

## **‘Small is Beautiful’, Analysing the Democratising Effect of Localism, Greater Regional Autonomy, Decentralisation and Constitutional Reform**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to provide a critical theoretical comparative review of the effect upon democracy, constitutional reform could have on new smaller states. This paper posits that it is an untried, untested assumption that democratisation will follow, if nation states’ populations choose constitutional reform. This paper also posits that social, economic, political, historical and cultural generic domains influence the drive for constitutional reform in very different ways globally. This paper intends to discuss the pressure for constitutional reform, from a globalisation perspective. This paper will demonstrate how globalisation itself is a significant causal factor, increasing the propensity towards constitutional reform of smaller states. This paper will also demonstrate that the EU anti-globalisation sentiment, asking for constitutional reform, is globally replicated elsewhere.*

**Keywords:** democratisation; decentralisation; localism; constitutional reform;

**JEL Classification:** F68; H75; O15; P46;

### **1. Introduction**

This paper is presented in five sections including an introduction, which describes the content of the text. The paper provides critical theory on the causal factors which have created an impetus in some quarters, for the creation of smaller autonomous, independent nation states. The paper expands the critical theoretical perspective, to demonstrate there is a similar impetus within nation states, which act as a driver for regionalism, decentralisation and localism (Trench, 2014, p.122). The paper provides comparative analysis of how choice of democratisation political process made by newly formed nation states, significantly influences resource allocation social policy formulation (OECD, 2014, p.16; UNRISD, 2011, p.12).

The second section is a literature review, which acts to introduce theoretical frameworks. Section two provides definitions to explore the phrase, the democratising effect of localism, greater regional autonomy and decentralisation. At this early juncture, a number of critical issues emerge. The definition of democratisation is hotly contested, who’ view of democratisation takes precedence, the ‘parent’ nation state, or the newly formed smaller state. What was the level of societal buy in, prior to choosing a democratisation process? (Anderson *et al*, 2013, p.3)<sup>1</sup>. This type of critical theoretical analysis, informs the reader, it is far from certain that a democratic landscape will result, after a majority decision for localism, or greater regional autonomy, or constitutional reform or decentralisation (LDI, 2013, p.19)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson et al. (2013) study posed similar questions at the embarkation of their proposed project. The Anderson et al study focuses upon the issues that arise for a ‘parent’ state facing calls for territorial autonomy, as part of constitutional transitions.

<sup>2</sup> This report was provided for the UK Department for International Development.

The third section discusses research methodology. This is a thumbnail sketch, a snapshot, which acts to demonstrate the number of times, the main democratising processes being discussed, are mentioned in news articles from UK media sources.

The fourth section is called 'Findings and Discussion'. Section 4.1 'Summary', provides an indication of the extent of the UK citizenship awareness of different types of democratisation.

The fourth section of this text is a critical review of localism (4.2). This section explores the foundations of localism. Critical issues such as accountability, locally controlled financial instruments, real autonomy and representative localism, are theorised to give an indication of how they would work in practice (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, p.260). Example is given of how localism can be undermined by central governments (Cox, 2014, p.152). The discussion expands further to give an indication as to the most favourable conditions under which localism can flourish, to be used as democratising tool.

The fourth section also considers the globalisation aspects underpinning the perception of democratisation (4.3), achieved using socio-political tools such as localism, greater regional autonomy and decentralisation (Soborski, 2014). Global calls for constitutional reform appear to have a different characteristic to those in the European-centric backdrop of Scotland and Spain, Catalonia (Ace Project, 2014; Hanschel, 2014, p.4). As part of globalisation, the generic domains of social, economic, political, historical, cultural and situational background act to shape the choice of democratisation tool used (Egana, 2014, p.2; Ricci, 2014, p.8). The nature and trajectory of democratisation is also influenced by the aforementioned generic domains, as people interact with various social actors in their lives (Ermini and Santorelli, 2014, p.153).

The fourth section of the paper also provides a critical theoretical perspective of the provision of public or social goods (4.4), after a nation state has been through a democratisation political process (UNRISD, 2010b, p.278). Section 4.4 will explain how resource allocation may well change substantively due to the generic domains of social interaction, alongside how an independent state formed. The culture and history of the newly formed nation state is often crucial, not only to what type of social goods are delivered, but often, if any social goods are delivered at all. There is critical analysis of whether the concept of universal coverage, a policy transfer facet of globalisation will materialise in a newly formed state (WHO, 2014, p.10).

The fifth section of the paper acts as a conclusion, providing a critical theoretical overview of the main issues to feature. The causal factors increasing or decreasing the likelihood for constitutional reform will be discussed (Gilardi, 2012, p.461). The conclusion gives contemporary examples of where the ethos of greater regional autonomy or decentralisation have been replicated in Europe and globally elsewhere (Lyon, 2012, p.80). There is also analysis of critical differences in newly formed nation states democratic processes identifying the causal factors which produced those differences (Ekiert and Ziblatt, 2013, p.90).

## 2. Literature Review Introducing Theoretical Frameworks

### (i) Democratisation political processes: some definitions

Numerous different policy makers are featured in the literature review conducted in writing this discussion text. During the course of the literature review, it became apparent that some words such as localism, decentralisation and devolution, are interchangeable, transferable within text. They are all points depicted on a matrix of democratisation.

The discussion begins with some definitions. The definition of nation 'state' has a multitude of meanings. This paper offers two examples. A paraphrase of Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) effectively defines a nation state as a geographic area with a defined territory, a sovereign political entity with a permanent population, with the capacity to enter into social, political, economic relations with other nation 'states'. Weber (1919) provides another definition. Weber (1919) describes a 'state' as a set of social institutions, actors, who claim they have the right to use legitimate force within their defined territory (Weber, 1919/2011, p.1). Similarly the definition of small nation state also has numerous meanings. Bailes and Thorhallsson (2014, p.119) argue that a 'small state' can mean a state which would have difficulty defending itself from a military aggressor, or from external financial shock. An eventuality contemporised by the global financial crisis of 2008.

### (ii) Democratic Corporatism

Small nation states which formed as a result of decolonisation from its parent nation state, often suffer from economic and political structural problems due to socio-historic factors present during formation. This situation can be exacerbated if the small nation state developed on a non-negotiated basis, breaking away from its main body abruptly, leading to a global perception, if not reality, of being unsustainable. Small nation states can also be defined as countries which would benefit by adopting policies of 'democratic corporatism' (Thorhallsson and Kattel, 2013, p.84). 'Democratic corporatism' can be defined as the social and political organisation of interest groups, working with the state towards common interests. Small states should make consensual internal arrangements with trade unions, employer's unions, financial institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This is to co-ordinate the continuation of a basic social goods safety net, during a crisis. In practice, Katzenstein (1985, p.22), Miles (1996, p.4) and Thorhallsson (2005, p.111; 2013, p.7) argue to varying degrees, that 'democratic', or 'sectoral corporatism' although well intentioned does not happen.

### (iii) Democratisation

The definitions of democracy, democratisation, or *demos*, are themselves contested. Such definitions being influenced by numerous causal factors to include historical, cultural and linguistic singularities (Requejo and Sanjaume, 2013, p.2). For example, Tierney (2007) provides a robust critique of neoliberal definitions of democracy, on the grounds that they contain the inbuilt assumption that parent nation states have a single cultural identity, "*an assumption that the state embodies a single nation that provides an exclusive societal context for all its citizens*" (Tierney, 2007, p.733). Tierney (2007), albeit tacitly, argues that in practical terms, this is simply not the case. There's also the influence of whether a nation state is a '*pluri-national*' state to consider. Swenden (2013) informs, '*pluri-national states*' are; "*States that are marked by the presence of at least two territorially distinct communities. Their territorial distinctiveness can be linked to the presence of a*

*particular language, a tribe, a religion, a shared history, but above all a shared understanding of being part of a separate political community with a distinctive identity separate from or in addition to the state as whole*” (Swenden, 2013, p.61). Requejo (2010) succinctly reinforces Tierney’ (2007) critique, that it is folly to shoehorn a nation states’ population, into a ‘one size fits all’ situation, where people have to accept a decision-making process, remote from themselves, that often does not address local needs, history, language or culture. *“It is more correct here to speak of a plurality of **demoi**, than of a single **demos** (although the latter may describe itself internally as ‘plural’). The general challenge of plurinational democracies is **one polity, several demoi**”* (Roquejo, 2010, p.152, original emphasis).

#### **(iv) Decentralisation**

In this paper, decentralisation can be defined as the delegation of decision making powers to a grassroots body of people. The lower the level where decisions are made, the greater the degree of decentralisation. Decentralisation can be defined as a form of governance where decisions are made by those who have most knowledge about the local area and conditions. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (2010b) argue that decentralisation is beneficial because *“It seeks to reduce rent seeking behaviour and seeks to reduce resource allocation associated with centralised power by dispersing such power to lower levels of government, where the poor are likely to exercise influence and a variety of actors may participate in the provision of services”* (UNRISD, 2010b, p.278/279).

There is however an alternative non-statist view, which focuses upon a parent nation state’ motive for delivering decentralisation. Anderson (2014) paraphrases contemporary literature to delineate the point. Anderson (2014, p.6/7) informs the reader that Requejo (2004) argued that some parent governments, decentralise some power to minority nation states, to appear to be supportive of the pluri-cultural and pluri-linguistic aspects of the minority nation state. In reality, according to Requejo (2004), the parent nation state is using decentralisation, to offset, to mask its refusal to recognise its pluri-national status. The parent government’s real motive for offering decentralisation, is to create an impression of being a uni-national state, whilst denying the existence of its pluri-national characteristics. *“The history of modern federations is the history of two concealments of classic federalism”* (Requejo, 2004, p.32).

Fiscal decentralisation would involve the necessity of allowing local areas to conduct their own financial affairs. Fiscal decentralisation can also be defined as the central body giving, or allowing local decision making bodies e.g. a citizen’s assembly to create financial instruments (UNRISD, 2010b, p.271; Lyon, 2012, p.82). These financial instruments may include tax revenue raising powers, or skills, training and employment regeneration funding, to reflect identified local priorities (Cox, 2014, p.154). Hanschel (2014) presents a similar argument, that financial independence is an essential by-product to demonstrate true independence from the ‘parent’ state. *“In that sense a stronger financial autonomy, might, for instance, be an important step forward. Additional powers regarding energy policy, in particular oil and gas, and accruing benefits would be very popular...”* (Hanschel, 2014, p.18). Devolution, which is different to full independence, often includes some form of continual funding from the ‘parent’ state to the separate, devolved (but not independent) new state.

### **(v) Devolution**

Devolution can be said to be a form of secession, a process by which a small nation state forms. *“Secession strikes at the twin pillars of the Westphalian State system: Sovereignty and territorial integrity. A successful succession shrinks the territorial reach of the former parent’s state’s sovereign authority and establishes a new sovereign in its place”* (Connolly, 2013, p.67)<sup>3</sup>. The Westphalian system is the concept of the sovereignty of nation states on their territory, with no role for external agents in their domestic structures. In devolution, the new state continues to have political representation, either by choosing its own social actor, or as in the UK’s case, both Scotland and Wales currently have their own devolved assembly. There is a widely held view that the UK, the parent nation state, said yes to devolution in Scotland (and Wales), because it wanted to reduce political support for the Nationalist political parties. Connolly’s quote of James Macintyre in the New York Times, February 8, 2012, demonstrates that international political commentators share this view. *“When the Labour party returned to power under Tony Blair in 1997, it promised devolution of powers throughout the United Kingdom, in part to “lance the boil’ of independence”* (Connolly, 2013, p.61).

Hanschel (2014) introduces a number of important aspects when discussing devolution, as a component of the contested concept of democratisation. These aspects include conflict resolution, the appearance of political stability and trust. For devolution to develop and then be sustained in the long term, people in the devolved area, must have confidence that what was agreed as the chosen decision making body, will actually materialise.

To develop such a spirit of co-operation, there needs to be societal buy in, social entrenchment. These are the conditions whereby people are ready to adopt a regime, which for many will be a new experience in their lifetime. This is where the trust and political stability is required to resolve a conflict. *“The strong trust in the open political process appears to stabilize expectations regarding the permanency of devolution, in a similar way as legal entrenchment through a list of powers in a constitution and supervision by a constitutional court would in many continental legal orders. The effectiveness of entrenchment as a means of conflict resolution does not hinge on its legal quality as such, but on the perceived level of stability and reliability”* (Hanschel, 2014, p.15).

### **(vi) Greater regional autonomy**

Greater regional autonomy for the purpose of this paper can be defined as the right, opportunity and ability to self-govern. Greater regional autonomy means being truly independent, having freedom from external control or influence. Griffiths and Savic (2009) articulate how globalisation can impede democratisation political processes. *“The existence of economic globalization introduces a paradox: secession cannot produce full autonomy in economic matters because states with smaller economies tend to have less policy autonomy”* (Griffiths and Savic, 2009, p.424). Griffiths and Savic (2009) argue that in practice, although an area might have greater regional autonomy from its ‘parent’ state, *‘...it may be simultaneously losing policy autonomy to global market forces!’* (Griffiths and Savic, 2009, p.431). Hanschel (2014) also gives an equally robust warning which harmonises with Griffiths and Savic (2009). *“Similarly, granting and using subnational constitutional power, may be part of a suitable constitutional response to centrifugal tendencies in Flanders and Catalonia. After all, independence might not be*

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher K. Connolly, is currently (to 30 September 2014) Assistant United States Attorney, Southern District of New York.

*identified as the best option for regions within an integrated Europe, where decisions increasingly require transnational coordination and take effects beyond the narrowly confined domestic realm” (Hanschel, 2014, p.21).*

**(vii) Constitutional reform**

For the purpose of this text, constitutional reform can be defined as a nation states mechanism by which she can change the existing, ‘supreme law of the land’ (Karlsson, 2014, p.567). A nation state should go through a process of constitutional reform before embarking upon any of the democratising political processes such as greater regional autonomy or decentralisation. Constitutional reform can be enacted in numerous ways, all of which belong in one of two procedural families, explicit or implicit. Explicit refers to formally changing the wording of the constitution document. This can prove problematical, if the ‘parent’ nation state does not have a written constitution e.g. the UK. In most nation states, some form of referendum would be required. Implicit constitutional reform, involves changing how the constitution should be interpreted, whilst leaving the document intact. Here, constitutional courts have been instrumental ‘as drivers for implicit change’ (Karlsson, 2014, p.567). Another problem with using explicit procedures for constitutional reform is that the manner in which the constitution is worded can preclude attempts to bring about the very changes required to help people. Scotland has been able to choose to have a referendum of its people regarding becoming independent. Scotland chose to remain part of the UK, 18 September 2014. In practice there was no direct impediment from a written UK constitution preventing Scotland from holding a national vote on this issue (Tierney, 2013, p.360). It is a very different story for Catalonia. Spain does have written constitution, from which Article 2 and Article 8 act to prevent the Catalan people from having a referendum to vote for or against independence (Spanish Constitution 1978, Articles 2 and 8). Due to the Spanish Government’ application to Spain’s Constitutional Court, the Catalan Government have postponed the independence referendum which was scheduled for November 2014 (The Guardian Online, 14 October 2014).

### **3. Research Methodology**

Table 1 details the number of occasions one of the four democratisation processes appeared in each of the news media sources, the BBC, The Guardian and The Telegraph newspapers, during October 2014. Table 1 was compiled by logging on to the internet, then using the Google search engine to find the official website of each news media source chosen. Localism, greater regional autonomy, decentralisation and constitutional reform, were then searched for on each news media source web page. The frequency in which they all appeared was tabulated. The first letter of each democracy tool was capitalised for all searches. This did not make a difference to the search results. I performed the exercise by capitalising the first letter of the phrase on the two examples, where more than one word is used. The results were the same.

**Table 1. UK Media News Articles Mentioning a Democratisation Process - October 2014**

Date in October 2014	Democratisation Process											
	Localism			Greater Regional Autonomy			Decentralisation			Constitutional Reform		
	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B
1 October	2			2	1					3		
2 October				1							2	
3 October				1		3				1		
4 October										1		
5 October	1									2		1
6 October	2			2	1					1		
7 October	4			1						2		
8 October	2			1		3				2	1	
9 October	1			1						1		
10 October	2				1					2		
11 October						1				1	1	
12 October	1									3		
13 October	3			1	1	1				11	2	1
14 October				1	4	2	1				4	3
15 October	3											
16 October	4		1	1	2		1					1
17 October					1			2				2
18 October										3	1	2
19 October	2										1	
20 October	1			2	1		3	2		3	3	
21 October	5		1	1		1	4			2	1	1
22 October	3				1		1		2	1		2
23 October	1	1					5			2		
24 October				2			1					2
25 October										1		
26 October	3			1								2
27 October	2		1	1						1	1	1
28 October	2			1			1	2			1	1
29 October	1		1	5			1		1	1	1	
30 October	1				3		1			2		1
31 October						1			1	1		1

Key: UK Media News Source: The Guardian (G); The Telegraph (T); The BBC (B).

Notes: Four democratisation processes, were each put into the search facility of three news media sources: the BBC, The Guardian and The Telegraph on 9 November 2014.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Summary

**Constitutional Reform** appeared in the most news articles, mentioned 87 times. One reason for this higher figure could be that **Constitutional Reform** has more of a profile globally. From a UK perspective, more international articles appeared in this search.

**Greater Regional Autonomy** had the second highest frequency, being mentioned in news articles 54 times. **Greater Regional Autonomy** had quite a high profile in articles regarding European countries, but not so frequent further afield globally.

**Localism** produced some interesting results, appearing 51 times in the study. What is most striking with the **Localism** result is the breakdown in the choice of news media sources. 46 of the 51 mentions are in The Guardian, with 4 on the BBC and 1 result from The Telegraph, for October 2014. (Please note, the search was for Localism, not the Localism Bill, which may have produced a different frequency of result). None of the other democracy tools discussed, had such a high frequency of being represented, in one of the particular news media sources chosen, compared to the others.

**Decentralisation** had the lowest frequency, appearing in news articles 27 times. One reason why this figure is lower may be that **Decentralisation** does not have the same influence globally or European wide, as the other democratisation processes.

### 4.2. Critical review of localism as a democratisation political process

Ed Cox, Director of IPPR North (2014) argues that numerous policy makers have indicated, there are five foundations of localism. Localism is meant to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in resource allocation, using a prioritisation process, which identifies and meets local needs. *“The majority of public services and investments require a much greater degree of sub-national, local and neighbourhood decision-making, and in each case the grounds on which that assessment has been made – in terms of which is the effective and efficient level at which responsibility ought to reside – need to be articulated”* (Cox, 2014, p.152).

Another foundational stone of localism is that of democratisation and accountability. Immediately, the issue that the process by which decisions are reached must be open, honest and transparent, comes to the fore. The process must be articulated in the operational mechanics of localism. Bentley and Pugalis (2013), restate the interoperability issue, as an observation. *“A question that immediately arises is; how will these principles be acted upon and operationalised in practice”* (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, p.260). In order to affect such functionality of localism in practical terms, the political architecture and infrastructure must be in situ, understandable and accessible to locally accountable decision makers. *“Alongside this ‘framework’ there needs to be a coherent ‘institutional’ architecture within which decisions are made and services are commissioned and delivered”* (Cox, 2014, p.152).

The importance of locally controlled financial instruments is reinforced by the foundational stone of funding. For localism to be truly effective, local areas must be given financial localism allowance, with no centralised political strings at play, controlling expenditure. The basic tenet that local areas need independence over their finances, is present in the ethos of the Localism Act 2011, as laid down by the ‘Six Acts of Decentralisation’ (HM Government, 2010, p.2/3). Bentley and Pugalis (2013) are equally forthright in their analysis of localism. *“Financial autonomy is a prerequisite of localism,*

which could involve permitting local government to determine its own rates of taxes (and subsidies) (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, p.260).

Localism recognises that there does need to be governance, audit trail and financial oversight processes in place, to safeguard the disbursement of the localism allowance expenditure. However localism is of the view, that there should be no cherry picking, no politicising from the central body, of what, where, when, why and how the localism allowance is spent. The latter point encapsulates the potential dangers of over centralisation, which can act to impede democratisation and localism. UK Member of Parliament (MP) Graham Allen (2014) articulates this point succinctly. In the following quote, localism has been interchanged with devolution, yet the comment remains relevant and entirely valid. *“There has been devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, yet there is still suffocating over-centralisation in England, with local government acting merely as the delivery arm of central Government”* (Allen, 2014)<sup>4</sup>.

Connolly’s (2013) work on secession thematically chimes with Cox’s (2014) study, from the operational mechanics view. Connolly’s (2013) study also acts to demonstrate that in practice decentralisation, localism and secession are interlinked, overlapping political processes. They intend to deliver an interpretation of democratisation, as perceived by those affected, at the local level. By proxy, both Connolly (2013) and Cox (2014) introduce terminology and discourse, akin to discussion on how constitutional reform should be enacted, to ensure public and social goods provision (Connolly, 2013, p.77).

New nation states may well not be able to emulate the localism ideal, immediately after formation. However, such new states would do well to take heed of Cox (2014), as they develop their decision making political infrastructure over time. Especially when, as is often the case, the newly formed nation state has to comply with the lending requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the World Bank (WB), or in a small number of cases the European Union (EU). *“The conditions attached to European aid packages for crisis-hit countries have strained democratic principles to their limit”* (Nida-Rumelin *et al*, 2013, p.7). Applying the ethos of localism, argued by Cox (2014), social justice can be effected by diverting resources, allocated by the central body towards for example public transport subsidy, to local hospitals, to improve infant mortality rates. This is where decentralisation or localism, the phrases are interchangeable on a tapestry of greater self-determination, delivers democratisation, accountability and social justice at the regional level (MacKinnon *et al*, 2011, p.39).

Real autonomy, or ‘local autonomy’, is also a foundational part of localism (Pratchett, 2004, p.363). Here, the generic domains of lived experience, social, political, economic, cultural, historical and situational, exert their most influence on the nature and extent of localism. The lack of clamour for localism at the grassroots level is partly explained by real autonomy coupled with people’s general perceptions about local officialdom (Smith, 2013, p.6).

Generally, Western liberal democracies populations do not perceive their local government officers to be a danger, some form of malevolent, controlling force. More often, such populations view central government effectively as an insurance policy, the social guarantor of uniform public services delivery, paid for by redistributive tax provision (Baars, 2014, p.8). Social justice is enacted by a central body regime. There is no sense of a lack of real autonomy, that the legitimacy given to the central body is in

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<sup>4</sup> Graham Allen, UK Member of Parliament for Nottingham North, and Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee.

essence, misplaced blind faith. Due to the absence of political urgency, the centralised state is now enabled to exact injustices. This happens in passing, as an unintended consequence, whilst the central body conducts its business elsewhere.

Two UK examples are, a local council reduces expenditure by cutting services, in turn receives ‘conditional’ localism (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, p.260; Hildreth, 2011, p.704), from the central body in the form of more decentralisation. Democratic deficit has taken place in the form of not having real autonomy. Decentralisation is granted provided the local authority continues to hit the national targets set by the central body. Those targets might not be locally identified priorities, so it’s not real autonomy, democratisation has been derailed. Another UK example is ‘community’ localism (Bentley and Pugalis<sup>5</sup>, 2013, p.260; Hildreth, 2011, p.704). Here, central government policy is enacted and local people are unable to effectively challenge the policy, in an area that should be decided locally. The social policy of free schools, organisations that can receive public money, yet are not under local authority control, is probably the best contemporary UK example, of the lack of real autonomy (Cox, 2014, p.156).

Real autonomy is most likely to occur in the political economic landscape of ‘representative localism’. Here impartial people are elected by the local population to form a citizens’ or local assembly, a local panel. This local decision making body is substantively reinforced, by being recognised as the agreed delivery agent of local needs. In this sense ‘representative localism’, has become a statutory instrument, real autonomy being underpinned by law. “... ‘representative localism’ is characterised by local actors or spaces of governance having a clear constitutional position in a democratic system” (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, p.261).

The following quote by Cox (2014) underscores how ‘representative localism’, as described by Hildreth (2011, p.704), can be adapted globally. As part of globalisation, newly formed states, whose ‘parent’ state would not be classed as being a Western liberal democracy, will benefit. Globally, such fledgling nation states can develop, while avoiding the pitfalls of ‘conditional’ or ‘community’, alongside adopting the ethos of ‘representative localism.’ “*The third type of localism is described as ‘representative localism’ and refers to the decentralisation of powers to independent, locally elected authorities, whose powers are rooted in legally agreed principles. In many respects this is the most autonomous form of decentralisation and is much closer to kind of the central-local relations that exist in most other developed nations*” (Cox, 2014, p.156).

### **4.3. The effect of globalisation on the democratisation of small nation states**

Globalisation has heralded in a new era of fading borders and boundaries a process which has helped to push to the fore, the existence of pluri-nationalist states, which some parent states won’t acknowledge. There is a view that globalisation provides a dichotomy of opportunities and threats to socio-political democratisation tools such as devolution or constitutional reform (McTernan and Chwalisz, 2014). On the one hand, globalisation is an essential ingredient of trade emancipation, local regions being able to act autonomously, independent of their parent nation state, in the international market place. In turn, local regions would be able to demonstrate they are economically viable in neoliberal terms, requiring some form of political separation, in order to flourish. On the

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<sup>5</sup> Gill Bentley and Lee Pugalis (2013) study informs the reader, that ‘community localism’ is itself split into two important variants. ‘Commissioning community localism’ and secondly, ‘community asset localism’. The fundamental issue is that of accountability. Local area voices are lost, as the central body’s priorities are pursued.

other hand, neoliberalism in the form of EU, IMF and/or WB finance agreements, complete with the policy transfer aspects of loan conditionality attached, will be imposed upon new nation states, undermining attempts at self-determined decisions.

Lopez-Santana (2015 forthcoming) indicates there is a symbiotic relationship between globalisation and localism, as regards labour market policies and welfare reform. Currently (2014), there has been impetus towards nation states reorganising their workforce policies in a manner, which gives a minimal amount of work and/or access to limited social protection payments, to most citizens. One such European example is the UK, where partly due to the global downturn, has seen a proliferation of the labour market policy of zero hour contracts (Chandler, 2014, p.2; Pickavance, 2014, p.5). Here, UK citizens have no guarantee of work and can claim welfare payments for periods not in employment. Comparative analysis reveals that democratisation processes such as decentralisation or localism are being used to enact welfare reforms state wide, in postindustrial countries across both sides of the Atlantic (Lopez-Santana, 2015 forthcoming).

Analysis of the Australian Government's 'Reform of the Federation' White Paper (September 2014) demonstrates that Australia's trajectory of regional autonomy, is underpinned by a relationship between globalisation and localism. Australian people want to be able to respond to global social and economic challenges, by designing and implement policies at the local level. That is the impetus providing the leverage for regional autonomy. Australia's most recent attempt at federal reform acts as a case study, demonstrating that a nation state can deliver decentralisation, without choosing wholesale constitutional reform, an option rebuffed on numerous previous occasions (Australian Government, 2014, p.3).

Globalisation increases the propensity for small nations to form as separate political entities, as they now have guaranteed access to international trade. Small, culturally and linguistically distinctive nations, benefit from less bureaucratic red tape and greater administrative efficiency, by being politically separated from the main body. These are the mechanics of globalisation, which led Tony Blair, when UK Prime Minister, during a speech in Chicago in 1999, to attest that essentially, territorial, political and economic borders of nation states are obsolete. "*He argued that sovereignty should be reconceptualised because globalisation was changing the world in ways that made the traditional Westphalian approach anachronistic*" (Bellamy et al, 2010, p.37).

Small, advanced countries appear to be the main beneficiaries of the freer trade due to globalisation, in both economic and political terms. The economic opportunities afforded by globalisation, create a critical juncture, a policy window, by which democratisation political processes e.g. localism or independence may take place. Small is beautiful, the benefits of being a small nation state remain, e.g. local knowledge and specialisation, easier administration of public and social goods provision. Moreover, small nation states can avoid many of the historical, political economic pitfalls, e.g. large proportions of their populations, not being able to use or have access to the latest technological advances (UNRISD, 2010b, p.278).

Globalisation has eroded many of the political and financial economies of scale benefits, a local region used to receive from its parent nation state (Ermini and Santorelli, 2014, p.154). An individual larger nation state in isolation is not able to address global societal problems such as Ebola or global warming. The lack of any realistic intervention or protection in the event of a crisis acts to loosen the societal buy in, the social-political glue, binding the small nation state to its parent. However, the larger parent nation state is

still too remote, too distant, to provide the problem solving at the local level, which localism would deliver. One of the effects of globalisation on small nation states is to justify their formation and continued existence.

As part of globalisation, Global South country's populations have developed at their own pace, concordant with their socio-political-cultural history, to the point where there is an increasing groundswell asking for some form of constitutional reform. The Aboriginal population of Australia and large tracts of India people, disadvantaged by the caste system, being cases in point. Mexico a Global South nation state, has introduced juridical-institutional scaffolding, delivering a scale of democratisation powers unheard of in Latin America. In Mexico, constitutional reform will be effected by a process of free and fair access to the media. Also gender equality, at least 40% of the candidates put forward by a political party must be women. These are just two constituents, from a raft of constitutional reform measures, which came into force in Mexico in April 2014. Probably the most fundamental change is the increased transparency, delivered by the introduction of national laws to govern how elections are run. This best manifests itself with the 'New causes for the invalidity of an election' legislation (Ace Project, 2014).

Mexico's recent insistence on equal access to the media provides an additional benefit of panopticon style electoral surveillance. As with the 'invalid election' procedures, there is increased transparency which acts as critical underpinning of the checks and balances in place to prevent constitutional abuses. Mahatma Ghandi is attributed as saying 'you can judge a society by the way it treats its weakest members'. This discourse has been contemporised, producing coded language, informing nation states that with the latest technology, the international community is constantly watching. The use of social media is a key facet of globalisation, it enables people's perceptions of a government's actions to be heard, seen, analysed and commented on quickly. The Arab Spring of 2011 developed very rapidly, facilitated by people being able to access social media.

The operational mechanics of globalisation interact with the main generic domains to include social, economic and political integration, in a multitude of ways. This has enabled democratisation processes to develop differently, depending upon which nation state is being considered, the nature of their historical background and how their political infrastructure developed (Ermini and Santorelli, 2014, p.153). Such issues affect a nation states sense of identity, its cultural influence, in turn the population' choice of democratisation tool. This is why a small nation state in the developing Global South, may well make a very different democratisation choice to a newly formed state in Northern Europe e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Globalisation affects different nation states in different ways at different points in time. That can be in the form of a newer state being encouraged to privatise, it's small and large industries, and /or its public and social goods service providers. Such decisions, often lead to improved labour conditions, due to efficiency savings, brought forward by privatisation (Potrafke, 2014, p19). Potrafke (2014) posits that a substantive amount of the negative discourse against globalisation is not entirely justified. "*Globalisation has various desirable consequences. The empirical evidence shows that especially social globalisation advanced human development and promoted gender equality and women's rights*" (Potrafke, 2014, p.21).

#### 4.4. The effect of democratisation processes on public and social goods provision

There are clear parallels between operationalising democratisation processes, and the socio-political infrastructure required for good governance and human rights (UNRISD, 2010b, p.273). Analysis of these parallels will establish, they have a substantive bearing on the provision of public and social goods. The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), an arm of the United Nations, has a clear good governance standpoint. *“The true test of ‘good’ governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key question is: are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing, the right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, quality education, fair justice and personal security?”* (OHCHR, 2014).

Once analysed, the OHCHR definition of “good” governance, harmonise with the social justice political goals expressed by Cox (2014) and Connolly (2013). The OHCHR discourse has an affinity in how social justice would be achieved, that of establishing a rights based approach to the provision of public and social goods. The OHCHR definition also acts to underpin Tolksdorff (2014), with decentralisation, as a mechanism to deliver peace, a social and public good. The OHCHR operationalises an effective response to Requejo’ (2004, p.32) valid counter critique of decentralisation, being at best, an opaque democratisation process.

The OHCHR inform the reader, *“Key attributes of good governance are, transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness (to the needs of the people)”* (OHCHR Official Website, 2014). Once again, analysis of this terminology, demonstrates a substantial policy fit with the discussion’s main democratisation processes. Policy harmonisation by proxy continues from the OHCHR, with their explanation of how good governance and human rights are interconnected. The OHCHR (2014) say: *“The links between good governance and human rights are organised around four areas: Democratic institutions...Service delivery...Rule of law...Anti-Corruption”* (OHCHR, 2014). Analysis of these OHCHR links and the previous explanations clearly demonstrate the parallels between what is required to deliver human rights and democratisation, from a provision of public and social goods perspective.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) broadly recognises the good governance themes as indicated by the OHCHR in their national and global discussions on delivering universal health coverage, a public and social good. The WHO recognition manifests itself by their identification that there needs to be a constitutional guarantee in every country’s healthcare system, of equality of access for all of its population. There is similar recognition that citizens should have a right of redress, if people feel they are not getting universal coverage of their health service (WHO, 2014, p.10)<sup>6</sup>. The WHO offers anecdotal evidence which itself doubles as a clear parallel, reinforcing the necessity of having a socio-political infrastructure in place, in order to deliver democratisation in the form of universal health coverage. The WHO discourse sounds remarkably similar to that of localism, as discussed by Bentley and Pugalís (2013) and Cox (2014). Both these political commentators place significant emphasis upon how the ‘foundations’, the ‘principles’ of localism, should be delivered. Bentley and Pugalís (2013) and Cox (2014) politically harmonise with the WHO (2014) who say, regarding the provision of universal health coverage, that the “Criteria for selecting indicator sets”, *“...should be useful for implementation or oversight both for the government and its social partners such as civil*

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<sup>6</sup> This meeting in Bellagio, Italy, 6-8 May 2014 was facilitated by the WHO, as part of their ‘Social Determinants of Health’ agenda.

*society organisations or development partners.*” (WHO, 2014, p.9). The inclusion of the word ‘oversight’, in the WHO Summary (2014), resonates with the OHCHR’s description of the key attributes required to deliver on good governance. Newly formed nation states clearly fall within the WHO agenda, in their quest for delivering universal health coverage for all.

## 5. Conclusion

Nation states could choose constitutional reform producing new smaller nation states for a number of reasons. Often the parent nation state wishes to demonstrate to be perceived as having acted legitimately, in how the newly formed nation state was created. One of the causal mechanisms producing constitutional reform is that of policy diffusion. Gilardi (2012) describes four types of diffusion mechanisms; coercion, emulation, learning and competition. Coercion is effected when usually the nation state, perceived by the international community to be authoritarian, manipulates the decision making of key social actors in such a way, that they ‘choose’ to adopt certain behaviours, values and policies. In most cases, coerced policy diffusion, has been enabled by an external social actor who can employ some form of conditionality mechanism (Gilardi, 2012, p.461). Supranationals such as the IMF, the World Bank and the EU belong in this category.

Emulation policy diffusion would occur when a nation state chooses constitutional reform, in order to be able to take certain actions and adapt preferences to copy the perceived success of a competing nation state (Gilardi, 2012, p.466). In essence, the first nation state has made a normative comparison of for example, a neighbouring nations state’ welfare provision or security strategy, and decided to emulate that by adopting similar policies. In our discussion, the said nation state has gone through the democratising political process of constitutional reform, using a variety of policy diffusion mechanisms as a catalyst.

Ekiert and Ziblatt (2013) offer an explanation of some of the causal factors behind a small nation states democratisation trajectory. Essentially, a relative new nation state can have a psycho-societal connection with its ‘deep past’, a historical legacy that usually takes a long time to be discarded by the majority populous. This can be described as a ‘long durée’, or alternatively, ‘long-run continuities’ (Ekiert and Ziblatt, 2013, p.90). Frequent institutional disjuncture, such as those experienced by Central and Eastern European states (CEE), which include our earlier examples, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, manifest as their incessant problems of ethnopolitical conflict. These regular disruptions act to arrest developmental and democratising processes in these small nation states. They also produce favourable conditions for institutional mimicry, which in turn is conducive for Gilardi’s (2012) emulation policy diffusion, motivated by a need to have a coping mechanism to alleviate the institutional disruption (Ekiert and Ziblatt, 2013, p.92).

Ekiert and Ziblatt’s (2013) work compliments the Requejo and Sanjaume (2013) self-identification element of democratisation, as part of their study of the Catalan case. The historical ‘legacy’, the ‘long-run continuities’ of cultural identity, the ‘deep past’ of language, which can never be forgotten because the Catalan dialect exists, is nascent throughout Requejo and Sanjaume’s (2013) study. Ekiert and Ziblatt (2013) study considers the historical past of European democratisation processes in its different regions. How World War 1 and World War 2 affected different autonomies throughout Europe has a bearing. Path and context-dependent factors have a significant effect. As do

socio-economic-political transformation from industrialisation, modernisation and technological change (Ekiert and Ziblatt, 2013, p.95).

The policy transfer aspects of compliance with the funding criteria of transnational international funding institutions (IFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the European Union (EU), enter the conclusion. Newly formed nation states often have to borrow money from the IFIs in their early developmental stages, so they can remain independent, having left their 'parent' state. The IFIs are said to often attach conditions that a newly formed nation state governs itself in a manner, conducive to the lending criteria of the IMF, WB or the EU (Archick, 2014, p.6). This conclusion informs the reader, there are concerns that as part of globalisation, some nation states, large or small, newly formed or well established, are being forced by proxy to adopt democratisation programmes which they themselves have not necessarily agreed with. This practice by transnationals e.g. the IMF, WB and the EU, has also transferred neoliberalism, in the form of cuts in welfare credits, and spending on public and social goods, such as health and education (Soborski, 2014; UNRISD, 2010b, p.275).

Globalisation, coupled with security and defence considerations, can also have an effect upon the democratisation of small or newly formed nation states (Piccolino and Minou, 2014, p.9). Once again the generic domains of social interaction to include history, culture and language, can have a pivotal role on critical issues such as allegiances formed, peace treaties signed and neighbour's recognition of nation state's borders (Chellaney<sup>7</sup>, 2013b). EU accession procedures can act as a democracy barometer, balancing a nation state's choice to join the EU with ensuring that a nation state retains its cultural identity. A very important issue arises. A nation state's decision to join the EU, must itself have been reached in a democratic manner (Milner *et al*, 2014, p.12; Harris *et al*, 2014). Iceland's position on joining the EU is currently suspended (2014), the reason being, it's most recent election returned an anti-EU government. That position could change if Iceland's population were to subsequently decide - for our national security, we would be better off joining the EU.

The Iceland example reveals another issue regarding globalisation's effect upon security and defence. There are numerous nation states, whose populations do not have what Western liberal democracies would describe as democratic elections (Freedom House, 2014<sup>8</sup>, p.1). This would include China, Russia, Pakistan and Syria, this list is not exhaustive. In these nation states, 'pluri-nation' states, large sections of their respective populations are prevented by the 'parent' state, from having any form of local control over their political affairs. China's position towards Tibet and Russia's actions towards Ukraine, provide two contemporary examples. There are many others. The latter case is of importance to global security, Ukraine's status of having its own independent nuclear deterrent, is now increasingly being questioned (Sherwood-Randall, 2014).

America is showing an increasing reluctance to get involved in security and defence problems globally, unless it's directly adversely affected. This has potentially serious ramifications on access to key resources such as food and fossilised fuels. Often such items are geographically located in nation states, which are having democratisation problems of their own (Chellaney, 2013a, p.1). America and other liberal democracies have often been criticised for enacting regime change, especially when it has been

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<sup>8</sup> This is an overview essay presented as part of the Freedom in the 2014 report. The essay was written by Arch Puddington, Vice President of Research. Jennifer Dunham, Bret Nelson, Aili Piano, Tyler Royslance and Vanessa Tucker contributed to the preparation of the Freedom House 2014 report.

perceived that the exercise was to protect their own interests. There are recent contemporary examples of no democratic process being formed in the nation state where the resources are situated, producing long term political instability e.g. Liberia and Sierra Leone (Piccolino and Minou, 2014, p.2). Substantial numbers of the minority 'plurinational' state population being murdered, ethnically cleansed, by the majority 'parent' nation state. Allegiances formed with neighbouring nation states, which together represent a threat to global security from the Western liberal democracies perspective (Chellaney, 2013a, p.3). This is an excerpt from the problem constellation of globalisation, security, defence and their effect upon democratisation processes in nation states.

Small nation states have benefitted from greater regional autonomy and/or decentralisation. Lyon (2012) argues that probably the best example is the Republic of Macedonia, which is widely regarded by most international relations observers as being successful in minimising ethnic conflict (Lyon, 2012, p.80; European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, 2014). Subsequent initiatives to replicate the success of greater regional autonomy, have had mixed success in other nation states such as Albania and Kosovo. All three countries cited as examples have currently or recently had substantive ethnopolitical conflict incidents in 2014. However Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia still represent good global examples, where decentralisation once replicated will help democratise these nation states, by giving political power to ethnic minority and opposition groups. In essence, greater regional autonomy enables minority groups to obtain quick political wins, intrinsic gains, which make political engagement, with their 'parent' nation state, a worthwhile proposition (Lyon, 2012, p.84).

Small is beautiful, decentralisation or greater regional autonomy, designed properly, replicated correctly, will benefit both the newly formed nation and the 'parent' state. The small nation state will obtain many political benefits, which it may not otherwise have received. The 'parent' receives state wide acceptance internally of its institutions and externally, international recognition of being a more democratic state. A 'parent' nation state' population might feel threatened by an impetus towards secessionism, or federalism, or independence. Such people may well choose a democratising mechanism e.g. devolution, as a political halfway house. "...decentralisation can appear an attractive way of preserving state integrity and integrating state separatist movements" (Lyon, 2012, p.84).

As contemporary examples, Scotland and Catalonian nationalists, need to be aware that yes a significant proportion of their populations do want less central government control, but a broadly equal number of people do not want to sever the relationship with their 'parent' body. Moller-Loswick (2014) articulates this point aptly, providing a dichotomy, depicting both sides of the same paradoxical coin. Moller-Loswick (2014, p.5) argues against full independence - not only does a minority unjustly lose out, but so to do a majority (Moller-Loswick, 2014, p.6).

This discussion paper has revealed that there are a multitude of democratising processes, which have developed or been impeded, by interaction with any number of the earlier mentioned generic domains. This work by referring to contemporary literature, has shown the most likely trajectories in which localism, greater regional autonomy, decentralisation and constitutional reform, will develop in various regions in Europe and globally. Analysis of whether democracy has been attained by a small nation state is held in abeyance by constantly moving goal posts, manifest in the form of the different generic domains, interacting with globalisation.

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