



Scottish independence?

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An analysis of speeches made by Jack McConnell

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Abstract

The Scotland Act 1998 created the Scottish Parliament and Executive. The First Minister of Scotland is the head of the Scottish Executive. Since 2001, Jack McConnell has been the First Minister of Scotland. In this Master's Thesis I present an analysis of six speeches made by Jack McConnell between 2003 and 2006, to see if he is establishing a political discourse that contains an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit.

It seems from the evidence of those six speeches that the First Minister of Scotland is not establishing a political discourse that contains an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit. To help explain the First Minister's decision not to create an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit my work draws on three hypotheses.

These three hypotheses are the political party constraint, the political constraint and the financial constraint hypothesis.

Discourse analysis is the methodological approach, with the work of Laclau & Mouffe and their concept of 'hegemony' as the centrepiece of the analysis.

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Part One: Introduction

There was an important turn in Scottish politics in the late nineties. This turn would presumably alter the face of Scottish politics. The Scotland Act 1998 (The Scotland Act 1998¹) confirms the (re-) establishment of a Scottish Parliament and a Scottish Executive. The British Parliament passed this act in 1998; a year after the Scottish people gave it their backing through a referendum. With the establishment of a separate Scottish Parliament and Executive assumptions were made that probability was high politics in Scotland would develop politics with a higher degree of nationalistic flavour. This has not been the case. Scottish politics have not, as the First Minister has noted in his speeches, become more insular ('Modern Scotland: Ambition and opportunity for all').

In fact very little has changed in Scottish politics in the last decade. Scottish politics is still dominated by the Labour Party, and the political debate centres on similar issues that are found in British politics. Politics in a democratic society seldom remain frozen. Scottish politics does have to potential to be different from British politics. This thesis considers whether the First Minister of Scotland is establishing a political discourse that contains an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit.

In this Master's thesis I will analyse speeches made by the First Minister of Scotland from 2003-2006. I consider Jack McConnell, the First Minister in this period, to represent the Scottish Labour Party. Since the Scottish Labour Party is the leading political party in Scotland, and have been for a number of decades, I also consider its political discourse to be the dominant political discourse in Scotland.

¹ URL: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980046.htm>

The relationship between Scotland and the United Kingdom before The Scotland Act 1998

A brief historical background

On May 1st 1707 the United Kingdom of Great Britain came into existence. The reasons for King William III to recommend to parliament that the English and Scottish kingdoms should unify were many. Scotland had become increasingly difficult to govern since the revolution of 1688 and the death of the Duke of Gloucester compounded an already thorny state of affairs. Being situated on a relatively small island, a single political leadership had in many ways been a goal for several of the islands rulers.

With the annexation of Wales, Scotland remained as the only rival to the Crown of England. In 1603 the crowns were joined by the ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne. Political and economical gains were factors that lay behind the union, the latter felt overwhelmingly by the Scottish who had their economy in tatters before the union was a fact (Riley 1978).

The Scottish Office

Ever since its creation in 1885, The Scottish Office has employed civil servants, and has been a key institutional link that tied Scotland to the United Kingdom. The Scottish Office has in the whole post-war period acted as a state within a state, but with clear limitations. London remained in control, and The Scottish Office was part of the Whitehall (Whitehall²) machine. It thus felt the same financial limitation as other parts of the British state apparatus. The Scottish Office could therefore be described as an institution with a dual spirit, both chained to the centre and free within its limitations.

It was the British Prime Minister who appointed ministers to the Scottish Office. These ministers often had Scottish connections, or were representing Scottish constituencies in the British Parliament. Whilst The Scottish Office remained more or

² URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitehall>

less unchanged through out the cold war period, the Scottish political landscape has some major shifts over those same decades. As the Scottish Office only had limited areas under its responsibilities, there was an inevitable convergence between Scotland and the rest of Great Britain.

Post WWII Scotland

In late 1949 an effort to establish a Scottish parliament was initiated. The political demand never bore fruits. The next change came in the mid-60s. The Conservative Party that once was the biggest party in Scotland started to diminish, and has to this day not been able to regain the stature it lost. Another change was the rise of The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP for short). The Rise of The Scottish Nationalists Party effectively blasted the two-party system to bits, and even though the SNP have not performed as well in the last decades as in their heydays of the 60s and 70s, the SNP is now a political force that has to be reckoned with. The 1970s ended for Scotland with the defeat of the 'Yes' vote in the 1979 referendum.

The Thatcher years and beyond

Scotland would have to wait almost twenty years to vote on the issue of devolved government. 1979 also brought Margaret Thatcher and The Conservative Party to power. Since the Conservative Party never won Scotland in the years they governed there was a democratic deficit that lasted until New Labour's election victory in 1997. Thatcher was also seen as a politician who did not show the sensitiveness towards Scotland as some of her predecessors did. For Thatcher Scotland was part of the United Kingdom. The dual role of The Scottish Secretary, both representing Scotland at Westminster and Westminster in Scotland, was tipped towards the latter. During the Thatcher years the Scottish Secretary, and thus the Scottish Office, was viewed upon as the extended arm of the Conservative government. This is the background to the state of affairs prior to the New Labour landslide victory in 1997, the Scotland referendum the same year and The Scotland Act 1998 (Lynch 1991, Mitchison 2002, Mitchell 1996, Mitchell 2003).

Political institutions in Great Britain

The British Parliament

The British parliament is situated in London, and is often referred to as Westminster (Lijphart 1999, Heidar & Berntzen 1998). The parliament consists of two chambers, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The general election decides the make-up of the House of Commons. In this chamber each Member of Parliament (MP) has gained a seat by winning a constituency at an election for Parliament. A constituency is a geographically limited area, and the registered voters in a given area can vote for one candidate in an election. The first-past-the-post system that is employed in Britain results in only one MP, the one to gain the highest number of votes, per constituency. This electoral model is also called the Westminster model (Lijphart 1999, Heidar & Bertzen).

The House of Commons and the British government

The Prime Minister asks the Queen to dissolve Parliament, thereby calling a general election. The maximum length of a Parliament is five years (The UK Parliament – Elections FAQ page³). The government is formed after a party or parties receive the backing of the majority of the House of Commons. The political power resides in the House of Commons, and the extension of the power that is in the House of Commons, namely the Government. The British government, and the British Parliament is a sovereign entity, and can change every Act of Parliament it wishes.

The British government has due to this freedom called an elected dictatorship. After New Labour won the general election in 1997 it chose to use the powers that a British government has, and started a wave of constitutional reform that is on-going. One of the most important products of those reforms was the Scottish referendum and the subsequent Scotland Act 1998 (The Scotland Act 1998⁴).

³ URL: http://www.parliament.uk/faq/elections_faq_page.cfm

⁴ URL: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980046.htm>

The House of Lords and the influence of the Scotland Act 1998 on British politics

The House of Lords is the anomaly of the British democracy. It consists currently of Lord Spiritual-s, more specifically the archbishops of Canterbury and York in addition to senior bishops. Also there are Lord Temporal-s, who are divided into Life Peers, Hereditary Peers and Great Officers of State. Life Peers are members of the House of Lords who are proposed by the Prime Minister, Hereditary Peers are people who have inherited a place in the House of Lords, and the Great Officers of State who are Crown Ministers (The House of Lords⁵). The House of Lords can delay certain bills passed by the House of Commons, and it has some judicial powers.

The devolution of power to the Scottish Parliament and executive has not changed the structure of British politics on the whole, though some structural changes have occurred. I will look at these changes in the chapter on the Scottish political institutions. Even though some policy areas have been devolved to Scotland, the British Parliament can at anytime, and without consultation, make laws for Scotland that in principle is not the area of responsibility for the British Parliament (Heidar & Berntzen 1998, Gamble 2003, Cable 1987).

Political institutions in Scotland

The Scottish Parliament and its proportional system of representation

The political institutions in Scotland have undergone significant changes since the devolution agreement was passed by the parliament in London. Scotland has now a parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh. It has an executive that is formed by the majority in power in the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Parliament has the power to make laws in matters that are not reserved to Westminster (Scottish Executive Topics⁶), as

⁵ URL: <http://www.parliament.uk/directories/directories.cfm>

⁶ URL: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/>

the Scotland Act 1998 lists the reserved powers instead of the devolved (Lynch 2001:15), and to scrutinise the policies of the Executive.

The Ministers of the Scottish Parliament (MSP for short) are as opposed to the British Parliament in London, not representing a constituency alone. In Scotland a proportional system of representation, known as the Additional Member System is used. A voter in the Scottish general election casts two votes. One vote is for a constituency member whom will be the candidate winning the largest number of votes in a constituency, whilst the second vote is for a party, or an independent candidate, within a larger electoral area called a Scottish Parliament region. There are eight regions in Scotland at the moment, namely Highlands and Islands, North East Scotland, Mid Scotland and Fife, West of Scotland, Glasgow, Central Scotland, Lothians and South of Scotland (Scottish devolved government, civil service, Scottish politics⁷).

The Scottish Office and The Scottish Executive

The Scottish Office exercised a wide range of government functions in relation to Scotland. Within the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State was the chief minister in the British government with responsibilities for Scotland. After the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Executive, the Secretary of State for Scotland and The Scotland Office (the heir of The Scottish Office) deals five functions, the most important of them being to represent Scottish interests within the United Kingdom and acts as a check vis-à-vis the Scottish Parliament to ensure that the legislative proposals do not tread over into reserved matters (Lynch 2001). Most of the responsibilities of The Scottish Office have been transferred to the newly established Scottish Executive, and the majority of the civil service that was connected to The Scottish Office is now a part of The Scottish Executive (Lynch 2001).

⁷ URL: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/FAQs>

The Advocate General

The office of Advocate General for Scotland was also created by the devolution agreement (Advocate General for Scotland⁸) and the Advocate General is to be the chief legal adviser to the government in Britain on Scottish law.

Three hypotheses

I will now introduce three hypotheses on why the First Minister is not creating a political discourse that contains an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit. These hypotheses will be discussed applying a scientific approach that is unusual within the field of political science, namely discourse analysis. Discourse analysis as a scientific approach will be discussed in part three of this Master's Thesis.

Political party constraint

The Scottish Labour Party share many views with their British counterpart. The First Minister's inability to form a political discourse that also incorporates a sense of independence can be accredited the narrow political manoeuvrability that arises due to the lack of political independence of his regional party, from the centre, in other words the British nationwide party. The party constraint hypothesis is further assigned weight by Hopkin & Bradbury (2006), who argue that the Scottish Executive have avoided disagreements with the United Kingdom level as to avoid rifts with the statewide Labour party. They also add depth to the party constraint hypothesis, by making a claim that the Scottish First Minister, Jack McConnell, is a Blairite politician. That is to say he shares many of the political ideas that the statewide Labour party leadership, most notably the Prime Minister Tony Blair, embodies.

Bradbury & Mitchell (2004) reminds us of the short election cycle that exists between the United Kingdom and Scotland. They argue that the Scottish devolved

⁸ URL: <http://www.oag.gov.uk/>

level not only have to bear in mind their own political fate, but they also need to consider the spill-over effect, on to the national level, of their actions. There are both political, and as we will see later on financial, reasons for the Scottish devolved level to enhance its nationwide party's success. Driver & Martell (2002), Franklin (2004) and Lynch & Birrell (2004) all describe the British New Labour Party as a party that relishes control. The leadership of the British New Labour Party has also a tight grip on the regional Scottish party. Hassan & Warhurst (2001:222) notes that some observers have even accused the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, to regard the Scottish Labour Party as his personal fiefdom. Lynch & Birrell (2004) notes that the Scottish regional Party for a long time lacked organisational independence, adding weight to the political party constraint hypothesis.

Political constraint

Hassan & Warhurst (2001) suggest that the devolution of power to Scotland was part of a progressive approach lead by the British New Labour Party. 'Radical democratisation' was a key idea behind the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and Executive, which was engineered into existence so that the centralisation of the British state could be broken. More consultation and more consensuses were key elements of the constitutional reform (Hassan & Warhurst 2001:214).

Hassan & Warhurst (2001) also advocate the lack of difference in the Scottish and British political discourse. Since there was no desire from the United Kingdom level for an autonomous Scotland, this was neither the case in the Scottish level. The lack of an image of Scotland as an independent nation in the political discourse of the First Minister could therefore also be contributed to a mutual understanding between Scottish and British levels of politics about the nature of the devolutional agreement. The Scottish Parliament was created in order to pull Westminster closer, not to push it away.

Financial constraint

Financial constraint is another hypothesis to why the First Minister of Scotland is not able to create an image of Scotland as an independent nation. Hassan & Warhurst (2001) touch upon this theme. Since the Scottish Parliament and Executive is not self financed, the financial constraints it experiences are linked closely with its relationship with the United Kingdom level. For a Scottish Labour politician, keeping a good relationship with its statewide party members and leadership, serves a financial aspect.

A possible future scenario

The picture is not totally black and white. Keating, Stevenson, Cairney & Taylor (2003) suggest a possible break of the established status quo might come when either the Scottish or the British level loses its hold on power. At the moment the most likely outcome is that the British New Labour Party loses control over Westminster. A change in the power relations between the two Labour parties, and the two Executives might facilitate a changed political discourse, and lead to a more nationalistically flavoured discourse. Aspects of the European Union, embodied in this Master's thesis by the organisation REGLEG and the treaties the First Minister has signed with Catalonia and Tuscany, provide another possible future scenario that might lead to a changed political discourse on the part of the Scottish First Minister.

The structure of this Master's Thesis

In the following chapter, Theory, I will investigate the work of Laclau & Mouffe, with a focus on their concept of hegemony. I have decided not to include a brief introduction to the different scientific definitions in the Introduction chapter, as I find it more appropriate to define and explain the different scientific definitions whereupon they occur. However, I am going to define my usage of the terminology

‘political discourse’ and ‘autonomous political unit’ in the beginning of the Theory chapter.

In chapter three I will look at discourse analysis and qualitative research, and explore and answer some of the methodological questions raised by this Master’s Thesis.

The following chapter will be the analysis of the selected speeches. I have chosen to analyse certain aspects, which I have deemed important of each speech. These speeches are analysed one by one, instead of thematically. This is the approach I have chosen because I wanted to show continuity in the speeches’ content, and direct my focus on the different speeches as individual events. I have also found it more appropriate to include theory concerning communication, myths and nationalism in this part of the Master’s thesis, adding theory I see contributing to the analysis continuously. In this way the reader will have the relevant theory etched out where it is relevant, instead of in a separate chapter.

The analysis of the speeches has a brief conclusion, and in this brief conclusion I sum up the vital results found in the analysis part. It is also in this latter part I consider my hypotheses. This is in order to have a more compact result.

In chapter five I dwell on the question of why the First Minister talk so little about expanding the Scottish autonomy. This chapter is pursued by a discussion on the usefulness of Laclau & Mouffe’s theory. After this discussion I will conclude this Master’s Thesis.

My Thesis uses discourse analysis as methodology. This breaks with the usual methodological approach within political science. I have made a conscious decision to apply discourse analysis, since I want to focus on language and the communication of ideas. Discourse analysis is an excellent methodological approach in this respect.

PART TWO: Theory

My definition of a political discourse involves practice, in addition to the linguistic discourse found in the speeches I am analysing in this Master Thesis. There is a continuous interaction between the discursive and practical levels (Rød 2005:21). I concur that an analytical divide between the discursive and the practical level could be a possible solution. However I do not find such a divide befitting. This is the reason I am including the practical sphere in my definition of a political discourse. In this paper the political discourse represents both the linguistic and the practical political sphere.

Another definition I want to clarify is the ‘autonomous political unit’ expression I use. By an autonomous political unit I mean a political entity that has the same political, legislative and financial possibilities as a sovereign country.

Laclau & Mouffe’s discourse theory

Laclau & Mouffe’s discourse theory deals with the social field as a web where the establishment of meaning occurs. In this process meanings are being fixated. Different signs bear different meanings. These meanings are given their initial meanings by the social actors involved, and are placed in a context with other meanings. Each meaning of a given sign is a possible meaning, but not the only meaning. A discourse tries to impose an order amongst the different signs and meanings, but due to the contingency of the different signs and meanings this feat is not possible to complete fully (Howarth 2000:103). I will explore this point in more detail further on.

Discourse analysis is an analytical tool used to show how social actors are in a continuous battle over the meanings of different signs. Fixation of a sign does not signal a final end of a battle over the meaning attributed to that sign. If a sign has a natural meaning to us, it does not exclude alternative meanings. Social actors carry

out fixations of meanings, and social actors can in time change the meaning of every previously fixed meaning (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:35-36). On the contrary to Saussure's analysis of language, where each sign has a fixed meaning Laclau & Mouffe's structure does not feature such permanent attributes (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:112-113, Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:39-40).

Discourse – Moments - Element

Articulation is defined by Laclau & Mouffe as 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:105).

Discourse is defined as '[t]he structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:105).

The different positions within a discourse are the different moments, whilst a difference that is not discursively articulated is an element (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:105). A discourse is not unified as one is initially led to believe. Laclau and Mouffe uses Foucault's notion of regulatory dispersion to explain how a discursive formation is unified (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:105). Dispersion itself, they write, is the principle according to Foucault, of unity as long as it is governed by rules of formation.

The different moments are placed in different positions, and it is an ensemble of a group of differential positions that make out the unity of a discourse.

'This ensemble is not the expression of any underlying principle external to itself (...) but it constitutes a configuration, which in certain contexts of exteriority can be signified as a totality' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:106).

Laclau and Mouffe draw on elements of linguistic models, creating parallels between the social system and the linguistic system. But their theory differs on two important points.

The first important difference is that for Laclau & Mouffe social relations are not merely linguistic phenomena. A political discourse, as for instance Bill Clinton's New Democrats, does not only consist of a language, but also a set of action and practises. For Laclau & Mouffe discourse is both ideas and practice.

The second point where Laclau & Mouffe differ from the linguistic model is in their belief that there cannot be a point where all meanings are given. There is no closure in the theory of Laclau & Mouffe. As we will see later on, it is the reproduction and alternation of a given meaning that is one of the fundamentals in Laclau & Mouffe's theory (Howarth 2000:102-103). Just as discourse does not operate within tight limits, do the moments that make up the discourses, not become eternally fixed positions. Instead, they are relative to other moments. Moments operate through relations to other signs, and they do this by excluding possible meanings. The transformation of elements into moments, a movement from the outside of a discourse to being within, is never complete. But a discourse tries to limit the fluxation of meanings. It tries to create order. Just as it is not possible with complete fixation neither is complete non-fixation (Laclau & Mouffe 2001).

Field of discursivity – Nodal points

Even though there is no ultimate fixation of meaning, a given discourse will try to control a field of discursivity. The field of discursivity is what Laclau & Mouffe (2001) describe as the terrain that surrounds a discourse. What are positioned in this field are surpluses of meaning. They are surpluses because they are not within the boundaries of a discourse. These surplus meanings are essential for the constitution of every social practice. The surplus meanings in the field of discursivity are always a threat to the order that a discourse is trying to establish. As a field of discursivity surrounds discourses, every meaning, including a political project no matter how successful, will never be able to articulate every possible elements as moments.

To stem the flow of differences, a discourse tries to construct centres of meaning. These points are partially fixed, and are called nodal points. As written earlier, moments operate through excluding alternative meanings. In order to exclude an alternative meaning, there needs to be some meaning initially. The nodal points are the references applied by the moments. Nodal points also play a part in the practice of articulation, as the practice of articulation comprises the construction of nodal points. Social practice thus has an element of articulation. A given articulation either reproduces or challenges a discourse by fixating a meaning in a particular way. Thus articulations are contributing to a continuous movement of meaning, and can be described as contingent interventions in an unresolved environment. The articulations

are therefore unpredictable, and they become weapons in the fight for the way a discourse is shaped (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:39-40).

The distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices

There are no distinctions between discursive and non-discursive practices in Laclau & Mouffe's theory. However, this does not mean there is no world outside of discourse. What Laclau & Mouffe try to convey is that objects and events in the world we live in receive their meaning from a discursive field. If you walk down the street and an ice tap hits you on the head it is a fact. But if you see it as an expression of faith, divine wrath, an unfortunate incident due to the sudden warming of temperature or an expression of the lack of care in modern society is optional.

Another point is what Howarth (2000) calls 'the material character of discourse'. He writes that Laclau & Mouffe

'blur the sharp separation between an objective world, on the one hand, and language or thought on the other, in which the latter is simply a representation or expression of the former. Discourses are not confined to an 'inner' realm of mental phenomena, but are those publicly available and essentially incomplete frameworks of meaning which enable social life to be conducted' (Howarth 2000:104).

The primacy of politics

As we have seen so far, Laclau & Mouffe's theory is a theory based on the possibilities of movement and power. Discourses, identities and meanings are not fixed. 'If all identity is relational and differential, and no discourse can in principle be closed, how is any identity or any society possible' (Howarth 2000:104). Laclau & Mouffe reply to this challenge by having politics as a primacy. There are a few concepts that need a closer look. These are antagonism, the logic of equivalence, the logic of difference, the category of subject and hegemony.

The category of subject

Howarth (2000:108) writes that Laclau & Mouffe are critical to Althusser's view of the subject. Althusser opposes the subject as the maker of its own consciousness. He believes instead that subjects are moulded by ideologies that in turn are based in social structures. Laclau & Mouffe argue that all social practices are discursive, including ideologies, and they are also critical to what they see as Althusser's theft of the subject's autonomy. Laclau & Mouffe can agree that identities are discursively created and maintained through ideologies, but in Howarth's words they deem the complete theory of Althusser to be too 'deterministic and reductionist' (Howarth 2000:108).

Laclau & Mouffe do not confine a social agent into a single identity. There is room for several identities, as the category of subject is incomplete (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:121). Sometimes a social agent is forced into action, and the social agent has to choose between different identities and the discourses that they articulate. During the Second World War a German working-class soldier fighting on the east front would have found it difficult to identify himself primarily as a labourer, instead of a German. If the proletarian discourse becomes the primary source of identity the German soldier would have to desert.

Antagonisms

Antagonism arises when social agents are unable to secure an identity. The blocking of the attainment of an identity creates an enemy for the social agent. The experience of hostility is mutual between the agent who is blocked and the agent who is blocking. There are in other words no previously fixed identities that make a conflict unavoidable. If an immigrant wants to change his identity into his newly found home identity, but is prevented from it, antagonism will arise. This view conveyed by Laclau and Mouffe stands in opposition to Marxism's view of historical determinism or the notion of a universal political agent that is guided by consolidated identities.

At the base of Laclau & Mouffe's theory lies a fluidity and movement that shines through here as well. By having reached a limit, due to the blocking that occurs, the contingency of identity is revealed. Along with this discovery, the outside threat of an identity is also becoming visible. The field of discursivity discussed

earlier is coming into light, as there are competing identities outside a given discourse that are threatening the status quo. Antagonisms as witnessed now, help to create an inside and an outside, and thus enable us to reveal the boundaries of identity formation. It is at the boundaries where identities are no longer stable that the battles between identities inside and outside a discourse are most visible (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:122-127, Howarth 2000:105-106).

Equivalence and Difference

As different social agents occupy different positions, antagonism is unavoidable. By placing themselves in different positions, the agents become what Laclau & Mouffe (2001) labelled as 'particularities'. In some cases there are social agents who inhabit points not too far from other agents, but are at a considerable distance from another agent, or cluster of social agents. The agents who are closer to each other can find a common ground, as opposed to the other or others. Thus the outside threat brings a collection of particular identities together under a unified umbrella. The differences coming together need to be able to express something underlying them all. In order to come together, there must be a negation, something that those who group together can group against. The process of coming together of the different particularities is described by the logics of equivalence, in other words a simplification of a political space.

Certain clusters of different, but co-operating social actors join forces. Since they represent different particularities, there needs to be a way to represent them all. One of the particularities will split and

'(...) without ceasing to be its own particularity, it transforms its body in the representation of a universality transcending it. This relation, by which a certain particularity assumes the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it, is what we call a hegemonic relation ' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:XIII).

Laclau & Mouffe describe the universality that one of the particularities transforms into as contaminated. This is due to both the unresolvable tension between universality on the one hand and particularity on the other, and that the function of hegemonic universality is not acquired as a permanent feature, but is inconstant.

On the other hand there is the logic of difference. Laclau & Mouffe (2001) believe that different social actors place themselves differently within the discourses that make up society. This is the logic of difference. The logic of difference sets out to break the discursive order created by the logic of equivalence, and increases the complexity of the political space that the logic of equivalence tried to simplify.

If a social relation is unstable, it is unlikely that the social agents can be able to establish a chain of equivalence, and thereby simplify the political space. The opposition to the communist dictatorships in Central-and-Eastern Europe had a common enemy in the regime they fought against. They came together under the common ground of democracy, and simplified the political space. Even though there was great distance between the different social agents, their discourse of democracy held them together against the outside agent of the un-democratic dictatorship. Laclau & Mouffe (2001:130) use the example of the 19th century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli to illustrate how the logic of difference breaks up ‘the system of equivalences which made up the popular revolutionary subjectivity’. Disraeli introduced a ‘one nation’ policy to confront the established dichotomy of the people versus the elite. With the introduction of this policy he did not choose between the two discourses but established a rival that could in turn act as an alternative making the existing political space more complex.

Hegemony

Previously I have mentioned that articulation is needed in the construction of nodal points. Articulation can move elements into moments, and it is here where hegemony enters the fray. If a system is closed, and the moments are fixed, there cannot be room for a hegemonic practice. Hegemonic practice is thus linked to articulatory practice, and space to manoeuvre in. Laclau & Mouffe (2001) write that hegemony supposes the incomplete and open character of the social. Along with an incomplete and open space, hegemony also presupposes the presence of antagonistic forces. The contingent elements that have not been turned into moments of a discourse can be articulated as the hegemonic intervention sees fit. New nodal points can be established, and by establishing new nodal points the hegemonic practice can create and stabilize a new system of meaning. Since hegemonic practices presuppose the presence of

antagonistic forces, they also need chains of equivalence and the frontiers that come with antagonism.

Discourses are from time to time being challenged by alternative discourses, seeking to become the dominant way of understanding a phenomenon. If there are no clear challengers to a discourse, then it will dominate and establish it self as an objective discourse. This means that its changeability will become less visible, and after a point it will become a seemingly objective fact. The traces of power have been worn off. Power is to be understood as a force that contributes to the production of the social sphere. Power and politics are intertwined, as power is needed to produce the objects, for instance identity, and politics is the field in which these objects receive their meaning and reveal their changeability (Laclau & Mouffe 2001).

Discourses have the potential to move from apparent objectivity on the one hand, to a political field filled with competing discourses on the other. To move from being part of a political conflict to objectivity, 'hegemonic intervention' is called for. If a discourse is to become dominant, it has to suppress the alternatives, and this is achieved by what Laclau & Mouffe describe as 'hegemonic intervention'. This intervention can be labelled as a success if one discourse ends up dominating a field where there used to be competition. According to Laclau & Mouffe, the establishment of hegemonic discourses as objective discourses and the dissolving of the political field is a vital aspect of social processes.

Gramsci's development of classical Marxists theory

Gramsci (1971) meant that the economically determined ideology is not a sufficient explanation of how the ruling class obtain their power structure. He added the term 'hegemony' as an answer to how consent was being organised. Control of a social group is manifested as both domination and intellectual leadership. Hegemony is political, intellectual and moral leadership vis-à-vis allied groups. It is important to notice that only a dominant class can become hegemonic. To stabilize power in the hands of those who possess it, Gramsci thought that being in control of the formation of opinion would be vital, as this leads to the naturalisation of the existing power structures and blurs the vision of people, concealing from them their true interests.

These hegemonic processes take place in the superstructure and are part of a political field, and not directly determined by the economical sphere. The supplement

of an independent political field is part of the revision that Gramsci made on the classical Marxist theory.

Gramsci's Influence on Laclau & Mouffe

Gramsci describes hegemony as an analytical category that can be related to all forms of articulation of a fundamental class' interest. Laclau & Mouffe's discourse theory is a theory about the establishment of meaning, and they have sought to further develop Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'. Whilst Marxism presupposed an objective social structure, Laclau & Mouffe dismiss the fact that there are objective laws that has fragmented society into certain groups. Political discursive processes always create the groups that are present, and these processes never gain complete closure, enabling the recreation of groups and hierarchies in a continuous cycle. The base and the superstructure are joined into one field, and this joint field is the product of discursive processes (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:66-71, Mouffe 1997a, Mouffe 1997b, Gramsci 1971).

Hegemony does not equal a total abolishment of the other's interests and tendencies. A certain degree of incorporation and equilibrium is needed (Mouffe 1997b, Gramsci 1971). The preservation of alternative ideas represents possible alternative scenarios in the future. Laclau & Mouffe's (2001) field of discursivity is the basis of their alternative scenarios. Neither Gramsci's nor Laclau & Mouffe's hegemony does therefore develop to become a monolithical truth.

The movement towards hegemony, Gramsci (1971) says, is a 'passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures', by which he means passing from the specific interests of a group or class to the building of institutions and elaboration of ideologies. These institutions and ideologies will be universal in form, in other words they will not appear as those of a particular class, if they reflect a hegemony (Gramsci 1971:181). Hegemony is the higher form of synthesis that binds the collective will together (Mouffe 1997b).

For Laclau & Mouffe hegemony is the central category of political analysis, just as it is for Gramsci (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:X). As noted earlier discourse analysis lets us see the contingency in what is perceived as objective. Laclau & Mouffe acknowledge that deconstruction and Lacanian theory has had vital influence on the way they have formulated their approach towards hegemony. From Derrida,

the idea of undecidability has been important. 'If, as shown in the work of Derrida, undecidables permeate the field which had previously been seen as governed by structural determination, one can see hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:XI). Hegemonic transitions are dependent on political articulations. These articulations according to Laclau & Mouffe do not depend on outside interest, such as class-interest, but they retroactively create interests they allegedly represent (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:XII). This point further underlines a form of fluidity in the theory of Laclau & Mouffe, breaking with the rigidity of classical Marxism.

PART THREE: Methodology

Discourse analysis

Language

Since I have chosen to use discourse analysis as my scientific method I will have to make considerations in relation to language that many of my fellow political scientists do not have when conducting their research. The emphasis that discourse analysis places on language in comparison to other analytical methods that political scientists usually use, is also the strength of this form of qualitative research. Gaining understanding of social phenomena is a key part of qualitative research. Acquiring the perception of the people involved, instead of merely 'number crunching', can give the researcher an alternate insight to a social phenomenon.

Neuman (2001) has argued that researchers within social science have turned towards the analysis of language in order to study the social sphere. This is done because the creation of meaning is an essential part of the social sphere, and in order to more adequately study the creation of meaning, the analytical tools employed by linguists are needed. Discourse analysis is one of the analytical tools previously used by linguistics, now honed alternatively, in order to be useful social scientists.

The common ground between the different approaches

It is difficult to define what ‘discourse’ is, as there are several competing definitions. This is in part due to the fact that different disciplines use the term ‘discourse’, along with competing theoretical standpoints as well. Foucault’s analytical work on knowledge, power and social practice (Fairclough 1992) heavily influences my usage of ‘discourse’ in this Master’s thesis. As I have written earlier, I will use political discourse to reflect both the linguistic and the practical political sphere.

Winter Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) write that discourse analysis is both a theory and a method that are intertwined and should be used together. There are different approaches to discourse analysis, but there is some common ground between the approaches.

A theoretical trait which the different approaches to discourse analysis share is the critical view they have on what is perceived to be scientific truth. The knowledge we have about our surroundings cannot be said to be an objective truth. This is in part due to the belief that we are historical and cultural creatures, and our historical and cultural belonging therefore biases our knowledge. Our perception of our world is tainted by our place in space and time, and simultaneously is fluid. It is not given what our social world is like on the basis of external conditions. Our way to understand our world is created during social interaction and is upheld by social interaction. Winter Jørgensen & Phillips notes that there is a connection between knowledge and social action. That is to say that on the basis of our perception of the world some action is deemed acceptable, whilst others are not. Different views of the world thus lead to different possibilities for social action, and that in turn gives rise to different possibilities to accumulate knowledge (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:13-14).

There are also some common views on language between the different approaches to discourse analysis. Our link with reality goes through our language; it is through language we can make sense of the world surrounding us. The world outside our language is real, but we need language to make a meaning of the world outside. Language is more though. It is also the means by which we construct the social world, and thus social identities and relations. It is therefore a political tool, as well as a descriptive device (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:17-18).

Difficulties

Winter Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) touch on the difficulties surrounding a discourse analysis. The theoretical approaches do not deal with strict dividing lines between discourses, and at the heart of discourse theory lies a belief in change and transformation that abolishes the possibility of a rigorous methodology. Discourse analysis provides the scientist with an analytical tool which enables the scientist can work on the world. The definition of the different discourses should be seen as part of the research, and discourse analysis offers leeway enough to let the limits of a discourse change from case to case.

The construction of the limits of a discourse is thus the responsibility of the given scientist, and this fact should be taken into account, and receive the attention it needs. This does not mean that a discourse is something purely in the mind of a researcher. Discourses need to be based on findings from “the real world”. This in turn raises the issue of the scientist not only conducting research, but also being a part of the research. The researcher is thus taking part of the production or reproduction of discourses he analyses (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:149-150, 153, 161-162).

The social-constructivist based worldview of discourse analysis has been criticized of being politically impotent, since it will not say what is right. At the same time it has been criticized for being unassertive. That is to say that that discourse analysis sees every result as a representation among other representations, with no clear view on what is right.

This critique is somewhat misleading. It is true that discourse analysis does not point to a right answer and does not reveal an objective truth. But discourse analysis does turn the spotlight on circumstances and events that otherwise might have been overlooked, it does offer a fresh approach to old challenges. By letting a researcher cast doubt over allegedly fixed meanings, structures and action, discourse analysis provides the means to help us understand our social world in a different light, and thus make the possibilities for change available. Discourse analysis does not say what should be right, but that is not equitable with political impotency. By bringing a discourse out from the objective category and placing it a non-objective category, discourse analysis makes a particular discourse open for debate, criticism and possibly change. It is this critical edge that gives discourse analysis an important scientific and political power (Winter Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:162, 164-166).

Qualitative research versus quantitative

Social science can roughly be split into two categories; one is quantitative research and the other category is qualitative research. These two categories represent different methods to collect, to analyse and relate to scientific questions (Widerberg 2001). The type of qualitative research that I use in this thesis is based on text analysis. Text analysis is one of the main sub categories that qualitative research can be broken down to.

In comparison to for instance observation, which is another main sub-category within qualitative research, the data used by the researcher is already in place, and cannot be influenced with to the same degree. Interview, another main sub-category within qualitative research, differs also from text analysis. As noted earlier, the researcher has a set text to relate to, and cannot influence the creation of the research material in the same way as an interviewer can. Having said this, data has to be selected, the language has to be analysed and meaning has to be attributed. Throughout the process the researcher can consciously and unconsciously influence the result of the analysis.

When conducting a qualitative research in social science it is important to keep in mind that there is not a distance between the researcher and what is being researched in the same way that there is a distance between a statistician and his numbers of a biologist and his ducks. The positivistic stance, that a scientist can distance himself from the material in question is abandoned (Thagaard 1998:193).

Text and sample

As a researcher I have made a choice to analyse a certain text instead of another. The choice of disregarding something as relevant to a research is just as important as the choice of bringing something into the analysis. In qualitative research the researcher's choice of what is relevant is more present than in quantitative research. By being more closely connected to the material, the objectivity that is often assumed in science becomes more blurred. Taylor notes that 'discourse analysis is not a neutral, technical form of processing but always involves theoretical background and decision making' (Taylor 2001:24 in Rød 2005:27).

As noted earlier, I have included six speeches in this Master's Thesis. I have selected these six speeches because they have been given at different times, at different places and to different crowds. The first speech I analyse, 'Modern Scotland: Ambition and opportunity for all', is the most important speech. This is not only due to its length, but also because of its content. I have consciously added a speech made abroad, namely the 'Speech for Regleg Conference', as to see whether the First Minister's speech is influenced by the change in locus. The method of selection I have chosen is strategic selections. This selection method has enabled me to choose the speeches I deemed necessary to be able to answer the research question. As Thagaard (1998:51) writes, the size of the selection must be considered to be desirable. Beyond a certain size, there is no need to add more selections. I believe that six speeches represent a point of desirability.

In addition to this, qualitative research is based on a perception that cases are representations of particular social phenomena. Qualitative research can base it self on a far smaller selection than quantitative research can, as the individual cases are seen to mirror larger social structures (Thagaard 1998:16, 51).

Considering my usage of discourse analysis

The initial objective for the Master's Thesis was to map out the political discourse of the First Minister, and in particular his attitude towards a further autonomisation of Scottish politics. I wanted to write a Thesis on what I see as an essential part of politics, namely the communication of ideas. While writing my Master's Thesis I experienced the interplay between research and the material that I researched. This came most clearly to expression in my three different hypotheses, as these developed in continuum with the Thesis.

I chose to use discourse analysis, as I wanted to look at how a policy was being defined and communicated by a central member of a political elite. In order to analyse his language in a social context, I found discourse analysis as an appropriate analytical tool. I know that discourse analysis is not in widespread use in the field of political science. I believe that it is important for political scientists to look at how language is used in politics. This should not be left to other sciences, but should be an accepted part of political science.

Since I have used speeches that are publicly available I have been able to backtrack to my data whenever I wanted to. This is a major reason to why I could develop my hypotheses over time, and it has also been vital for me, since the shape and the content of my Master's Thesis has changed up to the last minute. These paths would not have been open for me if I had chosen an interview as a research method.

Thagaard (1998:174) writes that between induction and deduction, stands abduction. Inductive approach stresses the accumulation of empirical studies, as to develop theory, while the deductive approach is when a theory is tested in the light of the collected data. Abduction, continues Thagaard, 'brings out the dialectical relationship between theory and data [my translation]' (Thagaard 1998:174). My work with this Master's Thesis has been influenced by both theory and data.

'Established theory represents a starting point for the research, but the goal is not to necessarily develop the theory. Earlier theories might give ideas to the analysis, and the data could be interpreted in the light of a theory that the investigation is based upon. Thereby is the research characterised by an interaction between an inductive and a deductive approach...[my translation]' (Thagaard 1998:178).

Validity – Generalisation - Ethical considerations

The concept of validity has been given new meaning in qualitative research, Thagaard (1998:20) writes, this is in order to make it more appropriate to the way qualitative research is conducted as opposed to quantitative research. Thagaard (1998:20) suggests that validity should be exchanged with confirmation, and that the quality of the research in addition to the support of other research should be the basis of confirmation.

The results found in this Master's Thesis should only be used in a different context with care. The historical background of the United Kingdom, the cultural and economic factors, and the historical and lingual ties that bind the Scottish people together with the rest of the United Kingdom is unique. To only see the centre – periphery connection would be wrong. There are several factors to consider before the Scottish case is used to express something about for instance The Basques, The Sami or The Corsican people. In this respect, the generalisation power of this Master's Thesis is limited.

The tension between the rhetorical and the practical level could be employed on different cases, as the story he tells about Scotland and the political reality that creates the limits of the Scottish Executive are not always in line. The conflict between words and deeds is a universal topic. In a democracy the politicians are dependent on the approval of the public, and in view of this dependency applying rhetorical tools to convince or cajole is a natural consequence. Salmon (2006) writes that storytelling as a rhetorical tool is gaining ground in politics. This paper can be used in the debate surrounding this development.

The ethical considerations are slightly different between researchers using text analysis versus those researchers who employ observation or interview as their scientific method. When analysing a speech that is attainable for the general public, and in the case of my thesis the speech was delivered in a public setting and not private, the question of confidentiality becomes empty. Whether or not the person delivering the speech in question has to make a conscious choice to participate in the research, and whether or not I as a researcher should inform the person that delivered the speech that I am using his speech as a research material becomes less vital, than if I would have made an interview or observed him. Since the speech, as I have noted earlier, was both made in public, and is available to the public, analysis of that speech does not have to take the aforementioned ethical guidelines into consideration.

The more lenient approach to ethical guidelines does not render ethics irrelevant when conducting text analysis. As a researcher I have to be aware of the power of quotation, and how that can affect the meaning of a text, and I must also be conscious of my role as an interpreter of meaning. The interpretations that I will make are subjective interpretations that are influenced by, amongst other things, my theoretical background and knowledge.

Wikipedia and other Internet sites

I have included one reference from the Internet based encyclopaedia called Wikipedia. The use of this site, as any other Internet site, has its limitations and faults. Being publicly supplied and as such subject to the subjective interpretations of others, Wikipedia offers opportunities for forgery of facts and events. This unwanted element is being countered by a continuously, qualitative assurance by the company responsible for the site, and its user community.

All Internet sites have to be treated with care. Forgery of information can occur on the World Wide Web, and as a responsible researcher, one has to take this into consideration when quoting from the Internet. The majority of the references to Internet sites I have used have been to official sites of the Scottish government, the British government or renowned newspapers. This diminishes greatly the possibilities of false information.

The usage of Internet sites greatly enhances the availability of information, but it also demands great vigilance on the part of the researcher.

PART FOUR: Analysis - The speeches

In this section I will present parts of speeches the Prime Minister of Scotland has made the last couple of years. The excerpts of the speeches presented in this section have been selected on the basis of their relevance to the research question.

Modern Scotland: Ambition and opportunity for all

5 March 2005

The Scottish educational system and globalisation

‘And two outstanding universities – making a name for themselves across the globe. Dundee University – the 3rd best university in the world for science. Where the young Canadian student I met, could tell me he was here because his teacher in Montreal told him it was the best place in the world to study medicine. And the University of Abertay. World renowned for digital games technology and providing real opportunities for local students too.’

The Scottish educational system was one of the institutions that remained sovereign after the Union with England in the beginning of the 18th century. The First Minister

is in this paragraph showing high remarks about the Scottish educational system, bringing the Scottish educational system into a global perspective. Scotland can according to the First Minister manage on its own, even when compared to the rest of the world. There is seemingly no need for outside help, more specifically English help, as the Scottish educational establishment can meet even the highest criterion, worldwide competition.

The world itself contains no meaning. We create it through language and through our experiences. (White 2003:13,15,124). Hayden White talks about the domestication of history (White 2003:11). This implies that the past is captured into simplifying terms and structures. The past is tweaked, and something that is alien to us becomes less so.

The parallel existence of alternative histories is often ignored or overridden by the dominant makers of history. This domination can be interpreted using Laclau & Mouffe's term hegemony, which states that there are dominant discourses that are being challenged by alternatives. In such respect, our history as we have learned it in the schools, in our families, in our society, is an expression of a dominant history. Norwegian school curriculum teaches the pupils a great deal about the Vikings and the liberation of the Norwegians first from the Danes, then from the Swedes and finally from the Germans. The wars that the Norwegians fought up till 1814 are dealt with hastily, and the Scandinavian movement during the 19th century has taken a firm back seat to the anti-Swedish struggle. The oppression the Norwegian state has conducted towards its own indigenous people and other minorities in its first hundred years of independence is not a topic. Parallel histories are thus an inevitable fact of multiplicity, of the reality that we are many.

The Scottish nationalists can use the topic of the Scottish educational system to reach political goals. They can champion the unique Scottish educational system, exemplifying that Scotland can be different from the rest of the British Union, and still do well. Hassan & Warhurst (2001) have pointed out that there is a different view on educational policy in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Mitchell (2003) also touches upon this.

The tuition fee row in 1999, and the Cubie Rapport that recommended the abolition of the tuition fee proposed by the Scottish Labour Party (Hassan & Warhurst 2001:219) shows that the Scottish Labour Party cannot simply copy a British New Labour policy without considering its local consequences.

The spirit with which the First Minister faces the global challenge is typical of New Labour. Engagement is a key word, as the process labelled globalisation in which the action and reaction in different areas reach global proportions, is according to some an inevitable development (Driver & Martell 2002). As Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) writes, the process of globalisation affects the Scottish economy, and some of the response has been what they label as a ‘filling in’ (Goodwin, Jones & Jones 2005:442) of the state in some areas. They argue that Scotland has begun to ‘remake their institutional architectures of economic development’ (Goodwin, Jones & Jones 2005:442). Dealing with the new economic challenge that lays ahead is in other words on the drawing table and is being put into action. The institutions for higher learning, that is to say Universities and Colleges, are the backbone of the Knowledge economy (Knowledge economy⁹). This is an economy that is given significant importance as the barriers between different countries are breaking down owing to the globalisation process.

Scottish education revisited

‘In education, Scotland is one of the top performing nations in the world and Labour’s ambition is that it will perform even more successfully in the future.’

‘Scotland’s educational strength lies within our comprehensive tradition.’

These two paragraphs focus on the Scottish education. The Scottish schooling system dates back to the time when Scotland was an independent nation. As noted earlier (Hassan & Warhurst 2001, Mitchell 2003) there is still a difference between the Scottish educational system and the educational system in the rest of the United Kingdom. In more than one speech the First Minister touches upon the fact that the Scottish educational system is different from that which exists in England.

The Scottish educational tradition is promoted as an example of something that is both genuinely Scottish and exemplary. The uniqueness of the Scottish educational tradition is often brought to fore as the First Minister flaunts the credentials of the top Scottish universities. The results and reputation of the top

⁹ URL:<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/8/1913021.pdf>

Scottish universities becomes mixed in with a description of the Scottish education's past. The history of Scottish education is thus being built on the double foundation of a valuable and exceptional past, and a top performing and sought after present state. Little details are given into what made the past so special, though the First Minister gives us a few glances in his different speeches, into what he sees as the pluses of the Scottish educational history. 'Comprehensive tradition' is the term used by the First Minister to describe Scotland's educational history. The undisclosed details add to the perception of vagueness.

The myth of an esteemed past is further cemented by the First Minister. The present state is described through the performance of a few Scottish universities. Being amongst the best universities in the world today is no small feat. The Scottish universities are not in the elite division (Top 100 European Universities¹⁰) and to label them as such is somewhat misleading. The focus that the First Minister places on the educational traditions of Scotland and the performance of the best Scottish universities, and the way these are presented, seems to point to the First Minister making a specific history of Scottish education. This fact has been outlined several times by the First Minister, and would serve as a good fundament to promote the special values and experiences of Scotland and the Scottish people.

The way in which the First Minister uses the uniqueness of the Scottish educational tradition, does not seem to indicate that he is seeking a confrontation between the Scottish and the English educational system, or in other way to degrade the English educational system. He is merely promoting the education of Scotland. The lack of confrontation between the Scottish and the English system leads us to draw the conclusion that the First Minister does not want to use this opportunity to further expand the independence from Britain. This again further enhances the perception of the First Minister of Scotland as a politician who does not have an alternative political discourse to the one presented by the British New Labour Party, only deepening the hegemonic discourse already in place.

¹⁰ URL: <http://ed.sjtu.edu.cn/rank/2004/Top%20100%20European%20Universities.htm>

A big transfer of power

‘Last month, Alistair Darling and I agreed the biggest transfer of power and resources to Scotland since devolution.’

This paragraph indicates that the devolution is not a finished business, but an ongoing process. It also indicates a change that gives the Scottish devolved government more power, giving the impression that there is movement towards more self-government, that is to say independence. This is a false impression. The transfer of power since the Scottish parliament was established has gone both ways. The Sewel Motion (The Sewel Motion¹¹), named after the former Scottish Office Minister Lord Sewel, by which the Scottish Parliament gives its consent for Westminster to legislate for Scotland on devolved matters, is an example of power going from Holyrood to Westminster.

The power referred to by the First Minister in this paragraph is about transportation (New rail powers for Scotland¹²), that is to say a minor detail in the Scotland Act. So even though the devolution process is an ongoing affair, the major reference points to the Scotland Act are seemingly well cemented, and constitutional changes are not on the horizon for the time being.

Since both ‘power’ and ‘resources’ have positive connotations when it comes to politics, the First Minister understandably wants to exploit a potential positive effect of a policy change. As Heradstveit & Bjørge (1992) argue, rhetoric is an essential part of politics, something we do need to take into consideration when analysing political communication. Hopkin & Bradbury (2006) write, that the Scottish executive is communicating a sense of ‘Scottishness’ or autonomy that it does not possess, and while the words used to describe a policy may seem grand, the policies that are delivered are not much different from the British New Labour strand.

The First Minister does not seek to exploit the rhetorical possibilities of Scotland receiving additional possibilities from the United Kingdom. He does not for instance hint at a possible future transfer of power, even vaguely. Co-operation with the United Kingdom, and not a possible confrontation is the First Minister’s mode of conduct (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006).

¹¹ URL:<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Sewel/Introduction>

¹²URL: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2004/07/17171430>

The general election in the United Kingdom

‘And we will campaign side by side in the election to take Scotland forward. With devolution, we have over 20 new direct air routes to and from Scotland. Tourism marketing has doubled and visitor numbers keep going up. The research and innovation in our universities is transforming into commercial success. And we are investing more in those universities than ever before. A 30% increase. An investment for the future. And every penny at risk from the Tories. For Scotland to grow still further we need efficient public services, flourishing social enterprises and business that compete with the best in the world. That means we must grow Scottish business and companies. Profitable companies. Growing businesses. Businesses creating more jobs and increasing opportunities. Gone are the days when Scottish Labour would not welcome profitable companies. In fact, gone are the days when we grudgingly conceded that profit was a necessary evil. No. Strong, profitable companies are good for Scotland.’

In this paragraph the First Minister once again envisions Scotland competing with the rest of the world, and once again there is no reference to Scotland competing as a part of Great Britain. The reference to Great Britain comes in the form of the election campaign, and the similar policies between the Scottish government and the British government. Bradbury & Mitchell (2004) touch upon the issue of the short election cycle now in place in Great Britain. The elections for Parliament in London and in Edinburgh are only two years apart. This puts political stress on the First Minister of Scotland. He is not only economically hindered (Hassan & Warhurst 2001), but is also under political pressure to accommodate the timing of his policies to the general election in the United Kingdom.

This pressure is not only delivered by the United Kingdom level, but is also an internal pressure, as the money that the Scottish Parliament and Executive spend (Draft Budget 2007-08¹³) comes by and large from south of the border (Budget 2006¹⁴). As these figures show, every Scottish First Minister has to take the financial limitations into consideration. Co-operation with the United Kingdom level close to a

¹³ URL:<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/146893/0038508.pdf>

¹⁴ URL: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/26E/0F/bud06_completereport_2320.pdf

general election is a form of economic self-preservation for the First Minister since his government is economically dependent.

Aspirational Scotland

‘We must inspire a generation of young Scots to raise their sights. To aspire to far more than their parents and grandparents could aspire to. We will do that by recognising and rewarding achievement. Success should be celebrated. We should shout about it from the rooftops. Create role models and champions. Aspirational Scotland. That is Labour’s goal. And I will work with anyone to encourage and achieve it. Entrepreneurs and philanthropists, faith groups, civic leaders and trade unionists, celebrities and volunteers. Rural and urban. A team for Scotland. Everyone pulling together. To support and encourage a ‘can do’ Scotland to replace that Scottish cringe.’

This paragraph falls short of promoting an outright independent future, but it does promote a strong Scotland. As we have seen before, Scotland is portrayed as an autonomous unit, without the implication of ties to Great Britain. Here the Prime Minister of Scotland is creating a myth of the past, whilst at the same time creating a history of present day Scotland. Eriksen (1996) writes that if science is our main religion, then histories are our greatest myths. Myths are according to Eriksen (1996) a reflection of our universal humanity. They give nourishment for the hunger of wanting to belong to something more than the present, and the sole individual. Frønes (2001) also touches upon this issue. He writes that myths and stories are part of our social existence. These myths and stories give structure and meaning to our lives. The story told in this paragraph is about the young Scots. What should characterise a young Scot is aspiration and success.

Here it seems natural to draw on communication theory. The paragraph in question has a level of ambiguity, and political forces bent on unsettling the status quo can exploit this ambiguity. Ambiguity is a rhetorical tool (Heradstveit & Bjørge 1992), used when a speaker is trying to address an audience with different sympathies. Communication is one of the main ways of influencing in politics. Rhetoric is persuasive communication, and is a communicative tool that is often used

in politics (Heradstveit & Bjørge 1992). Mathisen (1997:4) notes that all political action, given the absence of violence, happens through speech.

Rhetoric in the political debate is primarily about values. Values being a body of unknown size and form that often mutually exclude one another will lead to a struggle for supremacy. In this struggle, which is one of the core essences of politics, knowledge and facts tend to be played down, and the persuasive use of language will come to the forefront. A reoccurring test for a political speaker is to address different audiences at the same time. Being vague sometime solves this challenge.

In the case of this speech the audience was both Scottish and British, and the speech was held prior to the British general election. The First Minister was thus addressing both a crowd that fears that the devolution process is a camouflaged independence campaign on the part of the Scottish, and a crowd who, based on the referendum results of the Scotland Act, is keen to establish a stronger local government.

The aspiration aspect can therefore be interpreted in different ways, but the language will link the First Minister's speech to that of the British New Labour party, further decreasing the notion that the First Minister has a separate agenda that entails independence. Hopkin & Bradbury (2006) has underlined the First Minister's clear Blairite stand. Promoting values that are close to the British New Labour Party (Driver & Martell 2002) should therefore not come as a surprise. Sharing same values as the United Kingdom leadership puts the First Minister of Scotland in a unique position. As he has not the same closeness with the politics of the United Kingdom as his predecessors have had (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006), he can front the same values as The British New Labour Party in a more credible way than a politician who is perceived to be close to the British leadership. The values of the British New Labour Party can thus seep in through the front door without too much antipathy from the general public. Hegemony can thus more easily be established since a potential friction between a Scottish brand of Labour politics and a British strand of Labour politics is eradicated.

International Scotland

‘Scotland has a proud international history. I am proud of the strength of our voice when Apartheid was in place in South Africa. I am proud of the way ordinary Scots respond to humanitarian disasters across the globe. And the incredible support shown this year for the victims of the Tsunami. Just as I am proud of the Scottish soldiers I met yesterday who fought in Iraq; this year, the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2, we must not forget the huge numbers of Scots who helped liberate Europe from the Nazis. So that my generation could live in peace all our lives. There was a concern that with devolution we Scots could become more insular, increasingly parochial. That having responsibilities for our domestic affairs might mean that we lost some of our international spirit. But the opposite is now true. Our devolved government has been working to improve trade, attract foreign tourists and encourage international flows of knowledge and expertise. All these things will help grow and globalise Scotland’s economy. And provide the jobs for the future. But if our only objective in our work was to make more money, then we are missing the point. There is a more profound reward to be found when we build lasting friendships with others. At a time of worldwide insecurity, international terrorism and extreme gaps in wealth. The greatest reward will be won if Scotland, and others like us, take responsibility for the world around us. For the environment, for greater tolerance and for increasing development for all. Scotland is part of the rich and prosperous world. We know that many countries are not. I want to give a clear message. Scotland is determined to play our part in supporting them meet the challenges they face.’

‘And in our own way, with the powers we have, Scotland’s Labour led devolved government will play our part.’

In this paragraph the First Minister expresses his interpretation of Scotland’s recent history. He starts off with a grand proclamation. ‘Scotland has a proud international history’, the First Minister states. A great degree of national independence is conveyed in these words, but not only independence, but also a certain stature comes from ‘proud’. By proclaiming Scotland’s history to be of an ‘international’ character, the First Minister is widening the political playing field of Scotland.

What makes the First Minister proud is the way that Scotland and the Scottish people responded to Apartheid in South Africa, to humanitarian disasters and the

Scottish soldiers fighting in Iraq. These three elements are quite diverse, linked most obviously by the fact that neither of the events occurred in Scotland. The First Minister is here creating a history, and the history tells us that the people of Scotland can feel proud of how they reacted to different challenges. Rhetoric of this sort can be used in the creation of a myth about the Scottish people. One speech is not enough, but if the political and other leaders communicate that the Scottish people are right to feel proud of their international history, foundation for a myth will be laid.

The condemnation of Apartheid was formalised by United Nation General Assembly Resolution 1761 (UN General Assembly Resolution 1761¹⁵) passed November 6 1962. The resolution brought up the question of the treatment of peoples of Indian and Pakistani origin, noting reports from the Indian and Pakistani governments. The resolution also notes that the United Nations has dealt with the matter of Apartheid in South Africa on several occasions prior to Resolution 1761 (In 1946, 1950, 1952, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961 to be more precise).

The popular boycott of South Africa has British roots, and even though several political forces supported it, the boycott remained a rather delicate issue, both due to South Africa history with its Boer wars, and the international political climate of the time (History of the British Anti-Apartheid movement¹⁶). Scotland took part as one of many countries boycotting South Africa. Furthermore, it was the British government and Westminster that was the political initiator and executioner of the boycott. The proudness of taking part in the struggle against Apartheid can on the basis of these facts be questioned.

The last point that the First Minister is proud of is the efforts of the soldiers in Iraq. The war in Iraq has been met with popular antipathy from the very beginning of the campaign. Scotland, being a part of Great Britain, has been part of the core nations that has supported both the developments that led up to the war with Iraq and the current status quo. With the wisdom provided by hindsight, the attitude towards the Iraq conflict has soured. People are more negative and support for the operations is

¹⁵ URL:

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600594458/\(httpPages\)/AAF20C17ADA889B5C1256F550058C1E4?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600594458/(httpPages)/AAF20C17ADA889B5C1256F550058C1E4?OpenDocument)

¹⁶ URL: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/aam/aamhist.html>

dwindling. Saying that he is proud of the soldiers in Iraq is thus venturing into a politically delicate situation.

The First Minister is minimising the negative effect of leading the party that sent the soldiers into Iraq, by not mentioning Iraq again in this paragraph. Instead he turns the attention over to a historical event that has a unison interpretation in Great Britain and Scotland, namely the fight against Nazi Germany. The subtle point of introducing the Iraq war before turning his attention to the Second World War is to draw parallels. A key aspect of rhetoric is to achieve legitimacy. Heradstveit & Bjørge divide the political “reality“ into three different levels. The first level is facts, the second is perception and the last level is the rhetorical. The rhetorical component can be broken down to a cognitive and an affective one. These components might sway the listener in a certain direction. Rhetoric can thus be used to recode old meaning into new ones (Heradstveit & Bjørge 1992:101-104).

Legitimising the war in Iraq is needed, as it faces massive popular disapproval. Paralleling the warfare against the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein to the Third Reich tries to squeeze drops of badly needed legitimacy for a course of action that many citizens oppose. The parallel in this paragraph is that both wars were fought so that the people ‘could live in peace’ all their lives. This is an argument that cannot be discredited, and is a safe rhetorical trump to play in this given situation. To compare the war with Nazi Germany, and Iraq is at best dubious. The shallowness of the comparisons also underlines the emptiness of such a claim.

Further in the paragraph the First Minister announces that even though the Scots have achieved a bigger say in their domestic affairs than before devolution, they are not becoming more insular. He is saying that Scotland still has its ‘international spirit’ intact. The Scottish First Minister can try to encourage individuals or organisations to engage with the world. The Scottish devolved government on the other hand has its hands tied due to the Scotland act of 1998 (The Scotland Act 1998¹⁷).

Tourism and the environment are the two devolved political issues that have the biggest international aspect. Issues such as foreign policy, defence and national security and trade are all reserved issues. This leaves little leeway for the Scottish elected government when it comes to international issues. Scotland’s international

¹⁷ URL: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980046.htm>

spirit can thus be attributed to its people, and not to its devolved political structure. How much the First Minister should be playing the ‘international card’ in his political speech is therefore something to be questioned. He cannot instigate important political action on behalf of the Scottish devolved government, and if the citizens in his country were to want a specific policy of international character to be enacted, Westminster would be the political establishment that will decide the issue.

Co-operation agreements have been signed with both the regional government of Catalonia and Tuscany (Protocol of co-operation between The Scottish executive and the government of Catalonia, Co-operation agreement between the Scottish executive and the regional government of Tuscany) stretching into policy areas as diverse as arts, science and economic development. Co-operations of this kind, that is to say with other regional governments within the European Union, are considered to push the limits of the devolution agreement, contradicting the assessment made by Bradbury & Mitchell (2004). The weight of these co-operation agreements should not be made into something more important than they actually are. The Scottish regional assembly has less power and possibilities than that of for instance Catalonia (The statute of autonomy of Catalonia¹⁸), and internal political events in the different European Union member countries could also influence the realpolitik outcome of such agreements. Time will tell whether or not agreements made on regional level across the borders of the European Union has been a step towards a more independent role for Scotland.

The First Minister’s words about ‘working to improve trade’ are in quite general terms. The reason for this unspecified terminology might be the fact that trade is a reserved issue. When The First Minister wants to ‘encourage international flows of knowledge and expertise’, he is treading into the realm of immigration, which also happens to be a reserved issue. Tourism is the only devolved issue amongst the three points that The First Minister uses to describe the international spirit of Scotland. The proportions do not add weight to his argument that the devolved Scottish government has an international spirit, though the Scottish people’s international spirit cannot be questioned as a part of this critique. But what is evident is that the devolved Scottish government cannot take an active stand on many vital political issues with an

¹⁸ URL: http://www.parlament-cat.net/porteso/estatut/estatut_angles_100506.pdf

international dimension, such as trade and immigration, due to the framework the devolved government has to respect.

After having talked how that Scotland and the Scots have engaged with the world, and the manner in which the First Minister's government has tried to maintain the 'international spirit' of his country, Jack McConnell then turns to another aspect of international relations. To 'grow and globalise' is according to The First Minister what Scotland's economy should do, as this will 'provide the jobs for the future'. That the economy needs to grow enjoys political consensus amongst the main political parties, though alternatives to this view are to be found.

The green movement is one of the most potent political alternatives to the mainstream. They have popular support across the continent, mostly manifested through NGO's, but also as fractions within political parties. Green politics is described by Woodin & Lucas as politics that 'aims to reconstruct the patterns of human activities and relationships so that they come to respect the natural systems on which they depend and thus guarantee the central goal of sustainability' (2004:xix).

The First Minister is falling in line with the British New Labour party in his views on globalisation and the economy (Driver & Martell 2002). The view that the First Minister advocates is contested. Across the Continent there are heavy political forces in motion to keep the consequences of a globalised economy at bay (The Economist a 2005, The Economist b 2005, The Economist 2006, Economic Survey of Norway¹⁹). These fears are in contrast to the views made by the First Minister in this speech.

The First Minister sets his sights on the potentials of a globalised economy, with the creation of work places as his primary target. The competition in a world market is fairly bigger than that of a smaller, regional market, whilst regulations tend to be looser. The loosening of the regulations does affect the possibilities of political control. Cases involving the breach of trade rules, for instance, are being brought to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by parties in trade disputes constantly (World Trade Organisation²⁰). These disputes are time and money consuming, and at the end of the line they are not solved, as per se, as the WTO does not have the authority to impose its will on the member states.

¹⁹ URL: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/7/57/29632929.pdf>

²⁰ URL: http://www.wto.org/English/tratop_e/dispu_e/find_dispu_cases_e.htm#results

Opening one's economy to global impact can have large-scale effects. The First Minister does not elaborate on these effects, presenting only a positive interpretation of future events, and as noted earlier he falls in line with the view that is dominant within the British New Labour Party (Driver & Martell 2002), further emphasising the perception of the First Minister of Scotland as a Blairite politician (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006). This in turn only strengthens the political discourse of the British New Labour Party, and contributes to it becoming the hegemonic political discourse.

The First Minister continues by saying that making money is not alpha and omega. Scotland has to take responsibility, he says. He describes a gloomy world with terrorism and inequality. This world is according to the First Minister a place that can be changed. He lists the environment, tolerance and development as areas that could be changed by political action. Here again there are differences between the political ambition of the First Minister and the political realities he faces.

As Beck (1992) notes, the environment of one country does not stop at the political border. The challenges of one country are likely to be the challenges of another one. Deforestation, air pollution, sea pollution or diseases carried by wildlife forces political co-operation, as no one country can deal with serious environmental problems on its own. Even though the First Minister has the political authority to bring about changes in the environmental policies of his country, he needs to co-operate with other countries for his own policies to be as effective as possible. Co-operations need to be followed through, and possible violators need to be punished. That is why inter-state co-operation is the most likely arena for environmental issues. This again means that the political power that will deal with environmental issues most effectively will be, in the case of Scotland, the British government.

The call for greater tolerance is on the other hand something that the First Minister can try to influence. The 'Fresh Talent' programme that the First Minister is speaking about in this speech needs tolerance in order to function optimally. There will be conflicts if a workforce that the citizens are hostile towards is allowed into the country. If immigration is to be a success, tolerance will be one of the key factors. How tolerance can be enhanced politically is difficult to answer.

Increasing development is a policy area that falls beyond The First Minister. In this respect The First Minister is promoting policies that he himself cannot deliver. As a result of this he is left as mouthpiece to the British Labour Party.

Even though the First Minister is addressing issues that he himself has no direct political influence over it is once again worth noticing to what degree his political discourse falls in line with the one represented by The British New Labour Party. Scott & Mooney (2005) point to the lack of drive towards a radical policy development. This further strengthens the point that the First Minister is facilitating the political discourse of The British New Labour Party in to the hegemonic political discourse.

Every Scot getting the right chances

26 September 2005

The Scottish myth and nationalistic language

‘Scotland is an ancient nation. It did not take devolution to deliver a sense of national identity, it wasn’t devolution that created our separate legal system, or our distinctive educational traditions, or our national football team. But devolution did set right a wrong. Scots now determine their own affairs. This is now post-devolution Britain. And there is a lot you may not know about the new Scotland. First of all, we are systematically challenging the things that have held us back. Scotland’s national health is amongst the worst. So we have the biggest health improvement programme in the UK and the best school dinners. And we will go further we are banning smoking in every public place in Scotland from March next year. Scotland’s population is projected to decline. But instead of planning for fewer people and decline we now plan to reverse the trend by attracting new people to live and work in Scotland. We are tackling male violence, and we no longer tolerate the booze and blade culture. We have had enough, too, of sectarian prejudice – and we are taking it on. At the football ground, in the classroom, and on the streets. But there’s more to Scottish Labour than this. It was once said that Scotland’s Parliament was about

finding Scottish solutions to Scottish problems. Now we aim higher. We are finding Scottish success through Scottish ambitions. Creating a Scotland of opportunity and ambition.'

The Scottish legal system and the Scottish educational system are amongst the few institutions that were unchanged when Scotland entered into the union with England. The uniqueness of the Scottish educational system is a reoccurring point in the First Minister's speeches, but as I have pointed out before, he does not lean on this subject in order to promote an independent Scotland (Tomaney 2000, Hassan & Warhurst 2001, Mitchell 2003). Instead, the First Minister only keeps alive the history of the Scottish educational system, helping to create a myth about Scotland's past (Eriksen 1996, Frønes 2001). The point about the national football team is in no way in proportion with the other two examples, and can be seen as a rhetorical tool (Heradstveit & Bjørge 1992) in order to put a populist spin (Franklin 2004) on the message. The higher aim that the First Minister is talking about at the end of the paragraph is not independence.

The key words are success and ambition, both well used within the New Labour party (Driver & Martell 2002). This paragraph again demonstrates the unwillingness of the First Minister to steer his government towards a more pro-independence stand, and shows his Blairite credentials again (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006).

This paragraph is an example of how the First Minister of Scotland uses rhetoric that has a nationalist feel to it, due to the repetitive presence of the word 'Scotland'. This rhetoric is blended with the political discourse of the British New Labour. A nation's culture is not a fixed object, but is continually being challenged by other definitions of what a given nation's culture should be like. The fluidity of the definition of a nation is very much in line with Laclau & Mouffe's (2001) theory of discourse. In their view, no discourses are fixed, and there is always a field of discursivity surrounding a discourse, and within that field of discursivity lays an opportunity to alter the current discourse (see chapter on Laclau & Mouffe).

The community identity created in a nation transcends personal acquaintance and creates a fictive communion. This union is not limited to political borders. National identity is not the only identity in a society. The national identity co-inhabits

with, amongst others, sub-national (local) and supra-national identities. The importance of national identity differs from country to country, and sometimes also within a country (Østerud 1997:25).

Nationalism is not only a word with different meanings; it is also a word that is used for different political means. It has both excluding and including qualities, making it a potent political device. Both left and right-wing parties has taken advantage of nationalistic rhetoric and policies, and therefore one can conclude that nationalism is not an either-or when it comes to political colours, but is dependent on the history of a particular country (Østerud 1997:9-11, Hechter 2000:5-8). Nationalism can be described as an ideology that portrays a common background. This background is a point of origin, and represents a form of purity that has been, or has tried to be, stained by different factors through history (Eriksen 1993:32).

On a different note, the rhetoric used here by the First Minister could be described as regionalism. The lack of a European debate within Scotland, and the minor place that Scottish nationalism has in Scotland, can lead us to conclude that nationalism is not hard political currency in Scotland. Hechter (2000) makes use of the term regionalism, as supposed to nationalism. When the centre and periphery tension is merely about reallocating resources and not sovereignty Hechter argues that it is not nationalism per se (Hechter 2000:9). Having said this, I do believe that there are tensions between Scotland and the United Kingdom that cannot be contributed to merely a quarrel about the reallocation of resources.

In my opinion there can be such a thing as nationalism, without the objective of establishing a separate state. The Scots in Great Britain, the Székely in Transylvania and the Sami in North Scandinavia are people who belong to a distinct nation, with cultural affinities and common historical background, but so far these people have not sought independence for their respective nations, only partial regional autonomy within the boundaries of the nation states in which they reside. Nationalism in the case of Scotland is somewhat unique due to the special background that the Scots have, with regards to the historical, cultural and religious ties that bind them to the English, and the subsequent mergers between the two nations. With this setting nationalism as a phenomenon will not be the run of the mill.

By redefining how nationalist rhetoric can be used, whilst retaining key elements of the British New Labour political discourse, the First Minister is influencing both the Nationalist and Labour discourse. He is linking nationalism, of

one sort, to a progressive ‘new-left’ discourse, creating logic of equivalence between the two. Labour has had difficulties in relating to nationalistic political tendencies in the periphery of Great Britain (Thorpe 2001, Tomaney 2000). But by embracing a flavour of nationalist rhetoric, The First Minister is showing that there can be a common ground between nationalist sentiments and Scottish Labour, or Blairite, politics. Scottish nationalistic rhetoric, which is not an element in British New Labour’s political discourse, is by the First Minister being pulled in within that same political discourse and becomes a moment.

It can be argued that since the Scottish First Minister is not a part of the British New Labour Party, he cannot be said to be able to change the discourse that they represent. I argue that the proximity the First Minister enjoys to the British New Labour Party, both as a key politician in one of the British New Labour’s regional branches, and his closeness to the mainstream of political discourse within the British New Labour Party, places the First Minister in a position where he can deeply influence the political discourse of the British New Labour Party. Therefore I view his repetitive agitation of Scotland and Scottishness as important.

Scottish Values, Ideas and Ambitions from Witherspoon to today

6 April 2006

Scotland’s past greatness

‘It is a recognition of the ties of kinship, heritage and history which bind together the United States and Scotland. It is a celebration that has become an established feature of the calendar on both sides of the Atlantic.’

This paragraph establishes a link between the former independent Scotland, and the United States. Subsequently the First Minister continues by saying:

‘This week we celebrate the strong affinity between our two countries and resolve to use it for our mutual benefit for generations to come. I want to use the opportunity that I have today to talk about three things. Firstly, I’d like to talk to you about Scotland’s most influential period – the Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th century. Those enlightened values, philosophies and sciences were used by John Witherspoon and others to lay down the foundations of the new America. And they helped create the modern world too. Secondly, I want to talk about the way in which enlightened Scottish ideas and values have provided the basis for Scotland’s democratic renaissance over the last seven years. Finally, I want to talk about modern Scotland – to describe the dreams and ambitions we have for our country in the 21st century. And to make the case, that it is not out with the bounds of possibility that Scotland can be home to a new, second enlightenment.’

In this paragraph the First Minister continues by talking about the past links between the two countries, referring only to the enlightenment. Here the First Minister is establishing a history of Scotland as a place that has been the birthplace of great ideas in the past, and that Scotland also had taken part in the founding of the United States of America. The myth (Eriksen 1996 & Frønes 2001) that the First Minister is establishing is of a Scotland, which is a country that fosters extraordinary people. These immense achievements embody a nationalistic pride, and draw a picture of Scotland as an important nation.

Linking great historical achievements with the vision for tomorrow is a well-used rhetorical feature. In this paragraph the First Minister is on the one hand giving nourishment to a myth of a past Scottish greatness, that he on the other hand is trying to gain political points from when presenting his vision of the Scotland for tomorrow. The word ‘ambition’ crops up again, linking the expressions used to describe the Scottish Labour Party’s politics together over time. As noted earlier, The First Minister is not challenging the political discourse of the British New Labour Party, and can thus be seen as a politician who is attributing to the hegemonisation of the British New Labour Party’s political discourse. Another feature that this paragraph underlines is the way The First Minister of Scotland uses nationalistic rhetoric together with the values of The British New Labour and Scottish Labour parties, and thereby expanding The British New Labour Party’s political discourse.

Scotland's dependency on The United Kingdom

'There are some who say it was a result of Scotland being the first place in the world to institute universal school education. We created that in 1696 and perhaps created a capacity for learning and development that was greater than elsewhere.'

'But, I believe there is momentum and we are on the way back up. And the platform for that momentum is the constitutional settlement that means Scots have powers over their own affairs. There is a flowering of culture and enterprise and an increase in confidence. We are more at ease with ourselves, but more united and assertive in promoting Scotland too.'

Again, the historical uniqueness and the political future are separated. Scotland has a special educational history (Tomaney 2000), and now Scotland has the ability to control their political destiny. Whether or not the Scottish people have the powers over their own affairs after they voted in favour of the devolution process is an open question. The First Minister is clearly trying to form a picture of a Scotland prior to the devolution as a greatly different Scotland to the one after the reestablishment of the Scottish parliament in Edinburgh.

In his speeches the First Minister has used to distinguish sharply between how the Tory led government in the 1980-s managed Scotland and how the devolved government runs the show nowadays. The message is that since the executive is now directly responsible for the Scottish people, the incentive to do a better job is much higher. The Tory government never won the general elections after Thatcher came to power by capturing the Scottish votes (Mitchell 1996), but by capturing the English votes, as there is a sizeable difference in the number of English MP-s in Westminster and Scottish MP-s (Members of Parliament by county or unitary authority²¹). The government was therefore never dependent to Scottish voters to win the general election, and could therefore ignore the Scottish vote.

Whether or not the Scots now have power over their own affairs is not straightforward. There are still many policies that are reserved for the parliament in London (The Scotland Act 1998²²), according to the Scotland Act 1998 Westminster has the power to make any devolved policy area reserved and London is a key

²¹ URL: <http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/clomps.cfm>

²² URL: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980046.htm>

financier of the Scottish parliament. These arguments all point to a lack of de facto influence, on the part of the Scottish parliament. Furthermore Hopkin & Bradbury (2006) claim that the Scottish Executive and Parliament has avoided disagreements with the United Kingdom level.

The economic influence of the United Kingdom level over the devolved Scottish level is one argument of the devolved Scottish level being restrained; another is the fact that the same political party, the Labour Party, has controlled both levels. Bradbury & Mitchell (2004) point for instance to the short election cycle, and argue that this constraints Labour politicians in devolved Scotland. The political argument therefore is another point that puts weight under the argument of lack of influence on behalf of the Scottish Parliament and its Executive.

The First Minister does not challenge these arguments. He does not seek to actively add to the number of devolved issues, although he was quick to point out the new devolved power that the Scottish devolved parliament received. Neither is the First Minister active on the issue of self-funding the policies that the Scottish parliament votes through, by having extensive revenue raising powers. Having a bigger influence on the economy in Scotland is by far one of the most important aspects of a government who wishes to be independent, or to have a higher degree of autonomy. Bearing this in mind, Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) claim the Scottish Executive to be active in economic policies. They say that the devolved administration has put its own stamp on the development of economic policies. This contradicts the image of devolved Scotland as a passive recipient of British money and political instructions.

However, the arguments that underline the challenges the Scottish Parliament and Executive face vis-à-vis Britain are of greater weight. Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) nevertheless show us that the picture is not completely black – or – white.

One Scotland – A better Scotland

27 September 2004

Scotland's achievements

'Conference I'm proud that the country which gave you Auld Lang Syne has now brought you Harry Potter. I'm proud that the country which brought you the telephone and the combustion engine is now the place most likely to find a cure for cancer, and build the world's first deep water off-shore wind farm. And I am also proud that the country that stood up to Margaret Thatcher and said no to the Poll Tax banned foxhunting over two years ago and led the way on land reform and the right to roam. But conference, this is not the whole story of modern Scotland. Devolution has been good for Scotland. But it can be even better. Scottish Labour has a lot to do over the year ahead, but we will do it. We will create Schools of Ambition to lift underachieving schools up to the standards of the very best. We will tackle violent crime and deal with Scotland's appalling re-offending rate. We will take the next steps on health improvement - improve diet and exercise, and yes, take action on smoking in public places. We will invest more in young Scots, giving them the chance to aspire and succeed. We want to leave no one behind, but we will hold no one back either. And through our National Youth Volunteering programme we give young Scots the opportunity to serve.'

After a short listing of achievement the First Minister points to the future and lists ways that devolution can be better for Scotland. The listing of achievements made by Scottish people in the past and present is done in a superficial manner. The First Minister is clearly beating the nationalist drum, triumphant of the achievements of past and present. I have shown previously in this thesis how the First Minister's flirtation with nationalistic rhetoric influences the political discourse of the British and Scottish Labour parties.

The ways devolution can be better for Scotland would have been a good moment to set new goals that might test the limits of the current devolutional agreement. The First Minister does nothing of the kind. The proposals he lists are all safely within the boundaries set up by the Scotland Act 1998 underlining Scott &

Mooney (2005), Bradbury & Mitchell (2004) and Hopkin & Bradbury's (2006) assessment of the devolved level in British politics as a non-confrontational and benign political sphere with reference to the centre. This in turn adds weight to the argument of The First Minister of Scotland contributing to the hegemony of the political discourse of The British New Labour Party.

Speech for Regleg Conference

November 2003

An introductory remark

'By the standards of many round the table here today, the Scottish Parliament and the Executive are still fairly new creations and I think it is a very positive sign that Scotland is already recognised as playing a full part in Europe.'

The Conference of European regions with legislative power (short version - REGLEG) is a body that features regional legislatures from Germany, Spain, Italy, the UK, Austria, Belgium, Finland and Portugal. The audience for this speech is therefore quite different than the previous speeches. This in turn influences the speaker's repertoire, as he does not need to take the same precautions as he would have to take if were to address The British New Labour Party Conference, or unaffiliated voters in Scotland (Heradstveit & Bjørgo 1992).

The First Minister does not have to bear in mind the general election in the United Kingdom, as he did in 2005, and the 2003 Scottish Parliament election is also in the past (The Scotsman 2006). Having said this, the First Minister is not without his shackles. To a certain degree the First Minister's audience is always the Scottish public. In the information age, being physically in one place does not equal having a presence in only that particular place.

Television, the Internet and radio are just some of the communication tools that provide information across long distances. Being a leading politician in the Scottish devolved political system, The First Minister of Scotland speeches are

followed more closely than just a random politician. Thus even though The First Minister is not directly addressing a Scottish audience, he is clearly having to have them in mind as well. The lack of reference to Scotland's own role in Europe in the previous speeches is being balanced by the introduction to this speech.

Scotland's road to a more autonomous relation to Great Britain might go through a European dimension. REGLEG offers an arena for dialogue and exchange of ideas and experiences that could come in handy. The Eurosceptics are found in both the major British parties, and are also found in the Scottish parties as well. Being positive towards Europe puts Jack McConnell in the same camp as the leadership of the British New Labour Party. This again places the First Minister within the dominant political discourse of The British New Labour Party. A possible break with aspects of that political discourse would be if the First Minister would want to expand the possibilities Scotland has within the European Union, and to recast the moment of 'Europe'.

If The Scottish Executive had a different outlook on, and saw different possibilities with, and engaged in a different manner towards the European Union, or parts of the Union, as seen exemplified here at the REGLEG conference, there could be a decisive break between the Scottish First Minister's political discourse, and the political discourse of the British New Labour Party.

The road through the European Union

'The first thing to say is that we have come a long way. Ours is an important agenda. 56% of EU citizens live in regions with legislative powers. That means 56% of EU citizens depend upon regional governments to implement - and of course in some cases to transpose - the legislation that delivers the environmental, economic and social benefits that the Union provides.'

'Beyond the conclusion of the IGC, there will continue to be a role for REGLEG and its members in ensuring that as the Union implements the new Treaty Articles, it does so in a way sensitive to the requirements of the regions with legislative power. We should all work together to support the ways in which regional parliaments might best be involved in the implementation of the subsidiarity mechanism. I think that this is an obvious case where exchanging experiences, information and best practice will help

us all develop systems which use the resources and expertise that regional governments can provide.'

Here the First Minister is discussing the potential power of the different European regional legislative governments. Scottish independence has hindrances at both British and European level. Both London and Brussels has control of certain aspects of Scottish life. The potential of the European Union vis-à-vis Scotland is that it can become a partner for the Scots in some respect. A possible scenario where the Scots negotiate with the European Union directly instead of through London can become reality. Scottish interests might not always be inline with the interest of the rest of the United Kingdom, and an opportunity to lobby on their own behalf increases their autonomy in relation to Great Britain.

The formal co-operation that the REGLEG represents adds to the legitimacy of the regional legislative assemblies. To gain further autonomy from London, Holyrood needs to gain legitimacy, and fronting Scotland's cause within the European Union, and in bodies such as REGLEG, gives the Scottish devolved parliament that legitimacy. As discussed above, a shift within the political discourse of the First Minister giving the European Union, and regional bodies within the European Union, an accentuated presence could provide him with a basis for an alternative political discourse.

Consultation powers

'We all have an interest in ensuring a strong regional voice is heard in Europe. The devolution of power is one of the ways in which governmental and EU decisions are brought closer to the daily lives of the people they represent. Regional authorities are in many cases the institutions closest to the citizens of Europe. It is important for everyone, therefore, that the Commission consults widely before bringing forward new legislation and that that consultation includes direct consultation of regions with legislative powers. The more effective legislation that results from this approach will do more than just deliver the policy benefits we all get from membership of the EU more effectively; it will help demonstrate those benefits to the ordinary citizens of the Union.'

By making the regional legislative bodies a reference point in the consultation rounds before a law is passed in the European Parliament, the regional legislative bodies will gain formal recognition and legitimacy. These aspects can again influence the relationship that they enjoy with their respective national legislatures and governments. As noted before, greater autonomy for Holyrood might not necessarily go directly through London at first, but through the maze that is the European Union. Hassan & Warhurst (2001:214) labelled one of the perspectives on the establishment of the Scottish Parliament as ‘radical democratisation’. By the term ‘radical democratisation’ they imply that the establishment of the Scottish Parliament can be seen as a break with the centralisation of the British state.

It is at the same time a break with the Scottish Office, and the administrative devolution it enjoyed. A Scottish Parliament draws the people of Scotland closer to the levers of power, offering a ‘more mature and progressive politics’ (Hassan & Warhurst 2001:214). In this paragraph the First Minister of Scotland is making an argument on behalf of ‘radical democratisation’. As noted earlier, the European Union, and institutions such as REGLEG, can provide the basis for the First Minister to break with aspects of the political discourse of The British New Labour Party.

The Futures Project - Thinking for the Long Term

23 May 2006

Linking Scotland to the world

‘The Futures Project is not about trying to predict the future. It is about place and positioning. We have analysed in detail Scotland's place internationally. Not our geographic location, but where we are compared to other countries on a whole range of indicators from the economy and health to education and the environment.’

By establishing Scotland’s place internationally the Scottish government can set its sight on specifying Scotland’s needs more easily. The more reference points the government has the better. By tailoring its action on the grounds of how other

countries are responding to similar challenges, Scotland's answers might in time diverge from the rest of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Parliament has already shown willingness to make legislations that is separate from the rest of the United Kingdom (Keating, Stevenson, Cairney & Taylor 2003). By establishing links to countries, or regions, Scottish politics might start to develop in a different direction from the rest of the United Kingdom. With the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and Executive, this scenario is quite possible. Though Hassan & Warhurst (2001) note that Scottish and British politics are not two separate spheres. Having this in mind, and also remembering the many ties (cultural, historical, financial, etc.) that tie Scotland to Britain, we see an eventual change in Scottish legislature and politics will take time.

The scenario of the Scottish Parliament and Executive slipping Scotland further away from Britain has its obvious flaws, such as the asymmetrical relation of power between Scotland and the United Kingdom, the ties that bind the nations of the British Isles together and the relatively weak support received by political forces representing Scottish independence. A heightened awareness of Scotland's place internationally though might give food for thought to people who have not considered Scotland to be too different from the United Kingdom or that Scottish challenges need Scottish answers. This paragraph though does not give any indication of the First Minister taking on a different political discourse then the one he had in the previous speeches.

General remarks for the speeches

In this part of the analysis I will look at the three hypotheses I introduced in the first chapter, one by one.

Political party constraint

The First Minister of Scotland points on several occasion to unique Scottish traditions, such as the educational system (Tomaney 2000) and he also talks about

Scotland's international history, without a reference to England or Great Britain. The discourse of the First Minister does, despite these points, not contain any real effort to promote Scottish independence, or to challenge the level of autonomy set out in the devolution agreement (Scott & Mooney 2005). His Blairite colours (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006) shine through on several occasions, showing his political closeness with the British New Labour Party leadership, and adding strength to the hypothesis of political party constraint. The First Minister's political discourse falls indeed very closely to the political discourse that dominates The British New Labour Party. Being the head of the Executive in Scottish devolved politics, this has its consequences. By falling in line with the dominant discourse within The British New Labour Party, The First Minister is helping that discourse become hegemonic.

The political party constraint can also be supported by other parts of the speeches than those I have already analysed. Policies on social issues, represented by the 'Anti Social Behaviour Orders' and the National Health Service (appendix - speeches) are along the lines drawn out by the British New Labour Party. There are also signs that the ideological stance of the Scottish Labour Party is very similar to the British New Labour Party. In the speeches I have gathered, the First Minister's visions and presentation of his policies are arguably in line with the leadership of the British New Labour Party. Expenses are labelled as investments, as in 'Our political opponents say that Labour's investment in the NHS isn't making a difference'.

The economic policies are in line with the vision presented by the British New Labour Party. Examples of this can be found several places in the text.

'Gone are the days when Scottish Labour would not welcome profitable companies. In fact, gone are the days when we grudgingly conceded that profit was a necessary evil. No. Strong, profitable companies are good for Scotland. Creating opportunities', and '[T]hat entrepreneurial spirit is something we Scots had but lost along the way. We can re-ignite it and I see glimmers in young Scots of it re-awakening' (appendix).

These political visions fall in line with the visions of the British New Labour Party (Driver & Martell 2002). The same can be said about the First Minister's presentation on tackling crime.

A last point I want to draw attention to is the First Minister's remarks on how the Scottish party is working in the Scottish Parliament to obtain Labour's goals, and how they worked to help Labour secure a third general election victory. These remarks add weight to the hypothesis of political party constraint, as it describes a Labour party that works united across the different levels of British politics, making dissent and alternative political paths unlikely.

Political constraint

Being the Scottish First Minister, his speeches will always have repercussions in Scotland, no matter which audience he addresses, and due to that fact his speeches will always have to carry a Scottish audience in mind. The First Minister's speeches analysed in this thesis are founded on stabilisation, the preservation of the status quo. Both the 2003 and the 2005 Labour Manifesto (Scottish Labour Manifesto 2003, The Scottish Labour Party Manifesto 2005) shows a refrained policy towards further autonomy. These points are important to add weight to the political constraint hypothesis. Neither the Scottish, nor the British political level, perceived the Scottish devolution as a stepping-stone towards independence. The First Minister's restraint of applying a political discourse with an element of independence is therefore quite reasonable.

Apart for the excerpts I have used in the analysis, the First Minister's speeches provide more evidence to support the political constraint hypothesis. In the speech 'Scottish Values, Ideas and Ambitions from Witherspoon to today' the First Minister says that '*[t]he demand for change was largely political, improving our democracy and giving democratic expression of Scottish identity within the UK*' (appendix - speeches). The limitations of the devolution agreement are in other words accepted. The First Minister signals his acceptance of the framework of the devolution agreement on other occasions as well, giving strength to the political constraint hypothesis.

Financial constraint

The financial constraint hypothesis is the hypothesis that I have found least support for in these speeches I have analysed. Only indirectly, either when the First Minister is addressing issues related to the phenomena of globalisation, or by being non-specific in his dealings with economic issues, is the hypothesis of financial constraint touched upon. This can be understood in the light of the other two hypotheses. Given that the First Minister is both constrained through his ideological affiliation with the British government, and his shared belief, with the same government, of the objective of a Scottish Parliament and Executive, it would be reasonable to argue that the First Minister is not going to stress his financial dependency in his speeches. The lack of clear reference to the Scottish Executive's financial constraint can be accredited these circumstances.

The First Minister's speeches do not touch often on the issue of financial constraint in a direct manner. In the speech entitled 'Modern Scotland: Ambition and opportunity for all', he does speak about the financial constraints. He does this by warning about the consequences of a change of government in Britain.

'And conference, there is a myth out there. That somehow, we in Scotland don't need to worry so much about the Tory threat. That devolution will protect us from the worst of Tory cuts. The Tories are claiming that every penny of their £35 billion cuts – will come from England. Don't believe a word of it. Scottish schools; Scottish hospitals; and the Scottish police forces will have their budgets cut if Michael Howard becomes Prime Minister this year' (appendix - speeches).

This is the clearest evidence of the First Minister's financial constraint being displayed in the selected speeches. Not being more present does of course not mean that it is not real. Until the Scottish devolved government is in fiscal control they will always be dependent on the United Kingdom for financial support. The speeches made by the First Minister give no support to scratch the financial support hypothesis, but they also struggle to provide evidence that supports it.

Possible future scenario

The co-operation agreements that the First Minister has signed in 2002 with Catalonia and Tuscany neither break with the uniformity of the First Minister's speeches (appendix - speeches). Neither agreement truly tests the limits of Scottish devolution. Both agreements place weight on the European Union and the parties agree 'to consult each other' and 'jointly contribute to the development of the regions' role in Europe'. Establishing political allegiances within Europe is a grey area, as it falls between the categories of domestic and foreign policy. A further exploitation of this area could lead to a renewed political discourse on the behalf of Jack McConnell. Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) and Keating, Stevenson, Cairney & Taylor (2003) all show the potential of the Scottish political milieu to act assertively, and somewhat independently.

These nuances help us to envision the possibilities of change, for at the present Scottish politics are closely linked with British politics (Hassan & Warhurst 2001). Change in the composition of either British or Scottish politics through election victories for competing politics forces may facilitate important alterations at either of the political levels (Keating, Stevenson, Cairney & Taylor 2003) and in turn lead to a revision of the hegemonic political discourse. As Laclau & Mouffe (2001) notes, all discourses are threatened by competing discourses. Status quo is never permanent.

PART FIVE: Further analysis

Why does the First Minister talk so little about expanding the Scottish autonomy?

After the analysis of the speeches given by the First Minister, a question remains unresolved. Why does he say so little about the devolutional process? The First Minister does not in any way try to extend the boundaries of the devolution; he does not challenge aspects of the deal. His focus is on underlining his loyalty to the current

Act of Parliament. Neither in Scottish, British, European or Transatlantic forums does The First Minister convey an alternative message. His discourse concerning Scotland's role within the United Kingdom is therefore no different than that of the New Labour party, the party responsible for the agreement that exists today.

New Labour leadership

New Labour has been criticized for holding a too short leash on the representatives of the party (Fairclough 2000, Franklin 2004). Communications as a political tool was brought into the defining centre of British politics by the Thatcher government, and New Labour adapted the Conservatives professional approach. Devolution became an instant problem for the New Labour leadership, as the establishment of a separate but dependent parliament at Holyrood meant that there would be a Labour party running solely for seats in the Scottish parliament. The newly established Scottish Labour party would share New Labour's political power base, meaning everything from organisational arrangements to voters. Even though this regional party only has obligations to the voters of a certain part of the British Isles, its close ties with a nationwide party means that its actions produce consequences beyond Scotland's border.

The leadership of the British New Labour party understood this, and in the beginning sought to control its Scottish sibling party, by using its power to choose candidates for the Scottish parliament election and influencing the political choices made by the Scottish Labour party. The tight grip that the British party has had over the Scottish party has been diminishing over the years. In practical terms the picking of candidates and party policies has been given freer reign. With the ascension of Jack McConnell as The First Minister of Scotland, a politician without a past in British politics, a new era for the Scottish Labour party is dawning (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006).

Wales

Even though the Scottish Labour party in recent years has been given a more independent role its policies still bear the hallmarks of the New Labour party from which it originated. As opposed to its Welsh sibling party, there have not been any major differences between the Scottish and the British Labour parties. The First

Minister has thus continued a tradition of co-operation with the British Labour party, which is at the moment also in control of the British parliament at Westminster. This dual role of both being in government in Scotland and Britain makes a clear alternative difficult to establish, but as the Welsh party has shown, it is possible to oppose elements of the political platform of the nationwide party (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006).

Parliament

There are chances that given a loss of control of either parliament could move the Scottish and British Labour parties in different directions, as they respond to different needs, and are controlled by different political forces. This is of course only a possible path, one amongst many. Having only recently been established as a purely regional party, the Scottish Labour party along with the Scottish regional politics will probably be looking to establish itself as an independent entity. It is the on-going establishment of this entity that makes the position chosen by The First Minister such a vital step.

By lining up behind the British New Labour party, he is continuing a line of politics, albeit a new one, that could cement the possibilities of The Scottish Labour party. The attitudes and actions of the party's leader place his party in a particular relation with the British party, its Scottish rival parties, internal dissenters and future voters.

Devolution of policy areas to a Scottish Parliament has since its creation had a proportion of uncertainty surrounding it. How would the Scottish voters react, what kind of dynamics would be unleashed within the Scottish and British Labour parties, and how would unforeseen events influence the framework that won the referendum? These questions, amongst others, were unanswered at the time of the establishment of the Scottish parliament and devolved institutions. By quelling any attempt by forces within Scottish Labour that represented a view that professed a higher degree of autonomy to the devolved institutions of Scotland, at an early stage, New Labour has been able to maintain a hegemonic control over the devolution discourse in the Scottish Labour party.

The First Minister gives the impression of being satisfied with the present devolution arrangement, and in his speeches he only bolsters the status quo. He is

thereby adding weight to the dominant discourse within his party, and since his party is the biggest in the country, also to the national debate.

Is Laclau & Mouffe's discourse theory useful?

Suitable analytical tool?

Is discourse theory a good enough analytical tool to explain the questions that arise by the analysis of the empirical material at hand? The short answer is yes. Laclau and Mouffe's theory enables us to not just analyse political action after it occurs, but to deal with the political before it embodies itself into physical action. By looking into the speeches made by the First Minister, we are able to see how he is working in the political field, by forming and maintaining a given discourse. This in turn is the basis for the actions that will eventually occur.

Politics is an arena for battling over deviating ideas and the formation of such ideas is therefore vital. Inevitability and objectivity are not as inevitable and objective as one might perceive at first glance. The status quo of the devolution process is only one alternative amongst many. There are still clear alternatives to this agreement, most notably the Nationalists' answer. Though still a minority voice within Scotland, the Nationalists persistent articulation of their Scottish discourse keeps the debate very much a live. The British Labour party has, as noted earlier, been the dominant force in Scottish politics for many decades.

With the help of 'hegemony' as an analytical tool the perception of this domination is further underlined. Using the term 'hegemony' as guidance, the First Minister's lack of exuberance over further autonomy can also be dealt with. Setting his discourse into a pattern enhances the analysis by adding another layer of explanation to the thesis. This in turn makes the conclusions validity greater, and can be used on more examples than just in this specific context.

Britishness

The discourse on Scottish autonomy as presented in the First Minister's speeches is a reflection of the centre's discourse. An important element of both the First Minister's Scottish autonomy discourse and the New Labour's Scottish autonomy discourse is to build an identity not just around the national identities of the British Isles, and in this example specifically the Scottish identity, but also to strengthen the common identity of Britishness. The historical, cultural, economical, political and linguistic ties that bind the Scottish nation to the rest of the peoples of the British Isles are used to juxtapose against the nationalist discourse.

Britishness is a unique feature of Britain, and the possibilities that surface thanks to this feature are also unique. As the identity of being Scottish can in practice be a part of an identity of being British, the sting of the Scottish nationalist discourse is lost. It is no longer an either-or situation, and it is exactly this feature that both the New Labour Party and the Scottish Labour Party exploit in their discourse. The discourse on Scottish autonomy that New Labour represents is an alternative to the status quo on the British regions that dominated the British political discourse in the preceding decades.

The nodal point of democracy

The logic of difference can be used regarding an analysis of how New Labour sought to develop their discourse on regional policy-making within the United Kingdom. The fresh discourse set out by the New Labour Party broke up the discursive order that was in place and created a new discursive stand. The New Labour discourse on the Scottish devolution has been built around the nodal point of democracy. The Thatcher years was a period of change. Several aspects of British society were altered. According to the New Labour Party, the Conservative governments in the 80s and 90s overlooked certain aspects of the British society. New Labour has sought to change these features (Driver & Martell 2002).

Having declared Britain a country that is controlled too tightly by the central government, it proposed devolution of power. This devolution was a feature in a broader package of constitutional reform. Thus a new discourse on Scotland and its role within the UK emerged, driven by the force of New Labour. Even though the

discourse promoted by New Labour, and enacted by the Scottish First Minister is quite recent, it has gained ground in British politics to such a degree that it is now the dominant discourse. By using the new nodal point 'democracy', the New Labour discourse on the autonomy of Scotland moves it away from independence to regional autonomy.

The other parties

The 'other' in New Labour's discourse is independence. Throughout the speeches made by the First Minister there is emphasis on what is perceived as a damaging consequence to Scotland and its people if the Scottish Nationalists' policy wish of Scottish independence will gain support and triumph. By attacking discourse of the Scottish Nationalists New Labour is signalling that they regard their discourse to be the greatest challenge. The most quintessential difference between the Scottish Nationalists discourse and New Labour and The First Minister of Scotland's discourse is the question of the state of Union between Scotland and the rest of Great Britain. This difference is understandably deemed to be too far from the New Labour discourse in order to be part of the chain of equivalence that resides within the discourse set up by New Labour and The First Minister of Scotland.

For New Labour the discourses of both the Liberal Party with its positive views on federalism, and the Conservative Party with its lack of support for the establishment of regional legislatures, represent a discourse that stands in opposition to their own. The Liberal Party has been drawn closer to the New Labour Party in the political landscape, and also included in regional governments.

The Conservative Party has, in the wake of their electoral defeat to the New Labour Party in 1997, not yet been able to challenge for power in a credible way. Despite this, the Conservative Party is at the moment the only credible alternative to the New Labour Party in Britain. This makes the challenge of the Conservative discourse important. With regards to the devolution process, the Conservative Party has not been able to formulate a challenge to the New Labour discourse, and is very much trapped by it. The Conservative Party opposed the New Labour plan of creating regional legislatures, as this was seen as the first visible step in the breaking up of the Union between England and Scotland, and ultimately the demise of Great Britain as we know it today.

Abolishing the regional legislatures is not a feasible option for the Conservative Party, and they therefore have to live with this element of the New Labour discourse of democracy. A possible Conservative answer to New Labour's democracy discourse might be a further accentuation of the individual and its responsibilities, and in this way luring power, influence and financial benefits away from regional legislatures. The Achilles heel of the regional legislatures and executives is still their limited financial possibilities and strength. A possible route for the Conservative Party might therefore be to pound on the weak spot of the regional legislatures and make the legislature and executive politically unimportant whilst at the same time retaining them.

A good analytical approach

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory provides a good analytical approach to understand how the leader of a regional division of a national party is retaining the discourse of the political centre. The political structure between centre and the periphery is many cases as fragile and changing as the discourses in Laclau and Mouffe's theory. In Europe today it is not only in Britain that there is a development of the power structure within a state. Spain is another example of a large European country where the relationship between centre and its periphery is in motion towards a new possible interim status quo.

The former communist states of Central –and- Eastern Europe have an internal power structure that also could be ripe for a change. The democratic struggles of the Romany people in large parts of the region, the Hungarian minority in the Carpathian basin, the Polish minority in Belarus and the Russian minority in the Baltic states are all examples of people who still have not received the democratic rights and possibilities that the majority of the people in Central – and – Eastern Europe were given.

These people and their quest for democratic rights could set off a change in the political structures of those states involved. In that case, the example of the centre-periphery relation analysed with the help of Laclau and Mouffe's theory, might provide us with further insight than if we were to rely on traditional methods of analysis. This thesis also acts as example of the way Laclau and Mouffe's principle of hegemony can function when applied to a specific example.

PART SIX: Conclusion

In line with the British New Labour Party

This Master Thesis' research question was whether The First Minister of Scotland is creating a political discourse that contains an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unit. To be able to answer that question I analysed six of The First Minister's speeches, made from 2003 till 2006.

The analysis of the First Minister's speeches has shown that he does create an image of Scotland as an independent nation by relating Scotland's present to its historical past, and by focusing intensively on Scotland without always referring to the United Kingdom. This however falls short of creating an image of Scotland as an autonomous political unity. Jack McConnell does not stray far off the course that has been set by the British Labour Party. In several speeches, the First Minister accentuates that he sees Scotland as an integral part of the British union.

Despite that the First Minister often emphasise what he sees as a particular Scottish heritage or trait, he never dwells on underscoring that particular heritage or trait. He never uses the difference between Scotland and the United Kingdom, in most cases represented by the biggest member of the Union – England, for the sake of scoring political points for Scotland. Not all Scottishness is characterised as a positive feature, but the majority of characteristics do have something positive at their core and can be used to inspire the listener. The general tone of the First Minister's speeches is inspirational and unifying.

Storytelling

There is a tension between the rhetorical expressions in the First Minister's speeches and the framework of the Scotland Act 1998. The rhetoric of national awareness is in conflict with the political possibilities represented by the Devolution. The story told by the First Minister, is not in accordance with the political reality as defined by the realpolitical power relations. Storytelling has become an integral part of political rhetoric (Salmon 2006). The communication of political ideas and visions are being advanced through narrative techniques that include storytelling. Whilst the specifics of the British political setting limits the possibilities of the conclusion of this paper to

become useful in other settings, the theme of storytelling on the other hand can be used in different settings.

Expectations

When I started to analyse the speeches given by the First Minister I thought that it would be reasonable to expect a few proposals or a few indications that might test the framework of the devolutional agreement. This was based on the presumption that the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and Executive would have resulted in a political discourse that is more heavily influenced by the idea of Scotland as an independent nation.

Even though the First Minister represents a branch of the Labour Party, he only represents the interests of the Scottish people, and that might unintentionally lead to disputes with the central power, no matter what party affiliations the Scottish and British governments have. The lack of any willingness on the behalf of the First Minister to put the devolutional agreement to the test is therefore somewhat surprising.

Friction

As the example of the Welsh Labour Party has shown, it is possible to have some political differences and still be an election winning party both regionally and on a national level. What the example of the Welsh Labour Party also showed (Hopkin & Bradbury 2006) was that dissent has its limitations. The regional branches of the Labour Party do not endorse challenges to key aspects of the devolutional agreement. Differences that have surfaced have been mainly due to friction caused by a change in course by the British New Labour Party. Reverberations after a change in political direction have not been bigger in Scotland, than other parts of Britain. The election victory of “red”-Ken (BBC news UK 2006²³, London elections 2004²⁴) is an example of this.

²³ URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3012347.stm

²⁴ URL: <http://www.londonelects.org.uk/>

Political party constraint revisited

As I have noted earlier in this paper, I consider a political discourse to have both linguistic and practical dimensions. My three hypotheses move along the practical dimension. Loyalty to the nationwide party, and sensitivity to its challenges, short term as for instance a general election, or long term, does not mean a complete assimilation of the centre's political preferences. The hypothesis called political party constraint has also been strengthened by the analysis of the First Minister's speeches. The organisational tightness revealed by Lynch & Birrell's (2004) work clearly underpins this hypothesis.

By using discourse analysis as an analytical approach, I have been able to show how close the First Minister's expressed political stance is to the British party's. Focusing on the language, which is how politics most often is articulated, has allowed the analysis to show how similar the approach towards a specific political challenge is being dealt with by two different political entities. This, as I have noted, has strengthened the political party constraint hypothesis.

Political constraint revisited

No ideas or proposals have been aired in the speeches I have analysed that might be conceived as disloyal to the agreement that was pushed through by the British New Labour Party. This strengthens the hypothesis I have called political constraint. It seems that the present Scottish Executive, represented by the First Minister, is no more eager to establish a political discourse that portrays Scotland as an independent nation eight years after the Scotland Act 1998 was passed, than they were before the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and Executive. The Scottish Parliament and Executive seem therefore to serve the goal of "radical democratisation" as noted by Hassan & Warhurst (2002:214).

The devolution process has moved British politics closer to Scotland, and not moved Scotland further away from the United Kingdom. Discourse analysis has been a good analytical tool when considering this hypothesis. By putting the emphasis on the speeches made by the First Minister, I have been able to show the extent he is in accordance with the spirit of the Scotland Act 1998. One of the essential agreements between the major political forces in the United Kingdom prior to the Scotland Act

1998, was that the establishment of the Scottish Executive and Parliament would not jeopardise the unity of the British union.

To show that the First Minister of Scotland does not make any attempt to unsettle the unity of the British union is therefore an interesting finding. Just as with the previous hypothesis, discourse analysis has allowed me to view politics from a different angle than what is usual. Discourse analysis sheds light on the creation of the framework that political discussions are limited by. By showing how the First Minister is contributing to a belief that the Scotland Act 1998 should be the status quo, he is also defining the limits of the democratic debate. Visions that break with the Scotland Act 1998 can thus be forced out of the mainstream. The ability to form and limit the political debate is important as power leverage.

Financial constraint revisited

The hypothesis of financial constraint has been only partly strengthened. I have during the analysis not been able to show clearly the level of dependency on the financial contribution from the United Kingdom, only indirectly. This renders the financial hypothesis a less significant explanation value, than the two previous hypotheses. In fact, since I have not found any direct evidence to support this hypothesis, it should not be considered a useful hypothesis in its current form. Discourse analysis has not given me the opportunity to consider the financial limitation that the Scottish Executive and Parliament is facing in a helpful manner.

Possible paths to change

The First Minister does however in his speeches accentuate certain types of unique Scottish traditions and traits, but he always falls short of providing an image of Scotland that is independent from The United Kingdom. There are though reasons to believe that this status quo will change. Keating, Stevenson, Cairney & Taylor (2003) describe a Scottish legislature that passes a significant quantity of Acts of Parliament, and Goodwin, Jones & Jones (2005) finds an Executive who is active in economic policies. The treaties signed by The First Minister Of Scotland with Catalonia and Tuscany also give a possible path to change in the status quo. In addition, it is likely that the Labour party will stop form governments at both levels of British politics.

Loosing control over one level might affect the political discourse of both levels of the Labour party.

Finally, Laclau & Mouffe's (2001) theoretical foundation, a foundation that has underpinned this Master thesis, notes that all political discourse are being threatened by alternative discourses, and since fixation of the moments never materialise, political discourse, as any other discourse, is bound to change in time.

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