking a central government minister to have a meeting with their devolved counterpart about a particular issue, or seeking information about previous communication. This sort of activity is worth exploring as, if it takes place to a significant extent, it may point to an aspect of wider inter-institutional relations within multi-level states that has been largely overlooked in existing literature, which focuses mainly on direct relations between governments (Behnke and Mueller 2017; Bolleyer 2009; Swenden and McEwen 2014). As noted, the potential for this dynamic has also been identified in the Spanish context (Grau Creus 2010).

Finally, the third sub-category relates to the sub-state institutions themselves. This includes calling for their powers to be extended and seeking to defend them against perceived attempts to curtail their autonomy. This is analogous to the sort of behaviour Young and Bélanger (2008) found to be a feature of BQ contributions in the Canadian House of Commons. Representing territorial areas through this sort of behaviour has also been relatively common in the UK during the period covered by this study, given the evolving nature of the constitution and the contested nature of inter-institutional relationships (Sandford and Gormley-Heenan 2020).

The following two rules are applied when conducting content analysis to identify claims within this category:

- The member refers specifically to their sub-state territory (not only to another sub-state level such as their electoral constituency)
- The member refers to the policy positions, institutional interests and/or powers of sub-state political institutions, and/or to engagement between politicians at the central and sub-state territorial levels

Examples include:

Mark Tami (Labour; Alyn and Deeside, Wales): More than a third of all new properties benefiting from superfast broadband are in *Wales*. Will the Secretary of State applaud the *Welsh Assembly Government* for their success in that area, and what does she think she can learn from *Wales* for England? (30 January 2014, HC Deb vol. 574, col. 998)

Ian Paisley (DUP; North Antrim, Northern Ireland): The scourge of bovine TB, as the Secretary of State rightly calls it, is unfortunately increasing in *Northern Ireland*. With that in mind, and given that we have only a catch, test and release scheme and would love to have a scheme that actually dealt with the badger, will he consider calling his counterpart in *Northern Ireland* and setting up a national conference, which he could chair, to address the removal of this plague from our land? (27 March 2014, HC Deb vol. 578, col. 441-442)

David Linden (SNP; Glasgow East, Scotland): Does the Minister agree that the devastating effect of free-movement restrictions will have a colossal impact on small businesses in Shettleston and in *Scotland* as a whole, and will he support the calls from the Scottish

Trades Union Congress for immigration to be devolved to *Scotland*? (1 May 2018, HC Deb vol. 640, col. 134–135)

Aims of territorial claim-making

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to consider what backbench MPs are actually seeking to achieve when making claims to represent their territorial units. To understand the motivations of those making such representative claims, and the wider significance of these interventions, it is essential to appreciate that there are multiple possible audiences. As well as ministers and other backbenchers, MPs may sometimes be seeking to communicate with extra-parliamentary audiences. This means that claim-makers may be able to achieve instrumental goals without specific demands being realised.

Where territorial representative claims contain policy demands, the most obvious aim is for these to be achieved. It is realistic to suggest that territorial claim-making by backbenchers could have an impact on policy in some circumstances. While the UK political system is often popularly characterised as executive-dominated, a large body of research indicates that backbench MPs have in fact been ‘extremely influential’ over aspects of public policy in recent decades (Russell and Cowley 2016, 134). This becomes particularly evident when less visible examples of MPs influencing policy are considered, such as where the government introduces legislative amendments following pressure from backbenchers (Russell and Gover 2017). Moreover, Russell and Cowley (2016, 133) suggest that governments ‘take constant account of parliamentary opinion’, and that this is an important factor in determining what policies are pursued. Territorially-focused contributions form part of this broader body of parliamentary opinion that contributes to agenda-setting at Westminster. Nevertheless, where territorial claims do have a policy impact this can usually be expected to be a long-term process, detectable over months and years rather than in the immediate responses of ministers. This is one reason why it was decided to focus on the ‘input’ side of substantive representation in the research design for this project and not to include systematic analysis of the initial ministerial responses to representative claims. Individual claims of the type this thesis is concerned with will rarely have a substantial policy impact on their own, but they could make some contribution to increasing the profile of an issue and the amount of attention it receives in government. Over time, a significant number of territorially-focused demands around a particular issues could contribute to shifts in policy. Scholarship on the dynamics of parliamentary policy-influence suggests that this is most likely to be the case where

claims containing policy demands are made by backbenchers that form part of the government majority, and where cross-party alliances are formed around a particular issue (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018).

It is nevertheless important to recognise that parliamentary speech can also have other, more instrumental, aims. Proksch and Slapin (2014, 41) advocate viewing parliamentary contributions as tools for ‘communication between MPs, parties, and the electorate’. As with other parliamentary interventions, there are good reasons for anticipating that MPs often make territorial claims with an eye to re-election, which has been described by a leading legislative studies scholar from the rational choice tradition as the ‘primary instrumental goal of legislators’ (Strøm 1997, 160). Given the salience of territorial identities, MPs may well believe that signalling a territorial focus through spoken parliamentary contributions could carry electoral benefits. It was this incentive that Judge and Finlayson (1975, 290) were hinting at when suggesting that Scottish MPs may still need to ‘prove their “Scottishness” after devolution. Since typical parliamentary proceedings are watched or read by relatively small audiences, such communication with the electorate in practice requires media coverage (Proksch and Slapin 2014). From this perspective, some claims may be considered to have achieved their objectives if reported in the media in a way that demonstrates a member’s engagement with the sub-state territorial level, even where specific policy demands have not been adopted.

Another way in which political scientists have suggested that parliamentary speech can have utility as a communication tool is in signalling key political dividing lines to extra-parliamentary audiences. It has been demonstrated that discourse can be used to highlight areas of difference between the positions of government and opposition parties (Finlayson 2017), and between coalition partners (Martin and Vanberg 2008). Where territorial claims are made, parliamentary speech may additionally serve as a signalling device to highlight dividing lines between policies and politics in the different parts of the state. As will be discussed in chapter 6, since the introduction of devolution it has become increasingly common for members of parties that are in government at devolved level to use contributions at Westminster to talk about policies pursued by the devolved government that distinguish it from the UK government. In these instances a territorial claim can serve as something of an advertisement for the devolved administration and its policies, intended to draw attention to what an MP views as the positive achievements of their party. Territorial claims may also be used to highlight differences in public opinion between the parts of the UK. Especially for members of sub-state nationalist parties, promoting the sense that the

different parts of the UK are substantially different political spaces can sometimes be a key political aim.

Finally, some parliamentary contributions containing territorial claims are intended partially or primarily to perform an accountability function. This entails seeking information from the government about its activities, policies and/or plans, as they relate to their territory. In the context of the post-devolution UK, one specific area where territorial claim-making can perform an accountability function is where MPs raise issues relating to relations between the UK and devolved governments. Since intergovernmental meetings take place in private, seeking information in parliament can be an important way of making the process more accountable and transparent (McEwen, Petersohn, and Brown Swan 2015). Although such interventions can also have associated policy and signalling aims, some are primarily intended to secure information and ensure that the UK government has to explain its position.

Conclusions

Representation has generated large volumes of theoretical and empirical scholarship, but few previous studies have applied the concept to territorial areas at an intermediate scale between electoral constituencies and the state. It was therefore essential to address key conceptual questions, and to devise an analytical framework, before proceeding with the empirical research for this project. Substantive representation, as distinct from the other forms of representation discussed by Pitkin (1967), has been identified as the focus of this thesis. The case has also been made for operationalising this in terms of representative claims, as conceptualised by Saward (2010), rather than seeking to ascertain how 'well' territorial units are represented. It has been explained that this conception of how MPs construct representative claims draws on the interpretive tradition in the study of political institutions, whereas other aspects of the mixed methods approach taken in this thesis are grounded more in positivism. A significant contribution has been to present an original typology of four forms of sub-state territorial claim-making, enabling variation in the focus of claims to represent the UK's territorial units to be analysed in subsequent chapters. Finally, the objectives of MPs when engaging in territorial claim-making have been considered, which helps to contextualise the behaviours discussed in the remainder of the thesis.

While this framework has been devised with the UK context in mind, it is intended that it can also be applicable to research on territorial representation in other state-level cases. At a time when issues relating to sub-state political levels are high on the agenda in polities such as Belgium, Spain and Italy as well as the UK, how the interests of these units are voiced at the centre is an important question that has previously been under-explored.

4. Research design and methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the analytical framework introduced in chapter 3 is applied in this thesis to investigate the extent to which, ways in which and with what consequences the UK's component territorial units are given substantive representation in the House of Commons. The first part discusses the overall research design. The remainder of the chapter then describes the method applied for each stage of empirical data collection and analysis.

In the empirical chapters the results relating to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are reported separately from those for Cornwall and Yorkshire, as the contexts for territorial representation within and outside England are too different to enable meaningful comparison. However, the data collection for all five areas was conducted in parallel. This chapter therefore relates to the research on MPs with seats in all five territorial areas. The rationale for choosing Cornwall and Yorkshire as areas within England to include in the study is addressed in chapter 8.

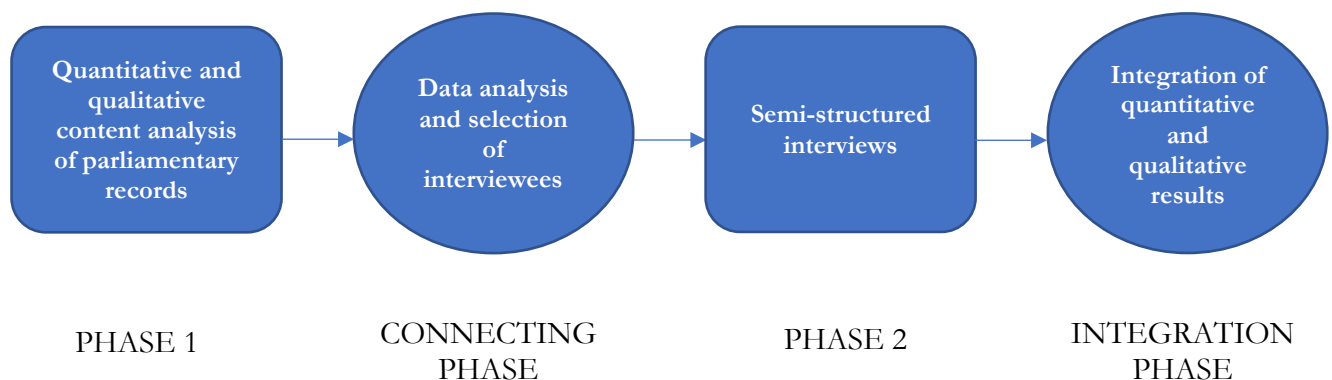
Overall research design

This project takes a mixed methods approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, 5) define mixed methods research as that which 'involves collecting, analyzing and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study'. The rationale is that drawing on the strengths of multiple methodological traditions can provide a fuller and more convincing answer to many research questions than exclusively quantitative or qualitative work. In the case of this thesis, the use of quantitative data drawn from parliamentary records is integral to enabling trends in claims to represent territorial areas in the House of Commons to be charted. However, this aspect of the analysis is by definition limited to formally recorded contributions by MPs. In practice many important activities performed by members of legislatures take place away from public view and are therefore unrecorded in formal outputs (Norton 2019; Russell and Gover 2017). Relying solely on quantitative analysis of parliamentary records would also prevent empirical consideration of many of the dynamics that might explain on-record behaviour. It is hence also necessary to capture less visible means by which MPs might seek to provide substantive representation to their territorial areas, and to place the findings from the analysis of spoken parliamentary contributions in their broader context. This is achieved by combining the extensive quantitative dataset that has been compiled with some qualitative analysis of these parliamentary contributions and with interviews. Such a combination of methods is common in parliamentary studies. Notable UK examples include works on the legislative process (Russell and Gover 2017), backbench rebellions

(Cowley 2002) and the substantive representation of women (Childs and Withey 2006). As discussed in chapter 3, the approach in this thesis draws on features of both interpretive and positivist research design, as well as combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

Methodologists have identified several models of mixed methods research that integrate qualitative and quantitative elements in different ways. This project follows the ‘*explanatory sequential*’ approach (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 2006). On this model an initial phase of quantitative data collection is followed by qualitative data collection. These are connected phases so that ‘the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem’, while the ‘qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results’ (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 2006, 5). This is broadly how the research for this project proceeded (see Figure 4.1). The first phase consisted of the quantitative content analysis of the parliamentary record. Some qualitative content analysis was also incorporated into this phase. The findings of the content analysis were analysed in what has been termed here as a ‘connecting phase’, informing the selection of interviewees and topics to focus on in the second substantive phase, which involved semi-structured interviews. Once all of the empirical data had been collected the quantitative and qualitative results were combined in a final ‘integration phase’.

Figure 4.1: Visual model for mixed-methods explanatory sequential research design



Phase 1: Quantitative and qualitative content analysis of parliamentary records

The aim of the content analysis of parliamentary records was to identify key trends and dynamics relating to how members of the House of Commons make claims to represent the UK’s component territorial units, of the type discussed in chapter 3. The following sections explain the

rationale for decisions about the time period to cover, which parliamentary activities to include and the coding procedure.

Choice of time period to cover

A key decision was to take a longitudinal approach, with data collected across several parliamentary terms, as opposed to a cross-sectional approach, focused on a single term (Burnham et al. 2008). A cross-sectional design would have enabled inclusion of a wider range of parliamentary mechanisms, thereby producing results that were more representative of the totality of parliamentary business. However, the findings of such a study would have been difficult to extrapolate beyond the prevailing political context at that time, and it would not have been possible to consider empirically how the dynamics of territorial representation have changed over time. In contrast, the longitudinal study enabled comparison of how MPs go about representing territorial areas across a range of different political and institutional contexts.

In deciding what time period to cover, a number of considerations were taken into account. First, it was important to include parliamentary terms when the House of Commons had been composed in various ways, in order to incorporate analysis of the dynamics of territorial representation in different political circumstances. In this respect the partisan composition of MPs returned for constituencies in the areas that the study focuses was of particular relevance. For instance, inclusion of parliamentary terms either side of the SNP breakthrough in 2015 enabled comparison between the behaviour of Scottish MPs under circumstances when Labour were the dominant party and then after the SNP assumed that position. Relatedly, it was important to include periods when different types of government and governments formed by different political parties were in office, as there are good reasons for anticipating that this may affect the dynamics of how MPs seek to pursue territorial interests. This suggested the need to extend the data collection further back than 2010, to incorporate periods when Labour were in power at UK level. Another consideration was that there was a strong case for gathering data from before the (re)-introduction of devolved legislatures during the 1997–2001 parliament, in order to enable consideration of the impacts of these reforms on the behaviour of sub-state territorial MPs. Nevertheless, the overall focus of the project is on reaching conclusions that are of contemporary relevance, so it was considered that this should be done without the project becoming a history of territorial representation. A final factor was practicality. There would need to be sufficient data available

from across the chosen time period and the overall amount of data to be collected would need to be manageable within the timescale of the project.

These considerations led to a decision to include the past seven complete parliamentary terms, starting with 1992–97 and ending with 2017–19. This 27-year time period saw major variation in the composition of the House of Commons and a range of different governments, as shown in Table 4.1. Beyond the overall headline figures, there was notable variation in the political composition of seats within the territorial areas that this research focuses on (see Tables 4.2–4.4 – equivalent tables for Cornwall and Yorkshire are included in chapter 8). Key electoral trends in those areas have already been discussed in chapter 2. These include the emergence of the SNP as the dominant party in Scotland from 2015, superseding Labour, and an increased presence for the DUP and Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland seats, at the expense of the UUP and SDLP. Sinn Féin’s abstentionism means that their MPs do not make spoken contributions in the House of Commons, and they are hence not included in the study. Consequently, the analysis of contributions by Northern Ireland’s MPs disproportionately relates to interventions by MPs from the unionist community.

Table 4.1: Party breakdown of House of Commons and government composition following general elections, 1992–2017

Election	Con	Lab	LD	SNP	PC	Other	Government composition
1992	336	271	20	3	4	17	Con majority
1997	165	418	46	6	4	20	Lab majority
2001	166	412	52	5	4	20	Lab majority
2005	198	355	62	6	3	22	Lab majority
2010	306	258	57	6	3	20	Con/LD coalition
2015	330	232	8	56	3	21	Con majority
2017	317	262	12	35	4	20	Con minority

Table 4.2: Party breakdown of Northern Ireland seats in the House of Commons following general elections, 1992–2017

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
Alliance	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
DUP	3	2	5	9	8	8	10
Independent	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
SDLP	4	4	3	3	3	3	0
Sinn Féin	0	2	4	5	5	4	7
UKU¹¹	n/a	1	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UPUP¹²	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UUP	9	10	6	1	0 ¹³	2	0

Table 4.3: Party breakdown of Scottish seats in the House of Commons following general elections, 1992–2017

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
Conservative	11	0	1	1	1	1	13
Labour	49	56	55	40	41	1	7
Lib Dem	9	10	10	11	11	1	4
SNP	3	6	5	6	6	56	35
Speaker	0	0	1	1	0	0	0

Table 4.4: Party breakdown of Welsh seats in the House of Commons following general elections, 1992–2017

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
Conservative	6	0	0	3	8	11	8
Independent	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Labour	27	34	34	29	26	25	28
Lib Dem	1	2	2	4	3	1	0
Plaid Cymru	4	4	4	3	3	3	4

The key juncture in terms of constitutional context was 1998–99, when the devolved institutions were (re)-established. Including 1992–97 in the study enabled reference to a data point prior to these reforms, facilitating comparison between how MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales went about territorial representation at Westminster before and after.

There was no significant practical limitation to including all complete parliamentary terms from 1992 onwards. Although some aspects are presented in a less user-friendly format for earlier terms, almost all of the required information is readily available online. An estimate of how long the data would take to collect and analyse was extrapolated from an initial pilot, based on a sample of 315

¹¹ UK Unionist Party.

¹² Ulster Popular Unionist Party.

¹³ The UUP contested the 2010 general election as ‘Ulster Conservatives and Unionists – New Force’, reflecting an electoral alliance with the Conservatives.

contributions made by MPs in the 2015–17 parliament. This confirmed that covering the period from 1992 to 2019 was manageable within the project timescale.

Selection of parliamentary activities and sampling strategy

Backbench MPs participate in a variety of different activities such as directing questions to government ministers (Bates, Kerr, and Serban 2018), contributing to debates (Foster 2015; Rogers and Walters 2015), proposing legislation and amendments to bills (Bowler 2010; Russell and Gover 2017; Thompson 2015), sitting on select committees (Benton and Russell 2013; Geddes 2020) and voting in divisions (Cowley 2002). The data that each of these produce have been used in empirical research, but it would not have been practical or desirable to cover all of them here. In deciding which to focus on, three main considerations were taken into account. First, it was important that the activities allowed representative claims by individual MPs to be captured, in line with the theoretical approach set out in chapter 3. Analysis of voting was therefore not included, since this can only capture whether MPs voted in favour or against a particular issue, or whether they abstained, with no elaboration on reasons for those stances. Second, the activities included needed to be those most appropriately used by individual MPs to engage in territorial representation. For this reason it was decided not to include analysis of select committee contributions. The subject matters of committee inquiries must usually reflect the interests of a group of MPs composed of members from across the UK, which can be expected to constrain the ability of members to engage in territorial representation.¹⁴ Finally, it was considered important to include some forms of business that related directly to key policy issues with a strong territorial dimension in the sample, in particular the development of devolution and Brexit.

Oral questions

The first mechanism included is oral parliamentary questions. These take up the first hour of business on Monday to Thursday in every sitting week (Rogers and Walters 2015). Ministers from each government department respond once every five sitting weeks, while the Prime Minister answers questions that can cover any matter of government responsibility every sitting Wednesday. Asking questions at these sessions is a highly individualised activity when undertaken by backbenchers, which is widely used by MPs from both government and opposition parties (Bates, Kerr, and Serban 2018). Although party whips might sometimes encourage their members to

¹⁴ The territorial select committees are obvious exceptions.

pursue a particular line of questioning, MPs ultimately retain a lot of freedom to decide which matters to raise. Moreover, oral questions can be seen as particularly suitable for pursuing territorial representation. They typically receive relatively higher levels of publicity than other parliamentary activities, so are one of the main ways that MPs can signal to voters that they are engaged in seeking to represent the interests and/or opinions of a particular group (Bates, Kerr, and Serban 2018). Oral questions are also an important accountability tool, and can be a good way of ensuring that an issue is on the government's agenda (Bennister and Larkin 2018).

The sampled oral questions comprised all asked by backbenchers with constituencies in the five territorial areas included in this research at 96 sessions of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) and a total of 168 sessions of questions to departmental ministers. Contributions by official opposition frontbenchers on policy areas that they had shadow ministerial responsibility for were not included in the sample, with MPs' biographies consulted where it was unclear whether the member was asking a question as a frontbencher or as a backbencher. All questions by MPs belonging to the third-largest party and other smaller parties with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were included, regardless of whether the member held a frontbench portfolio, as for these parties the distinction between frontbench and backbench roles is less clear-cut (Thompson 2020). The departmental question time sessions in the sample were those with remits covering agriculture and the environment, business and industry, culture and heritage, and home affairs. These were chosen to include a broad range of policy areas with different contexts in terms of the extent to which there are divergent territorial interests across the UK and the extent to which they include devolved competences post-1999. The full list of departments is provided in Table 4.5, and information about the extent to which policy in these areas has been devolved in each of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in Table 4.6. The names of three of these departments their precise remits changed over the period covered by the study, but core responsibilities remained similar. The rationale for including PMQs is that, unlike other question time sessions, it makes it possible to capture which matters MPs seek to prioritise in a situation where they are able to ask about any area of policy. Research has shown that topics raised reflect 'the general pressures on the policy agenda and the exigencies of party politics' (Bevan and John 2014, 79). PMQs also has a different dynamic from departmental questions due to much greater media coverage, which has contributed to it becoming the 'focal point of the weekly Parliamentary schedule' (Bates et al. 2014, 276). In recent years the sharing of clips from these sessions on social media has also become increasingly widespread, enabling some parliamentary contributions to reach larger and more diverse audiences than previously (Waddle, Bull, and Böhnke 2019). The extent to which sub-state territorial claims

are made at PMQs can therefore be seen as a good indicator of the salience that MPs afford the UK's component territorial units as a representational focus, at different points in time.

Table 4.5: Departmental question time sessions included in content analysis

Policy area	1992–97	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19
Agriculture and the environment	Agriculture, Fisheries and Food		Environment, Food and Rural Affairs				
Business and industry	Trade and Industry			Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	Business, Innovation and Skills		Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Culture and heritage	National Heritage	Culture, Media and Sport					Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Home affairs	Home Office						

Table 4.6: Policy areas included in sample of departmental question times and information about whether competences have been devolved or reserved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales after 1999

Policy area	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Agriculture and the environment	Mostly devolved from 1999. UK institutions retain competences relating to EU negotiations.		
Business and industry	Mixed devolved and reserved competences from 1999. UK institutions retain responsibility for most aspects of trade and industry regulation in all parts of the UK. Devolved institutions responsible for schemes promoting enterprise within their borders, and for some aspects of energy policy.		
Culture and heritage	Mostly devolved from 1999. UK ministers retain responsibility for some sensitive issues, such as oversight of the Parades Commission that regulates unionist and nationalist parades.	Mostly devolved from 1999. UK institutions retain some responsibilities, including for broadcasting policy.	Mostly devolved from 1999, including most aspects of language policy. UK institutions retain some responsibilities, including for broadcasting policy.
Home affairs	Policing and justice devolved from 2010. UK institutions retain responsibility for	Policing and justice devolved from 1999. UK institutions retain responsibility for	Mostly reserved.

	immigration and security.	immigration and security.	
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Stratified random sampling was used to select specific question time sessions. A complete list of the relevant sessions was compiled. A randomisation tool was then used to choose 12 30-minute PMQs sessions and six 30–60 minute departmental question time sessions for each of the four departments included in the sample, for each of the parliaments from 1997–2001 to 2017–19.¹⁵ For 1992–97 24 15-minute PMQs sessions were included, alongside the six departmental question time sessions per department.¹⁶ The full list of sessions is provided in Appendix 1. In summary, the sample contained 1,488 individual questions by backbench MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and 849 by backbenchers with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire.

Westminster Hall debates

The second mechanism included is Westminster Hall debates. These are debates on subjects of an MP's choice, held in the Grand Committee Room off Westminster Hall.¹⁷ The rationale for including these in the sample is that they facilitate analysis of longer contributions than those made at question time. As with questions, Westminster Hall debates require an oral ministerial response and so can also be used 'for awareness raising, providing an opportunity to outline a problem and present solutions to a captive ministerial audience' (Thomas and Frier 2018, 114). As most of these debates are structured to enable multiple backbenchers to contribute, they can also serve as a means of demonstrating and building support for a particular position, sometimes across party lines.¹⁸ They often receive some publicity, especially in local and regional media, so can plausibly be used by MPs as a signalling device to external audiences. There has been surprisingly little research on Westminster Hall debates, other than some descriptive accounts of the procedure, even though the majority of backbench-initiated debates in the Commons now take place through this mechanism (Rogers and Walters 2015; Thomas and Frier 2018). Their inclusion in the study points to the potential for greater use of this largely untapped source of data by parliamentary

¹⁵ The randomisation tool was <https://www.randomizer.org/>, last accessed 3 January 2023.

¹⁶ The format of PMQs changed from two 15-minute sessions to one 30-minute session per sitting week from 1997–2001.

¹⁷ A minority of Westminster Hall debates are on select committee reports scheduled by the Liaison Committee, and since 2010 debates scheduled by the Backbench Business Committee. These are included in the sample where they meet the other relevant criteria.

¹⁸ The length of time allocated for Westminster Hall debates ranges from 30 minutes to 3 hours. In the shortest debates it is usual for only the member initiating the debate and the minister responding to make substantive speeches.

studies scholars, as an indicator of topics that MPs' are focused on and how they frame arguments in relation to those topics.

The sampled Westminster Hall contributions comprised the opening speeches in all debates initiated by backbenchers – defined in the same way as for oral questions – with constituencies in the territorial areas covered by this project, during the sessions immediately following and preceding general elections in each parliament from 2001–05 until 2017–19.¹⁹ The rationale for focusing on opening speeches is that these are delivered by the MP that has chosen the topic, so are a better indicator of territorial focus than other speeches. Limiting the sample to the first and last sessions of each parliament was a practical decision, to prevent the amount of data collection becoming so large that the coding could not be completed on the intended timetable. As Westminster Hall debates were introduced in 1999, the entire period from that point up to the 2001 election was included to ensure a comparable amount of data was collected from 1997–2001 as for later parliaments. Overall this sample contained 883 contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, together with 412 by those with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire.

Legislation

The third mechanism included is debates on government-initiated bills. A key justification for including speeches made during legislative debates is that the various stages bills must pass through make it possible to trace the progress of particular campaigns and proposals. A territorially-framed argument made in a second reading debate on a bill may well be followed up at committee and/or report stage, potentially increasing pressure on the government to respond. Including bills also enables some consideration of how amendments might be used as a way of pursuing issues particular to territorial units. Research has demonstrated that it is common for legislation to be amended, sometimes substantially, during its passage, and that amendments often have origins in proposals made by groups of backbenchers (Dixon and Jones 2019; Russell and Gover 2017; Thompson 2015). Including legislation in the analysis also allows the study to incorporate consideration of how MPs went about representing the UK's component territories in relation to policy areas that have been the subject of major legislative debates, in particular Brexit and the development of devolution.

¹⁹ Sessions usually last approximately one year. Exceptionally, the opening sessions of the 2010–15 and 2017–19 parliaments lasted around two years. These two-year sessions are included in full in the sample.

The full list of bills debated in each parliamentary term was reviewed and a selection from across each of the seven parliamentary sessions was chosen for analysis, taking some inspiration from the approach used by Russell and Gover (2017) to select case study bills for their study of the legislative process. The 29 selected bills cover a diverse range of topics and are also varied in terms of their political and practical significance (see Table 4.7). There were reasons to anticipate that particular territorial dimensions might be raised during the passage of each of these. Several that related to devolved powers and to the post-2016 implementation of Brexit have been included, as these provide an important part of the evidence base for chapters 6 and 7. For each bill included in the sample, speeches by backbenchers – defined as for oral questions and Westminster Hall debates – with constituencies in the areas covered in this project, at all Commons stages, were analysed.²⁰

Territorial claim-making on these selected bills was not directly comparable to that on the sampled oral questions and Westminster Hall debates, so the content analysis on bills is disaggregated from that on the other parliamentary mechanisms where results are reported. The legislation case studies are used primarily to illustrate particular instances of territorial claim-making rather than to chart quantitative trends. Although detailed analysis was conducted on all 29 bills, space constraints mean that not all of them are ultimately referred to in the thesis.

Table 4.7: Legislation included in content analysis

Parliamentary session	Bills
1992–97	Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill 1992-93 Coal Industry Bill 1993-94 Firearms (Amendment) Bill 1996-97
1997–2001	Referendums (Scotland and Wales) Bill 1997-98 Scotland Bill 1997-98 Government of Wales Bill 1997-98 Northern Ireland Bill 1997-98
2001–05	Justice (Northern Ireland) Bill 2001-02 Regional Assemblies (Preparation) Bill 2002-03 Communications Bill 2002-03 Industrial Development (Financial Assistance) Bill 2002-03
2005–10	Government of Wales Bill 2005-06 Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Bill 2006-07 European Union (Amendment) Bill 2007-08 Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill 2008-09 to 2009-10
2010–15	European Union Bill 2010-12 Scotland Bill 2010-12

²⁰ Transcripts were not available for the committee stages of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill 1992–93 and the Coal Industry Bill 1993–94, so these debates are excluded from the analysis.

	Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013-14 Immigration Bill 2013-14 Wales Bill 2014-15 Infrastructure Bill 2014-15
2015–17	Scotland Bill 2015-16 EU (Referendum) Bill 2015-16 Immigration Bill 2015-16 Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill 2015-16 Wales Bill 2016-17 EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2016-17
2017–19	EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19 Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Bill 2017-19

‘Meaningful vote’ debates on the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement

The final set of Commons proceedings included in the content analysis are the series of three debates on ratification of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Theresa May’s government in 2018–19. These were referred to by MPs and the media as ‘meaningful vote’ debates.²¹ They were high profile occasions which, in all three instances, resulted in the deal supported by May being defeated. They are included in the sample to enable analysis of contributions by backbenchers with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to be incorporated into chapter 7. As with the analysis of territorial claim-making in legislative debates, these results are not directly comparable to those for the sampled oral questions and Westminster Hall debates. These results are therefore excluded from the datasets referred to in chapters 5 and 8 when discussing trends over time.

Coding method

All coding was conducted by hand. Machine learning software that automates the process of coding textual data is now widely used for content analysis, including in legislative studies (Slapin and Proksch 2014). However, the accuracy of these methods remains limited compared to hand-coding, and it is not well-suited to precise assignment of text into categories such as the forms of territorial representation outlined in chapter 3 (Nelson et al. 2021). An automated procedure was hence not considered likely to produce sufficiently valid results. Each of the 6,001 parliamentary contributions included in the overall sample were instead individually read and analysed. All

²¹ The term ‘meaningful vote’ was originally coined to draw a contrast with initial suggestions from the government that a vote on the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement could be non-binding (Fowler 2018).

relevant parliamentary records were uploaded to NVivo, which was used to record coding decisions. Results were then transferred to Microsoft Excel.

The coding scheme was based on the definition of sub-state territorial representation and typology of forms set out in chapter 3. For every contribution in the sample, the MP's name, territorial area and party affiliation were recorded, as well as the date and category of business. Each contribution that met the criteria of *explicitly seeking to advance the interests, policy priorities and/or recognition of identity and culture of the sub-state territorial unit within which a member's electoral constituency is located* was coded as containing a sub-state territorial claim. Where these criteria were not met, the contribution was coded as containing no sub-state territorial claim. Contributions coded as containing a sub-state territorial claim were then additionally coded within one or more of the four categories from the typology – *material interests, public opinion, identity and culture* and *sub-state political institutions*. These categories were defined based on the coding rules included in chapter 3. This scheme was first tested on the pilot sample of contributions from 2015–17. Following an initial evaluation minor adjustments to the process were made before proceeding to conduct the content analysis on the full sample. Table 4.8 shows a series of worked examples, drawn from PMQs on 16 May 2018.

A reliability check was performed by coding for a second time 217 contributions from 2010–15 and 2015–17, comprising 147 oral questions and 70 Westminster Hall debates, 6% of the total sample for these categories of business.²² The coding for the reliability check was undertaken between two and five months after the original coding, minimising the possibility that previous decisions were recalled. The results were compared, finding an agreement rate of 96.3% on whether or not a contribution contained a territorial claim, and 98.2% on which of the four categories of territorial representation these claims were coded within. The Cohen's kappa coefficient, a standard measure for calculating agreement when checking reliability in content analysis (Krippendorff 2004), was 0.90 for identifying territorial claims and 0.89 for assignment to the four categories, suggesting almost perfect agreement. Discrepancies identified through the reliability check were reviewed and adjustments made to ensure consistency. There was no second coder involved, for practical reasons in the context of a project involving only one researcher. These results can hence only be an indicator of the reliability of the coding scheme as employed by this author, not necessarily its reliability were it applied by others. Nevertheless, they do demonstrate that the coding scheme was applied consistently across the sample.

²² Specifically, the sample for this comprised two sessions per parliament for each of the question time topics included in the analysis, and a selection of Westminster Hall debates from the beginning and end of each parliament.

Table 4.8: Worked example of content analysis coding, PMQs, 16 May 2018, HC Deb vol. 641, col. 272–280.

MP asking question	Question	Territorial claim?	Material interests?	Public opinion?	Culture and/or identity?	Sub-state political institutions?	Notes
Ian Blackford (SNP, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, Scotland)	Last night the Scottish Parliament voted by 93 votes to 30 to refuse consent to the withdrawal Bill. The Scottish National party, the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens all voted to refuse consent. The Conservatives are isolated and out of touch with the people of Scotland. Will the Prime Minister respect the will of the Scottish Parliament and work with the Scottish Government to amend the withdrawal Bill?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Coded as a territorial claim, due to containing references to the opinions of the ‘people of Scotland’ and a vote in the Scottish Parliament
Ian Blackford (SNP, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, Scotland)	If the Prime Minister wishes to respect the Scottish Parliament, she should respect last night’s vote. It is very simple: the Tories are seeking to veto the democratic wishes of the Scottish Parliament. This is absolutely unprecedented. If this Government force through the legislation without the consent of the Scottish Parliament, the Prime Minister will be doing so in the full knowledge that they are breaking the 20-year-old devolution settlement. Will the Prime Minister reassure the House that the withdrawal Bill will not go through without the consent of the Scottish Parliament?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Coded as a territorial claim, due to containing a reference to a vote in the Scottish Parliament, and a defence of the Scottish Parliament as an institution
Stephen Kinnoch (Labour, Aberavon, Wales)	Figures released by the OECD on 27 April show that inward investment into the UK in 2017 slumped by 90% in comparison with 2016, which is one of the largest one-year drops in foreign direct investment ever recorded in any country. It is crystal clear that if this downward trend continues, it will have a catastrophic impact on steel and the other manufacturing and service industries that are the lifeblood of our economy in Aberavon, in Wales and in the UK. In order to reverse the profound market uncertainty that has caused FDI to plummet in this	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim, as the question was framed in terms of impact on economy of UK as a whole, although Wales is also mentioned in passing

	way, will the Prime Minister now confirm that she is prepared to keep an open mind on our country rejoining EFTA—the European Free Trade Association—and remaining in the European economic area? Will she also recognise the fact that there is a strong cross-party consensus for— [Interruption.]						
Thelma Walker (Labour, Colne Valley, Yorkshire)	I welcome the fact that the Health Secretary is in listening mode and has referred the plans for downgrading Huddersfield Royal Infirmary back to the trust. Now, here is the challenge. Nationally, how will the Government fill the 34,000 nursing vacancies, recruit the 47% of vacancies in GP surgeries, increase funding for community NHS services, fix Kirklees Council's social care funding gap of £9 million a year and protect our NHS so it is free at the point of use in its 70th year?	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim as the specific territorial reference is to the local council rather than Yorkshire as a whole
Sir Kevin Barron (Labour, Rother Valley, Yorkshire)	In February 2015, after the publication of the Casey report on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, the Prime Minister, in her previous role, said that if resources were needed, they must be provided. However, the Fusion bid has received only just over 30% of the funding requested. This funding is desperately needed to support survivors of CSE and to pursue convictions against the perpetrators. Will she ask the Home Secretary and the Justice Secretary to authorise the rest of the funding as a matter of urgency?	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim as the specific territorial reference is to a town rather than Yorkshire as a whole
Alec Shelbrooke (Conservative, Elmet and Rothwell, Yorkshire)	Russian military naval activity in the north Atlantic is at its highest level since the 1980s. Will my right hon. Friend update the House on the funding of the Royal Navy under this Government?	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim as there is no reference to Yorkshire
Andrew Jones (Conservative, Harrogate and	Thousands more homes across North Yorkshire will receive access to superfast broadband thanks to the Government's investment in North Yorkshire County Council. Much of that will be connected	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim as territorial references relate to North

Knaresborough, Yorkshire)	with fibre direct to the premises. Does the Prime Minister agree that fibre represents gold-standard broadband and that local authorities must use all their powers to ensure that developers install fibre broadband when building new homes?						Yorkshire, rather than to Yorkshire as a whole ²³
Stephen Gethins (SNP, North East Fife, Scotland)	My constituent, Jan Steyn, is an incredibly hard-working Church of Scotland minister, who has made North East Fife his home over the past seven years. He has been denied leave to remain because he temporarily served the Scots Kirk in Paris. Will the Prime Minister meet me and the Church of Scotland to discuss that issue?	No	No	No	No	No	Not coded as a territorial claim as it relates principally to an individual constituency case
Ross Thomson (Conservative, Aberdeen South, Scotland)	Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment and regret that we did not secure a legislative consent memorandum in the Scottish Parliament? Does she share my concern that Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democrats have become the midwives for the Scottish National party's crusade to tear apart the Union, leaving only the Scottish Conservatives as the party that wants to get on and make a success of Brexit?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Coded as a territorial claim due to reference to legislative consent debate in the Scottish Parliament
Nigel Dodds (DUP, North Belfast, Northern Ireland)	Following the completion at the end of the year of the Boundary Commission's review, which will apply to the whole of the United Kingdom, reducing the number of constituencies and Members in this House, has the Prime Minister further considered the resulting relative increase in the size of the Executive in this place? May I urge her not to apply the policy that is currently being applied to Northern Ireland of not having any Ministers, refusing to appoint any and allowing civil servants to run the place	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Coded as a territorial claim due to reference to governance arrangements in Northern Ireland during suspension of the Executive

²³ The reference to North Yorkshire was recorded in order to inform analysis that compares references to Yorkshire as a whole and to Yorkshire's component parts, reported in chapter 8.

Qualitative content analysis

The qualitative element of the content analysis involved gathering wider insights and information from the sample of parliamentary contributions, beyond the quantitative categorisation. Observations about particular contributions were recorded using the annotation function in NVivo, then transferred to a 'Notes' column in Excel. These were varied in nature, including the subject matters of contributions containing territorial claims, contextual information and significant or unusual features of individual contributions. These notes helped greatly with identifying policy issues around which there was a particularly notable amount of territorial claim-making. They were also invaluable for the purpose of locating examples to illustrate the discussion in the empirical chapters. Qualitative understanding of the dynamics of territorial representation at Westminster was further developed through the broader immersive process of reading through a large number of parliamentary records. To ensure that observations were recorded throughout the process of conducting the content analysis, interim reports were compiled after completing the coding for each parliamentary term.

Limitations of approach to content analysis

There were inevitably trade-offs associated with the research design for the content analysis, which mean that the results have some limitations.

One important drawback is that focusing on selected forms of parliamentary business means that the results cannot speak to the extent of sub-state territorial representation across parliamentary business as a whole. Since oral questions and Westminster Hall debates were chosen in part because they were considered suitable outlets for territorial claim-making, it is possible that the raw figures reported in subsequent chapters somewhat overstate the extent to which this takes place across the totality of parliamentary contributions. Similarly, although legislation case studies were included in the content analysis the results of these cannot tell us how far territorial representation is evident across all legislative debates, as the bills included in the sample are primarily those which had particularly strong sub-state territorial dimensions. Covering a wider range of business would, realistically, have required a cross-sectional approach or the use of automated coding. For reasons discussed elsewhere in this chapter neither of those options were considered desirable.

A further limitation is that the quantitative findings are restricted to identifying where sub-state territorial claims take place, and which of the categories in the typology set out in chapter 3 these fall within. This aspect of the project is therefore unable to account for variation in the *intensity* of territorial representation. Cases where the territorial claim is a tangential feature of a contribution count equally, for the purposes of the content analysis, to those where it is the central theme. There is also no quantitative measure distinguishing between the various categories of representation of sub-state political institutions identified in chapter 3, such as acting as a champion of devolved governments or advocating an extension of devolved powers. The reason for not adding additional categories to the quantitative analysis was to avoid over-complicating the hand-coding, which would have caused it to take longer and may have impacted on reliability. Nevertheless, this does mean that the results are a relatively crude measure of the extent to which territorial claims, and its various forms, were identified in the sampled parliamentary contributions. Only the qualitative aspects of the project can speak to more nuanced dynamics of territorial claim-making.

As there was only one coder it is also difficult to be certain about the replicability of the method, were it to be deployed by other researchers. The reliability check offered a high degree of confidence in the consistency with which the coding scheme was applied across the sample. However, this cannot speak to how the coding scheme would have been interpreted by other researchers. Although every effort was made to ensure that the coding rules were clear, for instance through developing the definitions of sub-state territorial representation and its different forms discussed in chapter 3, it is possible that another researcher would have been more or less restrictive in their assessments.

Connecting phase

Once the content analysis was completed, key patterns in the data were identified during a short ‘connecting phase’. Dimensions focused on at this point included the extent to which and ways in which MPs made sub-state territorial representative claims across different parliamentary terms, territorial units and political parties. Patterns in the extent to which the four different forms of territorial representation included in the coding took place were also drawn out. In keeping with the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, these findings were used to inform the second substantive phase (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). The quantitative and qualitative information gathered from the content analysis contributed to the choice of interviewees, the

themes to focus on in the interviews and identifying particular instances of sub-state territorial representation to follow up in more detail.

Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

The interviews with current and former MPs had three main purposes. First, they enabled major themes and key examples of substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units that were identified through the content analysis to be explored in more detail. Interviewees who had engaged in territorial representation were therefore asked to provide contextual information, to reflect on their aims and to evaluate the impact of particular interventions. Second, the interviews were used to gather information about the dynamics of territorial representation that could not be detected through the parliamentary record. This included exploring how groups of MPs from the UK's component units, such as the Scottish Conservatives and Welsh Labour, organise among themselves. Another dimension to this was asking about intra-party relationships between members of the House of Commons and the devolved institutions. This information played an important part in informing the discussion in chapters 6 and 7, in particular. Finally, the interviews provided an opportunity to incorporate MPs' own perceptions of the territorially-focused aspects of their roles into the study. Interviewees were asked about how far they prioritised a distinct territorial role and what they saw this comprising. Where MPs who had served over a long period were interviewed, this also included reflections on how the role had changed over time against the backdrop of different political and institutional contexts.

Selection and composition of interviewees

This project draws on two sets of semi-structured interviews, comprising 23 interviews in total. It was intended to include current and former MPs from across the territorial areas covered in the project and the main political parties that have held parliamentary seats in those areas over the period of the study. A purposive approach was taken when determining precisely who to issue invitations to. MPs that were invited included those who the content analysis had shown to be particularly engaged in territorial representation, those who had served across a range of different parliamentary terms, and those with experience both at Westminster and in the devolved institutions. This sought to ensure that the MPs who were interviewed were well placed to speak to the questions identified in the introduction to this thesis, including how patterns of substantive

representative of the UK's component territorial units have changed over time and the impact of devolution.

The first set of interviews took place between March 2018 and March 2020. These were originally conducted as part of the ESRC-funded *Between Two Unions* research project, on which this author was employed as a researcher, although some questions were framed with this project in mind.²⁴ This consisted of 11 interviews with current and former Conservative MPs. Four had been MPs for constituencies in Scotland, five for constituencies in Wales and two had represented constituencies in England, but were asked about issues relating to this research. Themes relevant to this thesis covered in these interviews included how Scottish and Welsh Conservative MPs organised at Westminster, how these party groups had adjusted to devolution and the approaches they had taken to issues relating to the devolved territories in the context of Brexit. These interviews were carried out prior to the completion of the content analysis, but it was decided that it would be inefficient to re-interview MPs from these groups. As sufficient data from Scottish and Welsh Conservative MPs had been collected, no further interview requests were sent to these groups. Later requests were sent to Conservative MPs with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire, as these areas were not covered in the first set of interviews.

The second set of interviews, which took place between January and October 2021, consisted of 12 interviews with relevant individuals from across the different territorial areas and parties. These comprised four current or former MPs for Scottish constituencies, two for Welsh constituencies, two for Cornish constituencies, two for constituencies in Yorkshire and one for a constituency in Northern Ireland. One of the interviews was with a former official in the Welsh Government, who had a number of relevant insights to offer into the relationship between the devolved executive and MPs with Welsh constituencies. A full list of the dates of the interviews, together with the territorial units and affiliations of the interviewees, is provided in Appendix 2.

It had originally been intended that this second set would be somewhat larger, involving around 20 interviews. However, the response rate to requests proved somewhat lower than had been anticipated, and lower than this researcher had experienced when interviewing MPs for previous projects. It is likely that one reason for this was the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the workloads and working patterns of MPs during the period when these interviews were being requested. Several MPs indicated in responses that they would normally have been willing to agree,

²⁴ Project reference ES/P009441/1. All interviews cited in the thesis were personally conducted by this author.

but wanted to focus on assisting their constituents in the context of the pandemic. In other cases automatic replies were received from MPs' offices indicating they were experiencing unprecedented levels of casework, and that enquiries from constituents would therefore be prioritised. This meant that phase 2 of the empirical research was unable to reach as comprehensive or representative a group of interviewees as originally planned. In this respect it is particularly important to note that only one interviewee had been an MP for a constituency in Northern Ireland and that no interviews were conducted with members of the DUP. There was also only one interviewee who had been an SNP MP. In the cases of these groups the wider political context may also have had an impact on availability to be interviewed. A Scottish Parliament election took place within the period when interviews were being conducted, in May 2021, and it is possible that the close involvement of many SNP MPs in campaigning for this election reduced their availability. Meanwhile, it is plausible that the sensitive political context in Northern Ireland during this period, which coincided with the introduction of the post-Brexit Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, may have made DUP MPs more reluctant to speak to academics. Despite not being able to secure as many interviews as originally intended, the interviews that were conducted were of a high quality. The interviewees were all well placed to offer insights on the issues that the project is concerned with and provided a large amount of useful information, which is referred to frequently in chapters 6, 7 and 8. Although multiple MPs from each party group would ideally have been interviewed, a single current or former MP was often sufficient to gain significant insights into how these groups organised internally, and about their relationships with members of the devolved institutions.

Interview procedure

The procedure was typical of that used by other researchers when interviewing members of the UK parliament (Cowley 2021). Requests were sent by e-mail and followed up where a response was not received within a reasonable timeframe. The approach e-mail explained the topic of the research and the contribution that the interviewee could make concisely, and was customised for individual MPs. All interviews were semi-structured, as is standard practice when interviewing politicians (Bailer 2014). A list of areas to cover was prepared in advance of each interview, but these were not fixed scripts and necessarily varied. Typical topics included how MPs personally understood their territorial roles, to what extent and in what precise ways party groups organised along territorial lines and how their work at Westminster interacted with devolved institutions. In some cases MPs were asked about specific instances of territorial representation that they had been

involved in, and which had been identified through the content analysis. The interviews had a duration of between 30 and 60 minutes. All were conducted on terms of anonymity, but interviewees were asked to consent to the use of non-attributable quotes, with all willing to agree.

The first set of interviews were conducted in-person at Westminster. For these interviews handwritten notes were taken, then transferred to a computerised record that was stored online in a password-protected file. Due to restricted access to Westminster during the coronavirus pandemic the second set of interviews were all conducted online. These interviewees were asked to consent to being recorded, which all agreed to. The recordings were then used to compile full transcripts, which were stored in a password-protected file. The online method of interviewing proved satisfactory in terms of securing the information from interviewees that was necessary for this project, with the majority of these interviews lasting for a similar amount of time to a typical in-person interview and interviewees being prepared to speak candidly. Nevertheless, conducting interviews online did preclude the more informal engagement with interviewees that typically takes place at the start and end of in-person interviews, for instance while walking to and from the interview location (Cowley 2021). It also made it more difficult to use the interview process to establish a wider impression of the environment in which MPs from the UK's different territorial units operate than if the interviews had involved visiting a member's office and meeting some of their staff, as is common when conducting in-person interviews at Westminster.

Integration phase

The final phase involved integrating the quantitative and qualitative results. At this point key conclusions were identified and the implications of the findings were considered, including for relevant academic literature and for how the roles of MPs within the post-devolution UK political system should be understood.

Conclusions

The approach described in this chapter facilitated a research programme that was able to address the questions inspiring the study in depth and with appropriate nuance. Through the content analysis it was possible to gather a large amount of quantitative information about the frequency of sub-state territorial claim-making in its various forms and to identify differences in the nature of this sort of representation over time, by area and by party. The interviews complemented the

content analysis by providing more detail about specific instances, as well as enabling information that could not be identified through the parliamentary record to be incorporated into the study. As with all projects, there are limitations associated with the research design, and some things that might have been done differently. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to believe that the project was designed in a way that enabled credible findings of empirical and theoretical relevance to be drawn out.

5. Trends over time in territorial representative claim-making by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

As was discussed in chapter 2, the UK's component nations and territories form increasingly distinctive electoral spheres (Awan-Scully 2018; Detterbeck 2012; Swenden and Maddens 2009). It was on this basis that Awan-Scully (2018, 14) claimed the House of Commons now 'resembles the European Parliament', with members chosen from 'a disconnected series of separate national electoral contests'. If this is an accurate characterisation of the contemporary Commons there are good reasons to expect this to be reflected in the content of parliamentary contributions by members returned from each part of the UK, with MPs increasingly focusing on issues most relevant to their particular territorial context. However, this has not previously been tested empirically. To address this, trends in the extent to which MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales make claims to represent those territorial units, of the type introduced in chapter 3, are analysed in this chapter.²⁵ This provides an indication of how far MPs from those areas are focused on matters specific to their home territories, and how this has changed in light of the transformation of the political and institutional environments in which these politicians operate since the 1990s. Variation in patterns of territorial representative claim-making between backbenchers from each area, and those belonging to different political parties, is drawn out. The extent to which each of the four forms of claim to represent sub-state territories identified in chapter 3 are evident in parliamentary contributions is also charted and discussed.

This chapter draws primarily on the quantitative content analysis of parliamentary records, the detailed methodology for which was explained in chapter 4. The sample that the results relate to consists of 2,371 contributions, comprising 1,488 oral questions and 883 opening speeches in Westminster Hall debates. The analysis here is confined to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as meaningful comparison between patterns of sub-state territorial representation by English MPs and those from the UK's other component parts is precluded by England's majority status within the Union, and the absence of English devolved institutions. Equivalent data to that reported in this chapter on patterns of territorial claim-making by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire is presented in chapter 8.

The results reported here are an important step towards addressing the gap in existing scholarship on the parliamentary roles and behaviour of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland

²⁵ A version of this chapter was published as Sheldon (2021).

and Wales identified in chapter 2. They comprise the first major systematic study of the extent to which MPs from Scotland and Wales display a territorial focus in their parliamentary behaviour since the introduction of devolution, and the first ever such study of parliamentary behaviour by MPs from Northern Ireland. The absence of recent UK or comparative works in this area, and methodological differences with the 1970s and 1980s works that were discussed in chapter 2, mean that there is no precise external benchmark against which to compare the quantitative results. Nevertheless, the results can be contextualised by comparing rates and forms of territorial claim-making as captured by the methodology deployed here over different parliamentary terms, by territorial area and by political party. It is intended that the findings can themselves provide a reference point for future studies on substantive representation of sub-state territorial units in the UK parliament, and in central legislatures elsewhere.

Expectations

A range of socio-cultural, institutional and partisan factors were expected to impact on the propensity of MPs to engage in representative claim-making in relation to their territorial areas. Those discussed here are not exhaustive, but were anticipated to be among the most important prior to beginning the content analysis. In the absence of a large body of existing research, identifying these informed decisions on what information to record in the dataset and which variables to focus on when analysing the results. In practice there are often countervailing factors affecting the context for territorial representation among MPs from an individual territory or party, so what follows should be read as suggesting factors that were expected to be important rather than precise predictions of when and by whom territorial representative claims will be made. Taken together, several of these contextual factors do nevertheless suggest a larger proportion of contributions in later parliaments, from around 2010–15 onwards, can be expected to include a territorial representative claim.

Intuitively, claims to represent sub-state territories would be expected to be made most often by MPs with constituencies in territories where a greater proportion of the population identifies with the area in question. Strong territorial identities are associated with ‘imagined communities’ that emerge from a variety of factors including distinctive historical experience, languages associated with particular areas and geographical distance from central institutions (Anderson 1983; Keating 1998). Keating (1998) has observed that such identities become politically salient when they give individuals a frame through which political issues are seen and interpreted. These conditions have

long been present among significant numbers of voters in all of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but are most widespread among the Scottish electorate. Polling in 2018 found that 84% of voters in Scotland identified ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ strongly as Scottish, 62% in Wales as Welsh and 58% in Northern Ireland as Northern Irish (LucidTalk 2018; YouGov 2018b, 2018c). All other things being equal, Scottish MPs can therefore be expected to display a somewhat greater sub-state territorial focus than their colleagues from Wales and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, since some of the other variables pointed in countervailing directions it was not necessarily anticipated that the rate of territorial claim-making by Scottish MPs would be consistently higher than that of MPs from the other areas. Differences in the nature of identities across the UK’s territorial components were also expected to have an impact on the extent to which MPs from those areas engaged in the four forms of territorial claim-making identified in chapter 3. For example, it was anticipated that claims to represent identity and culture would be higher among Welsh MPs, given the salience of issues relating to the Welsh language (Ford 2016).

As discussed in chapter 2, pre-devolution literature included speculation about the impact such reforms could have on the territorial roles of MPs. One school of thought was that the territorial role might become ‘redundant’ (Keating 1978, 429; Mishler and Mughan 1978), though it was also suggested that there might be still be an electoral incentive for MPs to focus on that level (Judge and Finlayson 1975). In the absence of much previous work examining this systematically, it was difficult to be certain of the impact devolution would have on territorial claim-making. It was tentatively anticipated that devolution would lead to a reduction in claims to represent material interests, identity and culture, since many issues within these categories no longer fell within Westminster’s responsibility in relation to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However, it was expected that a territorial focus would be retained to some degree as MPs would want to remain engaged with a level that resonated with their constituents, and was often an important part of their own political identities. Specifically, it was expected that claims to represent sub-state political institutions would emerge, which might have the effect of countering any reduction in the frequency of claims in other categories. It was noted in chapter 3 that research on the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados* found that, following Spain’s decentralisation reforms, some MPs had sought to give representation to the governments of the autonomous communities (Grau Creus 2010). Meanwhile, Staehr Harder and West (2022) found evidence of members of the Danish *Folketing* with seats in its devolved territories engaging in ‘cross-parliamentary control’. There were grounds for believing that these sorts of behaviours would be especially prevalent in the House of Commons where different parties are in government at Westminster and in a devolved area. Under

such conditions MPs belonging to the party in government at devolved level would be incentivised to use their mandates to promote the interests and policy positions of the devolved administration. The rate at which claims to represent sub-state political institutions are made was therefore expected to rise from 2010 onwards.

The type of party an MP belongs to was expected to be especially influential in determining the frequency of territorial representative claims. In particular, claims to represent sub-state territories were expected to form a greater proportion of the contributions of MPs from parties that contest elections in only one territorial unit, compared to those competing across Great Britain.²⁶ Advancing territorial interests is typically a foundational goal for parties that contest elections in only one part of a state, and they usually stand on election platforms reflecting that (Türsan 1998). By contrast, statewide parties must balance appealing to the particular concerns of electorates in individual sub-state territories with the need to advance a coherent policy agenda across the state as a whole. It was therefore expected that members of both sub-state nationalist parties such as Plaid Cymru and the SNP, and unionist parties in Northern Ireland, would display a higher rate of territorial claim-making than Britain-wide parties. The proportion of MPs belonging to parties competing in only one territorial unit rose substantially after the SNP landslide of Scottish seats in 2015. There were hence grounds to anticipate an increase in the extent of sub-state territorial claim-making at that point, at least among Scottish MPs. Since almost all MPs returned from Northern Ireland are members of parties that only compete there, it was also expected that there would be an especially high prevalence of sub-state territorial claims among those members across the period of the study.

MPs from parties that contest elections across different territorial units were expected to be more focused on the territorial level where sub-state nationalist parties are prominent competitors. In these circumstances Britain-wide parties have a strong electoral incentive to demonstrate engagement with territorial dimensions, in order to counter claims from sub-state nationalist parties that only they can defend the interests of the territorial unit. There is evidence of this being true in terms of election platforms and party organisational structures, and therefore good reason for believing this would also be reflected in activities in the legislature (Detterbeck 2012; Swenden and Maddens 2009). It was thus anticipated that the increased prominence of the SNP as electoral competitors for the main Britain-wide parties over the time period of the study, and especially

²⁶ 'Britain-wide parties' rather than 'UK-wide parties' is used to reflect that Labour and the Liberal Democrats do not stand candidates in Northern Ireland. The Conservatives stand candidates in Northern Ireland, but none were elected as MPs during the period covered by this study.

from 2014 onwards, would also have driven Labour and Conservative MPs who represent Scottish constituencies towards a greater focus on Scottish matters in the later parliaments in the sample. As Plaid Cymru's popular support at general elections remained relatively stable throughout the period of the study there were no strong grounds for expecting that they would have been a particular factor causing Labour and Conservative MPs with constituencies in Wales to display an increased focus on the sub-state territorial level. Increased divergence was therefore expected from the 2015–17 parliament onwards in the extent to which MPs from Scotland and Wales made territorial claims.

Parliamentary contributions are not made in isolation from the wider political agenda (Bevan and John 2014). It was therefore anticipated that claims to represent sub-state territories would form a greater proportion of parliamentary contributions when issues with a strong territorial dimension were of especially high salience. Young and Bélanger (2008) found some evidence for this dynamic in the contributions of *Bloc Québécois* MPs in Canada, which displayed a particularly heavy focus on issues relating to national unity during the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum campaign. In the UK it was expected that there would be a more intense focus on territorial issues first during the period around devolution's introduction and the conclusion of the Good Friday Agreement in 1997–2001. A further spike was expected from 2010–15 onwards when the Scottish independence referendum, followed by the EU membership referendum and its aftermath, meant that territorial issues were often high on the political agenda. This later period was expected to feature a particularly high number of claims to represent public opinion, given that MPs would be able to refer to the results of the Scottish independence and EU referendum in their home territories.

Overall patterns of territorial claim-making

Over one-third of the sampled parliamentary contributions were coded as containing a sub-state territorial representative claim (see Table 5.1). This confirms that backbenchers with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales often focus on matters specific to their territorial units. While not a new insight, having previously been identified in the 1970s and 1980s literature discussed in chapter 2, it is notable that this is still true following devolution. The proportion of coded contributions to include a territorial claim actually rose steadily across the sampled period, with only one of the seven parliaments – 2005–10 – where the proportion was not higher than in the previous parliament (see Figure 5.1). Whereas in 1997–2001 – the parliament when devolution was introduced – just over one quarter of analysed contributions contained a territorial claim, by

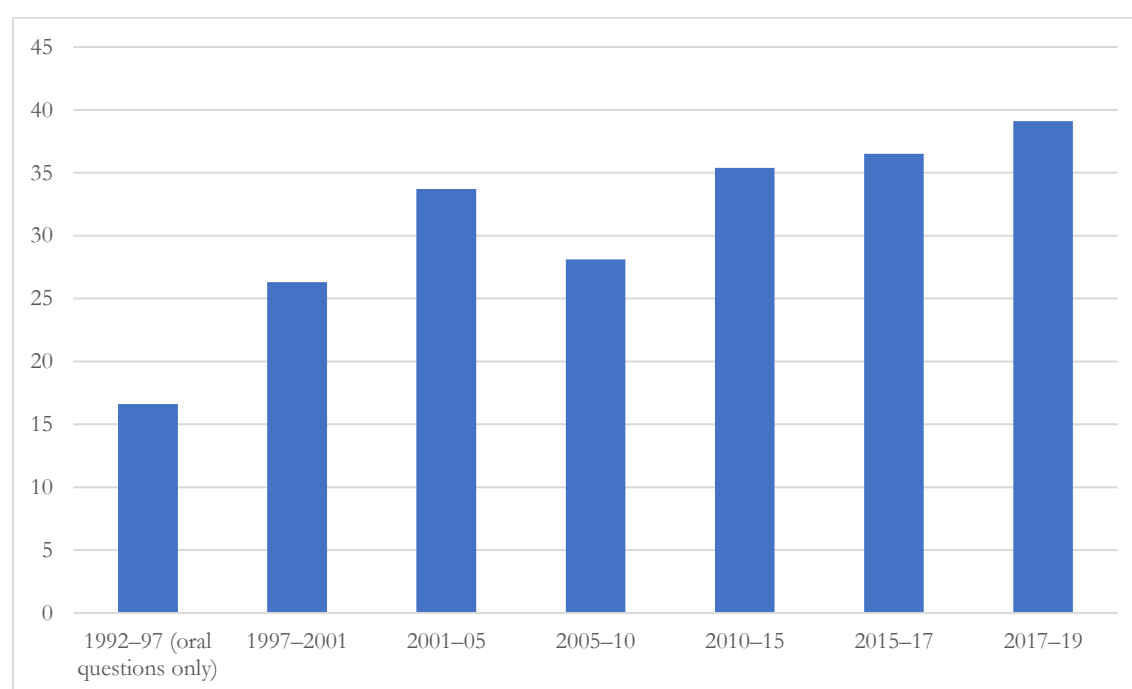
2017–19 this was almost four in ten. Consistent with expectations, the parliaments with the highest rates of territorial claim-making are the last three in the sample, from 2010–15, during which issues relating to sub-state territorial politics were often high on the political agenda and there was significant political divergence between the UK and devolved administrations. At least according to this indicator, it appears that MPs from the devolved parts of the UK have adapted their territorial roles to the changed institutional context, rather than switching to a focus on UK-wide issues as some authors had previously suggested might be a consequence of devolution (Keating 1978; Paun 2008).

Table 5.1: Sub-state territorial claim-making by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Parliament	Territorial claim
1992–97*	24/145 (16.6%)
1997–2001	45/171 (26.3%)
2001–05	88/261 (33.7%)
2005–10	78/278 (28.1%)
2010–15	146/412 (35.4%)
2015–17	190/521 (36.5%)
2017–19	228/583 (39.1%)
Total	799/2371 (33.7%)

* *Questions only*

Figure 5.1: Proportion of coded contributions to include a sub-state territorial claim by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)

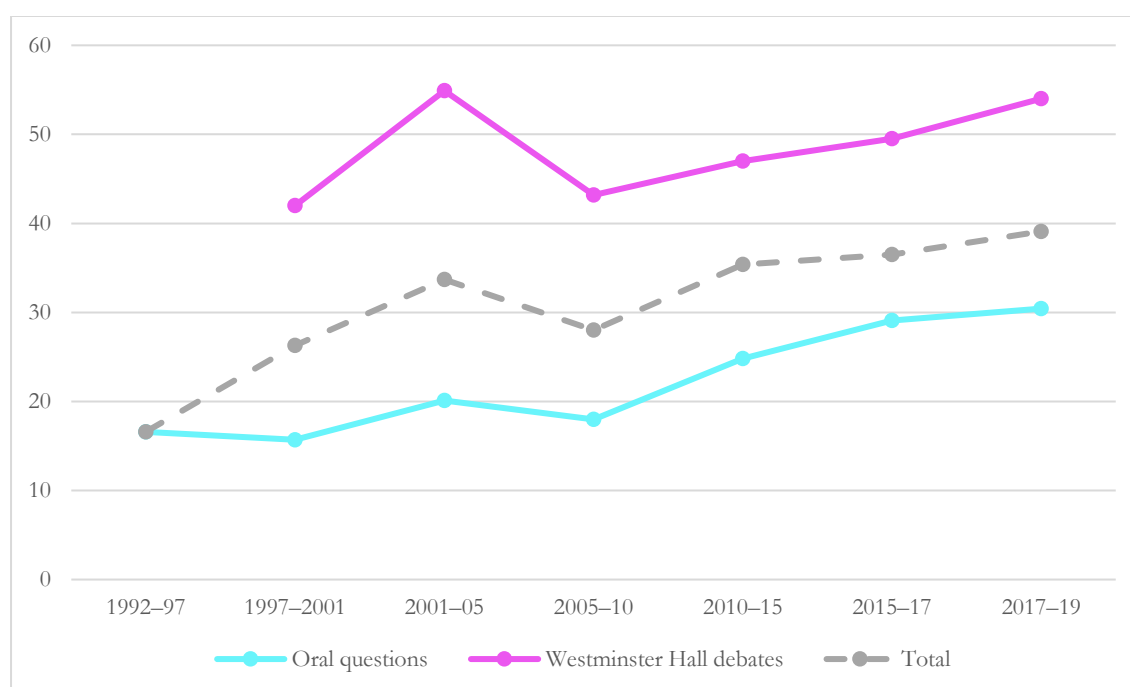


A similar pattern of a steady increase in the proportion of contributions including a territorial claim, interrupted only in 2005–10, is visible across both oral questions and Westminster Hall speeches (see Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2). That such similar trends are found across contributions made through two different procedural mechanisms strengthens confidence that the results are a valid indicator of variation in the extent to which these backbenchers seek to represent sub-state territories in their parliamentary contributions more generally. The proportion of opening speeches of Westminster Hall debates to include a territorial claim is consistently significantly higher than the equivalent figure for oral questions. This is not surprising, given that the Westminster Hall speeches that were analysed are considerably longer, which meant MPs had more time in which to include a territorial claim. Around one quarter of the oral questions included in the sample nevertheless contain such a claim, which suggests MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales do frequently use this mechanism to raise territorially-specific issues.

Table 5.2: Sub-state territorial claim-making by category of business and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Type of business	1992–97	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Oral questions	24/145 (16.6%)	16/102 (15.7%)	32/159 (20.1%)	30/167 (18%)	53/214 (24.78%)	97/333 (29.1%)	112/368 (30.4%)	364/1488 (24.5%)
Westminster Hall debates	n/a	29/69 (42%)	56/102 (54.9%)	48/111 (43.2%)	93/198 (47%)	93/188 (49.5%)	116/215 (54%)	436/883 (49.3%)
Total	24/145 (16.6%)	45/171 (26.3%)	88/261 (33.7%)	78/278 (28.1%)	146/412 (35.4%)	190/521 (36.5%)	228/583 (39.1%)	799/2371 (33.7%)

Figure 5.2: Proportion of coded contributions to include a sub-state territorial claim by category of business and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)

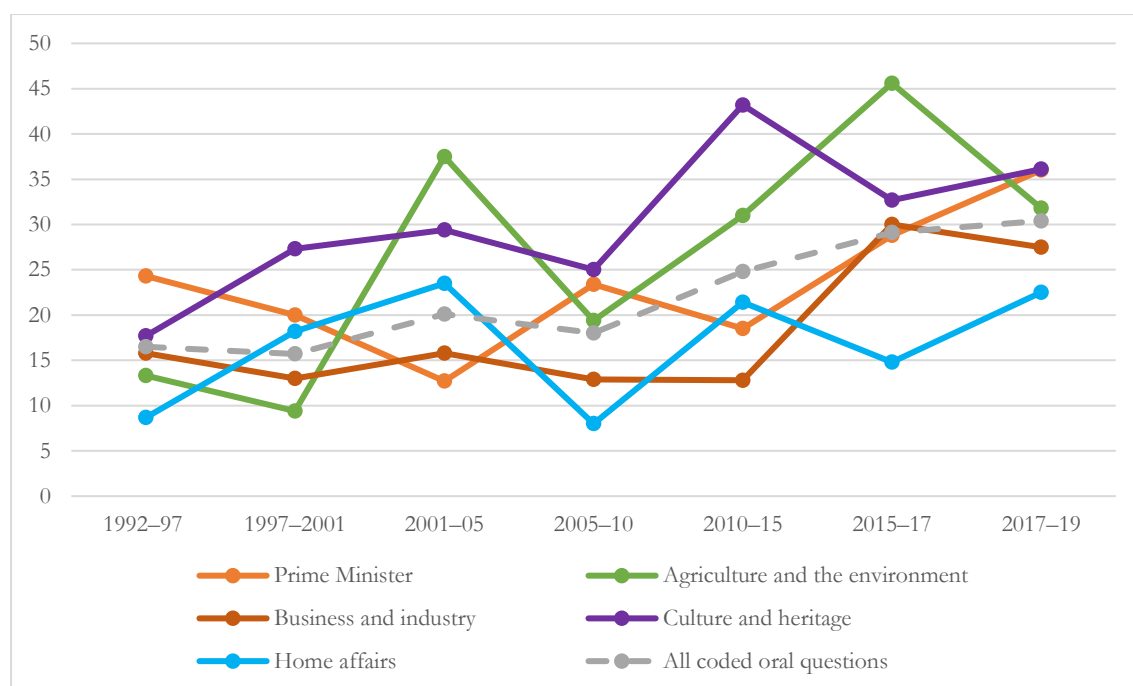


The oral questions can be further broken down into those asked at each regular question time session included in the sample (see Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3). Territorial claims by backbenchers from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are most frequent at those relating to culture and heritage, and agriculture and the environment. In each of these cases over one quarter of coded questions contain such claims. On one level this is unsurprising, since these policy fields contain a high concentration of issues with a strong territorial dimension (see chapter 4, Table 4.6). Nevertheless, it is notable that the rate of territorial claim-making in these question times has increased since the 1990s, even though many key competences in these fields now fall within the remits of the devolved legislatures. One factor behind the high rates of claim-making in the last two parliaments in the sample could be the salience of issues relating to the implementation of Brexit, which somewhat complicated the distinction between devolved and reserved powers. However, a ‘Brexit effect’ cannot explain the comparatively high levels of territorial claim-making that were already evident in these question time sessions in 2010–15. Another possibility is that this finding in part reflects the increased tendency of MPs to discuss aspects of devolved policy in their Commons contributions, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 6. The number of territorial claims identified at the question time sessions relating to home affairs and to business and industry remained relatively low throughout the period of the study. There was, though, a marked increase in the extent to which MPs displayed a territorial focus at business and industry questions from 2015–17. In this case the nature of the contributions containing a territorial claim suggests there was indeed a Brexit effect, with MPs from the devolved areas often raising the material impact that leaving the EU was expected to have in their home area.

Table 5.3: Sub-state territorial claim-making by oral question time session and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Oral questions session	1992–97	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Prime Minister	9/37 (24.3%)	5/25 (20%)	8/63 (12.7%)	11/47 (23.4%)	10/54 (18.5%)	19/66 (28.8%)	27/75 (36%)	89/367 (24.3%)
Agriculture and the environment	4/30 (13.3%)	3/32 (9.4%)	9/24 (37.5%)	6/31 (19.3%)	13/42 (31%)	26/57 (45.6%)	20/63 (31.8%)	81/291 (27.8%)
Business and industry	6/38 (15.8%)	3/23 (13%)	6/38 (15.8%)	5/40 (12.9%)	5/39 (12.8%)	24/80 (30%)	27/98 (27.6%)	76/356 (21.4%)
Culture and heritage	3/17 (17.7%)	3/11 (27.3%)	5/17 (29.4%)	6/24 (25%)	16/37 (43.2%)	16/49 (32.7%)	22/61 (36.1%)	71/216 (32.9%)
Home affairs	2/23 (8.7%)	2/11 (18.2%)	4/17 (23.5%)	2/25 (8%)	9/42 (21.4%)	12/81 (14.8%)	16/71 (22.5%)	47/270 (17.4%)
Total	24/145 (16.6%)	16/102 (15.7%)	32/159 (20.1%)	30/167 (18%)	53/214 (24.8%)	97/333 (29.1%)	112/368 (30.4%)	364/1488 (24.5%)

Figure 5.3: Proportion of coded oral questions to include a territorial claim by oral question time session and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



There was an especially substantial spike in the proportion of contributions at Prime Minister's Questions to include a territorial claim over the final two parliaments, from 19% in 2010–15, to 29% in 2015–17 and then 36% in 2017–19. Since PMQs is the highest profile regular parliamentary event, and the main opportunity to raise an issue with the head of government on the floor of the Commons, this can be interpreted as an indicator of increased political salience of issues relating to the UK's sub-state territories among MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The timing of this spike supports the expectation that the Scottish independence referendum, then Brexit, would drive an increase in territorial claims. Another plausible factor is the status of the SNP as the third largest party in the Commons from 2015, which meant that their Westminster leader had the opportunity to ask two questions at every PMQs (Arnott and Kelly 2018; Thompson 2018). Angus Robertson, who led the SNP Westminster group until 2017, and his successor Ian Blackford often used these to raise matters specific to Scotland. Somewhat surprisingly, there was no evidence of a similar spike in territorial claim-making at PMQs in 1997–2001, even though that parliament saw the introduction of devolution and the conclusion of the Good Friday Agreement. MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales devoted very few questions to those developments within the PMQs sessions from that parliament that were sampled.

Territorial claim-making by area

Members with constituencies in Northern Ireland made territorial representative claims in 54% of sampled contributions, considerably more often than their colleagues from Scotland and Wales, who did so 33% and 29% of the time respectively (see Table 5.4). This is not unexpected, since the majority of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland over this period were members of parties that do not compete elsewhere, elected on platforms grounded in the distinctive politics of that territory. In contrast, the large majority of MPs returned from Scottish and Welsh constituencies were members of the three major Britain-wide parties. Another likely driver of this finding is that the context of the peace process, and later controversies over outstanding matters relating to the legacy of the Troubles, meant that issues with a strong territorial dimension remained highly salient for MPs from Northern Ireland. In short, the exceptionally high rate of territorial claims by Northern Ireland MPs can be seen as a product of the wider series of factors that have led to that part of the UK being characterised as a ‘place apart’ from Great Britain (Brennan 2004). After peaking at 75% in 2001–05 and 2005–10, the rate at which MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland made territorial claims then decreased somewhat across the remaining parliaments up to 2017–19, when 44% of contributions by Northern Ireland MPs included a territorial claim. Particular caution should be exercised in interpreting the parliament-by-parliament breakdown for Northern Ireland, as the sample size for each term is relatively small due to the lower number of MPs returned compared to Scotland and Wales. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the relative decrease from 2010–15 onwards partly reflects the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2007, after being suspended in 2002, which reduced the number of Northern Ireland matters decided at Westminster compared with the preceding period (Birrell 2007). The devolution of policing and justice in 2010 further reduced the responsibilities of the UK institutions in that territory. Another possible factor is that whereas during the earlier parliaments it was common for MPs for Northern Ireland constituencies to hold dual mandates that meant they also sat in the Assembly, this practice was discouraged later on and prohibited from 2016 (Goldberg 2017). Where MPs are also members of the devolved institutions it would be logical to expect that this would lead to them focusing many Westminster contributions on matters relevant to their devolved remits.

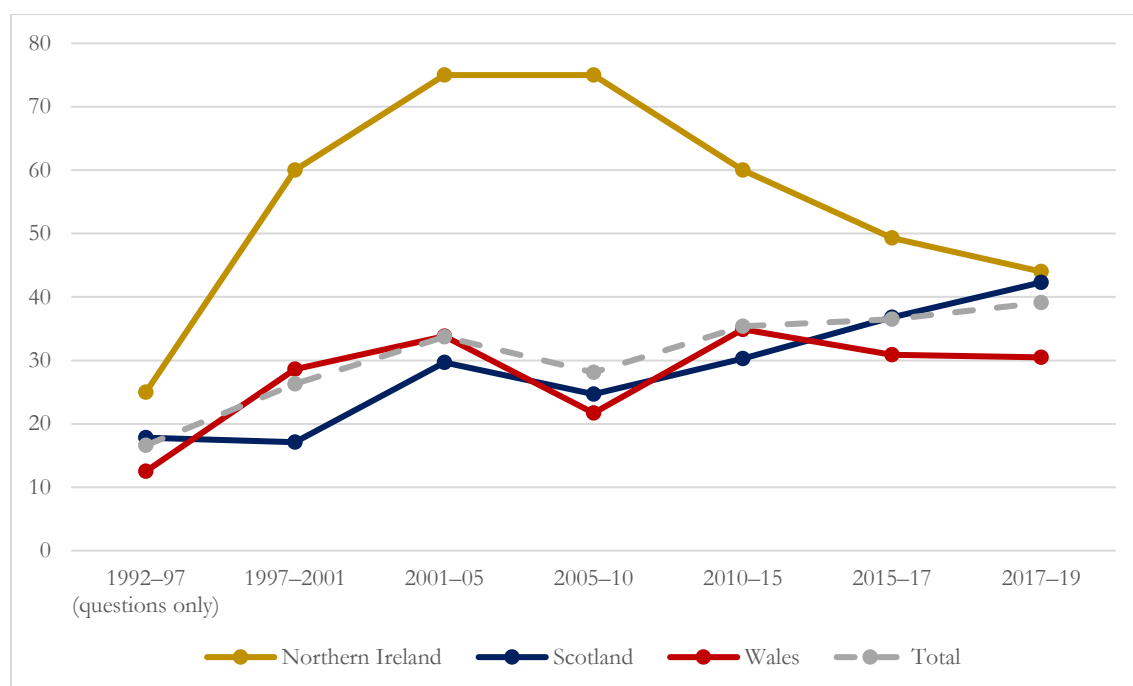
Table 5.4: Sub-state territorial claim-making by area and parliament, 1992-97 to 2017-19

Area	1992-97*	1997-2001	2001-05	2005-10	2010-15	2015-17	2017-19	Total
Northern Ireland	4/16 (25%)	12/20 (60%)	12/16 (75%)	18/24 (75%)	27/45 (60%)	34/69 (49.3%)	22/50 (44%)	129/240 (53.8%)
Scotland	13/73 (17.8%)	15/88 (17.1%)	49/165 (29.7%)	40/162 (24.7%)	59/195 (30.3%)	102/277 (36.8%)	156/369 (42.3%)	434/1329 (32.7%)
Wales	7/56 (12.5%)	18/63 (28.6%)	27/80 (33.8%)	20/92 (21.7%)	60/172 (34.9%)	54/175 (30.9%)	50/164 (30.5%)	236/802 (29.4%)
Total	24/145 (16.6%)	45/171 (26.3%)	88/261 (33.7%)	78/278 (28.1%)	146/412 (35.4%)	190/521 (36.5%)	228/583 (39.1%)	799/2371 (33.7%)

* Questions only

The overall increase in the proportion of contributions to include a territorial claim has been driven primarily by a growing rate of territorial claims among MPs with constituencies in Scotland (see Figure 5.4). Only 17% of sampled contributions by Scottish backbenchers included a territorial claim in 1997–2001, but this more than doubled to 42% by 2017–2019, indicating a step change in the extent to which Scottish MPs focused on the sub-state territorial level. This increase has accelerated since 2010, in line with expectations, suggesting that the growing disconnection between Scottish electoral politics and that elsewhere in Britain identified by scholars such as Awan-Scully (2018) has indeed had knock-on effects for the behaviour of MPs with Scottish constituencies. It is worth stressing that the large expansion in the size of the SNP parliamentary group from 2015 does not appear to have been the decisive factor. The upwards trend was already in motion in 2010–15, before the expansion in the number of SNP MPs, and continued at a similar rate in 2017–19 when the number of SNP MPs fell from 56 to 35. On this basis, it seems probable that wider shifts in the political environment in Scotland over the course of the period after the SNP took office at devolved level in 2007 have pushed MPs for Scottish constituencies from across the political spectrum towards a greater focus on territorial dimensions to policy. The increased salience of the independence question and growing policy divergence between the Scottish and UK governments are likely to be particularly important factors.

Figure 5.4: Proportion of coded contributions to contain a sub-state territorial claim by area and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



There is not such a consistent pattern in territorial claim-making by Welsh MPs. In 1997–2001 and 2001–05, and again in 2010–15, Welsh backbenchers made territorial claims in a greater proportion of their contributions than their Scottish counterparts. However, the increase in territorial claim-making among Scottish backbenchers from 2010 up to 2019 was not replicated among Welsh backbenchers, with the proportion of contributions that included a territorial claim by Welsh MPs actually 4% lower in 2015–17 and 2017–19 than it had been in 2010–15. This divergence over time in the behaviour of Scottish and Welsh MPs may well reflect that the intense constitutional debates that have come to dominate Scottish electoral politics have not been replicated to the same extent in Wales, and that Plaid Cymru have not achieved the same electoral success as the SNP. Another factor that might have impacted on patterns of territorial claim-making by Welsh MPs is reform of the devolution arrangements in Wales, which resulted in reduced overlap of responsibilities between Westminster and the devolved legislature from 2011 onwards, compared to the initial years after devolution was introduced (Wyn Jones and Scully 2012). The original set of arrangements meant that UK ministers retained greater responsibility for Welsh domestic policy than was true for Scotland, which may partially account for the relatively higher rate of territorial claims by Welsh MPs in 1997–2001 and 2001–05.

This discussion has highlighted three quite distinct patterns in the rate at which MPs with seats in each of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales made territorial claims over the period from 1992 to 2019. This underlines the need to be careful not to treat MPs from the devolved areas as if they were a single homogeneous group. Although all three areas have experienced devolution, different institutional and political contexts continue to prevail in each part of the UK, which have been reflected in varied patterns of parliamentary behaviour by their respective representatives at Westminster.

Territorial claim-making by political party

As expected, MPs from parties that stand candidates in only one part of the UK make territorial claims at a greater rate than those from parties that compete across Britain (see Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5). Almost 60% of coded contributions by MPs from the SDLP include a territorial claim. Over half of the contributions in the sample by DUP, Plaid Cymru and UUP MPs also include a territorial claim, while this is true of 40% of SNP contributions. It may seem surprising that the SNP figure is lower than these other parties. One possible explanation is that the larger size of their group after 2015 allowed them to diversify their focus to include contributing on more topics that did not have a particular sub-state dimension to them than was possible for other parties that compete in just one part of the UK. Arnott and Kelly (2018, 137–38) note how SNP MPs elected in 2015 campaigned on a number of issues that were not specific to Scotland, including opposing changes to pension arrangements for women born in the 1950s and the extension of UK military action in Syria. In a sense they were hence drawn into UK-wide politics to a greater extent than they had been previously.

Among the Britain-wide parties, Conservative backbenchers with constituencies in Scotland and Wales made territorial claims at the greatest rate – almost 40% of total coded contributions. However, caution should be exercised in comparing this particular figure to other parties, as these contributions are heavily concentrated in 1992–97 and the three parliaments from 2010, due to only a small handful of Scottish and Welsh Conservative MPs being elected between 1997 and 2010. The Labour and Liberal Democrat figures are 26% and 18% respectively, suggesting that territorial claim-making is a feature of parliamentary contributions by MPs from these parties with Scottish and Welsh constituencies, but not to the same extent as for members of the sub-state nationalist parties that held seats in those areas. Although members of these parties were the leading parliamentary advocates of devolution before the establishment of the new institutions,

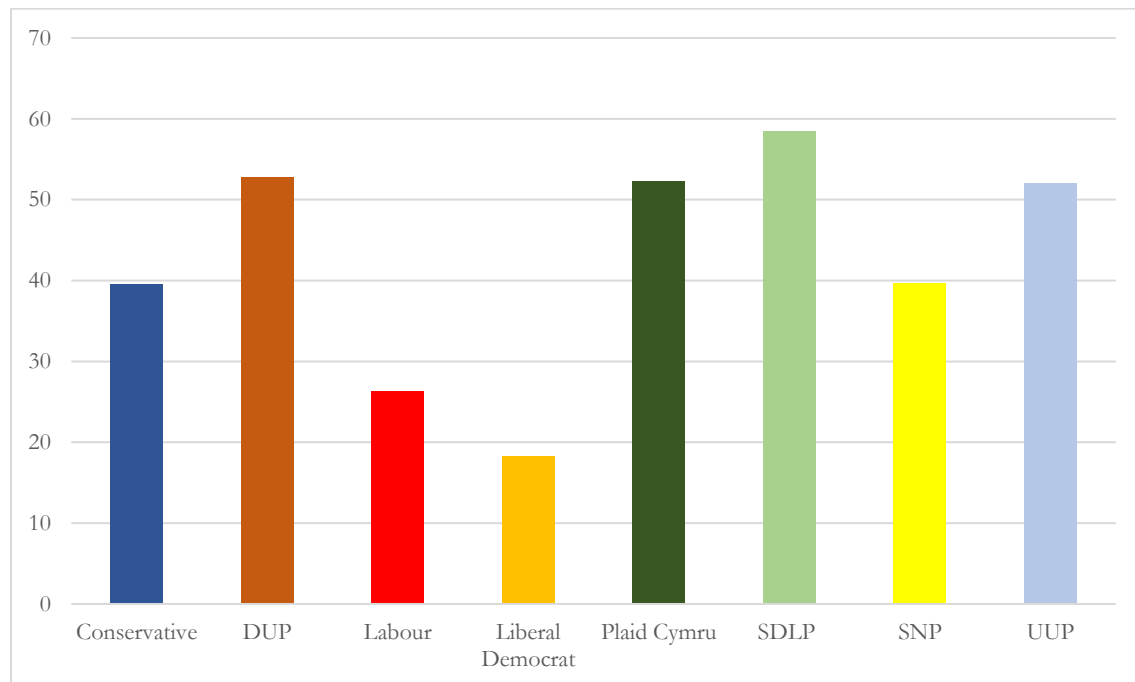
the results do not indicate that territorially-specific issues were an especially heavy focus for their backbenchers in the years following their introduction. This may be interpreted as evidence for what has sometimes been described pejoratively as a tendency to ‘devolve and forget’ on the part of devolution’s architects, transferring power away from Westminster, then subsequently disengaging from involvement in policy affecting Scotland and Wales (Andrews 2021, 516).

Table 5.5: Sub-state territorial claim-making by party and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Party	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Alliance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3/5 (60%)	n/a	n/a	3/5 (60%)
Conservative	5/24 (20.8%)	n/a	1/2 (50%)	4/15 (26.7%)	16/32 (50%)	11/38 (29%)	48/104 (46.2%)	85/215 (39.5%)
DUP	1/1 (100%)	n/a	3/3 (100%)	14/20 (70%)	18/27 (66.7%)	18/43 (41.9%)	22/50 (44%)	76/144 (52.8%)
Independent	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2/4 (50%)	n/a	2/4 (50%)
Labour	8/69 (11.6%)	25/109 (22.9%)	46/155 (29.7%)	34/140 (24.3%)	74/254 (29.1%)	30/118 (25.4%)	46/154 (29.9%)	263/999 (26.3%)
Liberal Democrat	1/18 (5.6%)	2/25 (8%)	6/53 (11.3%)	14/71 (19.7%)	6/35 (17.1%)	7/22 (31.8%)	11/35 (31.4%)	47/259 (18.2%)
Plaid Cymru	2/8 (25%)	5/11 (45.5%)	11/17 (64.7%)	3/14 (21.4%)	11/22 (50%)	10/15 (66.7%)	15/22 (68.2%)	57/109 (52.3%)
SDLP	0/2 (0%)	n/a	3/3 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	6/13 (46.2%)	11/19 (57.9%)	n/a	24/41 (58.5%)
SNP	4/10 (40%)	1/6 (16.6%)	12/18 (66.7%)	5/14 (35.7%)	12/24 (50%)	96/255 (37.7%)	86/218 (39.5%)	216/545 (39.6%)
UUP	3/13 (23.1%)	12/20 (60%)	6/10 (60%)	n/a	n/a	5/7 (71.4%)	n/a	26/50 (52%)
Total	24/145 (16.6%)	45/171 (26.3%)	88/261 (33.7%)	78/278 (28.1%)	146/412 (35.4%)	190/521 (36.5%)	228/583 (39.1%)	799/2371 (33.7%)

* Questions only

Figure 5.5: Proportion of coded contribution to include a sub-state territorial representative claim by party (%)



Although overall a greater number of territorial claims were made by MPs from parties that compete in just one part of the UK in all seven parliaments, over the period of the study there was some convergence between sub-state and GB-wide parties on this measure (see Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6). One driver of this is an increased rate of territorial claims among members of Britain-wide parties from 2010, peaking at 36% in 2017–19. This accords with the expectation that the salience of issues relating to territorial politics during the 2010s, and in the Scottish context the need for GB-wide parties to compete electorally with the SNP, would lead backbenchers from these parties to place a stronger emphasis on the territorial level than previously. Meanwhile, after 55% of contributions by MPs belonging to parties competing in only one part of the UK contained a territorial claim in 2010–15, this figure was somewhat lower in the post-2015 parliaments. This may well be related to the large expansion of the SNP group from 2015. From that point onwards the overall number of MPs from sub-state parties was much higher, and the composition of this group substantially different from previous parliaments.²⁷ One consequence of convergence in rates of territorial claim-making is increased potential for MPs from across different territories and types of party to coalesce around certain issues and present a common sub-state territorial perspective. This happened on several occasions during the parliamentary debates on the implementation of Brexit, discussed in chapter 7.

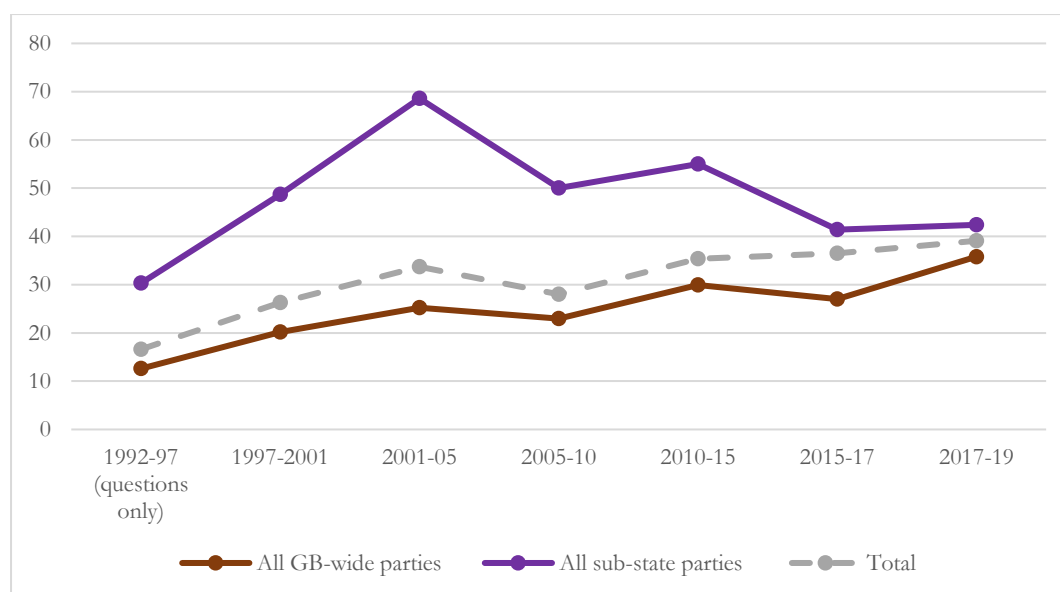
Table 5.6: Sub-state territorial claim-making by all GB-wide and all sub-state parties, and by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Group of MPs	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
All GB-wide parties	14/111 (12.6%)	27/134 (20.2%)	53/210 (25.2%)	52/226 (23%)	96/321 (29.9%)	48/178 (27%)	105/293 (35.8%)	395/1471 (26.9%)
All sub-state parties	10/33 (30.3%)	18/37 (48.7%)	35/51 (68.6%)	26/52 (50%)	50/91 (55%)	142/343 (41.4%)	123/290 (42.4%)	404/900 (44.9%)
Total	24/145 (16.6%)	45/171 (26.3%)	88/261 (33.7%)	78/278 (28.1%)	146/412 (35.4%)	190/521 (36.5%)	228/583 (39.1%)	799/2371 (33.7%)

* *Questions only*

²⁷ Up to 2015 the majority of MPs in this group had seats in Northern Ireland. After 2015 most were SNP MPs.

Figure 5.6: Proportion of coded contributions to contain a sub-state territorial claim by MPs from all Britain-wide parties and all sub-state parties, and by parliament (%)



To investigate the dynamics behind this shift further, the data on the rate of territorial claim-making by backbench MPs from the three main GB-wide parties can be broken down into groups of those with constituencies in Scotland and Wales (see Table 5.7 and Figure 5.7). This enables groups such as the Scottish Conservatives and Welsh Labour to be analysed separately. Up to 2015–17 the difference in the rate of territorial claims between Scottish and Welsh MPs on this measure is modest, especially for the Labour Party which accounted for the large majority of these MPs at that time. For instance, in 2010–15 both Scottish Labour and Welsh Labour MPs made territorial claims in 29% of coded contributions. However, at the end of the sampled period, in 2017–19, Scottish Conservative and Scottish Labour MPs made territorial claims at an unusually high rate – 53% and 45% of coded contributions respectively – whereas these parties’ Welsh MPs continued to do so less than 30% of the time. This lends further support to the suggestion that the nature of political competition in Scotland during the later parliaments in the sample contributed to a particularly increased focus on the sub-state territorial level among Scottish backbenchers from GB-wide parties, in line with the expectations set out at the beginning of this chapter. Gourtsoyannis (2020) has discussed how Scottish Conservatives at this time saw fighting the SNP and protecting the Union as their priorities, and sought to secure policy and spending commitments that specifically benefited Scotland from ministers. The exceptionally high rate of territorial claim-making among this group of MPs in 2017–19 provides quantitative support for them having adopted that focus. The similarly high figure for Scottish Labour MPs in 2017–19 suggests that the same imperatives were also in play among members that group. Notably, Scottish

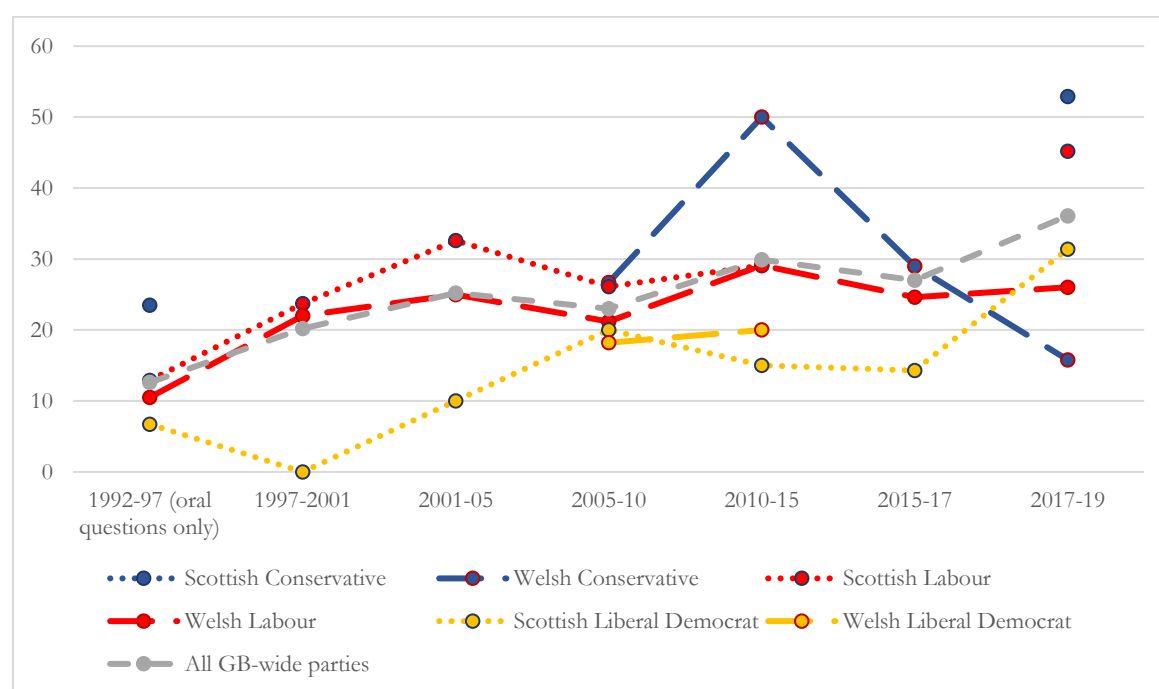
Labour MPs in 2017–19 were far more focused on territorial dimensions than in any of the five terms prior to their landslide electoral defeat in 2015. Although these particular findings relate to a single parliament where issues relating to territorial politics carried an unusual degree of political salience, they do suggest that the increased electoral distinctiveness of Scotland has also resulted in the representational focus of its MPs diverging further compared to members with constituencies elsewhere.

Table 5.7: Sub-state territorial claim-making by groups of Scottish and Welsh MPs within GB-wide parties, and by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Group of MPs	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Scottish Conservative	4/17 (23.5%)	n/a	1/2 (50%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	45/85 (52.9%)	50/104 (48.1%)
Welsh Conservative	1/7 (14.3%)	n/a	n/a	4/15 (26.7%)	16/32 (50%)	11/38 (29%)	3/19 (15.8%)	35/111 (31.5%)
Scottish Labour	4/31 (12.9%)	14/59 (23.7%)	31/95 (32.6%)	23/88 (26.1%)	44/151 (29.1%)	2/4 (50%)	14/31 (45.2%)	132/459 (28.8%)
Welsh Labour	4/38 (10.5%)	11/50 (22%)	15/60 (25%)	11/52 (21.2%)	30/103 (29.1%)	28/114 (24.6%)	32/123 (26%)	131/540 (24.3%)
Scottish Liberal Democrat	1/15 (6.7%)	0/23 (0%)	5/50 (10%)	12/60 (20%)	3/20 (15%)	2/14 (14.3%)	11/35 (31.4%)	34/217 (15.7%)
Welsh Liberal Democrat	0/3 (0%)	2/2 (100%)	1/3 (33.3%)	2/11 (18.2%)	3/15 (20%)	5/8 (62.5%)	n/a	13/42 (31%)
Total	14/111 (12.6%)	27/134 (20.2%)	53/210 (25.2%)	52/226 (23%)	96/321 (29.9%)	48/178 (27%)	105/291 (36.1%)	395/1471 (26.9%)

* Questions only

Figure 5.7: Proportion of coded contributions to include a sub-state territorial claim by groups of Scottish and Welsh MPs within GB-wide parties, and by parliament (%)



Territorial claim-making by category of claim

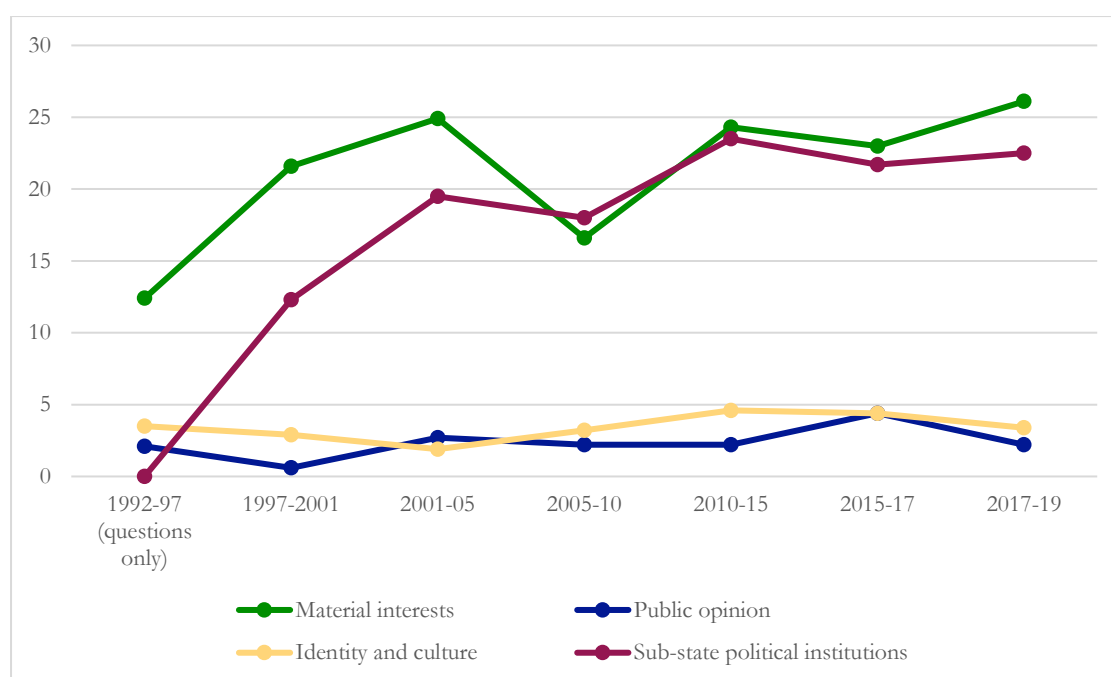
Table 5.8 and Figure 5.8 indicate the proportion of contributions in the sample that were coded within each of the four categories contained in the typology set out in chapter 3. Two of these are clearly most prevalent – representative claims relating to *material interests* were identified in 23% of the analysed contributions, and claims relating to *sub-state political institutions* in 20% of these. Claims relating to *public opinion* and *identity and culture* were less frequent, being identified in 3% and 4% of sampled contributions, although given the size of the sample this is still a significant number of individual claims. It is worth noting that public opinion claims were in fact much more common in legislative debates, particularly those related to devolution and Brexit, which are not included in the sample used in this chapter. It should also be reiterated that the coding scheme required the particular form of sub-state territorial representation to be explicitly invoked. In practice, MPs’ understandings of the identity and culture associated with their territory, and of the state of public opinion there, are often likely to inform the decision to focus on the sub-state territorial level, even where it is material interests and/or issues relating to sub-state institutions that are explicitly raised. It is nevertheless noteworthy that MPs frame so many of their territorial claims in terms of tangible beneficial outcomes. This implies that a large proportion of the representative claims that have been identified involve seeking distributive benefits for the MP’s territorial unit, in a role analogous to that of the ‘policy scavenger’ that it has been suggested MPs often act as when seeking to represent their electoral constituencies (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, 21).

Table 5.8: Sub-state territorial claim-making by form of territorial claim and parliament, 1992-97 to 2017-19

Category	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Material interests	18/145 (12.4%)	37/171 (21.6%)	65/261 (24.9%)	46/278 (16.6%)	100/412 (24.3%)	120/521 (23%)	152/583 (26.1%)	538/2371 (22.7%)
Public opinion	3/145 (2.1%)	1/171 (0.6%)	7/261 (2.7%)	6/278 (2.2%)	9/412 (2.2%)	23/521 (4.4%)	13/583 (2.2%)	62/2371 (2.6%)
Identity and culture	5/145 (3.5%)	5/171 (2.9%)	5/261 (1.9%)	9/278 (3.2%)	19/412 (4.6%)	23/521 (4.4%)	20/583 (3.4%)	86/2371 (3.6%)
Sub-state political institutions	0/145 (0%)	21/171 (12.3%)	51/261 (19.5%)	50/278 (18%)	97/412 (23.5%)	113/521 (21.7%)	131/583 (22.5%)	463/2371 (19.5%)

* Questions only

Figure 5.8: Proportion of coded contributions to include each form of territorial claim by parliament (%)



The most notable trend is the emergence of a significant number of representative claims relating to sub-state institutions. There were none of these within the sampled contributions in the 1992–97 parliament, the only parliament in the sample completed prior to devolution.²⁸ Claims in this category began to be identified from 1997–2001, and were included within 20% of coded contributions by backbenchers with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales by 2001–05. The proportion of contributions containing a claim to represent sub-state political institutions has consistently been greater than one in five of the overall sample since 2010, with this figure highest in the three most recently completed terms. In line with expectations, this type of behaviour has become more common since different parties have been in government at UK and devolved levels. The increase in claims relating to sub-state political institutions is an important finding, because it speaks to how the post-devolution role of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales has evolved. The ways in which MPs have adapted their territorially-focused behaviour to devolution are discussed more fully in chapter 6.

Another feature of this data worth noting briefly is that the number of claims in the public opinion category rose substantially in 2015–17, the parliamentary term that included the 2016 EU membership referendum. This reflects references to the result of the referendum at the sub-state

²⁸ Calls for the introduction of devolution made in 1992–97 would have been coded as containing a territorial claim in the sub-state political institutions category, but none were identified within the sample.

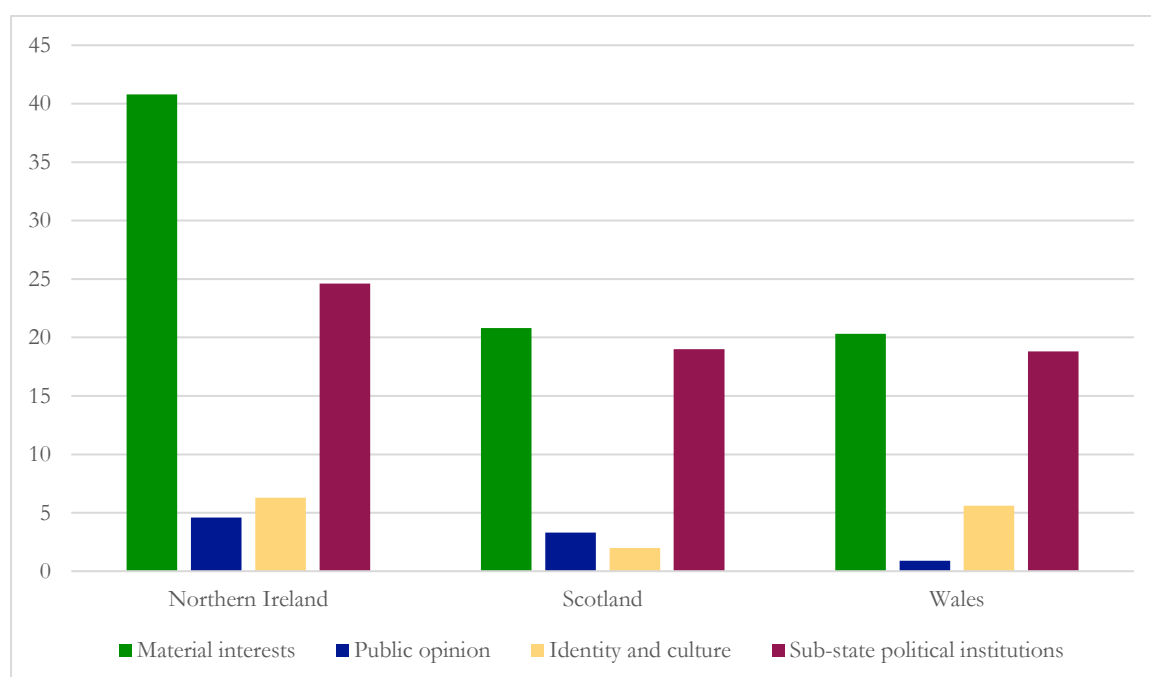
territorial level. Perhaps surprisingly, the proportion of claims to explicitly reference public opinion then returned to a lower level more typical of earlier parliaments in 2017–19, at least during oral questions and Westminster Hall debates. How MPs sought to give representation to their territorial units during debates on Brexit is discussed in more depth in chapter 7.

Variation was found in the extent to which the different forms of territorial claim are made by MPs from each of the areas this chapter focus on (see Table 5.9 and Figure 5.9). As many as 41% of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland include a claim to represent material interests, almost double the equivalent figure for Scotland and Wales. This may speak to the substantial extent to which many policies have distinct material implications in Northern Ireland compared to the other parts of the UK, for a mix of historical and – given the land border with Ireland – practical reasons. Claims to represent public opinion are overall significantly more common among MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland and Scotland than in Wales, with only seven claims to represent public opinion identified among the 795 contributions by Welsh MPs that were analysed. This likely speaks to the existence during the period covered by this study of a more clearly distinct sphere of public opinion in Northern Ireland and Scotland, as evidenced by election and referendum outcomes, compared to Wales, where political trends were often more similar to England. Meanwhile, claims to represent identity and culture feature in around 6% of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland and Wales, but only 2% by MPs with Scottish seats. The relatively high rate of claims in this category by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland is partly explained by the inclusion of claims relating to the legacy of the Troubles, and to issues such as parading associated with the major communities in Northern Ireland. These have remained a major focus for the parties there since the GFA (McGlynn, Tonge, and McAuley 2014). Among Welsh MPs, many of the claims coded within the identity and culture category relate to the Welsh language. It is somewhat surprising that the rate of claims relating to identity and culture is so low among Scottish MPs, given the high level of popular identification with ‘Scottishness’. One possible explanation is that the distinctiveness of Scotland’s identity and culture is considered by many of Scotland’s MPs to be self-evident, to the extent that frequent explicit articulation in the House of Commons is not deemed necessary. Another potential factor is that recognition of Scottish identity and culture is not as dependent on UK government intervention as Welsh identity has been, given the reserved nature of key responsibilities relating to the language.

Table 5.9: Sub-state territorial claim-making by form of territorial claim and territorial area

Territorial area	Form of sub-state territorial representation	Territorial claim in this category
Northern Ireland	Material interests	98/240 (40.8%)
	Public opinion	11/240 (4.6%)
	Identity and culture	15/240 (6.3%)
	Sub-state political institutions	59/240 (24.6%)
Scotland	Material interests	277/1329 (20.8%)
	Public opinion	44/1329 (3.3%)
	Identity and culture	26/1329 (2%)
	Sub-state political institutions	253/1329 (19%)
Wales	Material interests	163/802 (20.3%)
	Public opinion	7/802 (0.9%)
	Identity and culture	45/802 (5.6%)
	Sub-state political institutions	151/802 (18.8%)

Figure 5.9: Proportion of coded contributions to include each form of territorial claim by territorial area (%)



The findings relating to the forms of territorial claim are broken down by party in Table 5.10 and Figure 5.10. The patterns are broadly similar across most parties. However, there are distinctive features associated with territorial claim-making by SNP and Plaid Cymru MPs. The SNP is the only party for which more claims to represent sub-state political institutions were identified than claims to represent material interests. This reflects the fact that the large majority of SNP

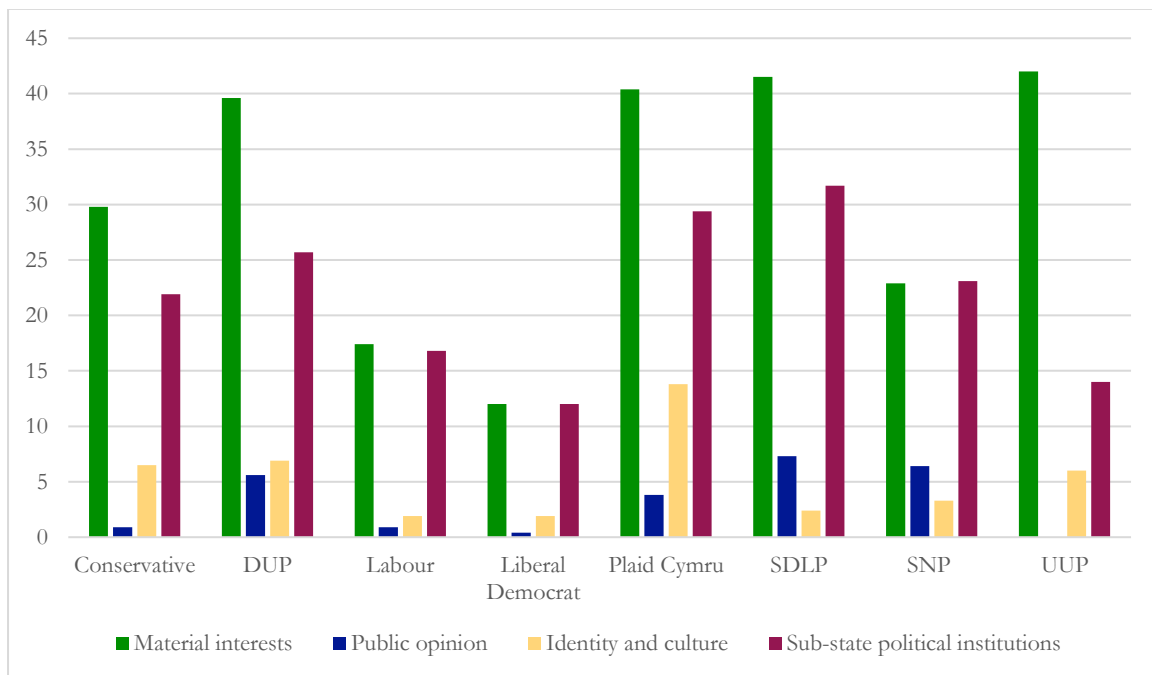
contributions were made while the SNP were in government at devolved level, from 2007. The ways in which SNP MPs seek to act as champions of the Scottish government are discussed in chapter 6. Among Plaid Cymru MPs, 14% of contributions include claims to represent identity and culture, much higher than for other parties. This is expected given that ‘cultural nationalism’ has traditionally been seen as a core component of that party’s ideology (McAllister 2001). In practice a large number of these claims relate to the Welsh language, which a Plaid Cymru interviewee described as ‘the central issue for the party’ (interview 12).

Table 5.10: Sub-state territorial claim-making by form of territorial claim and party

Party	Form of sub-state territorial representation	Territorial claim in this category
Alliance	Material interests	3/5 (60%)
	Public opinion	0/5 (0%)
	Identity and culture	1/5 (20%)
	Sub-state political institutions	2/5 (40%)
Conservative	Material interests	64/215 (29.8%)
	Public opinion	2/215 (0.9%)
	Identity and culture	14/215 (6.5%)
	Sub-state political institutions	47/215 (21.9%)
DUP	Material interests	57/144 (39.6%)
	Public opinion	8/144 (5.6%)
	Identity and culture	10/144 (6.9%)
	Sub-state political institutions	37/144 (25.7%)
Independent	Material interests	2/4 (50%)
	Public opinion	1/4 (25%)
	Identity and culture	0/4 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	0/4 (0%)
Labour	Material interests	174/999 (17.4%)
	Public opinion	9/999 (0.9%)
	Identity and culture	19/999 (1.9%)
	Sub-state political institutions	168/999 (16.8%)
Liberal Democrat	Material interests	31/259 (12%)
	Public opinion	1/259 (0.4%)
	Identity and culture	5/259 (1.9%)
	Sub-state political institutions	31/259 (12%)
Plaid Cymru	Material interests	44/109 (40.4%)
	Public opinion	3/109 (3.8%)
	Identity and culture	15/109 (13.8%)

	Sub-state political institutions	32/109 (29.4%)
SDLP	Material interests	17/41 (41.5%)
	Public opinion	3/41 (7.3%)
	Identity and culture	1/41 (2.4%)
	Sub-state political institutions	13/41 (31.7%)
SNP	Material interests	125/545 (22.9%)
	Public opinion	35/545 (6.4%)
	Identity and culture	18/545 (3.3%)
	Sub-state political institutions	126/545 (23.1%)
UUP	Material interests	21/50 (42%)
	Public opinion	0/50 (0%)
	Identity and culture	3/50 (6%)
	Sub-state political institutions	7/50 (14%)

Figure 5.10: Proportion of coded contributions to include each form of territorial claim by party (%)



Conclusions

The results presented in this chapter suggest that the development of more separate national spheres of electoral and party competition within the UK, documented by scholars such as Awan-Scully (2018), is reflected in parliamentary behaviour. Contemporary MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales often act as de facto territorial representatives, seeking to

use their mandates at the centre to advance the perceived material, cultural and institutional interests of their home territory. The proportion of spoken contributions at oral questions and in Westminster Hall debates that include a claim to represent these territories has increased since the 1990s, and especially since 2010. The emergence of a significant number of claims to represent sub-state political institutions since devolution is a particularly notable finding. Instead of retreating from a territorial focus following devolution, as some scholars had previously predicted might be the case (Keating 1978; Mishler and Mughan 1978), it appears that MPs from the affected parts of the UK have adapted their territorial roles to the changed context.

Below these overall trends, it has been shown that there is a good deal of variation in the extent of territorial claim-making among MPs from the different devolved territories and those belonging to different parties. Most of these findings were broadly in line with expectations. As predicted, high salience of issues with a strong territorial dimension and the prominence of sub-state nationalist parties within a particular area create the conditions for MPs from across the partisan spectrum to engage in territorial representative claim-making.

This chapter cannot itself speak to the consequences for public and constitutional policy of frequent claims to represent territorial areas by MPs. However, given the influence backbenchers are able to exercise within the UK ‘parliamentary state’ (Russell and Cowley 2016), it would be surprising if territorially-focused behaviour did not have some implications for policy, the distribution of resources and constitutional reform affecting the devolved areas. Existing scholarship suggests that this may well be especially so when territorial claims are made by groups of MPs from within the governing party (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018), as the results reported here indicate was frequently the case with the Scottish Conservative MPs elected in 2017. There are good reasons to expect that the interpretation of the needs and interests of territorial areas adopted by government supporters such as these would have a particularly significant impact on ministers, who must respond on a daily basis to questions and Westminster Hall debates of the type included in this analysis. This might be especially so in conditions where the government is reliant on the support of these MPs for its majority, as was true in 2017–19. Tracing such influence in particular cases would require detailed analysis of how ministers respond to claims, which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The chapter has made an important contribution to answering the principal research question set out in chapter 1 about the extent to which, ways in which and with what consequences the UK’s

component territorial units are given substantive representation in the House of Commons. The trends reported provide a strong indication of variation in the extent to which substantive representation of this sort of area is attempted across parliamentary terms, and among MPs from different areas and parties. Meanwhile, the breakdown of territorial claims into the four categories outlined in chapter 3 provides an overall sense of their content. It is intended that the results can help to facilitate future studies in this area by providing a methodological precedent for analysing trends in substantive sub-state territorial representation, and a quantitative benchmark against which the results of studies on the UK and potentially other cases might be compared.

Nevertheless, these results cannot on their own provide a complete picture of the dynamics of substantive representation of sub-state territorial units in the contemporary House of Commons. The crude measure of the extent to which sub-state territorial claims, in their various forms, are identified in parliamentary discourse inevitably obscures important aspects of the context, and some of the notable features of the claims themselves. Chapter 6 therefore incorporates qualitative findings to examine in more detail how MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have adapted how they go about their parliamentary roles following the introduction of devolution.

6. How have MPs adapted to devolution? The changing territorial roles of members with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

What are you going to do in the House, after devolution, apart from drawing your salary?
(Scottish MP, quoted in Judge and Finlayson 1975)

Those were the parting words directed by one retiring Scottish MP towards their colleagues when devolution was being proposed in the 1970s. In the decades since devolved legislatures were eventually introduced, little research has examined what MPs with seats in the affected areas do in sufficient depth to provide an answer to the question. Chapter 5 partially addressed this, showing that MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales continue to make those territorial units a major focus for their representational activities. However, the quantitative analysis of overall trends in territorial representation could not speak in much detail to the precise ways that MPs perform and interpret their territorially-focused roles, post-devolution. The finding that the Commons contributions of these MPs now frequently include representative claims relating to devolved institutions indicates that there has been a degree of *adaptation* to the changed constitutional environment, which Keating (1978, 429) had previously argued would be necessary if their territorially-focused roles were not to become ‘redundant’. This merits further examination, as it suggests that there have been important changes to the territorial roles of MPs with seats outside England, which have so far been largely overlooked in academic research on the roles and behaviour of members of the House of Commons. The aim of this chapter is therefore to analyse in much greater detail the various ways in which MPs with constituencies outside England have adjusted how they go about territorial representation since the 1990s. Specific issues that are addressed include how MPs with seats in the devolved parts of the UK interpret the scope of their remits in relation to their home territories, inter-institutional relationships between MPs and members of the devolved legislatures, and the implications of divergence in the political composition of the UK and devolved governments.

The chapter draws on qualitative evidence from the content analysis and interviews (for details see chapter 4). Various types of territorially-focused behaviour that can be said to comprise a new, post-devolution, sub-state territorial role for MPs – distinct from those performed by Scottish and Welsh MPs before 1999 – are identified. While chapter 5 focused mainly on the extent of territorial claim-making, this chapter addresses more fully the ‘in what ways’ and ‘with what consequences’

parts of the overall research question about how the UK's component territorial units are given substantive representation in the House of Commons. The findings are also intended to make a broader contribution to literatures on the roles and behaviour of MPs in the House of Commons, within which distinctions between English MPs and those with seats in the UK's smaller territories have rarely been prominent (Russell and Cowley 2018; Searing 1994; Shephard and Simson Caird 2018). In particular, the case is made for adopting a two-dimensional categorisation of MPs with seats in the devolved territories, incorporating their political orientations in relation to the devolved governments as well as the UK government. Finally, the chapter speaks to a broader comparative literature on how members of legislatures adapt their behaviour to changed institutional contexts. So far this has mostly focused on the impact of the development of supra-national institutions, primarily the European Union. For instance, Auel and Benz (2005, 389) found that 'different patterns of legislative-executive interaction' had emerged as a result of the 'strategic adaptation of national parliaments' to Europeanisation, with members seeking to find ways to influence the positions that their governments' take at EU level. Meanwhile, Hansen and Scholl (2002, 1) argued that the development of the EU had placed significant 'adaptational pressures' on national parliaments, resulting in changes such as the emergence of the European scrutiny system in the House of Commons. The analysis here suggests that the development of institutions at the sub-state level can impose similar pressures on MPs operating within central legislatures.

How do MPs interpret the scope of their post-devolution territorial roles?

An extended discussion of the pre-devolution territorial roles of MPs with constituencies outside England was included in chapter 2. To briefly recap, research found that Scottish and Welsh MPs formed distinctive groups that focused to a significant extent on their home territorial units. This was most clearly true for members with Scottish constituencies. As many of the policy areas that these MPs focused on were expected to be devolved, it was anticipated that devolution would have a major impact on their work (Keating 1978; Mishler and Mughan 1978). Following the introduction of devolution, King (2009, 201) described Scottish MPs as 'effectively eunuchs with regard to most matters that directly affect their own constituents'. However, the suggestion that MPs from the devolved parts of the UK would no longer have much of a role in relation to their home territories was qualified by Bogdanor (1999a, 190), who argued that 'any issue at Westminster involving the expenditure of public money must be of concern to all parts of the United Kingdom'. Meanwhile, in the 1970s context, Judge and Finlayson (1975, 290) suggested that the nature of

electoral competition might mean Scottish MPs would still face an incentive to ‘prove their Scottishness’. This section draws on the interview findings to consider how MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have interpreted the scope of their post-devolution remits in practice.

Several interviewees emphasised that many important matters affecting their home territories are still decided at Westminster. Offering perspectives from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales on such issues – and thereby acting as what Paun (2008) termed ‘territorial advocates’ – is thus a key aspect of the role of MPs from the devolved areas. A former SNP MP claimed that ‘the most powerful parliament that has any say over Scotland is the Westminster parliament’ and that there are hence a ‘wide range of areas where Scottish interests are at stake’ (interview 23). This interviewee argued that it is necessary to have a ‘strong voice to represent those particular needs at Westminster, otherwise they might be overlooked’. A Scottish Liberal Democrat similarly described their ‘Scottish’ role in relation to reserved matters as ‘big’, listing welfare, foreign affairs, defence and trade as issues where they offered a Scottish perspective (interview 13). Advancing Scottish interests in relation to matters within the remit of the central state was also a priority for Scottish Conservatives elected in 2017. One of their MPs suggested that the political success of their group ‘depends on demonstrating delivery for Scotland’, through achieving favourable material outcomes from the UK government (interview 5). The group focused particularly on Treasury matters, with an MP citing ‘policy wins’ for industries with a significant presence in Scotland such as whisky, and oil and gas, as evidence of their influence (interview 8). This discussion suggests that it is misleading to equate engagement with matters that have not been devolved with a ‘UK-wide role’, as implied by the notion that the distinct territorial role could become ‘redundant’ (Keating 1978, 429). In practice reserved matters often have strong territorial dimensions to them, which MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are highly motivated to raise. The focus of MPs on such issues does nevertheless present something of a puzzle, given that research in previous decades had found Scottish and Welsh members to be concerned primarily with matters that are now devolved (Judge and Finlayson 1975). The most likely explanation is that focusing to a greater extent on the territorial dimensions of matters that remain within Westminster’s remit is one outcome of a process of adaptation to the changed context. Indeed, an interviewee who was an MP when devolution was introduced claimed that they had needed to ‘readjust their thinking’ to a greater focus on reserved matters (interview 19).

While devolution removed some business specific to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales from the parliamentary agenda, particularly relating to public services, it is worth emphasising that it also led to the emergence of other forms of territorially-focused business. As discussed in chapter 2, the landmark devolution legislation passed during the 1997–2001 parliament did not turn out to provide for a fixed devolution ‘settlement’, but rather the first steps in an extended, incremental process of constitution-building. Consequently, legislation relating to the institutional arrangements for devolution has been a common feature on the parliamentary agenda since 1997, as the list of bills included in the content analysis for this project demonstrates (see chapter 4, Table 4.7). Although MPs from any part of the UK may participate on these bills, it is usual for backbench contributors to comprise overwhelmingly of those with constituencies in the relevant territory. The nature of these debates requires MPs to adopt a focus on the level of their home territorial unit, and has hence contributed to ensuring that distinctive territorial perspectives have remained relevant in the Commons. This aspect of the post-devolution work of MPs with seats outside England may not have been anticipated by some of those writing in advance of devolution, who presumed a more stable set of constitutional arrangements. In respect to Scotland and Wales, bills relating to the constitutional arrangements for devolution have often been prompted by external developments, notably the recommendations of bodies such as the Silk and Smith commissions. Nevertheless, the consent of the House of Commons has been essential in enabling this process of constitutional evolution. These legislative debates are used by some backbenchers, especially members of the sub-state nationalist parties and the Liberal Democrats, to push for further devolution of powers in particular areas, beyond that proposed by the UK government. As an SNP MP put it, their party’s approach to such debates is ‘the more powers to the Scottish Parliament the better’ (interview 23). Particularly in debates on Welsh devolution, scepticism about the development of devolution has also been expressed by some Conservative and Labour MPs. In the case of Northern Ireland, the ongoing peace process and unstable nature of the devolution arrangements has meant that legislation relating to the territory has continued to pass through Westminster regularly. An SDLP interviewee recalled that ‘there was always emergency legislation dealing with Northern Ireland’ (interview 16). Although this has often followed cross-party agreements and so been presented to MPs as something of a *fait accompli*, members from Northern Ireland that take their seats do use legislative debates to express their positions on proposed changes. Engaging in legislative debates relating to arrangements in their territories has therefore at times been an important part of the post-devolution parliamentary work of MPs with seats in each of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

As hinted at by Bogdanor (1999a), the operation of the Barnett formula, under which the size of the annual block grants received by the devolved governments are determined by changes in English public spending, means that MPs from the devolved areas can sometimes consider even business that appears to apply only to England to have implications for their home territories. Those belonging to sub-state nationalist parties have taken a particular interest in so-called ‘Barnett consequentials’, while the operation of Barnett more generally is an issue that Welsh Labour MPs have often focused on. An SNP interviewee gave the hypothetical example of a decision to build a road in Gloucestershire, which could have financial implications for Scotland because of Barnett (interview 23). Meanwhile, a Plaid Cymru MP emphasised that ‘what Wales gets is determined by the Barnett formula’, and making the case for more favourable funding arrangements from Westminster was hence an important ambition for their group (interview 12). Examples of interventions relating to the potential ‘Barnett consequentials’ of English spending decisions were identified in the content analysis.²⁹ For instance, after the UK government had announced new funding for flood protection in England, Welsh Labour MP Nia Griffith asked a minister to ‘clarify whether it will involve Barnett consequentials for Wales’ (13 February 2014, HC Deb vol. 575, col. 1001). Outside of the formal content analysis, ‘Barnett consequentials’ surfaced in debate about the ‘English votes for English laws’ (EVEL) procedures introduced in 2015. Opponents of EVEL with constituencies outside England cited the financial implications for their territories that might follow from English policies as a key objection (Gover and Kenny 2016). In one debate an SNP member highlighted the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport in London, which it was claimed would ‘affect the funding for Scotland’ (22 October 2015, HC Deb vol. 600, col. 1205). While Barnett pre-dates devolution, its application to the funding of the devolved institutions has made monitoring its operation a more salient concern for MPs with seats outside England. This sort of intervention can therefore be seen as another way in which MPs have adapted how they give representation to their sub-state territories to the changed environment, instead of retreating from distinct territorial roles.

The interviews identified differing perspectives on how appropriate it was for MPs to make contributions relating to devolved policy. Although the Commons passed a motion circumscribing the ability to raise such matters in 1999 (see chapter 2, footnote 7), this did not serve as a complete procedural barrier. The initial presumption for at least some MPs nevertheless seems to have been

²⁹ The number of interventions drawing attention to ‘Barnett consequentials’ identified in the content analysis was relatively small. However, the sample did not include questions relating to ‘English-only’ policy areas such as health and education, or Treasury questions where public spending is frequently discussed, so may under-represent the overall extent to which ‘Barnett consequentials’ were raised.

that it was no longer appropriate to engage with devolved matters. A Scottish politician who was an MP before and after devolution reflected that ‘our role in Westminster was diminished with devolution because MSPs then took on the role of representing their electorate on major issues like education and housing and local government and so on’ (interview 19). Some MPs with constituencies in the devolved territories are indeed now careful to avoid raising these matters. A former Labour MP stressed that you ‘quickly become aware of your limitations as a Scottish MP’ (interview 20). This interviewee spoke about how there would ‘always be debates on housing or health or education’, which they were ‘very interested in’ and which were prominent at constituency level, but suggested that as a Scottish MP ‘it’s not your role to go into a housing debate and talk about it’. Contrary to this view, many MPs from the devolved territories have actually continued to engage with devolved policy in Commons contributions. One reason is the nature of the devolution arrangements, which mean policies determined at Westminster often have knock-on implications for devolved matters. An SNP interviewee offered the example of higher education, a significant interest for this MP as a university was the largest employer in their constituency. Although higher education is devolved in Scotland, areas of policy that impact significantly on the university such as immigration, research funding and the UK-EU relationship are reserved. This MP therefore stressed that their constituents who worked and studied at the university were ‘affected by what happened at Westminster, and you have an obligation to represent them as best you can’ (interview 23). Thus, although this interviewee was ‘very conscious’ of the distinction between devolved and reserved issues, they had found that there were few policy areas that were off limits in terms of contributing to Commons debates. Some interviewees expressed a belief that devolution had not in fact fundamentally altered their remits. A Welsh Labour MP explained that they saw themselves as ‘a member of parliament with the full responsibilities and privileges that go with that’, and that in their view MPs had ‘a right to have an opinion on, and think about, and even to vote on, anything to do with anything anywhere in the world’ (interview 18). Consequently, this MP did not feel ‘restricted’ in what issues they could raise, although they would ‘self-censor to a certain extent’. Similarly, a former SDLP MP argued that ‘you’re an MP and you’re representing people on every issue’ (interview 16). This interviewee would raise devolved issues, while being careful to ‘couch it in such terms that you can get an answer and you’re not being told, that’s a devolved matter’. Therefore, while devolution restricts Westminster’s substantive functions in relation to policy areas that have been devolved, it has not entirely removed these from the Commons agenda as some pre-devolution predictions about the impact on the UK parliament appeared to presume would be the case.

One indication that MPs with constituencies in the devolved parts of the UK continue to see themselves as having a distinct territorial remit is that MPs with Scottish and Welsh constituencies within the two main Britain-wide parties form distinct caucuses that hold separate group meetings. This is by no means a new development since devolution. An interviewee who had first entered parliament in the 1970s recalled longstanding, and influential, Scottish and Welsh groups in the Labour Party (interview 19). In the 1990s the Conservatives also had separate Scottish and Welsh committees, with the latter reportedly having ‘influenced much of the party’s policy on the principality’ (Norton 1994, 116). Scottish Unionists had also organised separately prior to their full merger into the Conservative Party, and developed autonomous positions focused on matters specific to Scotland to the extent that Torrance (2017, 201) described them as a “‘national” party within a party’. That such arrangements have persisted is nevertheless noteworthy as an indicator of the continuing existence of distinct territorial spheres at Westminster. A former Scottish Labour MP who was in the Commons from 2017–19 recalled that during that parliament their group would meet at least every fortnight. At these meetings there would be a ‘big whiteboard where we would write everything we were doing’, which would serve as a ‘planning grid’ (interview 20). Scottish Conservatives elected in 2017 met weekly, with their separate organisation from the UK-wide party extending to appointing a group convenor and sharing research staff (Gourtsoyannis 2020). The extent to which these MPs identified with the Scottish Conservative label was expressed by one interviewee, who emphasised that they ‘stand as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party, of which Ruth Davidson [MSP] rather than [then Prime Minister] Theresa May is the constitutional leader’ (interview 5). Conservatives with constituencies in Wales also meet as a group, although the sense of distinctiveness from the UK Conservatives is weaker than for Scottish Conservatives, reflecting historical differences and the respective political contexts (interview 9). In contrast to the previous quotation, a Welsh Conservative stated that the ‘Prime Minister is the party leader, and many Welsh MPs look to the UK level’ (interview 10).

In their constituencies MPs had to adjust to the arrival of members of the devolved legislatures for equivalent districts. During the initial years of devolution Russell and Bradbury (2007) found that MPs and members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and National Assembly for Wales (AMs) for the same constituency generally co-operated well. This was aided by the fact that Scottish and Welsh constituency members at both levels were at the time overwhelmingly Labour, so often had existing political and personal relationships. A Labour MP during this period explained that they ‘often’ received casework that related to devolved matters that had to be ‘passed on’, but this was ‘relatively easy to do’ since the MSP was also Labour (interview 19). Practical co-operation that

quickly developed between MPs and MSPs/AMs of the same party included sharing constituency offices and staff. A Welsh Labour MP confirmed that they had always run a ‘completely integrated’ joint office which meant a ‘seamless’ service could be offered, with enquiries addressed to the ‘incorrect’ representative transferred within the office (interview 18). These relationships become more complex where Westminster and devolved representatives for equivalent constituencies belong to different parties. In such instances the MP and MSP/AM are usually in practice competitors, with each party aiming to gain the seat that they do not hold in future (Russell and Bradbury 2007). As the political landscape has evolved and as Westminster and Holyrood boundaries have diverged in Scotland, the number of instances where MPs’ constituencies overlap with one held by a different party at devolved level has increased. Interviewees suggested that in these circumstances the extent of co-operation depends on the individuals involved. A Scottish Liberal Democrat whose constituency is held by the SNP at Holyrood said that they had built a ‘perfectly cordial relationship’ with their constituency colleague, to the point where they could ‘pick up the telephone and tell her “Mrs Mackenzie is off about this”’ (interview 13). However, a Scottish Labour MP whose constituency had overlapped with those of two SNP MSPs regretted that although they had ‘tried quite hard to get a working relationship’, it had not happened since they ‘dealt with casework in very different ways’ (interview 20). Ultimately this MP decided to ‘take on any casework, no matter what it was’. That this MP felt able to take this decision is indicative of ongoing uncertainty about the norms in this area. There is no fixed set of rules about how the distinction between devolved and reserved matters should be managed at constituency level, with individual MPs interpreting their post-devolution remits in different ways.

The discussion in this sub-section suggests that there is no clearly defined remit for MPs with seats in the devolved territories. As one interviewee reflected, ‘there’s no job description and you can kind of make the job whatever you want to make it’ (interview 20). While this observation could be applied to the roles of MPs in general, it seems especially pertinent to those returned from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, who must negotiate dilemmas about how far to range across devolved and reserved spheres with few agreed rules or norms to guide them. It has been shown that there have been a range of different responses in practice. A key finding, consistent with the results of the content analysis reported in chapter 5, is that many MPs with constituencies in the devolved areas continue to see raising the specific implications of issues discussed at Westminster for their territorial units as an important part of their parliamentary work. Some initial evidence has been found for them having adapted their precise focus to the changed institutional context, for instance through focusing on territorial dimensions to reserved matters and on the

‘Barnett consequentials’ of English public spending. On this basis the depiction of MPs from the devolved parts of the UK as ‘eunuchs’ in relation to matters within their own territory seems like an over-statement (King 2009, 201). While it is true that backbench MPs no longer have a direct say in some key areas of public policy within their territory that were previously run from Westminster, it has been shown that they do continue to have a role to play in relation to many matters that impact on their territorial units. The evidence presented so far suggests that it is more accurate to speak of a changed territorial role, post-devolution, rather than a diminishing one.

MPs and inter-institutional relationships: a ‘linkage’ role?

It was noted in chapter 2 that one plausible post-devolution role for MPs with seats outside England was a ‘linkage’ function, as a bridge between the central state and devolved institutions (Paun 2008, 201). Paun suggested that this might include deepening relationships with the devolved governments and parliaments, and scrutinising intergovernmental relations. His study found little evidence of this up to 2007, although – by his own admission – it was limited by not considering aspects of inter-institutional engagement that were not publicly documented, or analysis of the content of individual Commons contributions. Chapter 5 hinted at how the ‘linkage’ role of MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales may in fact have developed, given the significant number of contributions containing representative claims relating to sub-state political institutions. The extent to which inter-institutional relationships have developed was explored further in interviews, enabling activities that are not publicly observable to be incorporated into this study.

Paun (2008) found formal institutional arrangements aimed at promoting inter-institutional relations to be limited in scope. No arrangements for systematic scrutiny of intergovernmental relations had been established, and there was no scrutiny committee dedicated to this. Joint meetings between committees from the different parliaments had been limited to the Welsh Affairs Committee and National Assembly for Wales committees, where the initial model of Welsh devolution meant there was greatest demand. There have not been many further developments in this respect since. There is still no formal process for scrutinising intergovernmental relations in the Commons, and organised interparliamentary relations remains confined to occasional and ad hoc meetings (A. Evans 2019; Sheldon and Phylip 2021). In institutional terms, there is hence still little evidence of a ‘linkage’ role for the House of Commons in relation to the devolved bodies.

In the absence of formal ‘linkage’ arrangements, the interviews found that connections between members of the different legislatures are most developed within political parties. These relationships are facilitated partly through joint group meetings, held regularly by most parties with seats at both UK and devolved levels. In interview people who had been MPs for the SDLP, the Scottish Conservatives, Scottish Labour, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Welsh Labour, the Welsh Conservatives and Plaid Cymru confirmed that these happen. The format for and frequency of these meetings varies. Where the number of elected representatives across devolved and UK levels is relatively small, frequent meetings and wider contact between members is more practicable. A former SDLP MP reported participating in joint meetings ‘every Monday morning’, known as the ‘parliamentary-assembly group’ (interview 16). These were described as ‘useful for the inter-exchange of ideas and policy and politics’, with MPs able to alert Assembly members to what was happening at Westminster and vice versa. Scottish Liberal Democrats also hold a conference call ‘at 9am every Monday’, which it was claimed ‘works really well’ in the context of a group of four MPs and five MSPs (interview 13). A Scottish Liberal Democrat MP also reported regular one-to-one contact with their Holyrood leader, who would call and ‘ask how it’s going and so on’. At the time of the interviews Plaid Cymru MPs and *Senedd* members met every two weeks, jokingly referred to as the ‘Plaid COBR’ in reference to the UK government emergency committee that had a prominent role in management of the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic (interview 12). These were chaired by the party leader, Adam Price MS, and used to ‘co-ordinate very closely’. Notably, both Scottish Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru MPs indicated that intra-party relationships had improved markedly over time. The Liberal Democrat interviewee claimed that the relationship between MPs and MSPs was ‘not good in the early years’, since ‘for the previous generation of Scottish Lib Dem MPs devolution was not part of the politics they’d been introduced to’ (interview 13). In contrast, more recent intakes had entered politics after devolution and were accustomed to working closely with MSPs. There appears to have been a similar dynamic in Plaid Cymru. While there had previously been ‘tension’, this had eased over time (interview 12). The MP who was interviewed indicated that movement of party members between positions in London and Cardiff was a factor. Price previously served in the Commons, so knew the MPs and understood how the UK parliament operated, while several of Plaid’s Westminster staff had worked in the Assembly. This trend towards more extensive and functional intra-party co-ordination suggests that adaptation to the post-devolution environment has been an ongoing process, rather than something that happened immediately when the devolved legislatures were established.

Intra-party co-ordination across the UK and devolved levels is also practiced by Scottish and Welsh groups of MPs within the larger Britain-wide parties, although the effectiveness of such initiatives is mixed. Within Welsh Labour there is a history of difficult relations between some MPs and AMs. A senior Welsh government official recalled that this relationship was ‘difficult’ during the early years of devolution, since many Welsh Labour MPs had been sceptical about devolution (interview 14). Although there has been improvement over time, in common with the Scottish Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru, prior to the coronavirus pandemic intra-party meetings of Welsh Labour politicians were still limited to occasional gatherings held in Llandrindod Wells. These were described by one MP as a ‘valiant effort’ at co-ordination but ‘not all that well attended’ (interview 18). This interviewee expressed optimism that more frequent co-ordination would be made possible by increased use of video-conferencing, which had made it ‘a bit easier’ during the pandemic. In practice, however, much of the most substantive day-to-day co-ordination takes place between individuals associated with the Welsh government and MPs, which will be discussed below, rather than ordinary *Senedd* members and MPs. In 2017–19 Scottish Labour MPs and MSPs also held ‘away days’, and attempted to co-ordinate, but an interviewee suggested that they never ‘got to the end of that journey’ (interview 20). One barrier was time. As a group formed primarily of new MPs they had to effectively start from scratch, in a context where parliamentary politics was dominated by Brexit and there ‘wasn’t a lot of time to think, ok, let’s make some space to work with our MSP colleagues and see what issues we could work on’.

Like Scottish and Welsh Labour, Scottish Conservative MPs and MSPs held ‘away days’ in 2017–19 (interview 5). An interviewee reported that Conservative ‘MSPs often want to come to Westminster to meet MPs, and the MPs also meet MSPs at Holyrood’ (interview 6). A factor helping to facilitate this relationship was that three of the 12 newly-elected Scottish Conservatives in 2017 had been MSPs immediately prior to their election to the Commons, so there were already well-established personal and political relationships. The interviews suggested that the relationship between Welsh Conservative MPs and AMs was sometimes more challenging, with limited co-ordination between the two groups. Somebody who had served as both indicated that one reason was tensions over attitudes to devolution itself. While the Assembly group has tended to be ‘focused on making devolution work’, there has been greater scepticism about devolution among MPs (interview 9). Another interviewee emphasised that whereas Scottish Conservatives elected in 2017 felt they owed their seats to their leader, Ruth Davidson MSP, so were willing to take a strong lead from her, ‘no Welsh Conservative would say they owe their seat to the leader of the Conservatives in the Welsh Assembly’ (interview 7). Any attempt to get Welsh Conservative MPs

to take a lead from their AMs was hence unlikely to succeed. The main institutional link between Westminster and Cardiff Bay within the Welsh Conservatives is between the Secretary of State for Wales and the group leader in the Assembly, who held ‘weekly conferences’ at the time of the interviews (interview 9).

Where MPs belong to parties in government at devolved level in their territories, the key ‘linkage’ relationship is often with the devolved executive rather than backbenchers. An SNP interviewee explained that their group ‘had a good relationship with special advisers and ministers’ in the Scottish government, put down to the fact that they ‘all knew each other’, often having worked and campaigned together for ‘years and years’ (interview 23). Visiting Scottish government ministers, including the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, would come to Westminster and ‘drop in on our group meeting to say hi’. There would also be regular communication between Holyrood ministers and the SNP’s Westminster spokespersons for equivalent portfolios, intended to ensure a co-ordinated approach to specific policy issues. The former MP who was interviewed stressed how being in government at devolved level as a sub-state nationalist party means ‘party hierarchies work very differently’ from most Westminster parties, with SNP MPs taking ‘their marching orders, when push comes to thrust, from Holyrood’. This interviewee was, strikingly, willing to go as far as to state that their ‘boss was Nicola Sturgeon’, highlighting the extent to which contemporary SNP MPs see offering support to the Scottish government as central to the purpose of their parliamentary group. As will be explored later in this chapter, this dynamic has important implications for the content of their Commons contributions.

The relationship between Welsh Labour MPs and the Welsh government has not always been smooth, reflecting the wider divisions within Welsh Labour that have already been noted, and the challenge its MPs face in balancing their loyalty to the respective UK-wide and devolved party leaderships. One MP recalled times when there was a ‘degree of hostility’, put down to some ministers in the Welsh government not being good at communicating with MPs, while others had been ‘more politically savvy and engaged in making sure that it’s a good relationship’ (interview 18). This MP claimed that this relationship had become more effective since Mark Drakeford became First Minister in 2018, as he ‘particularly mandated his ministers to be available and to talk to Welsh [Labour] MPs very regularly’. A former Welsh government official who worked closely with successive first ministers corroborated this account, suggesting that while there were still sometimes tensions, ‘over time the relationship has got better’ (interview 14). Nevertheless, the dynamics remain markedly different from those in the SNP. While there would be ‘conversations’

and ‘discussions’ about particular policies, the MP who interviewed stressed that the ‘Welsh government could never give a directive to Welsh MPs’ (interview 18). This underlines that different party cultures and priorities have a major bearing on the dynamics of these inter-institutional relationships.

A particular task that Paun (2008) associated with a possible ‘linkage’ role was scrutiny of the relationships between the UK government and its devolved counterparts. As already suggested, devolution has not prompted much procedural adaptation at Westminster, as happened following EU accession (Auel and Benz 2005; Hansen and Scholl 2002). However, the content analysis for this project did identify that MPs with constituencies in devolved areas often use existing procedures to ask ministers about communication with their devolved counterparts. A typical example was a question by Labour’s Chris Elmore, asking what discussions the minister had had ‘with the Welsh Government to ensure that the long-term industrial strategy supports industries such as Ford in Bridgend’ (17 July 2018, HC Deb vol. 645, col. 213). In another instance DUP MP Jim Shannon claimed that the ‘predicament of the bees’ was just as critical in Northern Ireland as in England, while intervening during a question about the health of the UK’s bee population, and asked about ‘any discussions with the Northern Ireland Assembly, and specifically the Minister responsible for this area, Michelle O’Neill, to ensure that the United Kingdom strategy is put in place across the whole of the United Kingdom’ (16 May 2013, HC Deb vol. 563, col. 783). Such questions can have a procedural purpose, as a way of legitimately raising a matter that falls within devolved competence, since ‘liaison between the UK Government and the devolved Executive’ is in order under the motion passed in 1999. The interview findings did, though, suggest that in some cases there is a genuine interest in probing the extent to which UK government ministers have engaged with the implications of policies for the devolved territories. A former SDLP MP who regularly asked about intergovernmental meetings explained that the aim was to ‘be sure there was that level of co-ordination, and political understanding of the issues’ as they related to Northern Ireland (interview 16). For some MPs, raising issues related to intergovernmental relations is also motivated by a desire to make a normative argument for greater co-operation. This was a common theme of Scottish Conservative contributions in 2017–19. For instance, Stephen Kerr argued for closer co-operation between the UK government and Scottish government because it was his ‘fundamental belief that by working together we can achieve so much more for Scotland’ (Westminster Hall, 17 October 2017, vol. 629, col. 279WH). MPs with constituencies in the devolved parts of the UK do, then, engage in some activity that could be described as scrutiny of intergovernmental relations. This tends to involve short and intermittent interventions rather than

sustained and substantive scrutiny activity, as might be expected to occur if a specific committee or procedure focused on intergovernmental relations had been established. It is nevertheless noteworthy as a further way that MPs have adapted their behaviour at Westminster, post-devolution, while remaining engaged with matters specific to their sub-state territorial units.

This discussion has suggested that ‘linkages’ between MPs and the devolved institutions have developed to a significant extent since devolution. These are most evident at the intra-party level rather than in formal procedures. The extent and effectiveness of co-operation, and the enthusiasm with which MPs participate, is unsurprisingly influenced by differing party cultures and political contexts. In general, co-operation is most extensive within parties that compete in only one part of the UK, although it is notable that it does also take place within the main Britain-wide parties. In several cases interviewees reported intra-party relationships having become more effective over the period since devolution was introduced, which supports the argument developed in this chapter that there has been an ongoing process of adaptation to the changed institutional environment.

MPs and polarised territorial politics: ‘champions’ and ‘critics’ of devolved institutions

The relationships between MPs at Westminster and party groups in the devolved territories can sometimes have significant implications for how MPs from the devolved areas contribute to debates in the House of Commons. It is argued here that the behaviour of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is best understood with reference to political orientations in relation to the respective devolved governments. A binary categorisation of these MPs as government or opposition, as is typically used as a shorthand in scholarship on the House of Commons, is insufficient to capture the dynamics driving the behaviour of these MPs, especially in relation to issues that have specific implications for their home territories. Table 6.1 illustrates how MPs with seats in the devolved areas can be placed in one of four positions in relation to the governments both at Westminster and in their territories. Evidence from the content analysis and interviews suggests that orientations in relation to political competition at the devolved level are of increasing importance. This trend has been especially apparent in the context of increasingly polarised territorial politics since 2010, from when each of the four executives in the UK has had a different political composition. It manifests itself through some MPs acting as *champions* of devolved governments and parliaments, making parliamentary contributions on behalf of these institutions in what one MP described as a ‘plenipotentiary role’ (interview 12). Meanwhile, other

MPs have increasingly positioned themselves as *critics* of the stances and performance of devolved institutions. As would be expected ‘champions’ are primarily MPs belonging to parties in government at devolved level (i.e. those in the upper half of Table 6.1), and ‘critics’ mainly MPs belonging to parties in opposition at devolved level (i.e. those in the bottom half of Table 6.1).

*Table 6.1: Status of different groups of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in relation to UK and devolved executives*³⁰

	In government at UK level	In opposition at UK level
In government at devolved level	Scottish Labour, 1999–2007 Welsh Labour, 1999–2010	SDLP, 1998–2002, 2007–16 UUP, 1998–2002, 2007–10, 2015 Scottish Lib Dem, 1999–2007 DUP, 1999–2002, 2007–17 Welsh Lib Dem, 2000–03, 2016–19 SNP, 2007–19 Plaid Cymru, 2007–11 Welsh Labour, 2010– Alliance, 2010–15
In opposition at devolved level	Scottish Labour, 2007–10 Scottish Conservatives, 2010–19 Scottish Lib Dem, 2010–15 Welsh Conservatives, 2010–19 Welsh Lib Dem, 2010–15	Scottish Conservatives, 1999–2010 SNP, 1999–2007 Welsh Conservatives, 1999–2010 Plaid Cymru, 1999–2007, 2011–19 Welsh Lib Dem, 1999–2000, 2003–10, 2015–16 Scottish Lib Dem, 2007–10, 2015–19 Scottish Labour, 2010–19 UUP, 2015–17 SDLP, 2016–17

Champions of devolved institutions

Instances of MPs acting as *devolved government champions* were identified in the content analysis from early on in the devolution era, while Labour was in government across Britain. In one early example Welsh Labour’s Huw Edwards praised the First Minister for efforts to resolve a crisis in the steel industry (7 February 2001, HC Deb vol. 362, col. 236WH). As devolution became more established, MPs began to highlight specific policies associated with devolved governments, and

³⁰ Periods where the Northern Ireland Executive was not sitting are not included in this table.

seek support from UK government ministers. For example, Labour's Mark Lazarowicz spoke about the 'ambitious plans' of the Scottish executive to improve rail services, and called for them to be included in a forthcoming extension of the East Coast Main Line franchise (13 November 2001, HC Deb vol. 374, col. 243WH). An MP who served during this period indicated that the emergence of policy divergence within the UK after devolution had provided opportunities to cite experience outside England to make the case for the UK government to make similar changes. One example was the ban on smoking in public places, which happened first in Scotland and was then 'used to advance the case in England' (interview 19). A Welsh Labour MP argued that the ability to feed in experience from the devolved level provided them with more of a view of the 'things that work and the things that don't seem to work' than would be the case for those with English constituencies, and was hence a 'distinct advantage' when contributing to policy debates (interview 18). This argument accords with the notion of devolution as a 'policy laboratory' (Hodgson et al. 2019; Paun, Rutter, and Nicholl 2016).

Contributions from devolved government champions sometimes draw comparisons between the records of the UK government and the administration in their territory that reflect favourably on the latter. Initially such interventions were infrequent, reflecting the support of Scottish and Welsh Labour MPs for the governments at both levels. Comparisons between the records of the UK and devolved governments became a more common feature of contributions by Welsh Labour MPs from 2010, after which these MPs were affiliated to a group in government at devolved level but opposition at Westminster. In a typical example Mark Tami asked the Culture Secretary to 'applaud the Welsh Assembly Government for their success' in rolling out superfast broadband, and what she could 'learn from Wales for England' (30 January 2014, HC Deb vol. 574, col. 988). Similarly, David Hanson noted that no badgers had been culled in Wales, unlike in England, due to 'the actions of the Welsh Government in supporting vaccination' (13 October 2016, HC Deb vol. 615, col. 432). This sort of intervention demonstrates how a context of governments with different political compositions can impact on how MPs with seats in the devolved areas contribute to parliamentary debates.

Championing the policies and performance of the Scottish government has been a notable feature of SNP contributions since the party took office at Holyrood in 2007. Examples were evident from their first term, such as Angus Robertson noting that 'police in Scotland are receiving a full pay rise, including back pay, from the Scottish National party Government' and asking Prime Minister Gordon Brown to 'congratulate First Minister Salmond on that fair decision' (12

December 2007, HC Deb vol. 469, col. 300). Following the large increase in SNP seats in 2015, the party became much more prominent in the Commons. SNP speeches after then often highlight Scottish government policies and achievements. A former SNP MP suggested that this was not a concerted plan, but reflected that ‘there was a living, breathing government within these islands that in the opinion of SNP MPs was doing a better job [than the UK government], and should be listened to’ (interview 23). This interviewee drew an analogy with how Labour and Conservative MPs cite the achievements of previous UK governments led by their parties when in opposition. However, for the SNP the priority was not to make the case for replacing the UK government but to ‘show that you support a government in these islands – it’s the Scottish government’. As the third-largest party the SNP group became entitled to ‘frontbench’ speaking slots and often took these up even on matters devolved in Scotland, using their speeches to refer to the Scottish government’s record on whatever issue was being considered. For example, when English Labour MP Rachael Maskell called a Westminster Hall debate on prison safety the SNP spokesperson, Joanna Cherry, stated that prison matters are devolved in Scotland, but that she would ‘say a little about how we have addressed some of them’ (17 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 96WH). Cherry proceeded to list a series of relevant Scottish government policies and initiatives, noting that figures on prison suicides in Scotland ‘compare favourably with the rate in England and Wales’ and suggesting that other prison systems in the UK might draw upon Scottish experience (17 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 97WH).

Despite the power-sharing nature of the Northern Ireland executive, which reduces partisan incentives to offer support to the local administration, there are also instances where MPs from that territory act as devolved government champions. One case was following the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001, when the UUP’s David Burnside asked the Environment Secretary to ‘seek a case study from the devolved Stormont Department responsible for agriculture and read it carefully to learn the lessons from the more effective, efficient and competent handling of the foot and mouth crisis evident in Northern Ireland’ (28 June 2001, HC Deb vol. 370, col. 766). Another was within a debate on support for small-and-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) led by the DUP’s William McCrea, in which a section of the opening speech was devoted to ‘what the UK Government could learn from the devolved Administrations’, in practice focusing on Northern Ireland (28 January 2015, HC Deb vol. 591, col. 299 WH).

Championing devolved governments sometimes extends beyond rhetoric to encompass interventions in the legislative process. In the absence of a formal mechanism for devolved

governments to table amendments to UK legislation, sympathetic MPs are well-positioned to act as their surrogates. Several examples of this were identified in the content analysis. This sort of behaviour is, unsurprisingly, most common where the party in government at devolved level is in opposition at Westminster (party groups in the top right-hand corner of Table 6.1), so does not have access to the sort of informal channels of communication available to parties that control government at both levels (the top left-hand corner of Table 6.1). Within the bills sampled for this project, there has been a particular increase in instances of MPs proposing amendments with origins in the devolved administrations since 2015. This is likely to reflect the context of growing intergovernmental tension, as well as the greater prominence of the SNP in parliament. For example, during the passage of the 2015–16 Scotland Bill the SNP’s Westminster leader, Angus Robertson, stated that he was tabling the ‘Scottish Government’s alternative clause’, which stipulated that the UK parliament must not pass legislative provisions applying to devolved matters without Holyrood consent (15 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 41). Welsh Labour MPs similarly noted the positions of the Welsh government during the passage of the Wales Bill in 2015–17, in particular on the issue of devolution of justice, which Christina Rees indicated was supported by the First Minister, Carwyn Jones (14 June 2016, HC Deb vol. 611, col. 1716). In this case it was Plaid Cymru that sought to push amendments seeking to achieve this with one of their MPs, Liz Saville-Roberts, highlighting that her amendment ‘uses the very words proposed by the Labour Welsh Government’ (5 July 2016, HC Deb vol. 612, col. 787). An interviewee reported that there had been divisions among Welsh Labour MPs on this issue, which may explain why the Labour frontbench did not itself press an amendment to a vote (interview 14). This example serves to demonstrate that while acting as a devolved government champion is primarily associated with members of parties in government at devolved level, occasionally this role may be taken on by members of parties in opposition at both levels. A Plaid Cymru MP indicated that their party would stand up for the Labour-run Welsh government in situations where they were sympathetic to their position, since as a party that believes in devolution they ‘want them to run Wales better’ (interview 12). As will be discussed in chapter 7, the trend towards MPs seeking to act on behalf of devolved governments developed further in the context of Brexit-related legislation, including some cases of amendments jointly drafted by the Scottish and Welsh governments being taken up by sympathetic MPs. One Labour MP suggested that this was in part a response to the UK government trying to ‘wrestle back a bit of control’ from the devolved level (interview 18). This interviewee put it that ‘when someone punches you in the face, you’ve got to punch back’. MPs have therefore adapted how they go about their territorial roles not only in the face of devolution itself, but also in response to changing political contexts.

The content analysis identified occasions when champions of devolved institutions refer to the positions of the devolved legislatures, instead of, or as well as, those of the executives. The premise underpinning such interventions is typically a belief that the legislatures, as elected bodies, carry a democratic legitimacy that means special account should be taken of their perspectives. One form that this can take is noting the outcomes of votes in the devolved bodies. For example, in arguing for votes at 16, the SDLP's Mark Durkan referred to how the 'Northern Ireland Assembly has voted with a majority for a reduced voting age, so the Assembly has expressed a will' (16 July 2013, Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, Public Bill Committee, col. 62). Similarly, when proposals for devolution of powers relating to regulation of fixed-odds betting terminals were being debated, Labour's Carolyn Harris noted that her amendment on this issue followed the 'adoption by the Welsh Assembly last year of a Back-Bench motion, supported by Members of all four parties then represented in the Assembly' (12 September 2016, HC Deb vol. 614, col. 664). References to votes in devolved legislatures are also sometimes made by MPs in the context of the Sewel convention, under which UK legislation that covers matters within devolved competence or alters the powers of the devolved legislatures should normally receive a consent motion at devolved level. During the dispute over the devolution-related provisions of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill (discussed in chapter 7), the SNP's Ian Blackford noted that Holyrood had 'voted by 93 votes to 30 to refuse consent', and asked the Prime Minister to 'respect the will of the Scottish Parliament' (16 May 2018, HC Deb vol. 641, col. 272). Blackford also drew attention to how the stance of the Scottish government had been supported by Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green MSPs. Referring to the parliamentary vote thus enabled him to argue that there was a cross-party consensus around this issue in Scotland, beyond just the position of the Scottish government and the SNP.

A related set of contributions contain discussion of reports of parliamentary committees in the devolved legislatures. These are especially prevalent where committees have been appointed to conduct scrutiny of legislation considered at Westminster, as has sometimes been the case with constitutional bills requiring a consent motion. During the passage of the Scotland Bill in 2015–16, SNP members made numerous references to stances taken by the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee at Holyrood. Their then parliamentary leader, Angus Robertson, stressed that the committee's recommendations 'were reached unanimously on an all-party basis' (8 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 947). Later on, when this committee concluded that amendments to the bill were sufficient for a consent motion to be supported, Robertson noted that the UK government

had ‘amended the Bill to reflect some of the comments of the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and its Committees’, for which SNP MPs had been the main spokespersons in the Commons (23 March 2016, HC Deb vol. 607, col. 1692).

The content analysis found that seeking to champion devolved legislatures has, as with championing of devolved governments, occasionally extended to tabling amendments with origins at that level. An example was during the passage of the 2016–17 Wales Bill, when amendments drafted by the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly, Elin Jones, were taken up by Plaid Cymru and Liberal Democrat MPs.³¹ These concerned the constitutional status of the *Senedd*, and included a clause asserting its permanence, as well as proposals to devolve powers relating to elections. An MP supporting these amendments, Hywel Williams, quoted a letter from Jones in which she indicated that they were informed by evidence ‘to the then Assembly’s Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee’, and ‘the Assembly’s experience of working under the current settlement’ (5 July 2016, HC Deb vol. 612, col. 800). Although not immediately pressed to a vote, the government ultimately conceded to several of the Presiding Officer’s proposals. This example demonstrates how, in a context where formal interparliamentary relations are limited, backbench MPs can have a ‘linkage’ role to play in scenarios such as this, taking proposals emanating at devolved level to the floor of the Commons.

Critics of devolved institutions

As a counter-point to the increase in MPs acting as champions of devolved governments, the content analysis also identified a growing number of contributions where MPs with seats outside England act as *devolved government critics*. Once again divergence in the political composition of governments across the UK since 2010 appears to have been a key factor. This behaviour is particularly associated with Scottish Conservative and Labour MPs elected in the period after the SNP took office, and with Welsh Conservatives. Few instances of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland acting as devolved government critics were identified, which likely reflects that the large majority of MPs from the territory have belonged to parties in office when the executive has been sitting, due to the power-sharing arrangements.

³¹ The Assembly Presiding Officer’s role reflects the convention that has developed, uniquely among the UK’s legislatures, that the holder of this post speaks for the *Senedd* as a whole on matters relating to its powers and organisation.

A challenge that devolved government critics have faced is getting such interventions ‘in order’, since devolved matters are not Westminster’s responsibility. However, in a further indication of adaptation, a long-serving MP indicated that over time ‘people have figured out ways to do those sorts of things’ (interview 18). A Scottish Liberal Democrat explained that if they stood up and said, ‘Prime Minister, I really want to raise with you the fact that [a road in their constituency] has had minimal investment in it’, that would be out of order since roads are devolved (interview 13). In this scenario the question would instead be framed ‘Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister would be interested to know that the [road] in my constituency is in a really bad condition. I do of course realise this is a devolved matter, but I would be grateful if the Prime Minister would offer me some advice as to what department of his government could offer advice which could be passed on to the Scottish government to achieve this end’. Since the question now related to the UK government’s responsibilities it would be in order. This MP also referred to an occasion where they had raised the slow superfast broadband rollout in their constituency, a devolved matter, and asked the UK government to ‘step in to sort this out’. This succeeded in getting the issue on to the agenda, and elicited a sympathetic response from the Conservative UK government minister. It is a telling indicator of how devolution has changed the dynamics of politics and electoral competition in Scotland that an opposition MP would choose to use an opportunity to speak to engage in criticism of the devolved government, rather than central government. This demonstrates the value of a multi-dimensional approach to categorising MPs with seats outside England, as presented in Table 6.1, taking into account orientations in relation to the devolved administration in their territory.

The prevalence of contributions by Scottish Conservatives including criticism of the devolved government is an important factor driving the high number of representative claims relating to sub-state political institutions by this group in 2017–19, reported in chapter 5. As Gourtsoyannis (2020, 67) noted, ‘there was always a total unity among the Scottish Tories as to their main objective: opposing the SNP and defending the Union’. In practice opposing the SNP meant engaging in frequent criticism of the Scottish government, and – in behaviour that mirrored that of devolved government champions – often drawing unfavourable comparisons between its record and that of the UK government in England. Questions containing criticisms were often brought into order by asking a UK government minister for ‘assistance’. For example, Luke Graham asked the Environment Secretary ‘what assistance and co-operation can he offer the devolved Administration in Edinburgh, who have managed only to reach 90.4% of common agricultural policy payments, compared to 99.2% in England’ (20 July 2017, HC Deb vol. 627, col.

970). In another instance Kirstene Hair raised superfast broadband, claiming that Scotland was 'lagging behind' the rest of the UK, and asking the Prime Minister to confirm that future UK government funding would 'bypass the shambolic Scottish Government' (22 November 2017, HC Deb vol. 631, col. 1040). Reflecting the group's other priority of defending the Union, these MPs also regularly criticised the Scottish government's policy of seeking a second independence referendum. In one typical occurrence Andrew Bowie told the Commons that discussion of the possibility of a referendum was 'damaging the Scottish economy and causing uncertainty', and asked the Prime Minister to join him 'in calling for the SNP to drop, once and for all, its obsession with a second independence referendum' (22 November 2017, HC Deb vol. 631, col. 1042). Given the platform that these Scottish Conservatives were elected on, these contributions may seem unremarkable. However, in a longer-term perspective it is a notable development that a group of MPs elected as members of a Britain-wide party saw opposing a devolved government as their top priority, ahead of offering support to the UK government led by their party. This can be seen as a manifestation of the extent to which Scotland has become an ever-more detached political sphere from the rest of the UK.

Criticism of the Labour-led Welsh executive has been a feature of Commons contributions by Welsh Conservatives since this group regained a Commons presence in 2005. These MPs have often focused on management of the health service, which by some statistical measures has performed worse in Wales than in other parts of the UK, and taken a more sceptical tone towards devolution itself than their Scottish counterparts. For instance, in 2006 David Jones claimed that the devolution of health policy had been 'a less-than-conspicuous success' and that many people in Wales were 'extremely disappointed' with the devolved administration's performance (9 January 2006, HC Deb vol. 441, col. 99). 'Devo-sceptics' continued to cite the record of the Welsh government a decade later when opposing extensions of devolved powers. For example, Chris Davies argued that 'devolving further powers at this time, when that Government are not capable of handling the powers they have, is a bad way forward' (14 June 2016, HC Deb vol. 611, col. 1697). Although they have also been in opposition at devolved level for all but four years since 1999, Plaid Cymru's MPs have tended to be more cautious in criticising the Welsh government. As one put it, 'if we made a full-throated attack on the Labour government we'd be helping our Conservative friends, and we don't want to do that' (interview 12). There have nevertheless been occasional examples of Plaid MPs acting as devolved government critics, such as Jonathan Edwards claiming that the collapse of a rail electrification plan 'revealed the incompetence of the Labour Government in Wales' (24 June 2014, HC Deb vol. 583, col 241). Such contributions have

quickly come to be viewed as part of the regular political knock-about at Westminster, and indeed in interview one experienced MP described this sort of behaviour as ‘very tedious’ (interview 18). However, taken together with the parallel trend towards MPs acting as devolved government champions, the development of the devolved government critic role does speak to a further way in which MPs have adapted their territorially-focused contributions to the changed context since the 1990s. The decisions of the devolved administrations have a major bearing on the lives of citizens outside England, and their actions have accordingly become a central focus for partisan political debate in the affected parts of the UK. This has been reflected in discourse at Westminster.

The content analysis picked up few instances of criticism of the devolved legislatures, as opposed to executives. This likely reflects a partisan imperative to level criticisms at political opponents that hold office at devolved level rather than the legislatures as a whole. There were, nevertheless, occasional instances of criticism of the legislative level, which tended to be associated with ‘devoscepticism’. For example, during debates on the Wales Bill, Conservative David TC Davies complained that the Assembly’s Health and Social Care Committee had taken votes on which witnesses to hear, saying that he had ‘never heard of anything as outrageous’ (6 May 2014, HC Deb, vol. 580, col. 91). In the same speech Davies pejoratively attributed difficulties getting cross-border funding for treatments to ‘the whole National Assembly mindset about doing everything in Wales because it feels that it can do it better’ (6 May 2014, HC Deb vol. 580, col. 89). Similarly, during debate on the Scotland Bill a Labour MP, Ian Davidson, was critical of the devolved legislature’s tendency to do things ‘simply to show that the Scottish Parliament could do it’ (15 March 2011, HC Deb vol. 525, col. 257).

Conclusions: a new sub-state territorial role for MPs?

The quantitative results presented in chapter 5 indicated that MPs with constituencies in the devolved parts of the UK continue to devote a significant proportion of their parliamentary contributions to giving substantive representation to their territorial units. Taking this finding as its starting point, this chapter has explored in much more detail how these MPs have adapted how they go about their parliamentary work, in light of devolution and related changes in the political context since the 1990s. Drawing on interviews and the content analysis, it has been shown that MPs have adopted various new modes of behaviour that have enabled them to continue engaging in territorial representation. The post-devolution sub-state territorial role of MPs can include:

- Acting as territorial advocates by engaging with the distinct implications of reserved matters for the devolved territories
- Raising issues related to the ‘Barnett consequential’ of the UK government’s spending in England
- Engaging with issues where policy decided at Westminster has knock-on implications for devolved competences
- Being members of territorial groups of MPs within the Britain-wide political parties that seek to develop territorially-specific policy stances and strategies
- Contributing to inter-institutional ‘linkage’ between the UK parliament and the devolved institutions, primarily through co-ordinating policy and strategy with party colleagues who are members of the devolved legislatures and/or executives
- Scrutinising intergovernmental relations through asking ministers about meetings with devolved counterparts
- Acting as champions and critics of devolved governments and parliaments, through spoken contributions and sometimes amendments to legislation

The variety of territorially-focused behaviours listed here indicates that MPs with seats in the devolved areas have successfully adapted to the post-devolution environment, as Keating (1978, 429) argued they would need to if their territorial roles were not to become ‘redundant’. While devolution means that they no longer perform all of the activities associated with the territorial role outlined in the 1970s and 1980s literature referred to in this thesis, these MPs have subsequently adopted a range of behaviours that amount to a new sub-state territorial role that has filled this gap. The analysis in the chapter suggests that one key driver of ongoing adaptation has been trends in party competition outside England. As noted in chapter 2 this is increasingly focused on matters specific to those territories, including during general election campaigns. This is reflected in what MPs concentrate on after their election. The ‘end of British party politics’ discussed by Awan-Scully (2018) therefore also appears to have major implications for the extent to which there is an integrated British parliamentary politics. The implications of this are considered further in chapter 9.

An additional contribution of this chapter is demonstrating the value of a two-dimensional categorisation of MPs with seats in the devolved territories, taking into account whether their party is in government or opposition at devolved level, alongside the more conventional categorisation

of whether their party is in government or opposition at Westminster. It has been shown that political orientations in relation to devolved politics have become increasingly important in influencing the behaviour of MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There is a strong case for this to be reflected to a greater extent in how the wider sub-field of parliamentary studies approaches analysing legislative behaviour, especially in relation to issues with a strong territorial dimension. A particular benefit of a two-dimensional approach is to better account for differences in the approach taken by MPs affiliated to groups such as Welsh Labour and the Scottish Conservatives, compared to their party colleagues with English seats.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that the process of adaptation to the post-devolution environment by MPs has been ongoing since devolution. Political developments such as increased divergence in electoral trends across the UK have undoubtedly been a key factor, as discussed above. However, evidence has been presented which suggests that there has also been an incremental process whereby MPs and party groups have learned how to perform their post-devolution territorial roles more effectively. One example of this dynamic is how intra-party relationships between MPs and members of the devolved legislatures have become deeper and more functional, enabling MPs to perform a more meaningful 'linkage' role. Another is how MPs have learned how to raise issues relating to devolved policy and politics in Commons debates, without being ruled out of order. A cohort effect may also be relevant. By 2017–19 there were few remaining MPs from the devolved areas with pre-devolution experience in the Commons, which meant that the overwhelming majority had worked out how to go about territorial representation with the devolved institutions in operation.

In comparative perspective, this analysis points to how constitutional reform at sub-state level can cause politicians operating within central legislatures to adapt how they go about their work. Previous scholarship on how members of parliaments have adapted in the face of institutional change has tended to focus on the impact of changes at the supra-national level, especially the development of the European Union (Auel and Benz 2005; Hansen and Scholl 2002). The findings discussed here suggest that there could be a fruitful research agenda in investigating the extent to which changes to sub-state arrangements in other polities that have experienced decentralisation, for instance Belgium and Spain, have placed adaptational pressures on the respective central legislatures.

7. Territorial representation in the House of Commons debates on Brexit, 2015–19

Brexit dominated the political agenda for two complete parliaments, from the 2015 general election at which the Conservatives won a majority pledging to hold a referendum on EU membership, until the 2019 general election at which the same party won a majority on a platform to ratify exit terms. During this time the House of Commons was the site of fierce and divisive debates about the process, form and possible consequences of leaving the EU (Russell 2021). A body of research has already been devoted to analysing this dramatic period in parliamentary politics. This has focused on the motivations behind MPs' voting decisions (Aidt, Grey, and Savu 2021; Auel and Umit 2021; Giuliani 2021), explaining the eventual adoption of a form of Brexit that involved leaving the EU single market and customs union (Quinn, Allen, and Bartle 2022), how MPs' approached scrutiny of the Brexit process (Lynch and Whitaker 2019; Thompson and Yong 2019), the impact of the Commons on Brexit-related legislation (Fleming and James 2022) and identifying the factors contributing to a 'perfect storm' in which parliament's role became increasingly contested (Russell 2021). However, there has been limited discussion of the part played in these events by MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This is despite the prominence of territorial dimensions in these debates, given differences in the referendum outcomes across the UK, disputes between central and devolved governments, and controversy over the treatment of Northern Ireland.

This chapter seeks to address this gap through a close analysis of how the UK's devolved territories were represented in the House of Commons at pivotal moments. The approach to studying territorial representation adopted in this thesis is applied to four key sets of Brexit-related debates. The extent to which MPs made territorial claims and the forms that these took are reported. The analysis also goes a step further than that in previous chapters by considering the impact of these interventions. This facilitates a detailed discussion of how the territorial dimension to Brexit and its implementation played out in the Commons. It is found that MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales focused heavily on their home territories. However, evidence of territorial representation having influenced the course of the Brexit process was limited mostly to second order issues, with the notable exception of the DUP during the 2017–19 confidence-and-supply agreement. Explanations for this include a failure to secure support from English MPs for key objectives at critical moments and the absence of constitutional protections for the UK's component territories within the design of the Westminster parliament. It is suggested that some interventions from sub-state territorial MPs in these debates were primarily aimed at audiences

external to Westminster. The conclusions consider how far the particular forms that territorial representation took during the Brexit years are specific to this highly unusual period in the UK's parliamentary politics, or whether they can also speak to wider developments of the type discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

Brexit was a suitable topic for a detailed case study of territorial representation because it was widely considered to have major material, constitutional and political implications for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Gormley-Heenan and Aughey 2017; Hunt and Minto 2017; McHarg and Mitchell 2017). In 2015 the SNP had secured an unprecedented landslide of Scottish seats at Westminster, ensuring a heightened focus on the domestic Union in British politics even before the EU referendum. During the referendum campaign various territorial-specific issues were aired, including the possible consequences of Brexit for the land border on the island of Ireland (H. Stewart 2016), and for the funding and economies of the devolved territories (BBC News 2016). The result exposed differences in public opinion on the question of EU membership between the UK's component parts. Majorities of English and Welsh voters supported Leave, while the votes in Northern Ireland and Scotland were 56% and 62% respectively in favour of Remain. The devolution arrangements themselves had been premised on EU membership, which ensured that Brexit became closely entangled with debates about the future of the Union (Keating 2021). How to manage devolved powers that had previously been subject to EU frameworks emerged as a particularly contentious issue that contributed to significant tensions between the UK and devolved governments (McEwen 2021). More generally, the Scottish and Welsh governments each favoured retaining a closer relationship with the EU than the UK administration – including remaining in the single market and customs union – and ultimately came to support holding a further referendum (Scottish Government 2016; Welsh Government 2017). Meanwhile, how to treat Northern Ireland in the Withdrawal Agreement became the key sticking point in UK-EU negotiations and associated domestic debates (Cochrane 2020). All parties agreed on the necessity of maintaining a 'frictionless' border on the island of Ireland but it proved impossible to formulate proposals for achieving this that satisfied both UK and EU negotiating 'red lines', and which were acceptable to unionists in Northern Ireland (Springford 2018). If territorial representation is an important feature of the parliamentary contributions of MPs from the devolved territories, as the findings discussed so far in this thesis suggest, it can therefore be expected to have been particularly widespread during the period covered by this chapter. Indeed, the analysis of contributions to oral questions and Westminster Hall debates in chapter 5 found that the highest proportions of contributions containing claims to represent sub-state territories by MPs with seats outside

England were in 2015–17 and 2017–19. Brexit was not the sole driver of this, but it is very likely that it contributed.

The central role played by the Commons at key decision points in the Brexit process means that there is an extensive corpus of debates available for analysis. This chapter draws on thorough qualitative and quantitative content analysis of four sets of debates, following the methodology outlined in chapter 4. These are all stages of the EU (Referendum) Bill 2015, EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2017 and EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18, together with the three ‘meaningful vote’ debates on ratification of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Theresa May’s government that took place in 2018–19. All of these debates took place during Theresa May’s premiership, so the chapter does not encompass systematic analysis of debates held after Boris Johnson became Prime Minister in July 2019. As elsewhere, the content analysis is complemented by interviews. The majority of interviewees had been MPs during the period from 2015 to 2019 and were asked to reflect on their approach to Brexit. The interviews also provided valuable information about behind-the-scenes aspects of how MPs from the devolved parts of the UK sought to represent their territorial units, including relationships between MPs and devolved institutions.

How did MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales approach Brexit?

Brexit posed acute representational dilemmas for many MPs. Personal views, party stances and constituency opinion were often conflicting, requiring decisions on how to balance these that some found difficult (Auel and Umit 2021; Crines, Jeffery, and Heppell 2018; Heppell, Crines, and Jeffery 2017). After the referendum, MPs who had campaigned to Remain had to consider how much importance to attach to ‘respecting’ the UK-wide result, in a context where many continued to have major reservations about leaving the EU (Russell 2021). For members with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the particular dynamics within these territories were an additional consideration. The vast majority of Scottish and Welsh MPs favoured Remain at the referendum (Mason, Sheehy, and Levett 2016). No members of the 2015–17 parliament with seats in Scotland and only four with seats in Wales, all Conservatives, campaigned to Leave. Most MPs from these areas subsequently favoured retaining a closer relationship with the EU than was proposed by the UK government, with many ultimately advocating a further referendum. Northern Ireland’s MPs were more evenly split in 2016. The eight DUP MPs and one UUP member supported Brexit, but the five others who took their seats (as well as the abstentionist

Sinn Féin members) were pro-Remain. The DUP came to play a pivotal role in 2017–19, when they were the Conservative minority government’s confidence and supply partner (Birrell and Heenan 2020). In that parliament 10 of the 11 Northern Ireland MPs who took their seats were DUP. Its MPs maintained support for Brexit but prioritised opposing a differentiated set of post-Brexit arrangements for Northern Ireland on unionist grounds, ultimately causing them to break with the government and vote against the Withdrawal Agreement (Murphy and Evershed 2020).

Issues specific to their home territories were of considerable salience for backbenchers with constituencies outside England. Over 70% of contributions to key Brexit-related debates by these MPs contained a representative claim relating to that level (see Table 7.1). This is a substantially higher rate of territorial claim-making than in the wider samples of oral questions and Westminster Hall debates from 2015–17 and 2017–19 discussed in chapter 5, consistent with the expectation that this would be especially prevalent in Brexit-related debates. This figure was broadly similar across the four sets of debates, ranging from 67% in the ‘meaningful vote’ debates to 82% during the EU (Referendum) Bill. The most plausible explanation for variation between sets of debates is differences in the partisan composition of contributions, with SNP speakers more dominant in 2015–17 than 2017–19.

Table 7.1: Sub-state territorial claim-making in contributions to key Commons debates on Brexit by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Debates	Territorial claim
EU (Referendum) Bill 2015	22/27 (81.5%)
EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2017	45/60 (75%)
EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18	85/122 (69.7%)
‘Meaningful Vote’ debates 2018–19	65/97 (67%)
Total	217/306 (70.9%)

Unsurprisingly, SNP MPs were especially heavily focused on territorial dimensions, with 86% of their speeches coded as containing territorial representation (see Table 7.2). A coincidence of strong pro-EU inclinations among the party’s MPs and leadership, as well as Remain votes in almost all of the constituencies they held and across Scotland as a whole, meant that they did not face the same dilemmas about how to respond to the UK-wide result as members of several other parties. One former SNP MP described their aims as ‘straightforward’ – ‘to keep as close as possible a relationship with Europe’, which they believed was in line with the preferences of their constituents (interview 23). A strong territorial focus was also evident in speeches from members

of the other parties that compete in only one part of the UK, including almost all by Plaid Cymru MPs. The conflict between Plaid’s pro-Remain stance and the referendum result in Wales could theoretically have posed a significant dilemma. However, in interview one MP claimed that this presented ‘fewer challenges than you’d expect’, since the Welsh-speaking areas that formed the party’s primary support base had voted Remain (interview 12). This MP also suggested that public opinion had ‘changed considerably’, so they did not consider the 2016 result to be an accurate reflection of the Welsh public’s views on Brexit by 2019. The content analysis indeed offered little evidence of uncertainty among Plaid Cymru MPs about what stances to adopt – their MPs were strong supporters of moves to ‘soften’ Brexit and among early advocates of a fresh referendum. Three-quarters of DUP interventions contained a territorial claim. This reflects their focus on the implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland, although their MPs rarely contributed to the sampled debates until the ‘meaningful votes’.

Table 7.2: Sub-state territorial claim-making in contributions to key Commons debates on Brexit by party groups of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Party group	Territorial claim
DUP	13/17 (76.5%)
Independent	3/3 (100%)
Plaid Cymru	18/19 (94.7%)
Scottish Conservative	25/30 (83.3%)
Scottish Labour	5/15 (33.3%)
Scottish Liberal Democrat	2/6 (33.3%)
SDLP	5/5 (100%)
SNP	117/136 (86%)
UUP	1/2 (50%)
Welsh Conservative	4/12 (33.3%)
Welsh Labour	24/61 (39.3%)
Total	217/306 (70.9%)

The 13 Scottish Conservatives elected in 2017 were the most heavily engaged with territorial dimensions among Scottish and Welsh groups within the Britain-wide parties. This is consistent with the findings from chapters 5 and 6, which indicated that this group had an unusually strong territorial focus for members of a Britain-wide party. Nevertheless, media speculation that they would act as a bloc to ‘scupper hard Brexit’ was never realised (Pasha-Robinson 2017). In practice they were often divided on key issues, including the critical votes on the Withdrawal Agreement (Gourtsoyannis 2020). Welsh Labour MPs made territorial representative claims in 39% of their contributions, lower than the equivalent figures for a number of the other party groups. This may reflect how the separation between sub-state and British political spheres remained less advanced

in Wales than elsewhere, even in the Brexit context. A number of Labour MPs for Welsh seats, such as Chris Bryant and Stephen Kinnock, were prominent in these debates at times. However, their arguments were rarely specific to Wales. A Welsh Labour interviewee considered that, for most members of their group, stances on Brexit were ‘less to do with how Wales voted and more to do with how their constituencies voted’ (interview 18). The number of speeches delivered by MPs from other groups such as Scottish Labour and the Welsh Conservatives was too small to analyse meaningfully, but the proportion containing a territorial claim is included in Table 7.2 for completeness.

The majority of coded contributions contained claims relating to sub-state political institutions, indicative of the high salience that issues pertaining to the devolved bodies carried for MPs with seats outside England (see Table 7.3). More than two-thirds of SNP speeches were in this category (see Table 7.4), often championing the positions of the Scottish government and parliament in the manner discussed in chapter 6. Stances taken at Holyrood were regularly contrasted with those of the UK government, enabling a narrative that Scottish perspectives on Brexit had repeatedly been ‘ignored’ at Westminster to be deployed. Contributions coded in the sub-state political institutions category were especially widespread during the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, when provisions relating to the post-Brexit handling of devolved powers were being debated.

Table 7.3: Sub-state territorial claim-making in contributions to key Commons debates on Brexit by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, by form of territorial claim

Category	EU (Referendum) Bill 2015	EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2017	EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18	‘Meaningful Vote’ debates 2018–19	<i>Total</i>
Material interests	6/27 (22.2%)	31/60 (51.7%)	38/122 (31.1%)	45/97 (46.4%)	120/306 (39.2%)
Public opinion	9/27 (33.3%)	24/60 (40%)	31/122 (25.4%)	34/97 (35.1%)	98/306 (32%)
Identity and culture	5/27 (18.5%)	8/60 (13.3%)	1/122 (0.8%)	9/97 (9.3%)	23/306 (7.5%)
Sub-state political institutions	19/27 (70.3%)	31/60 (51.7%)	81/122 (66.4%)	42/97 (43.3%)	173/306 (56.5%)

Table 7.4: Sub-state territorial claim-making in contributions to key Commons debates on Brexit by form of territorial claim and party groups of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Party	Form of sub-state territorial representation	Territorial claim in this category
DUP	Material interests	9/17 (52.9%)
	Public opinion	4/17 (23.5%)
	Identity and culture	4/17 (23.5%)
	Sub-state political institutions	6/17 (35.3%)
Independent	Material interests	1/3 (33.3%)
	Public opinion	1/3 (33.3%)
	Identity and culture	0/3 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	2/3 (66.7%)
Plaid Cymru	Material interests	12/19 (63.2%)
	Public opinion	6/19 (31.6%)
	Identity and culture	5/19 (26.3%)
	Sub-state political institutions	15/19 (78.9%)
Scottish Conservative	Material interests	15/30 (50%)
	Public opinion	7/30 (23.3%)
	Identity and culture	0/30 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	20/30 (66.7%)
Scottish Labour	Material interests	1/15 (6.7%)
	Public opinion	1/15 (6.7%)
	Identity and culture	0/15 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	3/15 (20%)
Scottish Liberal Democrat	Material interests	2/6 (33.3%)
	Public opinion	1/6 (16.7%)
	Identity and culture	0/6 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	1/6 (16.7%)
SDLP	Material interests	5/5 (100%)
	Public opinion	3/5 (60%)
	Identity and culture	1/5 (20%)
	Sub-state political institutions	3/5 (60%)
SNP	Material interests	60/136 (44.1%)
	Public opinion	68/136 (50%)
	Identity and culture	13/136 (9.6%)
	Sub-state political institutions	99/136 (72.8%)
UUP	Material interests	1/2 (50%)
	Public opinion	0/2 (0%)
	Identity and culture	0/2 (0%)

	Sub-state political institutions	0/2 (0%)
Welsh Conservative	Material interests	2/12 (16.7%)
	Public opinion	1/12 (8.3%)
	Identity and culture	0/12 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	3/12 (25%)
Welsh Labour	Material interests	12/61 (19.7%)
	Public opinion	6/61 (9.8%)
	Identity and culture	0/61 (0%)
	Sub-state political institutions	21/61 (34.4%)

Around four in ten speeches included a claim to represent material interests of territorial units. Many of these focused on economic implications. Supporters of maintaining a closer relationship with the EU, and/or a further referendum, frequently cited analysis predicting significant economic damage in their home territories. Sometimes these contributions focused on particular sectors expected to be hit, such as manufacturing in Wales. Half of Scottish Conservative speeches related to Scottish material interests. Several concerned fisheries, highlighted by one interviewee as an issue on which the Scottish Conservatives had taken a ‘distinctive position as a group’, advocating leaving the Common Fisheries Policy at the earliest opportunity (interview 5). During the ‘meaningful vote’ debates, DUP MPs made a material case against the proposed ‘backstop’, under which Northern Ireland would initially remain aligned with some EU regulations.

Notably, 32% of coded speeches contained territorial representative claims coded in the public opinion category, a much higher figure than in the wider sample reported in chapter 5. This was driven primarily by references to the referendum results in particular parts of the UK and to opinion polls conducted within territorial units. SNP MPs often cited the Scottish Remain vote, claiming that Scots were being ‘dragged out of the European Union against our will’ (4 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 790). A similar argument was made by SDLP MPs in the immediate aftermath of the referendum, citing the result in Northern Ireland in support of a bespoke deal for that territory, maintaining close alignment with the EU. There was relatively less emphasis on public opinion in Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour speeches. Contributions coded in the public opinion category by these MPs were mostly references to opinion polls, or to the Welsh public having shown support for devolution in previous referendums, rather than to the EU referendum result. This suggests that the dissonance between the referendum outcome in Wales and the views on Brexit of most of its MPs did somewhat restrict the extent to which public opinion at the Welsh level was invoked.

Only a handful of contributions to each set of debates were coded as containing territorial representative claims relating to identity and culture. These included claims that Scotland and Wales were fundamentally European nations, concerns that Brexit might have a negative impact on the Welsh language and arguments that the Northern Ireland ‘backstop’ was unacceptable on unionist grounds. As suggested in chapter 5, MPs’ understandings of the identity and culture associated with their territory are likely to have informed decisions to focus on the sub-state territorial level in other cases where this was not made explicit.

Shaping the referendum – EU (Referendum) Bill 2015

The EU (Referendum) Bill, which dealt with issues such as the date, franchise and campaign regulations, was the first Brexit-related legislation debated after the 2015 general election. Only the SNP was opposed outright, with Plaid Cymru and SDLP MPs abstaining. A number of provisions nevertheless became controversial, including some with a strong territorial dimension. Across all Commons stages 22 of 27 contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales contained a territorial claim (see Table 7.5). Of these 19 related to sub-state institutions, nine to public opinion, six to material interests and five to identity and culture (see Table 7.3). This breakdown reflects the procedural nature of the Referendum Bill, which limited the scope to debate the material effects of EU membership itself, and a strong focus by SNP MPs on promoting the Scottish government’s stances. The large majority of contributors from the devolved areas on this bill were in fact SNP. There were only two speeches by backbenchers with a seat outside England from Britain-wide parties, and those did not include territorial claims. This suggests that concern about the particular implications for the UK’s component territorial units was confined mainly to parties that competed in only one part of the UK at this stage, for whom engaging in territorial representation was a key part of their *raison d’être*. It is also partly a product of the SNP’s dominance of Scottish seats in 2015–17, which left only three Scottish MPs from Britain-wide parties, though this cannot explain the low number of contributions by Welsh Conservative and Labour MPs.³²

³² The sole Scottish Conservative MP, David Mundell, was Secretary of State for Scotland and the sole Scottish Labour MP, Ian Murray, was Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, so these MPs did not make any backbench contributions.

Table 7.5: Proportion of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales containing a sub-state territorial claim during House of Commons stages of the European Union (Referendum) Bill 2015

Party group	Second reading	Committee of the Whole House	Report	Third reading	Lords amendments	Total
DUP	1/1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/1 (100%)
Plaid Cymru	1/1 (100%)	2/2 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	3/3 (100%)
Scot Lib Dem	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
SNP	3/3 (100%)	8/10 (80%)	4/4 (100%)	n/a	2/2 (100%)	17/19 (89.5%)
SDLP	1/1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/1 (100%)
UUP	0/1 (0%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1 (0%)
Welsh Labour	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
Total	6/7 (85.7%)	10/12 (83.3%)	4/4 (100%)	n/a	2/4 (50%)	22/27 (81.5%)

The 2015 election result was a clear influence on the SNP's approach, enabling their MPs to claim an electoral mandate to oppose the bill and to contrast public opinion in Scotland with that elsewhere in Britain, where the pro-referendum Conservatives had made gains. One SNP member, Stewart Macdonald, asserted that he and his colleagues had been 'sent to this House to argue for Scotland's place in Europe' (9 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 1134). The central argument advanced by SNP MPs was expressed by the former First Minister, Alex Salmond – that it would be 'outrageous, disgraceful, undemocratic and unacceptable to drag Scotland out of the European Union against the wishes and will of the Scottish people' (9 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 1073). This would become a recurring theme.

The argument that Scotland, or indeed Northern Ireland and Wales, could not be taken out of the EU without popular consent from the electorates in those territories was encapsulated in a proposal for a 'quad lock', under which pro-Leave majorities in each of the territorial units comprising the UK would be required for Brexit to be implemented. Salmond tabled an amendment to this effect, noting the support of his successor as First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. He argued that this was about 'respect', and that the 'national statuses' of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland justified effective vetoes (16 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 191). This proposition was supported by Plaid Cymru's Hywel Williams, who highlighted 'particular EU issues pertaining to Wales' that he considered 'national issues' (16 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 222). SDLP MPs also prioritised trying to 'make sure the referendum was sectorised' on territorial lines (interview 16). This was, however, an idea that gained limited traction beyond sub-state nationalist parties, precluding any prospect of such an amendment being adopted. The minister responding, David Lidington, stated that 'in respect of EU membership, we are one United Kingdom' and thus that there should be 'one referendum and one result' (16 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 231). Labour's spokesperson, Pat McFadden, agreed that the UK was 'one

member state, and that we should make this decision as one member state' (16 June 2016, HC Deb vol. 597, col 206). The incompatibility between the quasi-federal understanding of the UK implied by the 'quad lock', emphasising the autonomy of the four component parts, and the unitary understanding of the UK advanced from the Conservative and Labour frontbenches, would become a fundamental point of tension behind many later clashes between groups of MPs from outside England and central government.

SNP MPs also sought to bring a territorial perspective to discussion of the franchise and campaign rules by making frequent reference to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Although the SNP had been on the losing side their MPs evaluated the campaign process positively, often referring to it as a 'gold standard' (7 September 2015, HC Deb vol. 599, col. 112). Aspects that were highlighted included extending votes to 16–18 year-olds, and high levels of public engagement. During these contributions MPs were acting as devolved government champions, commending the 2014 referendum legislation framed by the Scottish administration. SNP MPs also drew attention to legislation passing through the Scottish Parliament providing for votes at 16 for Holyrood elections, by way of contrast to the UK government's resistance to this for the EU referendum. On this matter Stephen Gethins urged the Commons to 'follow the lead of the Scottish Parliament, as it should do on so many issues' (18 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 599). Amendments providing for votes at 16 were also supported by Labour, and a majority of peers, but were successfully resisted by the government in the Commons.

There was one notable policy success for MPs from the non-English parts of the UK – on the referendum date. The original draft provided only that it needed to be held by 31 December 2017. However, there had been speculation about Prime Minister David Cameron opting for 5 May 2016, the same day as elections to the devolved legislatures (Shipman 2016). Cameron had failed to rule this out, noting that the referendum on the alternative vote electoral system in 2011 took place in parallel with devolved elections (10 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 1179). The possibility of combining polls did not go down well with MPs representing constituencies in the devolved territories. Significantly, there was a broader partisan base to opposition to this than there had been in favour of the 'quad lock' or votes at 16, with MPs with a range of different positions on Brexit presenting a common front. Those objecting included Nigel Dodds, the Westminster leader of the DUP and viewed as an influential figure even prior to the 2017 confidence-and-supply agreement. Dodds stated that there could be 'no question' of the EU referendum being held at the same time as polls 'as important as the three devolved contests', going as far as to suggest that

would ‘taint the referendum at source’ (9 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 1083). Alex Salmond, meanwhile, claimed that it would be ‘unacceptable to the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to have the European referendum held on the same day as our national elections’ (9 June 2015, HC Deb vol. 596, col. 1074). These arguments were bolstered by an Electoral Commission recommendation to avoid such a coincidence of electoral events, and by support from some Conservative Eurosceptics who were concerned that combining polls, including English local elections, would make it more difficult for them to personally campaign for Brexit (Shipman 2016). At committee the government announced that it had changed its position and supported amendments excluding 5 May 2016 as a possible date (Watt 2015). This allowed MPs who had raised this issue to claim victory, with Salmond describing it as a ‘humiliating climbdown’ (16 June 2016, HC Deb vol. 597, col. 186). In the grand scheme of things this was a minor policy win for sub-state territorial MPs, and ultimately a hollow one for those such as SNP MPs who had hoped that separating the devolved elections and the referendum would provide more time to make the case for Remain. The eventual referendum date of 23 June 2016 fell less than two months after the devolved elections, and some have speculated that less intensive campaigning and lower turnouts in Scotland and Northern Ireland than elsewhere could have been linked to election fatigue following the prior campaigns (Murphy and Evershed 2022; Scully 2016; UK in a Changing Europe 2021). Nevertheless, this example speaks to how the general increase in territorial claim-making by MPs from across different parties reported in chapter 5 can, in certain instances, enable a common sub-state territorial perspective that transcends territorial and partisan divides to emerge. It also demonstrates that it is possible to achieve policy impact through sub-state territorial representation, even when the composition of the Commons means that claims to represent Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are inevitably made by a small minority overall.

Triggering Article 50 – EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2017

The first legislative debates on Brexit’s implementation followed the *Miller* case, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the Article 50 UK-EU negotiation process could not be initiated without legislation (Craig 2017). The EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill duly completed all parliamentary stages between January and March 2017. It was supported by the official opposition, keen to signal their acceptance of the referendum result. Nevertheless, 47 Labour backbenchers – including seven with constituencies in Wales and their only Scottish MP during this parliament, Ian Murray – rebelled to oppose the legislation outright. Of the parties competing in only one part of the UK the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the SDLP voted against, but the DUP and UUP were in favour.

Unsurprisingly, sub-state territorial representation was widespread in contributions by MPs with seats outside England, featuring in around three-quarters of speeches (see Table 7.6). Over half contained territorial claims coded in the material interests and sub-state political institutions categories, and 40% included claims to represent public opinion (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.6: Proportion of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales containing a sub-state territorial claim during House of Commons stages of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill 2017

Party group	Second reading	Committee of the Whole House	Total
DUP	1/2 (50%)	1/1 (100%)	2/3 (66.6%)
Independent ³³	1/1 (100%)	n/a	1/1 (100%)
Plaid Cymru	2/2 (100%)	1/1 (100%)	3/3 (100%)
Scottish Labour	0/1 (0%)	n/a	0/1 (0%)
Scot Lib Dem	n/a	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
SNP	22/24 (91.7%)	8/9 (88.9%)	30/33 (90.9%)
SDLP	3/3 (100%)	1/1 (100%)	4/4 (100%)
UUP	1/1 (100%)	n/a	1/1 (100%)
Welsh Con	0/1 (0%)	n/a	0/1 (0%)
Welsh Labour	4/10 (40%)	0/2 (0%)	4/12 (33.3%)
Total	34/45 (75.6%)	11/15 (73.3%)	45/60 (75%)

As during the Referendum Bill, the majority of speeches by MPs with seats outside England were delivered by SNP MPs, around 90% containing an argument framed in territorially-specific terms. Thompson (2020) has noted that there was a concerted effort by the SNP group to make a large number of – often lengthy – speeches on this bill, and also to use devices such as frequent interventions and tabling large numbers of amendments. These tactics were intended to maximise the party's visibility and to serve as something of a protest at the relatively small amount of time allocated for the debate, which SNP members argued was insufficient for all of the issues that they wanted to raise to be properly considered. There were 12 Welsh Labour contributions, including four with a sub-state territorial focus. Both SNP and Welsh Labour MPs adopted the role of devolved government champion discussed in chapter 6, promoting the Brexit policies of the respective devolved governments, which had been published in white papers. Philip Boswell was one of numerous SNP MPs to contrast the May administration's proposals with those set out in *Scotland's Place in Europe*, which advocated maintaining a close relationship with the EU and bespoke arrangements for Scotland (Scottish Government 2016).

I hold in my left hand the Bill, this poor excuse of a sick note. It is what the Westminster Government have produced in seven months by way of an explanation to the people of

³³ Michelle Thomson, who was elected as an SNP MP but later suspended from the party whip.

the UK of what a hard Tory Brexit means. Let us contrast that with what I hold in my right hand: the Scottish Government's considerably compromised proposal to Westminster. (31 January 2017, HC Deb vol. 620, col. 990)

An SNP MP recalled initial hopes that the UK government would be willing to engage, and that 'while that compromise was live' it would have been difficult to propose 'another referendum to remain' (interview 23). A further way in which SNP members gave representation to sub-state political institutions in this debate was by calling for closer engagement between the UK and Scottish governments. For example, Deidre Brock complained that there had been 'no real engagement, no dialogue, no offer to discuss the negotiations as they go along, and no offer of a seat at the negotiating table for Scottish Ministers' (31 January 2017, HC Deb vol. 620, col. 881). There were similar themes in some speeches from Labour MPs with constituencies in Wales, indicating the emergence at this stage of common priorities for devolved government champions from Scotland and Wales. Welsh Labour's Albert Owen said that the 'best possible deal would involve a clear plan and participation in the single market' and welcomed the Welsh government white paper making this case (Welsh Government 2017). Owen went on to emphasise that it would be 'important for the UK Government to consult the Governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including through the Joint Ministerial Committee' (31 January 2017, HC Deb vol 620, col. 919). An amendment proposed by Labour sought to introduce a legal duty to consult the devolved governments at least every two months and before any agreements were reached with the European Commission. Another proposed by the SNP aimed to prevent negotiations being opened until a 'UK-wide approach to, and objectives for' negotiations had been agreed by the UK and devolved governments. If adopted, this could effectively have prevented Theresa May's government from pursuing withdrawal from the EU single market and customs union, since the Scottish and Welsh government would not have been likely to endorse such a plan. However, none of these amendments were successful, with these issues generating limited interest among English MPs. The Article 50 process was duly initiated on 29 March 2017, without legal guarantees of a role for the devolved legislatures and executives.

Only a handful of speeches were made by Northern Ireland MPs, but it is notable that there was broad agreement that Northern Ireland had specific material interests. The DUP's Dodds said that it would be 'right and proper that we respect the special needs of Northern Ireland', while SDLP members stressed the implications of leaving the EU for the principles of the Good Friday Agreement, the land border and Northern Ireland's economy (1 February 2017, HC Deb vol. 620, col. 1049). There was though, a marked contrast between the relevance which unionist and

nationalist MPs ascribed to the result of the referendum in Northern Ireland. SDLP MPs cited the majority Remain vote as justification for opposing the triggering of Article 50, with Margaret Ritchie deploying an argument that recalled the logic behind the ‘quad lock’ proposal, stating that ‘Northern Ireland’s place in the EU should be a decision for the people of Northern Ireland alone’ (31 January 2017, HC Deb vol. 620, col. 974). This argument was fundamentally rejected by the DUP, with Dodds claiming that he could ‘think of nothing that would be more calculated to undermine the Union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom than for Northern Ireland to be able to thwart the will of the people of the United Kingdom as a whole’ (1 February 2017, HC Deb vol. 620, col. 1049). Amendments that proposed inserting a requirement to maintain the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement into the eventual UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement were debated but not adopted. This reflected the Conservative majority’s general resistance to considering changes to this bill, which ministers framed to minimally meet the requirements of the *Miller* judgement. It passed unamended.

Post-Brexit devolved powers and the ‘clause 11’ controversy – EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18

The potential for MPs from outside England to influence Brexit was enhanced by the 2017 general election, which resulted in a hung parliament and significantly weakened the government’s political authority (see chapter 4, Tables 4.1–4.4). The first Brexit-related legislation considered subsequently was the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, which repealed the European Communities Act and provided arrangements for legal continuity. From the perspective of MPs in the devolved territories, some of the most controversial provisions related to the management of policy areas that were devolved under domestic legislation but subject to EU policy frameworks, such as agriculture and fisheries. Clause 11 envisaged initially reserving all such powers to Westminster. This provoked a furious reaction from the Scottish and Welsh first ministers, who described it as a ‘naked power grab’ (Sturgeon and Jones 2017).³⁴ This issue was the dominant focus for Scottish and Welsh MPs in debates on the Withdrawal Bill, during which 85 of 122 speeches by MPs from outside England contained a territorial claim, with 81 coded in the sub-state political institutions category (see Tables 7.3 and 7.7). Territorially-focused speeches were spread across parties to a greater extent than during the previous bills. This is indicative of the increasing salience of the territorial dimension to Brexit at this stage, as well as the more diverse composition of Scottish

³⁴ There was no Northern Ireland Executive at this time, following the resignation of Martin McGuinness as deputy First Minister in January 2017.

seats post-2017. Territorial claims were a feature of 39 SNP speeches, but also 13 delivered by Welsh Labour MPs and 16 by Scottish Conservatives. It is especially notable that almost 90% of Scottish Conservative speeches contained a territorial claim, higher even than the equivalent figure for the SNP. This is consistent with the heavy focus on the Scottish level for this group of MPs that was identified in chapters 5 and 6. As with previous Brexit-related bills, MPs with seats in Northern Ireland made only a few contributions. In this instance a likely explanation is that, in the context of the confidence-and-supply agreement, DUP MPs preferred to express their views on Brexit-related issues through private discussions with ministers.

Table 7.7: Proportion of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales containing a sub-state territorial claim during House of Commons stages of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18

Party group	Second reading	Committee of the Whole House	Report	Third reading	Lords Amendments	Total
DUP	0/1 (0%)	1/2 (50%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/3 (33.3%)
Independent	n/a	2/2 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	2/2 (100%)
Plaid Cymru	2/2 (100%)	3/4 (75%)	n/a	n/a	1/1 (100%)	6/7 (85.7%)
Scottish Con	3/4 (75%)	10/10 (100%)	2/2 (100%)	n/a	1/2 (50%)	16/18 (88.8%)
Scottish Lab	n/a	2/3 (66.7%)	1/2 (50%)	n/a	0/1 (0%)	3/6 (50%)
Scot Lib Dem	n/a	1/1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	0/1 (0%)	1/2 (50%)
SNP	7/7 (100%)	23/31 (74.2%)	5/7 (71.4%)	1/1 (100%)	3/3 (100%)	39/49 (79.6%)
Welsh Con	1/2 (50%)	3/3 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	4/5 (80%)
Welsh Labour	5/7 (71.4%)	6/13 (46.1%)	2/4 (50%)	n/a	0/6 (0%)	13/30 (43.3%)
Total	18/23 (78.3%)	51/69 (73.9%)	10/15 (66.7%)	1/1 (100%)	5/14 (35.7%)	85/122 (69.7%)

Clause 11 aroused particularly strong feelings among MPs from parties in government at devolved level, which was reflected in frequent recourse to hyperbolic language. The SNP's Peter Grant presented it as an 'act of constitutional betrayal' (7 September 2017, HC Deb vol. 628, col. 372), while Welsh Labour's Stephen Doughty echoed the First Ministers in describing it as a 'devolution power grab' (11 September 2017, HC Deb vol. 628, col. 522). Significantly, given the constitutional differences between their parties, Doughty suggested that he would be 'happy to work with those from the SNP and Plaid Cymru and others who will seek to defend the devolution settlement that we have all fought for' (11 September 2017, HC Deb vol. 628, col. 522–523). This is an indication of the extent to which defending devolution emerged as a cause around which Labour and the sub-state nationalist parties could co-operate, in spite of their traditional animosity. The wider content analysis conducted for this project suggests that a common sub-state territorial perspective of this type, crossing partisan and territorial boundaries, was rarely evident pre-Brexit.

The dynamics of this controversy played out differently from most previous Brexit-related issues on which MPs from outside England engaged in territorial representation, for two main reasons. The first was that, as clause 11 related to provisions impacting on the powers of the devolved institutions, the consent of the devolved legislatures would normally be required under the Sewel convention that had operated since 1999. Legislation had been passed at Westminster without consent where this would normally be needed on only a handful of previous occasions, and never on such a controversial matter (Institute for Government 2020). UK ministers were keen to avoid this scenario, fearing that it would boost support for Scottish independence, so were prepared to open a dialogue with their devolved counterparts. A former minister indicated that securing a consent motion had been a key aim for the government from the beginning (interview 2). The other, related, factor was that unease extended to Scottish Conservative MPs. As members of the governing party these MPs were better placed to influence ministers than members of opposition parties, and they had particular leverage given the hung parliament (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018). Scottish Conservative concern was expressed at committee, when seven of their MPs spoke and called for amendments. The strongest criticism came from Paul Masterton, who stated that clause 11 was ‘not fit for purpose’, going as far as to say that it ‘does not need to be tweaked a little; it needs to be amended and replaced with a new version’ (4 December 2017, HC Deb vol. 632, col. 731). A number of his party colleagues stressed the importance of reaching an agreement that could secure a legislative consent motion. John Lamont, for instance, suggested that it was the job of Scottish Conservatives to ‘ensure that the Bill is in a form that will ensure that the Scottish Parliament can give its approval’, predicting that without this ‘the Brexit process will shudder to a halt and create a constitutional crisis’ (4 December 2017, vol. 623, col. 758). These Scottish Conservative speeches also presented examples of the consequences of intra-party relationships between politicians in the devolved legislatures and Westminster, of the type discussed in chapter 6. There were several references to the positions taken by Scottish Conservative MSPs, including by Stephen Kerr, who praised the roles of leader Ruth Davidson, constitution spokesperson Adam Tomkins and others as ‘honest brokers’, ‘working with the Scottish and UK Governments to bring them together to build consensus’ (4 December 2017, vol. 632, col. 803). Concerns that Davidson and Tomkins had expressed about clause 11 are likely to have been an important factor prompting Scottish Conservative MPs to speak out (Nutt 2018).

In an unprecedented move, the Scottish and Welsh governments jointly published 38 amendments, seeking to effectively nullify clause 11 (Scottish Government and Welsh Government 2017). A Welsh government official reported that there had been internal discussion

about the ethics of drafting amendments for MPs, but it was concluded that it was appropriate to promote their administration's policy (interview 14). The amendments were sent to all MPs, with Welsh government special advisers making direct contact with Labour members expected to be particularly interested. They were then taken up by sympathetic MPs at committee. In this instance territorial mobilisation hence extended beyond rhetorical claim-making to legislative acts. Acknowledging the origin of these amendments was seen as a potential advantage, enabling parliamentarians to suggest that they were attempting to protect devolution, rather than seeking partisan advantage. Reflecting this, the SNP's Pete Wishart argued that 'where we are going requires cross-party attention, support and consensus, but it also requires cross-institution support' (4 December 2017, HC Deb vol. 632, col. 750). The amendments were resisted by the UK government, with Scottish Conservatives who had reservations about clause 11 opting to await the outcome of intergovernmental talks rather than rebel.

Discussions between governments remained deadlocked at Commons report stage. The absence of agreement prompted further dissent among Scottish Conservatives, with Stephen Kerr stating that he was 'intensely disappointed, dissatisfied and frustrated' (16 January 2018, HC Deb vol. 730, col. 816). Amendments drafted by the devolved governments were again debated, with the SNP's Stephen Gethins explicitly acknowledging the role of 'officials in the Welsh Assembly Government and in the Scottish Government who worked together to produce good amendments that we can support on a cross-party basis' (16 January 2018, HC Deb vol. 730, col. 831). In making the case for the amendments, Welsh Labour's Doughty and Anna McMorrin also championed devolved government policy by referring to an announcement by the Welsh First Minister that, if no agreement had been reached by the end of January 2018, his government would introduce its own 'continuity bill', seeking to protect devolved powers. The amendments were, nevertheless, again defeated. Despite the strongly held views of many MPs from the devolved areas it proved difficult to generate wider interest among English MPs, at a time when other issues such as the procedure for ratifying the Withdrawal Agreement were also the subject of heated debate. This did not come as a great surprise to the Welsh government official who was interviewed, who indicated they recognised that prospects of success were ultimately stronger in the House of Lords (interview 14).

By the time the Withdrawal Bill returned to the Commons from the Lords, the provisions relating to devolution had indeed been substantially amended, following an agreement between the UK and Welsh governments (UK Government 2018). However, the Scottish government stayed out

of this, so there was no legislative consent motion from Holyrood. The May government's decision to push ahead without this predictably provoked a furious reaction from SNP MPs. This was exacerbated by only around 20 – highly chaotic – minutes being available for debate on the devolution-related amendments, owing to scheduled time being taken up by votes on other matters. At PMQs the following day the SNP Westminster leader, Ian Blackford, claimed that Theresa May had acted 'in direct opposition to Scotland's elected Parliament', 'silenced Scotland's voice' and 'disrespected' the people of Scotland (PMQs, 14 June 2018, HC Deb vol. 642, col. 887), then led a walkout of his party's MPs in protest, which secured UK-wide media attention for the issue (Crerar, Walker, and Brooks 2018). This particular example serves to emphasise that territorial claim-making can have other aims beyond influencing public policy, as was suggested in chapter 3. Asked about the walkout, a former SNP MP said that 'it's not something you can do every week, but I think every now and again something is needed to underline that you are frustrated and you hear the frustrations from home' (interview 23). This interviewee claimed that following the protest there had been a 'bump in SNP membership' and a boost in the party's support. While Blackford's questions and the subsequent walkout did not lead to any change in the UK government's position, this was therefore seen as a successful act of sub-state territorial representation by SNP MPs.

Parliamentary impasse – 'meaningful votes' on the Withdrawal Agreement, 2018–19

The final phase of Theresa May's premiership was dominated by attempts to secure Commons approval for the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by her government. The three 'meaningful vote' debates between December 2018 and March 2019 were some of the most dramatic parliamentary occasions of modern times. The division following the first, eight-day, debate resulted in the Withdrawal Agreement being defeated by 432 to 202, with 118 Conservative rebels. Later votes were closer, but nevertheless further heavy government defeats. May was never able to secure a Commons majority for the deal and ultimately resigned. Territorially-specific concerns about the Withdrawal Agreement, in particular those expressed by DUP MPs, played a fundamentally important role in shaping these events. Overall two-thirds of contributions by MPs from groups with seats outside England contained claims to represent their home territorial units (see Table 7.8). Claims to represent the material interests of territories were identified in 47% of these, 43% contained claims relating to devolved institutions and 35% claims to represent public opinion (see Table 7.3). The strong focus on material interests in these debates reflects the emphasis of many MPs on the potential economic impact of the deal in their territories.

Table 7.8: Proportion of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales containing a sub-state territorial claim during House of Commons ‘meaningful vote’ debates, 2018–19

Party group	Meaningful vote 1	Meaningful vote 2	Meaningful vote 3	Total
DUP	8/9 (88.9%)	n/a	1/1 (100%)	9/10 (90%)
Plaid Cymru	4/4 (100%)	1/1 (100%)	1/1 (100%)	6/6 (100%)
Scottish Con	9/12 (75%)	n/a	n/a	9/12 (75%)
Scottish Lab	2/6 (33.3%)	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	2/8 (25%)
Scot Lib Dem	1/3 (33.3%)	n/a	n/a	1/3 (33.3%)
SNP	29/31 (93.5%)	1/1 (100%)	1/2 (50%)	31/34 (91.2%)
Welsh Con	0/4 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	0/6 (0%)
Welsh Labour	7/16 (43.8%)	n/a	0/2 (0%)	7/18 (38.9%)
Total	60/85 (70.6%)	2/4 (50%)	3/8 (37.5%)	65/97 (67%)

The DUP opted to oppose the Withdrawal Agreement at all three votes, citing objections to the proposed ‘backstop’, under which some EU regulations could continue to apply in Northern Ireland but not Great Britain. One of their MPs, Paul Girvan, claimed that the backstop would ‘do nothing but leave Northern Ireland out on the periphery’ (4 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 844–845). His colleague, Dodds, objected to the absence of provisions for intra-UK divergence to be subject to approval from the Northern Ireland Assembly. Following the first defeat, May’s government sought clarifications on the operation of the backstop from the EU, in response to these concerns (V. Miller et al. 2019). However, the DUP again decided to vote against when the Agreement was put before the Commons a second time. This position had not changed by the third debate, when DUP MP Ian Paisley suggested that it would cause ‘irreversible and lasting damage to Northern Ireland’ (29 March 2019, HC Deb vol. 657, col. 708). In the absence of MPs from other Northern Ireland parties, this interpretation was largely unchallenged. The main exception was the independent unionist, Sylvia Hermon, a supporter of the Withdrawal Agreement, who stressed that ‘the constitutional status of Northern Ireland remains the same’, pointedly suggesting that the DUP ‘does not speak for the majority of people in Northern Ireland’ (29 March 2019, HC Deb vol. 657, col. 710). According to one SDLP politician the case in favour of distinctive arrangements for Northern Ireland ‘was not being made because all the other side heard apart from Sylvia [Hermon] was the DUP, in their cosy relationship with the Tories’ (interview 16).

The significance of the DUP’s stance was not just that their ten MPs voted against the Agreement, but the influence that it had on the predominantly English Conservative backbenchers who were key swing voters.³⁵ Several Conservatives who opposed the Withdrawal Agreement explicitly

³⁵ This paragraph draws on analysis published in Kenny and Sheldon (2021b).

referred to the DUP's position as a factor in their assessments of the deal. Daniel Kawczynski even went as far as to present the DUP as 'our interlocutors', stating that 'if they are telling us, as the representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, that they have genuine concerns about the backstop, it would be highly irresponsible of us as Unionists to ignore these concerns' (4 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 822). Importantly, the DUP also developed close behind-the-scenes links with the Conservative European Research Group (ERG), the main backbench organisation co-ordinating Brexiteer opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement (Kenny and Sheldon 2021a). This was symbolised by the appointment of Dodds to an ERG panel established to evaluate the reassurances on the 'backstop' offered before the second meaningful vote (Isaby 2019). The panel urged MPs to remain opposed to the Agreement, in line with the DUP's own decision (Kentish 2019). While this alliance ultimately broke down, for a period in 2018–19 it was a major factor contributing to the parliamentary impasse. The incorporation of the DUP's territorially-focused perspective into the arguments of rebels on the government backbenches forced ministers to focus on the specific arrangements relating to Northern Ireland, if there was to be any chance of winning those MPs over.

Scottish Conservatives were unable to agree a uniform position like the DUP's, which limited their ability to influence these debates as a group, even though with 13 MPs they were potentially pivotal actors in the context of the hung parliament. In the first 'meaningful vote', ten of their MPs voted in favour but three against. Nevertheless, both supporters and opponents framed their arguments in explicitly Scottish terms, indicating once again the heavy territorial focus of post-2017 Scottish Conservatives. Speaking in favour, Andrew Bowie cited supportive positions of Scottish business organisations and suggested that Scottish MPs had a 'duty to do what is in the best interests of the Scottish people and the Scottish economy' (6 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 1186). In contrast an opponent of the deal, Ross Thomson, spoke about the potential for it to 'prevent us from reaching free trade agreements with the US or India, which are the big markets for Scottish whisky' (9 January 2019, HC Deb vol. 652, col. 455). Thomson also claimed to be speaking on behalf of Scottish Brexit voters, who were 'wholly under-represented both in this place and in the Scottish Parliament' (9 January 2019, vol. 652, col. 454).

Of 34 SNP speeches, 31 included a territorial claim. SNP members were vehemently opposed to the Withdrawal Agreement and deployed a territorially-framed argument with three main strands, mapping on to the categories of territorial claim identified in this thesis. First, there was a renewed emphasis on the pro-Remain nature of public opinion and the sovereignty of the Scottish people.

Second, evidence produced by the Scottish government was cited to suggest that the Withdrawal Agreement would have a negative material impact, leaving Scotland ‘£9billion worse off by 2030’ (5 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 1013). Finally, there were frequent references to the Scottish government’s positions being ‘ignored’ and to the Scottish Parliament voting overwhelming to oppose the deal (5 December 2018, HC Deb vol. 650, col. 927).

Territorial claims were identified in less than half of Welsh Labour speeches. This was in line with wider patterns across Brexit debates, suggesting that this group was less clearly focused on territorial dimensions than the DUP, SNP and Scottish Conservatives. Where Welsh Labour MPs did frame contributions in territorially-specific terms, it was predominantly to argue the Withdrawal Agreement would have a damaging impact on the Welsh economy. For example, Chris Elmore regretted that the deal ‘binds us into years of further wrangling, using resources that we could divert to investing in the Welsh economy’ (9 January 2019, HC Deb vol. 652, col. 463). Meanwhile, Chris Ruane highlighted £4.5 billion of EU structural funds received by Wales and complained that there was no guarantee of that being replaced.

Ultimately, it took a further general election in December 2019 for the parliamentary impasse to be broken. By then the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, had negotiated a revised Withdrawal Agreement and secured overwhelming support for this from Conservative MPs. After returning to parliament with a large majority drawn primarily from English constituencies, the immediate political need to respond to the concerns of MPs from elsewhere in the UK was much reduced (Sheldon 2019). Indeed, the revised Withdrawal Agreement, including the new Northern Ireland Protocol, was endorsed by the Commons despite the opposition of every MP from Northern Ireland to take their seat – a group which following the election included SDLP and Alliance members, along with the DUP. While Northern Ireland’s MPs had contributed significantly to the 2018–19 deadlock, they proved powerless in the face of the Johnson government’s fresh UK-wide mandate, confirming the contingent nature of the influence the DUP had enjoyed.

Evaluating territorial representation in the House of Commons debates on Brexit

The discussion in this chapter has referred to how particular instances of territorial representation by MPs were responded to by ministers. However, there has not yet been an overall evaluation of the impact of territorial claim-making in relation to Brexit. This is not a straightforward task. There are challenges associated with empirically identifying parliamentary policy impact, which Russell

and Gover (2017, 269) argue can take ‘hidden’ forms in their analysis of six ‘faces’ of parliamentary power, incorporating such dimensions as ‘anticipated reactions’ and ‘internalisation’ by government of parliament’s preferences. A systematic study of this would have required more extensive interviews with ministers and other government insiders than it was feasible to conduct. Even in cases where policy changes appear to respond to parliamentary pressure, it can be difficult to disaggregate this from other potential factors such as internal divisions within government and public opinion. Moreover, it was noted in chapter 3 that territorial claim-making can have a variety of different objectives, including electoral signalling and highlighting political dividing lines. Focusing purely on whether or not policy goals expressed by MPs are achieved is hence a misleading way of evaluating impact.

In terms of visible change to policy, or Russell and Gover’s ‘first face of parliamentary power’, changes in response to groups of MPs who engaged in sub-state territorial representation have been identified on a few second order issues. Examples are ministers introducing amendments to prevent the EU referendum from being held in parallel with devolved elections, and reaching an agreement with the Welsh government on the treatment of devolved powers in the Withdrawal Bill. Speeches by MPs were not the only factor influencing these changes of stance, but it is likely that cross-party and cross-territorial campaigns in the Commons were influential. These were, however, isolated instances, related to issues that had relatively minimal impact on the ultimate course of Brexit.

On the fundamental questions of whether or not Brexit would be implemented, and if so on what terms, the majority of arguments framed in territorial terms did not achieve their stated policy aims. The balance of opinion among MPs from Scotland and Wales in particular favoured maintaining a close relationship with the EU, including continued participation in the single market and customs union, or preventing Brexit from being implemented at all. However, the UK government and Conservative backbenchers preferred a cleaner break with EU regulatory regimes, and were able to achieve that once the parliamentary impasse was broken, with little regard to perspectives from outside England. In interview MPs who had engaged in territorial representation reflected that the majoritarian nature of the Westminster parliamentary system, and the government’s reluctance to engage with opposition members, meant that it was difficult to envisage what they could have done to achieve a different outcome. For instance, a former SNP MP felt that their group had been ‘as effective as we could be’, but that hopes of influencing policy had been frustrated because ‘Theresa May wasn’t that interested in engaging’ (interview 23).

Similarly, a Scottish Labour MP did not ‘really see that anything could have been done very differently’ (interview 20). These MPs had Brexit stances far removed from those of most government supporters, which ministers showed little inclination to compromise with.

To defeat the government MPs from the devolved parts of the UK would have required support from a large number of English members, both Labour and sufficient Conservative rebels, but such a coalition was not successfully assembled at key moments. Proposals such as a ‘quad lock’ on the referendum outcome and requiring the approach to UK-EU negotiations to be agreed with the devolved administrations came up against resistance to the quasi-federal implications among the English majority. Fundamentally, that the perspectives of the majority of MPs from Scotland and Wales could be disregarded on key issues with substantial consequences for those areas highlights the absence of constitutional protections for sub-state territories within the design of the Westminster parliament. Had the consent of a territorially-composed second chamber been required at key decision points, as would be the case for a major constitutional change such as Brexit in many federal and multi-level political systems (Russell 2001), that could well have proved to be a substantial obstacle to the form of Brexit that was ultimately adopted.

MPs from groups that formed part of the notional government majority would have been expected to have had the greatest opportunity for policy influence, especially during the 2017–19 hung parliament (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018). The clearest example of this demonstrably having occurred is ministers’ attempts to secure reassurances on the operation of the Northern Ireland ‘backstop’, in response to concerns voiced by DUP MPs and echoed by some English Conservatives. Nevertheless, these ultimately proved insufficient to satisfy the DUP. Boris Johnson was eventually willing to agree to a Northern Ireland Protocol with greater differentiation from arrangements in Great Britain than envisaged under the ‘backstop’, underscoring the limits to the influence even of groups of sub-state territorial MPs that the government depended on for its majority. Scottish Conservative MPs may also have had the potential to carry significant influence given their pivotal position under the post-2017 parliamentary arithmetic, but disunity at key moments ensured that this was never fully realised.

Some examples discussed in this chapter highlight how territorial claim-makers are often primarily aiming to communicate with citizens in their home territories. The high-profile nature of many Commons debates on Brexit, given the magnitude of the issues under consideration and the sense of jeopardy around key votes, meant that MPs had opportunities to reach wider audiences beyond

parliament than is typically the case. The analysis in the chapter suggests that external audiences were a particular focus for SNP members, who used hyperbolic language and protests such as their PMQs walkout to emphasise the distance between what they saw as the interests and preferences of people in Scotland, and the positions of the Westminster government. In these cases territorial claims can be viewed as having achieved their political aims without achieving expressed policy aims. From this perspective the SNP's continued electoral success, including its 13 gains at the 2019 general election, can be seen as a vindication of its approach. When asked to reflect on contributions to Brexit debates, some MPs responded in terms of such broader aims. For example, a Plaid Cymru interviewee pointed to 'growth in support for [Welsh] independence' and the sense that 'some people are now regretting their vote [for Brexit]' (interview 12). Meanwhile, a Scottish Liberal Democrat felt that 'as the flaws of the [withdrawal] deal become more obvious, our positioning will be good long term' (interview 13).

Conclusions: a significant juncture in sub-state territorial representation?

This chapter has demonstrated that MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales made extensive efforts to give representation to their home territories across the different phases of debate on Brexit, during Theresa May's premiership. There were some partisan differences in the extent of this focus, but members of both sub-state nationalist and Britain-wide parties were heavily engaged with territorial dimensions to Brexit. Contributions containing claims to represent sub-state territories were varied in focus, with frequent attempts at representation of material interests, public opinion and sub-state political institutions. However, evidence of sub-state representation having influenced the course of the parliamentary Brexit debates is limited primarily to second order issues, while the wider impact of this behaviour is difficult to quantify.

An outstanding question is how far the findings discussed here offer insights into how MPs with seats outside England go about representing their sub-state territories, and with what consequences, that can be extrapolated beyond Brexit. A combination of the extremely polarising nature of Brexit, the post-2017 hung parliament and divisions in the main Britain-wide parties made the 2015–19 period a highly atypical one in British parliamentary politics (Russell 2021). This undoubtedly makes it difficult to generalise from this particular episode. That said, it is worth emphasising that many of the trends identified in this chapter are consistent with the wider samples of contributions reported in chapters 5 and 6. For example, variation in how far different party groups of MPs engaged in territorial claim-making in the 2015–19 period was broadly similar in

the Brexit-related debates to the oral questions and Westminster Hall debates discussed in chapter 5. The SNP, Scottish Conservatives and DUP were particularly engaged with territorial dimensions, with this somewhat less true for Welsh Labour. It has also been shown that wider developments identified in chapter 6, such as MPs acting as champions of devolved governments, were an important feature of contributions to Brexit-related debates by members with seats outside England. This suggests that the high intensity of sub-state territorial representation in key Brexit-related debates, and the innovative forms this behaviour took, were part of a broader trend rather than unique to Brexit. While Brexit was certainly an issue that lent itself to a heavy focus on territorial representation, this was in a context where MPs with seats outside England were already heavily – and increasingly – focused on their territorial units.

In some respects the Brexit years acted as a spur to further development of the post-devolution sub-state territorial roles of MPs. This was most clearly true of ‘linkages’ between the devolved institutions and Westminster. These relationships tightened in the Brexit context, when the Scottish and Welsh governments actively sought to use sympathetic MPs to promote amendments on their behalf. An experienced observer confirmed that this was ‘novel’ (interview 14). It was especially notable that at times these MPs acted co-operatively to present a common front on behalf of the devolved administrations, a dynamic that has not been identified in previous debates included in this study. The extent of inter-institutional ‘linkage’ in this context set precedents that may well be repeated in future cases where one or more of the devolved governments have an institutional interest in policy being debated at Westminster. Indeed, following the end of the period of this study the Welsh government replicated Brexit-era tactics by again publishing amendments to Westminster legislation, this time to the Internal Market Bill (Welsh Government 2020). As such, even though the impact of MPs with seats outside England on the course of Brexit was limited, the debates between 2015 and 2019 can be seen as a significant juncture in the evolution of the sub-state territorial roles of MPs following devolution.

8. English MPs and territorial representation: the contrasting cases of Cornwall and Yorkshire

The majority of this thesis has concentrated on MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This chapter now considers how far and in what ways English MPs can also be said to engage in substantive representation of areas larger than constituencies. Given that members with seats in England comprise an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, and the absence of devolved institutions equivalent to those elsewhere, the context that these politicians operate in is very different. To the extent that there is existing literature on territorial representation by English MPs it overwhelmingly focuses on electoral districts, finding that these politicians devote a considerable amount of time to handling casework and refer to their constituencies extensively in Commons contributions (Gay 2005; McKay 2020; Norton and Wood 1993). There has been very little previous research on how territorial areas within England of a scale larger than constituencies are represented and imagined in parliament. Yet opinion polls provide evidence of strong levels of public identification with geographical areas at an intermediate level between the state and electoral constituencies (YouGov 2018a). MPs can be expected to reflect these identities in Commons contributions, so the absence of studies addressing this leaves a significant gap in empirical knowledge about the roles and behaviour of English backbenchers.

Following an initial discussion of different territorial levels that English MPs might seek to represent, this chapter focuses on members with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire, two counties with particularly distinctive identities. Patterns of territorial claim-making by backbenchers with constituencies in these areas are compared and discussed. Within each case the findings are broken down by party and by the different forms of claim to represent sub-state territories that have been discussed in this thesis. To facilitate this the content analysis method used elsewhere in this thesis is applied to MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire (see chapter 4). The sample for the quantitative results reported here comprises 1,261 contributions by backbench MPs between 1992 and 2019, consisting of 849 oral questions and 412 Westminster Hall speeches. Some contributions from legislative debates are also referred to. These particularly inform a section that discusses the engagement of MPs from these areas in debates about establishing new political institutions at county level. In addition to the content analysis, the chapter draws on four interviews with MPs who had represented constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire (see Appendix 2). It is recognised that this number of interviewees cannot capture the full diversity of perspectives and experiences relevant to the questions the chapter is concerned with. Nevertheless, those who were interviewed did offer valuable insights into how the county level is represented in the Commons.

The decision to focus on two areas means that it is only possible to reach tentative conclusions about the nature of territorial representation by MPs across England as a whole. However, the chapter can serve as a starting point for a wider research agenda that could incorporate other areas and geographical scales within England. It additionally makes important contributions to literatures concerned with the politics of Cornwall and Yorkshire. In each case existing research has focused on territorial identities (Deacon 2009; Fletcher 2012), electoral dynamics (Giovannini 2016; Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe 2016) and proposed decentralisation (Willett and Giovannini 2014). Yet there has been no previous systematic research on how MPs seek to represent these areas in parliament. The comparison between the behaviour of MPs with seats in Cornwall and in Yorkshire is also interesting in itself. The findings from this suggest that there are important differences between how the territorial sphere manifests itself politically in these areas, which may carry implications for ongoing debates about decentralisation in England.

England and the United Kingdom

The separate treatment of territorial representation by English MPs in this thesis is justified because those members operate in a markedly different geographical and institutional context. Fundamental to this distinction is England's preponderance in size, which means that its MPs form a large majority in the House of Commons. It follows from this that English voters usually get the governments they vote for.³⁶ English MPs also dominate Westminster politics, typically holding most front-bench posts and other parliamentary offices such as committee chairs. Westminster retains responsibility in England for matters devolved elsewhere, which means a significant portion of business considered by the Commons relates solely to England, notably in fields such as education, health and housing. Largely as a consequence of these factors, English MPs are seldom identified as a distinct grouping. It is rare for parties and politicians to explicitly present themselves as 'English', or to identify English interests or public opinion as different from those elsewhere in the UK. One indicator of this is that at the 2019 general election no Britain-wide party published an 'English' manifesto, equivalent to the separate platforms presented to voters in Scotland and Wales.³⁷ Therefore, while groups of MPs were elected on platforms to 'make Scotland's voice heard' (Scottish National Party 2019, 13), 'stand up for Wales' (Welsh Labour

³⁶ Since 1945 there have been only two occasions where the party that won the largest number of seats in England at a general election did not subsequently lead the UK government – 1950 and 1964 (Russell and Sheldon 2018, 100).

³⁷ The Conservatives published a separate English manifesto in 2015, containing proposals for 'English votes for English laws' (ITV News 2015). This was not repeated in 2017 and 2019.

2019) and ‘speak up for Northern Ireland’ (Democratic Unionist Party 2019, 4), none were explicitly elected on a party platform to speak for England. The implicit assumption behind this is that England is well represented without any need for its distinctive interests or trends in public opinion to be explicitly articulated.

Academic and political interest in England as a distinct political unit has, nevertheless, increased somewhat since devolution elsewhere (Henderson and Wyn Jones 2021; Kenny 2014). Growing levels of identification as ‘English’ have been detected in opinion surveys, with evidence suggesting that this has been an important factor in shaping public attitudes on some issues, notably Brexit (Henderson et al. 2017). There has also been interest in the constitutional ‘English question’ – including whether, and in what form, new sub-state institutional arrangements should be introduced for England (Hazell 2006; Kenny, McLean, and Paun 2018). As noted in chapter 2, attempts to establish regional assemblies in England were unsuccessful under new Labour. There has subsequently been limited decentralisation to parts of England through ‘devolution deals’ and the introduction of ‘metro mayors’. Within parliament reforms known as ‘English votes for English laws’ (EVEL), which required legislative provisions applying only to England to be approved by the majority of English MPs, were introduced in 2015 (Gover and Kenny 2016). However, these were then repealed in 2021, having failed to provide England with an ‘enhanced voice’ (Gover and Kenny 2018a, 2021). This leaves little formal recognition of the English policy sphere in the UK’s constitutional structures, even though Westminster often acts as a *de facto* English legislature.

Approach and case selection

There are several different territorial levels, larger than electoral constituencies, that could potentially be the focus for analysis of territorial representation by English MPs. These reflect ‘nested identities’ within England, which MPs and parties may invoke in particular contexts (Herb and Kaplan 1999).

One option could have been to investigate the extent to which MPs seek to represent England as a whole. A few parliamentarians have sought to provide an ‘English voice’, motivated by a perception that the platform devolution has offered politicians from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to advocate on behalf of those territories is denied to England (Gover and Kenny 2016). This has been a particular focus for former Conservative minister John Redwood. For instance, in

2016 Redwood called for the BBC charter to include a requirement that the broadcaster ‘recognise England as a nation, just as it recognises Scotland as a nation’ (12 May 2016, HC Deb vol. 609, col. 738). Meanwhile, during debate on the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill, he objected to amendments requiring consultation with the devolved governments on the grounds that ‘it is very important that the process and solution are fair to England’ (6 February 2017, HC Deb vol. 621, col. 154). These instances fit squarely within the criteria for defining territorial representative claims applied to the UK’s other component territories in this thesis (see chapter 3). However, based on this author’s informal impressions of parliamentary discourse it was anticipated that explicit claims to represent England would have been highly infrequent during the period covered by this study. Contributions such as Redwood’s remain notable for their rarity. Even after devolution elsewhere, English politicians have often been uncomfortable with explicitly engaging with England as a distinct unit, in part due to fears that could damage their party’s electoral support outside England and potentially undermine the Union (Denham 2018; Gover and Kenny 2018b). Using the sort of manual coding method applied to MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to identify such claims would likely have taken a significant amount of time, only to confirm that explicit substantive representation of England as a unit is much rarer than for the other parts of the UK. The focus here is therefore on geographical areas *within* England, which have been the subject of far greater attention from MPs and party leaders over recent decades than England itself (Ayres, Flinders, and Sandford 2018; Denham 2018). This restricts comparability with the analysis of territorial claim-making by MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in chapter 5. Nevertheless, it can tell us something about the relevance of intermediate territorial identities between constituencies and the state for English MPs, and about the particular dynamics in play when it comes to Commons representation of areas without legislative devolution.

Even within England there are several territorial levels, aside from constituencies, that could potentially be a focus for territorial representation. It is common for the north of England to be spoken of as a distinct political community, with material interests, cultural traditions and trends in public opinion which are assumed to differ from England as a whole (Hayton, Giovannini, and Berry 2016).³⁸ McLean (2016) has noted how northern MPs organised as a bloc in the 1970s, opposing Scottish devolution in protest at perceived neglect of their own region. While acknowledging the contemporary significance of this level of territorial area as an object of representative claims, it was decided to focus on counties in this chapter. English county labels are

³⁸ It is much rarer for the ‘south’ of England to be viewed as having collective interests and concerns.

often highly salient for people raised within their boundaries. A survey in 2018 found that 48% of the English population identified ‘very strongly’ or ‘fairly strongly’ as being from a county (YouGov 2018a). These are mostly regional rather than national identities, and the strength with which they are held varies markedly. While county identities are strong and distinctive in parts of the north and south west, this is less true elsewhere (Easton 2018). Cornwall and Yorkshire were chosen as case studies as they have particularly strong and distinctive identities. This enables the behaviour of MPs in cases where substantive representation is expected to be most likely to occur to be examined first. If little evidence of sub-state territorial representation is found, it would suggest that is also true for other counties in England where identification with the county label is weaker. The survey conducted in 2018 found Yorkshire and Cornwall to rank first and third respectively in terms of strength of county allegiance (Easton 2018). Cornwall is included rather than Lancashire, which ranked second on this measure, to facilitate comparison between two cases where county identity takes notably different forms, and where other contextual factors such as size, the political make-up of MPs and decentralisation arrangements differ considerably.

Cornwall is unique among England’s counties in having quasi-national characteristics (Deacon 2009). Located in the far south west, it is sometimes presented as part of Britain’s ‘Celtic fringe’, along with Scotland and Wales. Since the twentieth century a popular movement has drawn attention to Cornwall’s distinctive history (Willett 2013). There has also been a revival of the Cornish language and promotion of a distinctive iconography, including the St Piran’s flag. Research in 2008 found that given a forced choice between Cornish, English and British identities, 57% of Cornwall’s residents chose Cornish (Deacon 2009, 10). A Cornish nationalist party, Mebyon Kernow (MK), was formed in the 1950s. MK has never won a seat at Westminster but has regularly had a small local government presence. At general elections party competition in Cornwall is primarily between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats (see Table 8.1). During the period covered by this study the Liberal Democrats dominated Cornish representation from 1997 until 2010. The Conservatives won three seats in Cornwall in 2010, their first in the county since 1992–97, then went on to secure clean sweeps of the six seats in Cornwall in 2015 and 2017. No devolved assembly has been established in Cornwall, although there has at times been an active campaign for one (Willett and Giovannini 2014). In 2015 a ‘devolution deal’ was agreed between Cornwall Council and central government, providing for limited decentralisation without the requirement for an elected mayor that applied to other areas of England (Willett 2016).

Table 8.1: Party breakdown of Cornish seats in the House of Commons following general elections, 1992–2017

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
Conservative	3	0	0	0	3	6	6
Labour	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Lib Dem	2	4	4	5	3	0	0

In contrast to Cornwall, one of England’s smaller counties, Yorkshire is its largest. Yorkshire has been described as a ‘cultural region’, ‘rooted in objective realities such as landscape, built environment, economy and dialect’ (Wagg and Russell 2010, viii). Its distinctive identity is expressed through symbols such as the white rose and the survival of a relatively vibrant local media, in particular the *Yorkshire Post* newspaper. ‘Yorkshireness’ does not carry national aspirations for the vast majority of people in the area. It is rather a form of regionalism, in some respects closely associated with broader northern English identity (Fletcher and Swain 2016). The dominant party is Labour, though there are also pockets of Conservative strength (see Table 8.2). A small regional party, now known as the Yorkshire Party, was established in 2014 and campaigns for Yorkshire-wide devolution (Giovannini 2016). This has won council seats, but not had a breakthrough in parliamentary elections. There are no devolved political institutions for Yorkshire as a whole, despite campaigning for these by some MPs and council leaders. Instead separate mayor-led combined authorities have been established in South and West Yorkshire, though not yet East or North Yorkshire.

Table 8.2: Party breakdown of Yorkshire seats in the House of Commons following general elections, 1992–2017³⁹

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
Conservative	21	7	7	9	18	18	16
Labour	32	44	44	41	30	31	35
Lib Dem	0	2	2	3	3	2	0

Overall patterns of territorial claim-making by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire

The most striking finding from the content analysis is that Cornwall’s small number of MPs seek to offer substantive representation to the county level in a much greater proportion of their parliamentary contributions than MPs with seats in Yorkshire (see Table 8.3). Of 182 sampled contributions by Cornish MPs, 67 – or 37% – included a territorial representative claim. That is higher than the equivalent figure for Scotland and Wales, and lower only than for Northern Ireland

³⁹ Constituencies fully or partially within the contemporary boundaries of North, South, East and West Yorkshire were counted as Yorkshire seats.

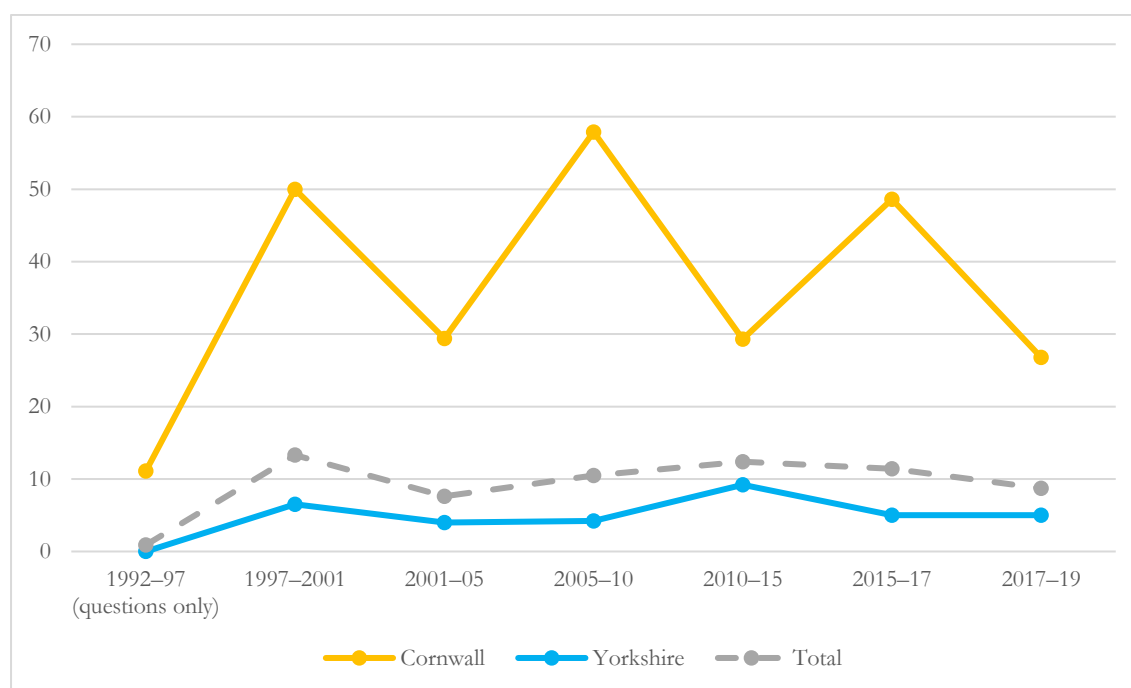
(see chapter 5). By contrast, only 57 of the 1079 sampled contributions by MPs with constituencies in Yorkshire included a representative claim relating to the county as a whole. At 5%, that was by far the lowest rate for any of the five areas included in the analysis. The much higher rate of territorial claim-making by Cornish compared to Yorkshire MPs is a consistent finding across the seven parliaments (see Table 8.3 and Figure 8.1).

Table 8.3: Sub-state territorial claim-making by area and parliament, by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Area	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Cornwall	1/9 (11.1%)	10/20 (50%)	5/17 (29.4%)	11/19 (57.9%)	12/41 (29.3%)	17/35 (48.6%)	11/41 (26.8%)	67/182 (36.8%)
Yorkshire	0/109 (0%)	7/108 (6.5%)	4/101 (4%)	6/143 (4.2%)	20/217 (9.2%)	10/201 (5%)	10/200 (5%)	57/1079 (5.3%)
Total	1/118 (0.9%)	17/128 (13.3%)	9/118 (7.6%)	17/162 (10.5%)	32/258 (12.4%)	27/236 (11.4%)	21/241 (8.7%)	124/1261 (9.8%)

* Questions only

Figure 8.1: Proportion of coded contributions to contain a sub-state territorial claim by area and parliament, by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



From 1997–2001 onwards Cornish MPs made territorial claims in at least 25% of sampled contributions, peaking at 58% in 2005–10. There was significant variation from parliament-to-parliament, which may partly be a product of the small number of MPs returned from Cornish constituencies. This means that the representational styles of individual members are likely to have influenced the results to a greater extent than for areas with more MPs. High rates of territorial

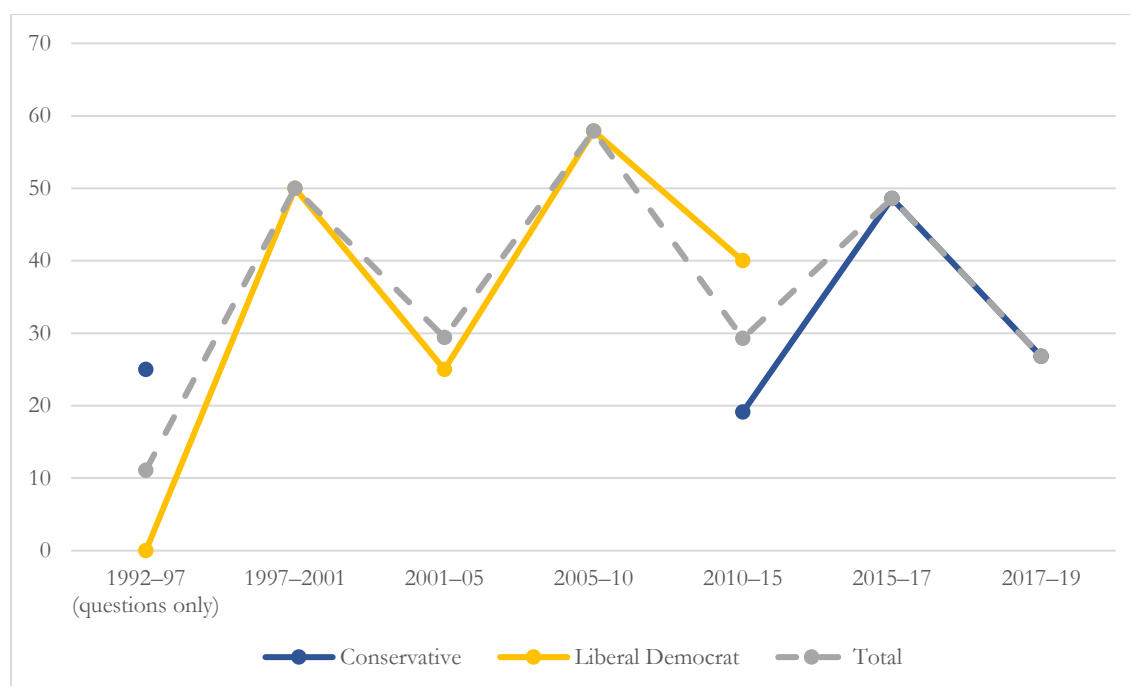
claim-making were identified among MPs from both of the two dominant parties in Cornwall. Liberal Democrats sought to give substantive representation to Cornwall in 40% of contributions, while this was a little lower for Conservative members, at 33% (see Table 8.4 and Figure 8.2). These results are consistent with the qualitative finding of Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe (2016, 777), that ‘Cornish identity has become a political idea that all parties feel that they have to engage with’. Both at elections and in parliament, Liberal Democrat and Conservative MPs have felt that there is advantage to be gained from displaying their ‘Cornishness’. A Conservative suggested that this ‘comes back to the geography of Cornwall’, which produces an ‘island mentality’ that makes it ‘much more natural’ to speak to regional identities than for MPs from elsewhere in England (interview 17). Meanwhile, a Liberal Democrat reflected that ‘over the years recognising and respecting the Cornishness of Cornwall has become mainstreamed’, to the point where it had become ‘essential’ in electoral terms (interview 22). This interviewee attributed this partly to politicians latching on to Cornish identity becoming ‘more commercially mainstream’, manifest in businesses increasingly using the Cornish language and St Piran’s flag in marketing. After the party gained a clean sweep of Cornish constituencies in 2015, Conservative MPs made territorial claims in relation to the county in almost half of sampled contributions until the 2017 general election. The high level of territorial claim-making by Cornish MPs thus continued even after the Liberal Democrats, historically the Westminster party most associated with promoting Cornish interests, ceased to hold seats there.

Table 8.4: Sub-state territorial claim-making by MPs with constituencies in Cornwall, by party and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Party	1992–97*	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19	Total
Conservative	1/4 (25%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	4/21 (19.1%)	17/35 (48.6%)	11/41 (26.8%)	33/101 (32.7%)
Labour	n/a	n/a	1/1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/1 (100%)
Liberal Democrat	0/5 (0%)	10/20 (50%)	4/16 (25%)	11/19 (57.9%)	8/20 (40%)	n/a	n/a	33/80 (41.3%)
Total	1/9 (11.1%)	10/20 (50%)	5/17 (29.4%)	11/19 (57.9%)	12/41 (29.3%)	17/35 (48.6%)	11/41 (26.8%)	67/182 (36.8%)

* Questions only

Figure 8.2: Proportion of coded contributions by MPs with constituencies in Cornwall to contain a sub-state territorial claim by party and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



The rate of territorial claim-making by Yorkshire MPs did not exceed one in ten coded contributions in any of the parliaments in the sample. The highest rate was 10% in 2010–15, before dropping back to 5% in 2015–17 and 2017–19 (see Table 8.3 and Figure 8.1). The rate of claim-making by Labour MPs, 6%, was higher than that among Conservative MPs, which was 4% (see Table 8.5). The highest proportion of Labour contributions to include territorial claims was recorded for 2010–15, but even this represented less than one in seven coded contributions (see Figure 8.3). A likely factor explaining the low frequency of territorial claim-making by MPs with constituencies in Yorkshire is the absence of the same sense that invoking a county-level territorial identity is integral to prospects of electoral success found in Cornwall. One consequence of this is that the major parties have been prepared to run candidates with few previous connections to Yorkshire. A long-serving politician reflected that a lot of MPs in the county were ‘from London’ and used the Yorkshire seat as ‘a convenience’ (interview 15). This interviewee suggested that many of these MPs were focused on ‘running the country’ and had ‘little identity with Yorkshire’. This has been particularly true among Labour MPs, which included frontbench figures such as Ed Balls, Hilary Benn, Yvette Cooper and Ed Miliband during the period covered by the study – none of whom were born or grew up in the county. Where these MPs made backbench speeches they typically focused on issues of national political interest and rarely framed contributions as of specific relevance to Yorkshire. By contrast, during the entire period of the study no MP with a Cornish seat sat in the cabinet or the shadow cabinet, with the majority having strong personal

connections to the area.⁴⁰ To adopt the language of one classic typology of Westminster roles, a far greater proportion of MPs for Yorkshire constituencies have been ‘ministerial aspirants’ and ‘policy advocates’, orientations associated with involvement in national politics (Searing 1994, 32). Cornish MPs, on the other hand, tend to focus extensively on the ‘local promoter’ role associated with ‘constituency members’, but which in the Cornish case often entails promoting the interests of Cornwall as a whole. A Liberal Democrat suggested that this had resulted in Cornish MPs being ‘pigeon-holed’ as ‘parochial’, and being overlooked for promotion, indicating that they had themselves found this ‘frustrating’ but were not willing to ‘bury [their] Cornishness in order to shin up the greasy pole’ (interview 22).

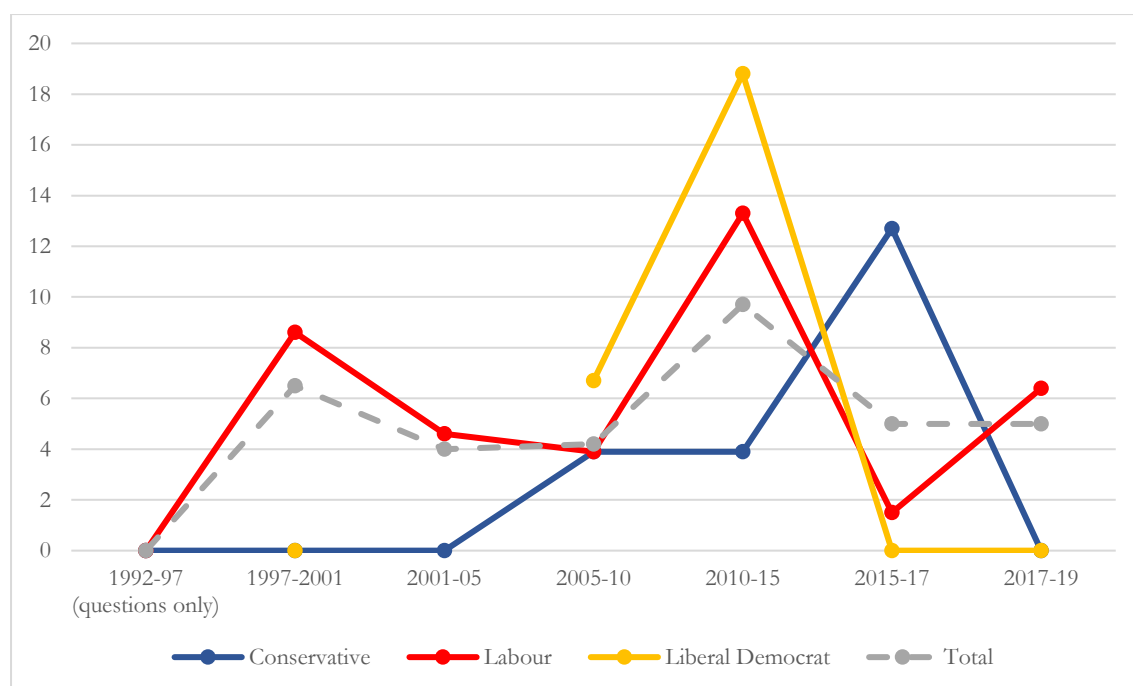
Table 8.5: Sub-state territorial claim-making by MPs with constituencies in Yorkshire, by party and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Party	1992-97*	1997-2001	2001-05	2005-10	2010-15	2015-17	2017-19	Total
Change UK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
Conservative	0/48 (0%)	0/21 (0%)	0/13 (0%)	1/26 (3.9%)	4/103 (3.9%)	8/63 (12.7%)	0/42 (0%)	13/316 (4.1%)
Labour	0/61 (0%)	7/81 (8.6%)	4/88 (4.6%)	4/102 (3.9%)	13/98 (13.3%)	2/130 (1.5%)	10/156 (6.4%)	40/716 (5.6%)
Liberal Democrat	n/a	0/6 (0%)	n/a	1/15 (6.7%)	3/16 (18.8%)	0/8 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	4/46 (8.7%)
Total	0/109 (0%)	7/108 (6.5%)	4/101 (4%)	6/143 (4.2%)	20/207 (9.7%)	10/201 (5%)	10/200 (5%)	57/1079 (5.3%)

* Questions only

⁴⁰ Several Cornish MPs were junior ministers during the post-2010 coalition and Conservative governments. George Eustice was appointed to the cabinet in 2020, after the end of the period covered by this study.

Figure 8.3: Proportion of coded contributions by MPs with constituencies in Yorkshire to contain a sub-state territorial claim by party and parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



Another factor that may partially explain the low rate of claims to represent Yorkshire is the range of alternative levels available as potential foci for territorial representation. As already noted, northern identities are highly salient in British politics, and in some contexts are given precedence. An interviewee acknowledged an ‘unresolved tension’ over whether the county or ‘the north’ should be seen as the ‘primary identity’ (interview 15). Many Yorkshire MPs have seats in major cities such as Leeds and Sheffield, and some may also see those areas as a more relevant geographical reference point than the wider county. Furthermore, the content analysis picked up that MPs from Yorkshire frequently refer to North, South, East and West Yorkshire (see Table 8.6 and Figure 8.4).⁴¹ In five of the seven parliaments, there were at least as many territorial claims relating to the parts of Yorkshire as to Yorkshire as a whole. These areas map on to Yorkshire’s historic ‘ridings’, and correspond to contemporary local government districts and/or combined authorities, which is one factor behind this finding.

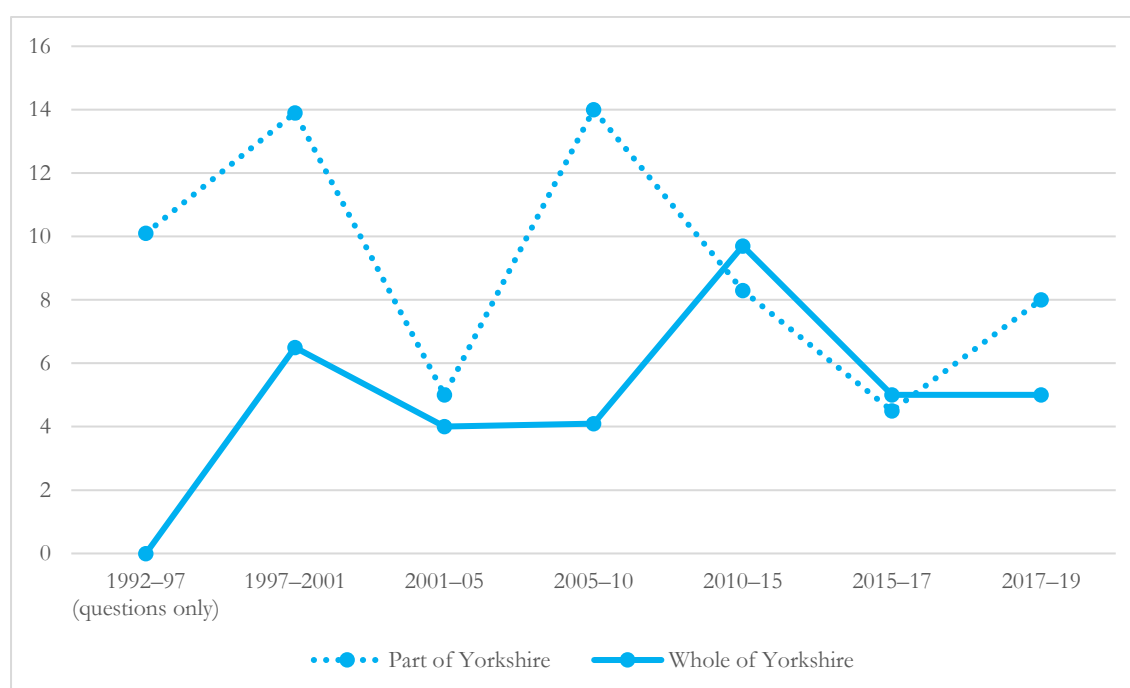
⁴¹ Contributions containing a territorial claim in relation to North, South, East or West Yorkshire, but not in relation to Yorkshire as a whole, were coded in a separate category to facilitate this analysis.

Table 8.6: Territorial claim-making by MPs in relation to North, South, East or West Yorkshire, by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19

Parliament	Claims in relation to part of Yorkshire
1992–97*	11/109 (10.1%)
1997–2001	15/108 (13.9%)
2001–05	5/101 (5%)
2005–10	20/143 (14%)
2010–15	18/217 (8.3%)
2015–17	9/201 (4.5%)
2017–19	16/200 (8%)
Total	94/1079 (8.7%)

* Questions only

Figure 8.4: Proportion of coded contributions by MPs with constituencies in Yorkshire to contain territorial claims relating to Yorkshire as a whole, and to North, South, East or West Yorkshire, by parliament, 1992–97 to 2017–19 (%)



The frequent references to sub-units within Yorkshire might also be indicative of the difficulty of identifying material interests common to the county as a whole, given its vast size and diversity. A Conservative, whose constituency is in North Yorkshire, explained that they were ‘very proud of Yorkshire and its heritage’ (interview 21). However, this MP felt that sometimes North Yorkshire’s ‘best interests are not served by presenting the Yorkshire case’, since ‘if you just look at things on a Yorkshire-wide basis everything would go to somewhere like Leeds’ (interview 21). Even if

claims in relation to Yorkshire as a whole and its component sub-regions were combined, the rate of territorial claim-making would be considerably lower than for Cornwall, and for the devolved territories. While substantive representation of Yorkshire surfaces occasionally in parliamentary debate, on this evidence it does not appear to be a major feature of the behaviour of most Yorkshire MPs in the same way that substantive representation of Cornwall is a major feature of the behaviour of Cornish MPs.

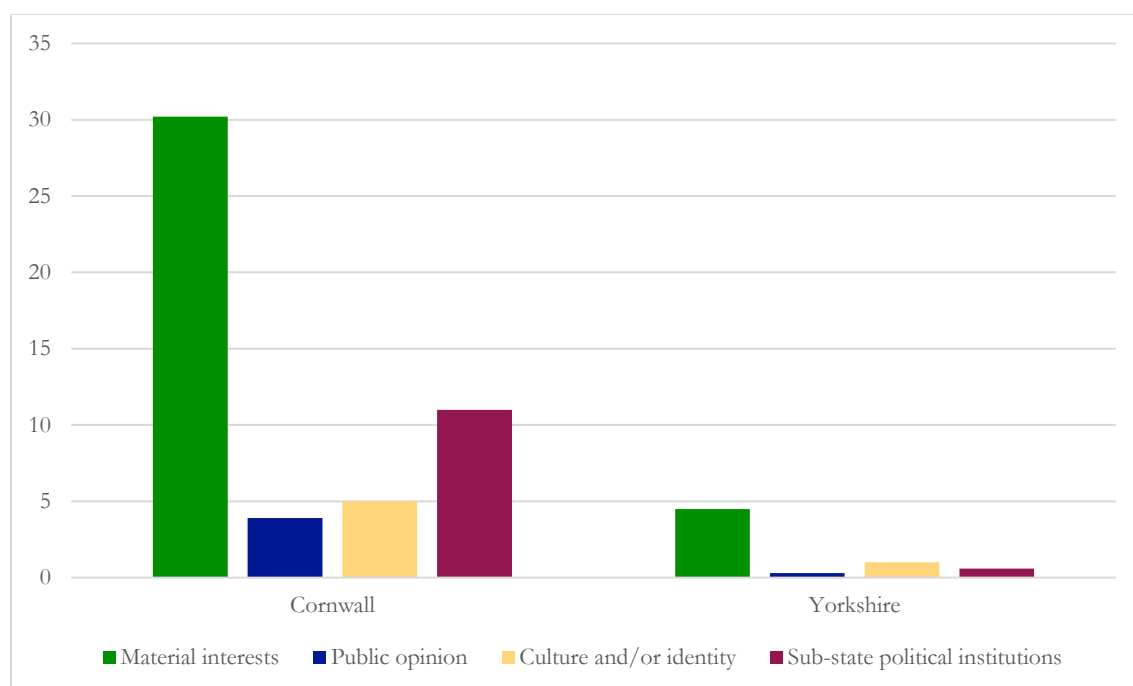
Content of territorial claims by MPs with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire

Table 8.7 and Figure 8.5 show the proportion of contributions by MPs with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire coded within each of the categories of territorial claim in the typology introduced in chapter 3. For both counties claims to represent material interests were by far the most prevalent, as was also true for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (see chapter 5). Claims relating to sub-state political institutions were the second most common form for Cornish MPs, but extremely infrequent among those with Yorkshire seats. This is not surprising – Cornwall had county-wide local government from 2009, while there were no Yorkshire-wide political institutions during the period covered. The content analysis picked up a small number of claims by MPs from each county in the public opinion, and identity and culture, categories.

Table 8.7: Sub-state territorial claim-making by form of territorial claim and territorial area, by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire

Territorial area	Form of sub-state territorial representation	Territorial claim in this category
Cornwall	Material interests	55/182 (30.2%)
	Public opinion	7/182 (3.9%)
	Identity and culture	9/182 (5%)
	Sub-state political institutions	20/182 (11%)
Yorkshire	Material interests	48/1079 (4.5%)
	Public opinion	3/1079 (0.3%)
	Identity and culture	11/1079 (1%)
	Sub-state political institutions	6/1079 (0.6%)

Figure 8.5: Proportion of coded contributions to include each form of territorial claim by territorial area, by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire (%)



Over 30% of sampled contributions by Cornish MPs included a claim coded in the material interests category. This reflects a heavy emphasis on campaigning for economic investment into the county. A Conservative noted that ‘for the last 50 years, Cornwall has been one of the most deprived parts of the UK’ and that one of the main things that they had focused on had been ‘trying to address that – both in terms of government support, but also in terms of inward investment from the private sector and trying to promote the opportunities I think we have in Cornwall’ (interview 17). This MP’s ambition was to ‘change the perception of Cornwall from being just a place to go on holiday to somewhere that’s also a good place to do business’. One notable set of material interests claims by Cornish MPs were associated with the issue of regional development funding. Within the sample this theme was first raised in 1995 by Sebastian Coe, then Conservative MP for Falmouth and Camborne, when he asked ministers to ‘look closely at the time taken to process applications in Cornwall’, following reports of delays (12 July 1995, HC Deb vol. 263, col. 942). In the 1990s a campaign developed for Cornwall to be granted ‘Objective One’ regional development funding by the European Commission. Cornwall had not been eligible, since it was combined for the purposes of calculating deprivation levels with Devon, its more affluent neighbour. Local campaigners argued that this was an injustice, since on its own Cornwall had a lower GDP per capita than any part of the UK receiving support (Willett 2013). The case was taken up at Westminster by Liberal Democrat Andrew George, who placed this in the context

of ‘agony and suffering’, following the closure of the last tin mine (5 March 1998, HC Deb vol. 307, col. 1186). Objective One status was ultimately granted in 1999. The issue of regional development funding was again salient following the Brexit referendum. At this point a Conservative, Steve Double, called for a ‘less bureaucratic and more effectively targeted’ programme to continue funding poorer regions such as Cornwall (12 October 2016, HC Deb vol. 615, col. 298). These contributions suggest that Cornwall’s relative economic deprivation is an important factor contributing to a focus on material concerns. Similar patterns of representation of county-level material interests would not necessarily be expected among MPs with seats in more prosperous counties.

Material interests claims in relation to Yorkshire were identified in 4% of contributions. Although this is far lower than for Cornwall, it accounts for the vast majority of territorial claims by Yorkshire MPs. These covered a broad range of issues. Those arising on multiple occasions included flood defences, following a number of severe flooding episodes, and promoting tourism. Poor transport links have also been a recurrent concern for Yorkshire MPs, with both Conservative and Labour members calling for infrastructure investment. Examples include Conservative Stuart Andrew asking for confirmation that the High Speed Two railway would come to Yorkshire (22 June 2011, HC Deb vol. 520, col. 332), and Labour’s Caroline Flint complaining that London had received five times the transport spend of Yorkshire and the Humber (19 February 2019, HC Deb vol. 654, col. 532WH). It is notable that these issues are devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, so do not feature in the same way in the contributions of MPs from those parts of the UK. In the absence of legislative devolution the UK government remains the key policy actor responsible for these matters in England. Outside the chamber, there is an active All-Party Parliamentary Group on Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, which is ‘always well-attended’ (interview 21). An interviewee indicated that its focus had primarily been material issues, such as ‘impacts of Brexit’, ‘investment, public and private sector’, and within that category ‘transport, skills, new industries, green energy’ (interview 21). This group meets ‘every couple of months’, often hosting a minister, presenting an opportunity for Yorkshire MPs to lobby for government support in these areas. There is hence some sense of Yorkshire as a geographical area with distinct interests that require representation, even if the findings here suggest that the county level is far less of a focus during parliamentary speeches than for MPs with seats in Cornwall.

The proportion of sampled contributions coded within the identity and culture category was small for both Cornwall and Yorkshire, at 5% and 1% respectively. Nevertheless, a number of these representative claims by Cornish MPs are illustrative of how the territory is sometimes imagined as having quasi-national characteristics. Claims stressing Cornwall's distinctiveness were a feature of the Objective One campaign, which George argued had been successful in securing confirmation that '[g]eographically, historically, culturally, constitutionally, communally, and economically, Cornwall is an entity in its own right' (11 January 2000, HC Deb vol. 342, col. 3WH). This framing is consistent with Willett's finding that the campaign was not only an important focus around which Cornish economic interests were articulated, but can also be interpreted as a 'significant moment of the mobilisation of a Cornish national identity' (Willett 2013, 307). More recently, in 2017, Conservative Scott Mann called for legislation to allow the St Piran's flag to be displayed on number plates and driving licenses. Mann's case was supported by his Conservative colleague, Derek Thomas, who framed the proposal as a way of enabling residents to 'celebrate Cornish identity' (19 April 2017, HC Deb vol. 624, col. 377WH). In interview a Liberal Democrat stressed that they saw themselves as a 'Cornishman, not an Englishman' and claimed that it was a 'statement of indisputable fact' that Cornish was a different type of identity to other county identities in England (interview 22). Similarly, the Cornish Conservative who was interviewed asserted that Cornish was a 'distinct national identity', citing recognition as a 'national minority' by the Council of Europe (interview 17). Both of these politicians had been particularly engaged in promoting Cornish interests, and it is unlikely that all Cornish MPs would go so far in proclaiming nationhood. Indeed, the Conservative acknowledged that 'some of us are much more inclined' to promote Cornish identity than others, which was attributed to differences in 'personal sense of identity' and 'the strength of that sense of identity within our own constituencies'. Even so, it is striking that quasi-nationalist arguments in relation to Cornwall have been adopted by Conservatives, who in other parts of the country might be expected to be unsympathetic to such causes given the primacy afforded to British identity in the Conservative tradition. The willingness of some English Conservatives to adopt this sort of identity is under-acknowledged in existing accounts of the place of national identities in contemporary Conservative thinking (English, Hayton, and Kenny 2009; Gamble 2016). These generally focus on how English and British identities are balanced, without much consideration of other identities within England.

Although not captured by the formal sampling, another campaign that aims at promoting Cornish identity seeks the inclusion of a tick-box to identify as 'Cornish' on census forms. This has been supported by both Liberal Democrat and Conservative MPs, at different times, again indicating

the cross-party acceptance of the case for promoting Cornish identity. In 2009, Liberal Democrat Dan Rogerson tabled an amendment to the parliamentary motion setting out the questions for the 2011 census, which sought to add this tick-box to census forms, but this was defeated (1 December 2009, HC Deb vol. 501, col. 1031–1032). Ahead of the following census, in 2021, this case was taken up by Conservatives. In interview one supporter argued that the Welsh, Scottish and Irish all had tick-boxes, and that ‘if we’re going to give the Cornish recognition we should too’ (interview 17). Despite the overwhelming support that this campaign has received among local MPs, ministers have continued to resist this proposal, citing the position of the Office for National Statistics. The failure to achieve policy objectives in this case may be indicative of the challenges Cornish MPs can face in seeking to influence the government given their small number, even when united and drawn entirely from the governing party, as has been true since 2015. With just six MPs from Cornwall, this group was not large enough to be able to threaten the government majority, given the limited interest this issue generated outside Cornwall.

The small number of identity and culture claims by Yorkshire MPs did not carry nationalist connotations, instead focusing on themes such as the importance of regional television in shaping culture in the county, and the opening stages of the *Tour de France* cycling race being held in Yorkshire in 2014. Another set of identity and culture claims related to recognising Yorkshire’s mining heritage. A number of these were made during the passage of the Coal Industry Bill in 1992–97. MPs including Labour’s John Gunnell, David Hinchliffe and Bill O’Brien, together with Conservative Elizabeth Peacock, proposed amendments seeking to secure funding to guarantee the future of the then Yorkshire Mining Museum. This was presented by Gunnell as a way of ensuring that a ‘vital part of the culture and heritage of Yorkshire’ would be preserved (22 March 1994, HC Deb vol. 240, col. 147). Although these amendments were initially resisted, the government ultimately offered £100,000 per year of funding for the museum, and other mining museums in Scotland and Wales. Later in the 1992–97 parliament the government afforded the Yorkshire museum national status. This set of territorial claims was therefore successful in policy terms. This may reflect the relatively symbolic nature of the request, with a comparatively small financial commitment involved. However, there is a strong likelihood that the cross-party nature of this campaign was also relevant, given the involvement of government backbenchers such as Peacock, at a time when the government had only a small majority. This example serves to show that even though it is overall rare for MPs to engage with Yorkshire as a distinct territorial sphere, members with seats in the county are willing to do so in specific contexts, where this is seen as useful to achieve desired ends.

Few claims to represent public opinion in Cornwall or Yorkshire were identified. This may partly be a product of the absence of county-level public opinion data. Polls of voters within specific parts of England are infrequent, while there are no elections to devolved legislatures in Cornwall or Yorkshire. The few public opinion claims in relation to Cornwall often relied on less scientific measures such as petitions. Four of the seven public opinion claims by Cornish MPs were made by Andrew George, with three making the case for a devolved Cornish Assembly. In one speech George noted that over 50,000 people had signed ‘declaration sheets’ in support (15 May 2002, HC Deb vol. 385, col. 266WH) and in another he presented this proposal as the ‘settled will of Cornwall’ (23 November 2005, HC Deb vol. 439, col. 455WH). In contrast to the regular references to the results of referendums by MPs from the devolved parts of the UK, there were few instances of this by MPs from Cornwall or Yorkshire. In the sample of key Brexit-related debates (see chapter 7) there were four examples of public opinion claims by Cornish MPs, and none by Yorkshire MPs. Although several Yorkshire MPs were high-profile participants in the Brexit debates, including Labour’s Hilary Benn, Yvette Cooper and Caroline Flint, and Conservative David Davis, they did not make reference to public opinion at the county level in speeches analysed for this research. That these MPs felt no need to offer specific representation to Yorkshire may be indicative of how the county is not viewed as a distinct political sphere in the same way as Cornwall, as well as the wider tendency for many of its MPs to be focused on national politics.

Devolution and MPs with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire

Some territorial claims by MPs with constituencies in Cornwall and Yorkshire that related to sub-state political institutions were identified, even in the absence of devolved legislatures (see Table 8.7 and Figure 8.5). These fell into two main categories: representation of the positions of existing local government bodies covering these areas (primarily Cornwall Council), and calls for new county-wide institutions. This section focuses on the latter. Calls for county-level devolution have intermittently been made by groups of MPs from both Cornwall and Yorkshire. However, the dynamics of these campaigns, the rationale presented and the ultimate outcomes have differed. The contrast between the two examples may offer valuable insights into wider dynamics influencing the course of decentralisation debates in England.

For MPs who advocate a Cornish Assembly, securing constitutional recognition of the area's distinctive identity has been a key motivation. In a speech making the case the most committed parliamentary supporter of this idea, Andrew George, hence stressed that 'Cornwall has a distinct history and its own language and Celtic culture' (15 May 2002, HC Deb vol., 385, col. 267WH). During the subsequent passage of the Labour government's Regional Assemblies (Preparation) Bill, George strongly objected to a proposal that would have enabled referendums on devolution to be held only at the level of larger regions such as the south west, excluding the possibility of a Cornish Assembly. He further suggested that an assembly 'based on a synthetic place that has been created purely for administrative convenience' would be rejected by voters (26 November 2002, HC Deb vol. 395, col. 265). Advocates of a Cornish Assembly during this period did also see associated material benefits, but these were closely tied to the cultural argument. George envisaged that a devolved Cornwall could 'trade on its distinctiveness and strong brand and use them for not only strategic, but economic, purposes' (15 May 2002, HC Deb vol. 385, col. 267WH). While George was the main parliamentary spokesperson, at its peak in the early 2000s the campaign for a Cornish Assembly had the support of four of Cornwall's then five MPs (Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe 2016, 779). Another Liberal Democrat, Dan Rogerson (2009), introduced a private member's bill providing for an assembly and an executive headed by a First Minister. Supporters from outside the county included Plaid Cymru and SNP MPs, reflecting the quasi-nationalist nature of the case being promoted by Cornwall's MPs, which implied an attempt to place Cornwall on the same footing within the UK's institutional structures as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The campaign for a Cornish Assembly found little sympathy with the 1997–2010 Labour government, perhaps reflecting Labour's limited involvement in Cornish politics, as well as its broader preference for devolution to larger regions. There was, however, a significant development in 2009, when local government structures in the area were reformed so that there was a single unitary council for Cornwall. Willett (2016, 583) has indicated that at the local level much of the rationale for this move was grounded in 'claims that this would move Cornwall closer to having its own directly elected devolved body'. This change helped to support Cornwall's case to benefit from the 'devolution deal' programme initiated by the subsequent Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition. As this form of decentralisation became the preferred model for central government, it also increasingly became the focus for Cornish politicians. A devolution deal was duly agreed by the UK government, Cornwall Council and other local stakeholders in July 2015 (Willett 2016). The devolution package does not equate to the legislative body envisaged by campaigners for a

Cornish Assembly, and has been characterised as providing for ‘decentralisation of central government *implementation*’, rather than enabling Cornwall to ‘set its *own* policy agendas based on local needs’ (Willett 2016, 588, original emphasis). Nevertheless, it is notable as an indication of Cornwall’s distinctiveness that central government was prepared to waive the requirement for a directly-elected mayor, a feature of all similar agreements elsewhere in England.

The devolution deal was strongly supported by Cornish Conservatives during debate on the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, which provided the legal basis for these arrangements. Interestingly, reflecting the contents of the deal, these MPs opted to emphasise the material benefits rather than presenting it as a landmark in recognising Cornish identity. Derek Thomas suggested that the deal achieved a ‘greater resolve than ever before to tackle the well-documented deprivation in Cornwall’ (14 October 2015, HC Deb vol. 600, col. 380), while his colleague Scott Mann stressed the benefits that he saw the deal offering for ‘buses, the European spending programme and the NHS’ (14 October 2015, HC Deb vol. 600, col. 395). Calls for a Cornish assembly have diminished since the deal. A Conservative interviewee attributed this to the changes in party politics in the area, suggesting that, as members of the party in government, Cornish Conservative MPs feel that they have ‘very good access to ministers and can get things done and delivered’ without a ‘full package of devolution’ (interview 17). The Liberal Democrat interviewee acknowledged that the campaign for a Cornish Assembly was now less active, as the post-2015 political context had provided ‘almost no fertile ground’ (interview 22).

The Regional Assemblies (Preparation) Bill also facilitated discussion around Yorkshire devolution. Unlike Cornwall, Yorkshire and the Humber was one of the regions where that legislation provided for a possible referendum. A proponent, Lawrie Quinn, argued that Yorkshire and the Humber represented a ‘clearly identified region’, which he compared in terms of the size of the economy and population to Denmark, suggesting that an assembly was needed because, unlike Denmark, the area did not ‘have a mechanism for determining our future prosperity’ (26 November 2002, HC Deb vol. 395, col. 247). However, aside from this speech there were few signs of enthusiasm for devolution to this scale. In interview it was suggested that ‘MPs have always had an ambivalent attitude to [devolution] because it’s a countervailing force to them’ (interview 15). No referendum was ultimately held in Yorkshire, following the heavy defeat of proposals for north east devolution in 2004.

When proposals for Yorkshire devolution returned to the political agenda in the context of the post-2010 ‘devolution deals’, a major barrier to the county’s participation was the existence of competing visions among supporters. While some MPs advocated new institutions for Yorkshire as a whole, others favoured devolution to sub-regions such as West and South Yorkshire. Some even proposed focusing on areas that crossed county borders, such as a ‘Sheffield City Region’ that would have included parts of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (Paun and Thimont Jack 2017). A Conservative MP recalled the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, joking that he ‘didn’t realise Yorkshire people hated each other as much as they hated everyone else’ after no agreement was reached (interview 21). The possibility of devolution to the whole of Yorkshire came to be referred to by its supporters as ‘one Yorkshire’. In the Commons a key proponent was Labour’s Dan Jarvis, who became the first elected mayor of South Yorkshire in 2018. Shortly before his election to that post, he argued that ‘nationally and internationally, a single Mayor would provide the single voice required to unlock the much-needed new investment’ (9 January 2018, HC Deb vol. 634, col. 66WH). He couched his case primarily in material terms, suggesting that devolution could address poor integration of public services between different parts of the county. However, Jarvis also presented Yorkshire unity as an advantage in terms of attracting investment, claiming that Yorkshire identity ‘means something’ to people both in the county and ‘the far east – China, Japan or wherever’ (9 January 2018, HC Deb vol. 634, col. 70WH). This campaign was supported by the majority of local councils in Yorkshire, a cross-party group of MPs was set up to advocate for it and there was a commitment in Labour’s 2019 general election manifesto (as well as those of the Liberal Democrats and the Greens). Yet this proposal also had its opponents, who favoured devolution to areas corresponding more closely to ‘functional’ geographies. For instance, Clive Betts, a Labour MP for a Sheffield constituency, objected on the grounds that it could be a ‘centralising rather than a devolutionary move’ (9 January 2018, HC Deb vol. 634, col. 73WH). A Conservative interviewee had similar objections, favouring devolution to smaller areas as this would enable a mayor to focus more closely on ‘micro-level policies’ (interview 21). This perspective prioritises material dimensions over the recognition of distinctive identities central to the argument advanced by proponents of a Cornish Assembly.

There were also partisan factors mitigating against Yorkshire-wide devolution. An MP who had supported ‘One Yorkshire’ indicated that some Conservatives were concerned about the prospect of a powerful new mayoralty for the whole of Yorkshire that, on the basis of previous election results, was most likely to be occupied by a Labour politician (interview 15). Conversely, some Labour MPs feared the election of a Conservative mayor, especially in light of growing

Conservative strength in some parts of Yorkshire following the Brexit referendum. These splits among MPs, which mirrored those among other key figures engaged in these debates, contributed to Yorkshire being left behind in the English decentralisation process. Despite strong identification with the county-level and the presence of large cities such as Leeds and Sheffield making it an apparently suitable case, progress has been slow and piecemeal compared to some other areas. In one think tank report it was referred to as the ‘hole in the Northern Powerhouse’ (Paun and Thimont Jack 2017). A different outcome might have been achieved if Yorkshire’s MPs had a stronger focus on giving representation to the county level and were more united around a single proposal, as had been the case in Cornwall ahead of the devolution deal there.

Conclusions and discussion

This chapter has considered how far and in what ways English MPs engage in representation of territorial areas at an intermediate level between constituencies and the state. The approach taken here, focusing on MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire, can offer only a partial picture. The analysis is nevertheless valuable in demonstrating that territorial representation of areas larger than constituencies is an important part of the parliamentary work of at least some English MPs. This is rarely acknowledged in existing literature on parliamentary roles in the House of Commons.

The findings reported in the chapter suggest that a desire to give representation to the sub-state territorial level has a particularly significant influence on the parliamentary behaviour of the small number of MPs with constituencies in Cornwall. Cornish MPs often prioritise issues relating to Cornwall’s distinctive material interests, culture and identity. Although data has not been collected for most other counties, it is very likely that the rate of territorial claim-making by Cornish MPs would be found to be the highest among English counties. In a territory viewed by many within its boundaries as having quasi-national status, engaging with Cornwall’s distinctiveness is considered to be electorally beneficial by local politicians. Substantive representation of Cornwall has consequently been a feature of the parliamentary contributions of MPs elected both as Liberal Democrats and Conservatives, the two main parties competing in the area. During the period covered by the study Cornish MPs have been able to claim notable successes on Objective One and on the achievement of a devolution deal for Cornwall. However, the campaign for a Cornish check-box on census forms has so far been unsuccessful, while calls for a Cornish Assembly have petered out since the devolution deal. These mixed fortunes speak to the inherent challenges faced by such a small group of MPs. Small size can make it easier to achieve consensus and present a

united front in parliament, but even where MPs are all in agreement the Cornish voice is inevitably marginal within a House of Commons of 650 members. More generally, these findings are noteworthy in underlining Cornwall's distinctiveness within the UK. Despite its quasi-national characteristics and strong identification with the Cornish level by the public and its politicians, Cornwall is routinely overlooked in discussion of sub-state territorial politics. These results suggest that there is a strong case for much greater recognition of the semi-detached nature of the Cornish political sphere, including in academic research.

Seeking to give substantive representation to Yorkshire is a less prominent feature of the parliamentary contributions of MPs with seats in that county. The difference in the rate of territorial claim-making between Cornish and Yorkshire MPs is very large. One of the main factors likely to explain this is that engagement with Yorkshire as a distinct area is not seen as conferring electoral advantages in the way that engagement with Cornish identity is in Cornwall. Many members with Yorkshire seats have hence been more oriented towards national politics and policy. An additional factor is that there are a multitude of layers of sub-state territorial identity that carry salience for Yorkshire's MPs. An MP with a Leeds seat may switch seamlessly between references to their constituency, city, West Yorkshire, Yorkshire, the north, England, Britain and the UK, depending on the context. Some MPs with seats in Yorkshire prefer to focus their contributions on the county's sub-units, which reflects the primarily material motivation for sub-state territorial representation. By comparison, recognition of the area's distinctive identity is a stronger priority for Cornish MPs when they engage in territorial representation. Despite the overall low level of territorial claim-making, the content analysis picked up some notable instances of engagement with Yorkshire as a territorial space. In the 1990s Yorkshire MPs successfully mobilised to secure government support for the Yorkshire Mining Museum, while more recently there has been an active campaign, which has won some parliamentary support, for devolution to the county as a whole. 'One Yorkshire' devolution has not so far been implemented, and the failure to establish consensus or secure widespread support among Yorkshire's backbench MPs is likely to be one contributing factor. The piecemeal approach to devolution that has been experienced, with separate arrangements in different parts of Yorkshire and a focus on addressing material issues rather than recognising distinctive identities, is more in keeping with the preferences of many of its MPs.

There are good reasons to believe that the Yorkshire findings are a better indicator of the prevalence of substantive representation of other English counties in the House of Commons

than those relating to the more idiosyncratic case of Cornwall. Given the relative salience of Yorkshire identity at population level, it seems unlikely that claims to represent counties are a more frequent feature of contributions by MPs from most other parts of England. If the Yorkshire results are reflected elsewhere, they therefore suggest that the county level is a relevant territorial reference point for at least some English MPs, but that it forms just one layer in a complex web of territorial levels that are sometimes the subject of substantive representation. This distinguishes England from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, where the analysis in preceding chapters has shown that identities at the level of the territorial unit are often much more dominant for MPs. This is not a surprising finding, given the different historical trajectories and institutional statuses of the English counties. The evidence of some level of substantive representation of the county level nevertheless indicates that there is a basis for representation of this level to become more pronounced in future, for instance in the event of a change in institutional and/or political context. The findings reported elsewhere in this thesis suggest that representation of these areas would be likely to become more prevalent if there were further English devolution, especially if this was to areas corresponding to county boundaries. In that context representation of those new sub-state political institutions could be expected to become an important feature of the work of MPs with seats in those areas, as they adapted to the changed situation.

As suggested at the beginning of the chapter, it is intended that these findings can serve as a starting point for a wider research agenda on how English MPs go about giving representation to intermediate territorial levels between constituencies and the state. Possible avenues for future research might include extending the analysis to more counties, focusing on larger ‘regions’ such as the north or conducting a more systematic study of how the distinctive interests and preferences of England as a whole are represented in the House of Commons. As devolution arrangements within England continue to evolve, there may also be potential to consider how far ‘metro mayors’ are given representation – something that it was not possible to incorporate into this chapter, given the cases chosen and the time period covered. It would, for example, be interesting to explore how far MPs act as champions and critics of mayors in their area, in a territorial role equivalent to that performed by MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in relation to the devolved administrations.

9. Conclusion and discussion

This project set out to consider how MPs go about representing the UK's component territorial units in the contemporary House of Commons. As an initial step a theoretical framework was devised for studying the substantive representation of territorial areas at an intermediate level between constituencies and the state. That informed the design of a detailed empirical analysis of spoken contributions in parliament, which was complemented by a set of interviews. It was found that MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are heavily engaged in giving representation to their territorial units, and that these MPs have adapted their territorially-focused behaviour to the changed institutional context since devolution. Members elected from the devolved territories can increasingly be said to form separate groups of representatives at Westminster, focusing on different issues and responding to different domestic political contexts than their English colleagues.

Here, in the final chapter, the main conclusions are synthesised and key implications are identified. The chapter begins by returning to the questions raised in the introduction, summarising how each has been answered. Sections then consider implications for the academic study of parliament and territorial politics; for how we understand the UK political system; and for debates about appropriate institutional structures for representation of territorial interests at the centre. Finally, potential areas for future research, building on this project, are identified.

Answers to questions addressed by this thesis

The principal research question was, 'To what extent, in what ways and with what consequences are the UK's component territorial units given substantive representation by MPs in the House of Commons?' In the introduction five more specific questions were identified, reflecting the most important lines of enquiry that run through the thesis. This section summarises how these have been addressed, highlighting the key theoretical and empirical contributions of this project.

1/ What is meant by substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units, and what forms does this take in the House of Commons? Since no previous studies had systematically applied the notion of 'substantive representation' to the UK's component territorial units, an initial question concerned exactly what is meant by this and what forms it takes in the House of Commons. This was addressed in chapter 3, which presented an analytical framework for studying parliamentary representation of territorial areas of an intermediate scale between constituencies and the state.

This drew on the theoretical literature on representation, notably the contributions of Pitkin (1967), distinguishing between forms of representation, and Saward (2010), conceptualising those engaged in substantive representation as advancing contestable ‘claims’ to represent particular groups. It was explained that, by focusing on how MPs’ construct representative claims, some aspects of the approach taken draw on the interpretive tradition in the study of political institutions, although other parts of the methodology are more grounded in positivism. A definition of substantive sub-state territorial representation for the purposes of this research was set out, as ‘parliamentary activities that explicitly seek to advance the interests, policy priorities and/or recognition of identity and culture of the territorial unit within which a member’s electoral constituency is located’. An original typology of four categories of claim to represent sub-state territorial areas was then outlined – relating respectively to *material interests*, *public opinion*, *identity and culture*, and *sub-state political institutions*. This framework significantly informed the design for the content analysis. The analysis confirmed that these categories capture the main themes of claims to represent sub-state territories in the UK House of Commons. Claims relating to material interests and sub-state political institutions were most common within the sample of oral questions and Westminster Hall debates analysed in chapter 5. Although devised with the UK case and the questions motivating this project in mind, the framework is intended to be a standalone contribution, which could be deployed for future research on parliamentary representation of sub-state territorial units in a variety of different settings.

2/ How have patterns of substantive representation of the UK’s component territorial units changed over the period from 1992 to 2019? This project had a strong temporal dimension to it, with patterns of substantive representation of the UK’s component territorial units analysed over seven complete parliamentary terms. This enabled trends over time to be identified. The analysis reported in chapter 5 found that the overall proportion of contributions by MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales containing a claim to represent sub-state territories increased steadily across the period covered. The proportion of territorially-focused contributions in the sample of oral questions and Westminster Hall debates rose from 26% in 1997–2001 to 39% in 2017–19. The emergence of a substantial number of claims relating to sub-state political institutions, following devolution, was a particularly notable finding. This was especially widespread during key debates on Brexit, discussed in chapter 7. The analysis reported in chapter 8 found the overall rate of territorial claims by MPs from the two English counties included in the study, Cornwall and Yorkshire, to be broadly stable from 1992 to 2019. At times MPs from these areas have engaged in debates about the possible establishment of new sub-state institutions. However, in the absence

of legislative devolution, most territorially-focused contributions by members from these areas are focused on the material interests of the areas in questions.

3/ How do patterns of substantive representation of the UK's component territorial units vary between MPs with constituencies in different parts of the UK, and belonging to different political parties? The data that was collected enabled variation in patterns of territorial representative claim-making between MPs from different territorial units and those belonging to different parties to be analysed in detail.

Northern Ireland's MPs were found to be the most focused on the sub-state territorial level in every parliamentary term included in the study. This reflects the longstanding distinctiveness of Northern Ireland's politics, including its separate party system. The overall increase in rates of territorial claim-making by MPs with seats in the devolved parts of the UK was driven primarily by a spike in such claims by Scottish MPs, more than doubling from 1997-2001 to 2017-19. This trend was already in motion prior to the 2015 general election, so cannot be attributed entirely to the large expansion of the SNP group at that point. The rate of territorial claim-making by Welsh MPs was relatively steady across the sampled parliaments, with no marked increase as for Scottish members. The results reported in chapter 8 demonstrated that of the two English counties included in the study, MPs with seats in Cornwall were far more focused on substantive representation of that level than MPs with seats in Yorkshire. This can be attributed in part to a strong sense that it is electorally essential for MPs elected in Cornish constituencies to engage with the county's distinctive material interests, identity and culture. In contrast, engagement with Yorkshire as a distinct area has not been seen as conferring substantial electoral advantages and many MPs with seats in Yorkshire have been more orientated towards national politics. The Yorkshire findings are more likely to be indicative of how MPs with seats elsewhere in England engage in substantive representation of the county level than the Cornwall findings, given Cornwall's unique quasi-national status.

It was shown that MPs that belong to parties that compete in only one part of the UK typically display a greater territorial focus than members of parties that compete across Great Britain. Across the sample of oral questions and Westminster Hall debates reported in chapter 5, DUP, Plaid Cymru, SDLP, SNP and UUP MPs were the most focused on territorial dimensions. Nevertheless, there was some convergence between sub-state territorial and Britain-wide parties on this measure over more recent parliaments. This reflects increasing engagement with territorial dimensions among backbench members of Britain-wide parties, in particular those with seats in

Scotland. An especially striking finding was that over half of contributions by Scottish Conservative MPs elected in 2017 related specifically to Scotland. Scottish Conservatives were also heavily focused on territorial dimensions during the key Brexit-related debates discussed in chapter 7. The context of political competition there following the 2015 SNP surge, since when the independence question has been of increased salience, appears to have contributed to a greater focus on the Scottish level among backbenchers from Britain-wide parties. This was not replicated to the same extent among Welsh Labour and Conservative MPs, which may indicate that, compared to their Scottish colleagues, these MPs remain more closely integrated into Britain-wide politics. Party political differences in rates of territorial representative claim-making by MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire were found to be modest. Both Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs elected from Cornish constituencies frequently raised matters specific to the county, suggesting that the notion of Cornwall as a distinctive political and economic space is widely accepted among the leading parties in that area. MPs from all parties with seats in Yorkshire displayed notably low rates of territorial claim-making.

4/ What impact has devolution had on the roles and behaviour of MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales? Evaluating the consequences of devolution for the roles and behaviour of MPs with seats outside England was one of the most important questions addressed by this project. This theme ran through chapters 5–7, but was considered in most depth in chapter 6.

Interview findings confirmed that there is no clearly defined remit for MPs with seats in the devolved areas. Significant variation was identified in how far MPs engage with devolved matters in their Commons contributions and how relationships with members of the sub-state legislatures are managed. It was found that many of these MPs continue to see raising the specific implications of issues discussed at Westminster for their territorial units as an important part of their parliamentary work. A ‘linkage’ role in relation to the devolved institutions was shown to have emerged, which so far has developed primarily through joint meetings and co-ordination within political parties. Interviewees indicated that these intra-party relationships have generally become more effective over time, suggesting that adaptation to devolution has been an ongoing process since 1998. The consequences that this can have for contributions on the floor of the House of Commons were demonstrated clearly during the parliamentary debates on Brexit, discussed in chapter 7.

A key argument advanced in chapter 6 was that the behaviour of MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales cannot be fully understood without reference to their political orientations in relation to the devolved governments in their territories, as well as the Westminster government. MPs who belong to parties in government at devolved level now often act as champions of those administrations on the floor of the House of Commons, and conversely MPs whose parties are in opposition at devolved level frequently criticise the devolved government in their territory. At times devolved government champions have even tabled amendments to UK legislation drafted within the devolved governments, notably during debates on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which were analysed in chapter 7. Divergence in the political composition of the governments across the UK, and associated intergovernmental tension, appears to have been a particular impetus for MPs to focus their contributions on matters relating to the policies and performance of devolved institutions.

Overall, it was argued that a new, post-devolution, sub-state territorial role for MPs with seats outside England has developed since devolution. This can be interpreted as an indication that MPs with seats in the devolved areas have successfully adapted to the post-devolution environment, preventing their territorial roles from becoming ‘redundant’ as had been suggested as a possibility in some pre-devolution literature (Keating 1978, 429).

5/ What are the consequences of the changing dynamics of territorial representation in the House of Commons?

The last question concerned the consequences of the changing dynamics of territorial representation that have been documented in the thesis. Some potential implications have already been identified. In chapter 5 it was suggested that the increased rate of territorial claim-making might have consequences for policy and the distribution of resources, especially where interpretations of the needs and interests of individual territories are adopted by government supporters. At the end of chapter 6 it was argued that the growing divergence in focus between MPs with seats in the different parts of the UK raises questions about the extent to which we can still speak of an integrated British parliamentary politics. The analysis of contributions to key debates on Brexit in chapter 7 highlighted how territorially-focused interventions can sometimes be used by MPs primarily to communicate with citizens in their home territories, and might potentially have an impact on public opinion. Although chapter 8 could only offer a partial picture of how English MPs engage in representation of the county level, it was suggested that the findings in relation to Cornwall and Yorkshire indicate the potential for representation of this level to become more pronounced in the future, for instance in the event of a change in institutional

and/or political context. The implications of the findings for the UK political system, and for debates about institutional reform pertaining to the representation of sub-state territories at the political centre, are expanded on later in this chapter.

Implications for academic literature

Previous literature on the UK parliament and its members has paid limited attention to the different political and institutional contexts within which members with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales operate, compared to the majority with seats in England. The findings of this thesis suggest that this is a significant oversight, since MPs with seats outside England exhibit a distinctive focus and patterns of behaviour. An important implication of this research is therefore to draw attention to a territorial blind-spot in UK parliamentary studies. This has meant that scholarship has often in practice focused on the experience of MPs with seats in England, neglecting the different priorities and behaviour of those with seats elsewhere. Many existing accounts of the roles of backbenchers make little or no mention of representation of the UK's constituent territorial units, even though the findings of this research have shown that this is a high priority for many backbenchers with seats outside England (Rush and Giddings 2011; Searing 1994; Shephard and Simson Caird 2018). Analysis of the dynamics of parliamentary behaviour, for instance studies of the legislative process (Russell and Gover 2017; Thompson 2015) and backbench rebellions (Cowley 2002; Slapin et al. 2018), also tend to overlook the impact of territory on the strategies adopted by MPs and the positions that they take. Future research focusing on the roles and behaviour of MPs should give greater consideration to differences that result from these territorial contexts in order to avoid producing findings that, in practice, relate primarily to MPs with seats in England.

The findings of this thesis suggest, in particular, that academics researching parliamentary behaviour at Westminster should take greater account of the consequences that devolution has had for MPs. It has been demonstrated that political orientations in relation to the devolved governments are an increasingly important factor influencing the behaviour of the substantial minority of members with constituencies outside England. Given this, it has been argued that the conventional categorisation of MPs in terms of whether they sit on the government or opposition benches in analysis of executive-legislative relations is now often insufficient (King 1976; Russell and Cowley 2018). Russell and Cowley (2018) have argued for greater attention to be paid to the distinction between the official opposition and smaller parties such as the SNP and DUP, but that

does not enable territorial groupings within the main Britain-wide parties to be analysed as parliamentary actors within their own right. As discussed in chapter 6, there is hence a strong case for adopting a two-dimensional categorisation of MPs with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales that encompasses whether their party is in government or opposition at devolved level within their territory. Deploying such a categorisation may better account for the approach taken by groups such as Welsh Labour and the Scottish Conservatives, who have at times been in government at one level and opposition at another.

These insights are relevant to comparative research on legislatures. As noted in chapter 3, few previous studies have considered representation of the component units of multi-level states by members of lower chambers. This thesis is the most detailed and systematic study of this in any legislature to date. The findings have demonstrated that representation of sub-state territorial units can occur in lower chambers, and highlighted various specific ways that this can manifest itself. The evidence of UK MPs using their mandates at Westminster to champion and criticise devolved governments lends support to the notion that members of lower chambers of central legislatures in multi-level systems can engage in ‘cross-parliamentary control’, as suggested by Staehr Harder and West (2022) in their study of behaviour in the Danish *Folketing*. This is an important theoretical addition to the large body of scholarship on how parliaments control executive actors, which to date has mostly related to central governments and supra-national institutions such as the European Union (Auel and Raunio 2014; Martin and Vanberg 2013; Strøm 2000). The findings also highlight the distinctive territorial-focused role that members of sub-state nationalist and regionalist parties can play in lower chambers. Aside from a small handful of studies that were referred to in chapter 3, this has tended to be overlooked in literature on party groups in parliaments, which focuses primarily on major parties of government and opposition. The potential for lower chambers to perform a role in relation to territorial politics should also be given greater recognition by legislative studies scholars, who have previously tended to focus on upper chambers when conducting research on territorial representation.

Some conclusions of this thesis also carry implications for the study of the dynamics of UK territorial politics, which has rarely paid much attention to the Westminster parliament since devolution. Existing scholarship on inter-institutional relations has primarily been concerned with direct interactions between governments, and the systems of meetings within which this takes place (Cairney 2012; McEwen et al. 2020; Swenden and McEwen 2014). However, the finding that MPs with seats in the devolved territories often use their mandates at Westminster to champion

and criticise devolved governments suggests that the House of Commons has an under-appreciated role in inter-institutional relations. This may be of greatest significance in the context of debates on legislation relating to the devolution arrangements, where MPs acting as champions of devolved governments and parliaments are able to give representation to the perspectives of these sub-state institutions, and sometimes propose amendments on their behalf. It has been shown that in some instances this sort of behaviour has contributed to changes in the UK government's positions. For instance, amendments were made following criticism of the handling of devolved powers during the passage of the 2017–18 European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and in response to proposed changes to the 2016–17 Wales Bill drafted by the National Assembly for Wales' Presiding Officer. Interventions such as these should be taken into account by researchers when evaluating how the interests of the devolved territories are related to the political centre, and how their demands are responded to.

The analysis of the parliamentary behaviour of MPs with seats in Cornwall and Yorkshire in chapter 8 makes a contribution to scholarship on English regional politics. While existing work has considered the nature of territorial identities (Deacon 2009; Fletcher 2012), the dynamics of electoral competition (Giovannini 2016; Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe 2016) and proposed decentralisation reforms (Willett and Giovannini 2014) at the county level, there has been no previous systematic research on how this sort of area is represented at Westminster. The findings suggest that county identities are reflected to varying extents in the parliamentary contributions of MPs. The prevalence of territorially-focused contributions by MPs can serve as a good indicator of the political salience of different identities. There is potential for a wider research agenda to develop encompassing other territorial areas and/or scales within England. The findings relating to Cornwall are especially notable. The extent of territorially-focused behaviour by Cornish MPs suggests that there is a strong case for greater recognition of the semi-detached nature of the Cornish political sphere in academic research.

Finally, the approach taken in this thesis may suggest future directions for the study of substantive representation. The extensive literature in this area has focused heavily on demographic groups, particularly women and minority ethnic populations (Childs and Krook 2009; Kroeber 2018; Sobolewska, McKee, and Campbell 2018). Substantive representation of territorial units of the type referred to in this research has been largely overlooked, even as research on the dynamics of territorial politics has emphasised how territorially-specific issues have become a more prominent focus for citizens and political elites across many multi-level political systems (Detterbeck 2012;

Swenden and Maddens 2009). The research undertaken for this project has shown that the considerable insights from the literatures on substantive representation and multi-level politics can productively be put into conversation with one another. This suggests that there is potential for a substantive representation framework to be used for further systematic consideration of how territorially-focused interests are raised and responded to in parliamentary settings.

Implications for the UK political system

Previous scholarship has emphasised that the electoral spheres in each territory comprising the United Kingdom have become more distinctive since devolution (Awan-Scully 2018; Detterbeck 2012; Swenden and Maddens 2009). The findings of this project indicate that these developments have had significant knock-on implications for the roles and behaviour of MPs. As a consequence the contemporary House of Commons is now fragmented not just along party lines, but also territorial lines. Members with seats in the devolved territories are often motivated by different issues and responding to different political contexts compared to their English colleagues. Those with constituencies in Northern Ireland and Scotland, in particular, often seem prepared to stick to territorial silos when going about their parliamentary work. These trends are not as advanced for Welsh MPs, although they have also shown distinctive patterns of behaviour in certain contexts, such as debates on the post-Brexit treatment of devolved powers. As was indicated in chapter 6 this raises the question of whether we might be witnessing not only the ‘end of British party politics’ (Awan-Scully 2018), but the end of British parliamentary politics too. These are developments with potentially far-reaching repercussions for the political system in the UK.

One possible consequence is for the career paths of MPs with seats outside England. Even though literature in the 1970s showed that there have long been distinctive features of Scottish and Welsh representation in the House of Commons, MPs with constituencies in these areas have historically often become prominent on the UK-wide political stage (though this cannot be said of MPs from Northern Ireland). The presence of senior figures from outside England in high office has been seen as important to ensuring the attentiveness of the UK government, and the main political parties, to issues specifically affecting the UK’s component territories (Bulpitt 1983). This can also be interpreted as being of symbolic significance, signalling to voters in Scotland and Wales that the MPs they elect have a stake in the governance of the UK. An increased focus on matters specific to their home territories, as documented in this thesis, raises the prospect that MPs with seats outside England will struggle to move beyond the periphery of UK parliamentary politics in

future. Already over the last decade or so, Scottish and Welsh MPs have had far less of a presence in senior offices in British politics than previously. A major reason is the emergence of the SNP as the dominant party in Scotland, which has meant that few Scottish MPs are now members of the main Britain-wide parties. The nature of the 2015 SNP landslide also meant that, even when Labour and the Conservatives regained some Scottish seats subsequently, few of the MPs holding those seats had sufficient experience to make them suitable for leadership roles. The trends documented in this thesis are also likely to have contributed. There are good reasons to believe that MPs who are focused heavily on matters specific to their sub-state territories while on the backbenches will not often be considered suitable candidates for frontbench posts in the main Britain-wide parties, outside of the territorial offices. Such MPs are unlikely to be part of the same party and issue-based networks focused on UK-wide politics as their colleagues with English seats, which are key to the process of ‘socialisation’ into parliamentary life (Rush and Giddings 2011). They may well struggle to appeal to the MPs and party members involved in Labour and Conservative leadership contests, the vast majority of whom live in England and take limited interest in issues specific to the other parts of the Union. Territorially-focused MPs could face similar issues when running for parliamentary posts elected by the full membership of the House of Commons, as select committee chairs have been since 2010. One possible implication of the increase in territorially-focused MPs is therefore that the UK government and official opposition, and other prominent posts within the Westminster system, become even more dominated by English politicians. That could in turn contribute to fostering the impression that Westminster politics primarily serves English interests. For their part, ambitious MPs with a strong territorial focus might increasingly find that they need to seek election to the devolved legislatures to fulfil their career ambitions. There are some signs of this in the career paths of Scottish MPs elected in recent parliaments. A prominent recent example is Douglas Ross, who after becoming an MP in 2017, and briefly serving as a Scotland Office minister, was elected as leader of the Scottish Conservatives and successfully sought election to the Scottish Parliament. Another is Neil Gray, an SNP MP from 2015 until 2021, who was then elected to the Scottish Parliament and appointed as a Scottish government minister.

The developments documented in the thesis also carry implications for the basis on which voters in the devolved territories make decisions at general elections. If their MPs are increasingly focused on giving representation to their sub-state territories, the policy platforms and national leaderships of the main parties competing for office at UK level are likely to become less relevant to voters in Scotland and Wales than in England. This has already been the case in Northern Ireland for many

decades. It follows from this that voters in the devolved territories are likely to find themselves making decisions on the basis of how effectively potential MPs can be expected to defend territorial interests, and their positioning in relation to the devolved administrations, rather than on the basis of which party they want to govern the UK. Such territorial divergence in the role of MPs can be seen as both a product of differentiation in patterns of party competition and election results in each part of the Union, and as itself contributing to entrenching these trends. In terms of partisan dynamics, an expectation that MPs from outside England are elected on the basis of their ability to defend territorial interests, rather than suitability to govern the UK, may favour parties that place a strong emphasis on territorial representation. This shift might go some way to explaining the SNP's success at recent general elections, on a platform to 'make Scotland stronger at Westminster' rather than to deliver a UK-wide policy agenda (Scottish National Party 2017, 3). It might also explain the increased emphasis on territorially-specific electoral platforms by groups within the main Britain-wide parties such as Welsh Labour and the Scottish Conservatives.

Overall, the findings from this project lend support to the thesis advanced by Awan-Scully (2018), that the contemporary UK is best understood as comprising a number of territorially-contained political sub-systems, with a decreasing sense of an integrated UK (or Britain)-wide level binding them together. This territorial fragmentation of the UK political system does not, by any means, make the break-up of the Union inevitable. Indeed, in some respects it can be seen as consistent with the development of a more 'federal' politics, of the type intended by devolution's advocates. In a context where questions about the future of the Union are never far from the surface of political and constitutional debate, the long-term consequences are highly uncertain.

Implications for debates about institutional reform

Some of the findings are relevant to debates about possible institutional reforms pertaining to how sub-state territories within the UK are represented at the political centre. As noted in the introductory chapter, the strains within the territorial constitution that have become apparent have fuelled speculation about further constitutional change. The Labour party supports a more 'federal' constitution, and is considering the findings of a commission appointed to report on this (Commission on the UK's Future 2022; Starmer 2020), while numerous academic experts and parliamentary committees have called for changes to how territorial relationships within the UK are managed (Constitution Committee 2022; Kenny, Rycroft, and Sheldon 2021; McEwen, Petersohn, and Brown Swan 2015; Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

2016). At the time of writing the Procedure Committee (2021) in the House of Commons is conducting an inquiry into how Commons procedures engage with the territorial constitution.

One implication of the thesis conclusions is to demonstrate that MPs with seats in areas with devolution continue to play an active role within the political system, as representatives of their territories. As the discussion in chapter 6 highlighted, many issues that are still decided at Westminster have significant and distinctive implications for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In these cases MPs have an important function to play by airing sub-state perspectives. These MPs have therefore emphatically not, as some pre-devolution predictions suggested, become ‘superfluous’ (Judge and Finlayson 1975, 292). Any proposal that the devolved parts of the UK should have fewer MPs relative to population size than England – as has occasionally been suggested in the past, and was the case in Northern Ireland from 1922 until 1983 (Gallagher 2012; Paun 2008) – would therefore be very difficult to justify. Even though the House of Commons often deals with legislation that formally applies only to England, this research suggests that there are good reasons for maintaining representation for the devolved parts of the UK at the political centre.

Ever since devolution there have been proposals for replacing the House of Lords with a second chamber that would explicitly give representation to the ‘nations and regions’, inspired by second chambers in federal and multi-level political systems such as Germany and Spain (Russell 2018). Proponents claim that this would help to bind the UK Union together and provide an enhanced voice at the centre for sub-state territories, as well as providing a more legitimate basis for the second chamber than the current system of prime ministerial appointment. This idea has featured in previous Labour manifestos (Labour Party 2015, 2019) and was endorsed in the commission report that the party is currently considering (Commission on the UK’s Future 2022). However, detailed proposals for how such a chamber would be composed, and what functions it would assume, have never been developed. Although this thesis was concerned with the Commons rather than the Lords, the findings do have implications for those who might be involved in considering and debating this idea.

First, it has been shown that sub-state territorial perspectives, including those of the devolved legislatures and executives, are already aired at Westminster, through members of the House of Commons. The novelty in any ‘territorial chamber’ would hence be primarily in any special protections for territorial interests that might be built into its design. This could be achieved by

over-representing smaller units in descriptive terms relative to population, and/or giving any new chamber powers to veto legislation that particularly impacts on the sub-state territorial level. While there are many international precedents (Russell 2001), these would be radical steps in the UK context, where the authority of a majority in the House of Commons is often viewed as a key feature of the constitution. Such reforms would – by design – make it much more difficult for perspectives with majority support among politicians from the devolved parts of the UK to be disregarded where they conflict with the position of the UK government, supported by a predominantly English majority, as happened during the Brexit debates discussed in chapter 7. Some might see that as an important constitutional protection for the smaller territories within the UK, consistent with the ‘quasi-federal’ logic of devolution. However, it would also create a likely flashpoint for constitutional conflict, if territorial representatives blocked a policy supported by the Commons. Policy-makers would need to balance these considerations when formulating the design of such a body.

Second, this research has demonstrated clearly that on most issues there is no single territorial perspective that ‘territorial representatives’ in any new second chamber could be expected to adopt on key questions. MPs interpret the interests of their sub-state territories in different ways, and often take opposing positions on the policies of the devolved administrations. On some issues there are big differences between the preferences of politicians who belong to parties in government at the devolved level and those who do not. Those involved in drawing up proposals for any territorial chamber would hence need to give careful consideration to whether the intention was to give representation only to the perspectives associated with the devolved executives (as in the German *Bundesrat*, which consists of delegations from sub-state executives), or to the range of different perspectives that politicians from a particular territory might adopt (as in the Spanish *Senado*, which includes delegations drawn from the sub-state legislatures). The first option would enable the territorial chamber to assume a pivotal role in intergovernmental relations, but at the cost of excluding perspectives adopted by politicians outside of the parties in office at devolved level.

A third issue highlighted by this thesis that those considering a territorial second chamber would have to face is how England would be given representation. Most proponents envisage that English ‘regions’ would be represented, but have not been more specific. This is not straightforward to resolve, given the range of different sub-state territorial levels within England. The discussion in chapter 8 suggests that county-level representation would be preferred by

Cornish politicians, and that there would be a high chance of hostility to any proposal that only sought to give representation to larger regions. However, the findings indicate that there is less consensus about the appropriate unit for territorial representation among politicians from Yorkshire. The experience of debates over devolution in Yorkshire, which have been hampered by disagreements over the appropriate territorial level to devolve powers to, may serve as a warning of the likely obstacles to consensus on how England would be represented if the ‘Senate of the Nations and Regions’ idea were ever to become a reality.

Another possible type of reform that has sometimes been proposed would be to give the House of Commons a more formal remit in relation to sub-state territorial politics. One possible step in this direction could be to establish a committee with a specific focus on intra-UK intergovernmental relations, which could systematically scrutinise central government’s engagements with its devolved counterparts and any agreements that might be negotiated at that level, as well as other issues relating to the devolution arrangements. A ‘Devolution Committee’ with a remit along these lines has previously been proposed by the McKay Commission (2013). This recommendation was not taken up, but the case for such a body has become stronger as the volume and significance of intergovernmental relations within the UK has increased, especially since Brexit (McEwen et al. 2020). The findings here suggest that there would be no shortage of interest in serving on a committee dedicated to devolution among MPs with seats outside England, given the focus on sub-state political institutions displayed in contributions in the Commons chamber. A potential benefit of such a committee could be to encourage constructive cross-party working around these issues, on which debates have often been heavily polarised between devolved government champions and critics in recent parliaments. It might also have a role to play in facilitating more substantive engagement between Westminster and the devolved legislatures, as has been proposed by various parliamentary committees and external experts (Constitution Committee 2022; Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee 2018; P. Evans and Silk 2021; Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee 2016). Such steps would signal a formalisation of the ‘quasi-federal’ role that the findings of this project suggest the House of Commons already effectively performs in certain contexts.

The potential reforms discussed here underline the possibility that the territorial roles performed by MPs could continue to evolve. There may yet be a further deepening of engagement with sub-state territorial politics by MPs, if arrangements for more systematic scrutiny of intergovernmental relations or more extensive interparliamentary relations are introduced. Alternatively if a ‘Senate

of the Nations and Regions' ever came to fruition, that chamber would likely come to be seen as the primary vehicle for territorial representation at Westminster. In that scenario MPs with seats outside England would again be faced with needing to re-define their territorial roles in light of a changed institutional context.

Areas for future research

It is intended that this thesis can inspire further research on representation of sub-state territorial units in parliaments, focused both on the UK case and parliaments in other multi-level states. Although this project has gone some way towards addressing the lacunae in existing literature identified in chapter 2 and 3, there is still much more work that could be done in this area.

One outstanding gap in knowledge relates to the work of MPs with seats in the devolved parts of the UK, beyond contributions in the chamber and in Westminster Hall. Future research could potentially focus on select committee work. Questions that might be considered include how far members with seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales participate in committees that scrutinise departments where policy is mostly devolved, or whether they concentrate mainly on those where policy is reserved to Westminster. Other possible lines of enquiry could be how far MPs focus on matters specific to their territorial units when asking questions during evidence sessions, and whether the presence of MPs with seats outside of England among committee memberships makes it more likely that reports refer to territorial dimensions. There is also scope for fresh research on how MPs from outside England organise their time and offices, building on the work of Russell and Bradbury (2007). As the analysis in this thesis highlighted, the political and institutional context in the devolved territories has changed markedly over recent parliamentary terms. It would be interesting to establish how far the continued development of devolution has impacted on the amount of time MPs devote to constituency work, and to consider in more detail the nature of relationships between individual MPs and members of the devolved legislatures at constituency level. This might be captured through surveys and further interviews, or potentially an ethnographic study.

A limitation of the content analysis for this research that was highlighted in chapter 4 is that it was restricted to identifying how often sub-state territorial claims are made, and which of the forms in the typology set out in chapter 3 these fall within. Future research might be designed in a way that enables individual contributions to be analysed in more detail. For example, coding schemes might

quantify instances of MPs acting as devolved government champions and critics. It might also be worthwhile to distinguish cases where a territorial claim is the central theme of a parliamentary contribution from those where it is tangential. While there are no reasons to believe that this would produce substantially different answers to the fundamental questions this project has been concerned with, it would add an additional layer of nuance.

This concluding chapter has raised important questions about the implications of adopting a strong territorial focus for career trajectories. A productive future research agenda could therefore involve systematically comparing the career paths of MPs with seats in the devolved parts of the UK to those of MPs with seats in England. This could potentially incorporate analysis of how far MPs from the Britain-wide parties with seats outside England are appointed to frontbench posts, as well as election of MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to committee chairs and other posts within the House of Commons. It might also consider career paths that involve moving from Westminster to the devolved legislatures, and vice versa. A plausible hypothesis to test is that politicians that display a strong sub-state territorial focus at Westminster must ultimately seek office at devolved level to progress to senior positions within their parties, and potentially in government.

There is a particularly strong case for additional research on the activities and behaviour of MPs holding seats in Northern Ireland. While the content analysis found that MPs from Northern Ireland that take their seats from across the unionist/nationalist divide are heavily engaged in territorial representation, it was not possible to explore these findings in much further detail as only one MP from that territory agreed to be interviewed. Given Northern Ireland's highly distinctive party system and wider political environment, there are important and largely unaddressed questions about how its MPs go about their work. The only existing study pre-dates the return of devolution (Hazleton 1995). A full study would likely require securing interviews with members of the different parties that have held Northern Ireland seats at Westminster over recent years. Lines of enquiry could include levels of engagement with ministers in the UK government and with members of the main Britain-wide parties. A study on this topic might also explore how abstentionist Sinn Féin MPs go about their work, something that could not be captured by the approach deployed for this thesis. As Dovi (2020) has noted, Sinn Féin raises difficult conceptual questions about whether representation, conventionally defined as the act of making something present, can be exercised through absence. Research on that subject would also fill an empirical gap – Sinn Féin are typically ignored in parliamentary studies literature, despite having held at least

four seats since 2001 and their status as one of the main parties of government at devolved level in Northern Ireland.

Another possible avenue for further research could be to focus on more practical factors that impact on the representational activities of MPs with seats in areas furthest from Westminster. Although not considered in detail in this project, the challenge of long commutes to Westminster was touched on by one interviewee with a seat in Northern Ireland, who noted that they had to get a flight to London every week and were ‘subject to the weather conditions which could have led to delays’ (interview 16). This could sometimes lead to missing business at the start and end of the parliamentary week. Recent work by Thompson and Meakin (2021) has highlighted how practical travel issues became particularly acute for MPs with seats outside England during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020–21, when restrictions on movement between the different parts of the UK and reductions in flights made regular travel more difficult. Taking into account the impact of issues such as these, which for geographical reasons particularly affect MPs with seats in the devolved territories, would contribute to establishing a fuller understanding of how the experience of being an MP can differ across the UK.

Chapter 8 served as a starting point for a research agenda on representation of intermediate levels between constituencies and the state by English MPs, but for reasons of practicality this provided only partial answers to key questions. As discussed in the conclusions to that chapter, future studies might extend the analysis to additional counties beyond Cornwall and Yorkshire, to get a clearer picture of the extent of county-level representation across England. Alternatively researchers could focus on other geographical levels within England. In the present political context, where the north of England has become a major political battleground following the substantial gains made by the Conservatives at the 2019 general election, a study applying the broad approach of this thesis to claims to represent ‘the north’ would be highly topical. There are also interesting questions about how far, and in what ways, English ‘metro mayors’ and other sub-state institutions within England are represented in the Commons, analogous to the representation of the devolved institutions elsewhere in the UK documented in this thesis.

This thesis has been about territorial representation in the House of Commons. Future research might consider how the House of Lords engages with issues pertaining to sub-state territorial politics. From one perspective the UK’s upper chamber is poorly placed to engage credibly in territorial representation, given the almost complete absence of members of sub-state nationalist

parties, despite the prominence of those parties in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Smith 2019). In recent times the Lords has nevertheless played a pivotal role where issues relating to the territorial constitution have been debated at Westminster. For instance, it was in the Lords that amendments were passed on the treatment of devolved powers in the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill 2017–18, as mentioned in chapter 7. An interviewee alluded to how the devolved governments had worked closely on this issue with a ‘choir’ of sympathetic peers (interview 14). The Lords also passed amendments relating to devolved powers during the passage of the Internal Market Bill in 2020, and has established specialist committees on post-Brexit ‘common frameworks’ and the operation of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol. This suggests that the upper house may be developing something of an informal ‘quasi-federal’ role, even in the absence of an explicitly labelled group of territorial representatives. This dynamic would be an interesting topic for further examination.

Finally, the analytical framework for studying sub-state territorial representation and methodological approach used in this thesis could be deployed for future work on representation of territorial units in other multi-level polities. The trends towards ‘reterritorialization’ of party politics and ‘denationalization’ of election results are cross-national, so there are strong reasons to expect that they might have had implications for parliamentary behaviour in other states as well as the UK. From a comparative perspective, studying representation of territorial units in more international cases could open up questions such as the consequences of having a territorially-composed second chamber for behaviour in the first chamber, the impact of electoral systems on the propensity of MPs to focus on sub-state territorial dimensions and the influence of different political contexts. It would be especially interesting to conduct systematic studies of sub-state territorial representation in the central legislatures of states such as Belgium, Italy and Spain, where issues pertaining to the relationship between territorial units and the state have often been highly salient in recent years, and where there have also been reforms to sub-state political institutions. This discussion points to the potential for a genuinely comparative study. That could be made more manageable by analysing a single parliamentary term from each of several legislatures, rather than seeking to replicate the temporal dimension of the research conducted for this thesis in every case.

Concluding remarks

The starting point for this project was that there had been no major study of how MPs with constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales go about representing those territories in the House of Commons since the 1970s. That empirical gap has now been addressed, using a theoretical and methodological approach that is intended to open up the potential for a broader research agenda on sub-state territorial representation in parliaments. The key findings are that MPs from the devolved parts of the UK devote a growing proportion of their parliamentary contributions to matters specific to their territorial units, and that they have adapted the nature of their territorially-focused behaviour to the changed context over recent decades. These carry significant implications for academic literature on parliaments and territorial politics, and for how the UK political system more broadly is understood. The overall trends that have been identified speak to a political sphere that is heavily and increasingly fragmented along territorial lines. Previous research had drawn attention to growing variation in party organisation and electoral outcomes between the different parts of the UK. This project has added to this by demonstrating that there are also important differences between the behaviours displayed by MPs from the UK's component territories after being elected. It remains to be seen whether territorial fragmentation of this sort is sustainable in the longer-term.

Appendix 1: Sample of oral question time sessions and Westminster Hall debates included in content analysis

Oral questions

Question time session	1992–97	1997–2001	2001–05	2005–10	2010–15	2015–17	2017–19
Prime Minister's Questions	22/10/92 2/2/93 4/2/93 27/4/93 29/4/93 13/5/93 10/6/93 22/7/93 16/12/93 22/2/94 17/5/94 29/11/93 6/12/94 18/4/95 2/5/95 11/5/95 9/1/96 11/1/96 25/1/96 7/3/96 18/6/96 14/11/96 14/1/97 18/3/97	11/3/98 6/5/98 1/7/98 29/7/98 28/10/98 13/1/99 27/1/99 19/5/99 15/3/00 22/3/00 12/7/00 29/11/00	4/7/01 24/10/01 6/2/02 1/5/02 8/5/02 12/6/02 6/11/02 22/1/03 18/6/03 11/2/04 24/3/04 9/2/05	19/10/05 1/2/06 26/4/06 21/6/06 18/10/06 18/4/07 23/5/07 12/12/07 5/3/08 17/12/08 4/3/09 8/7/09	16/6/10 2/2/11 22/6/11 9/11/11 11/1/12 31/10/12 13/3/13 5/6/13 29/1/14 2/7/14 10/9/14 14/1/15	3/6/15 9/9/15 16/9/15 20/1/16 27/1/16 24/2/16 4/5/16 20/7/16 7/9/16 12/10/16 30/11/16 7/12/16	11/10/17 22/11/17 10/1/18 21/2/18 7/3/18 14/3/18 16/5/18 12/9/18 28/11/18 16/1/19 17/7/19 2/10/19
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	2/7/92 28/1/93 2/11/95 29/2/96 20/6/96 6/3/97	19/6/97 19/2/98 30/7/98 16/3/00 21/12/00 8/3/01	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
National Heritage	9/11/92 7/12/92 14/6/93 12/7/93 4/6/96 1/7/96	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Home Office	19/11/92 22/7/93 21/4/94 12/1/95 14/3/96 4/7/96	9/6/97 24/11/97 22/12/97 26/10/98 24/7/00 5/2/01	2/7/01 19/11/01 4/2/02 11/3/02 18/10/04 20/12/04	7/11/05 13/2/06 9/7/07 27/10/08 9/2/09 6/7/09	6/2/12 19/11/12 15/7/13 27/1/14 5/1/15 23/3/15	6/7/15 12/10/15 16/11/15 22/2/16 11/4/16 5/9/16	16/10/17 4/6/18 3/12/18 1/4/19 10/6/19 15/7/19
Trade and Industry	2/12/92 20/1/93 17/3/93 22/6/94 12/7/95 19/2/97	5/3/98 14/5/98 18/6/98 3/12/98 25/2/99 4/11/99	20/3/03 6/11/03 11/12/03 10/6/04 4/11/04 3/3/05	30/11/06 7/6/07	n/a	n/a	n/a

Culture, Media and Sport	n/a	16/3/98 20/4/98 1/6/98 14/12/98 31/1/00 22/1/01	16/7/01 24/6/02 18/11/02 19/5/03 15/9/03 17/1/05	24/4/06 5/3/07 23/7/07 28/1/08 10/3/08 18/1/10	28/4/11 15/12/11 20/6/13 12/12/13 30/1/14 3/7/14	9/7/15 22/10/15 9/6/16 8/9/16 15/12/16 16/3/17	n/a
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	n/a	n/a	28/6/01 15/11/01 3/4/03 20/11/03 22/4/04 18/11/04	22/6/06 1/2/07 8/3/07 12/6/08 15/1/09 25/3/10	1/3/12 24/1/13 16/5/13 13/2/14 27/3/14 11/12/14	18/6/15 5/11/15 17/3/16 13/10/16 24/11/16 2/3/17	20/7/17 7/6/18 17/1/19 28/3/19 20/6/19 31/10/19
Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	n/a	n/a	n/a	17/1/08 22/5/08 7/5/09	n/a	n/a	n/a
Business, Innovation and Skills	n/a	n/a	n/a	14/1/10	14/10/10 17/2/11 24/5/12 20/12/12 13/6/13 8/1/15	10/11/15 15/12/15 3/5/16	n/a
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8/11/16 13/12/16 14/3/17	27/6/17 12/9/17 12/12/17 1/5/18 17/7/18 8/1/19
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	29/6/17 14/9/17 22/3/18 21/6/18 6/9/18 4/7/19

Westminster Hall debates

Debates held during the following parliamentary sessions were included: 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2009–10, 2010–12, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–19, 2019

Appendix 2: List of interviews

First set of interviews, March 2018–March 2020, in-person at Westminster

1. Welsh Conservative MP, 20 March 2018
2. English Conservative MP, 26 March 2018
3. English Conservative MP, 18 April 2018
4. Welsh Conservative MP, 19 April 2018
5. Scottish Conservative MP, 25 April 2018
6. Former Scottish Conservative MP, 26 June 2018
7. Welsh Conservative MP, 21 November 2018
8. Former Scottish Conservative MP, 4 June 2019
9. Former Welsh Conservative MP, 5 February 2020
10. Welsh Conservative MP, 5 February 2020
11. Scottish Conservative MP, 3 March 2020

Second set of interviews, January–October 2021, online on Microsoft Teams

12. Plaid Cymru MP, 28 January 2021
13. Scottish Liberal Democrat MP, 19 March 2021
14. Former Welsh Government official, 23 March 2021
15. Former Yorkshire Labour MP, 7 May 2021
16. Former SDLP MP, 9 June 2021
17. Cornish Conservative MP, 10 June 2021
18. Welsh Labour MP, 25 June 2021
19. Former Scottish Labour MP, 7 July 2021
20. Former Scottish Labour MP, 9 July 2021
21. Yorkshire Conservative MP, 14 July 2021
22. Former Cornish Liberal Democrat MP, 12 October 2021
23. Former SNP MP, 19 October 2021

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