

The Welsh and Scottish Devolution: a Comparative View

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, the main aim of the gradually evolving nations was reaching *independence*, though the members of these societies could hardly define what they meant by the concept of independence. Phaedrus, the Greek fabulist stated, for example, that independence is sweeter than anything else,¹ but his contemporaries could not formulate a precise definition either. The term *national sovereignty*, which is very close to *independence* in meaning, occurred in the terminology of international law only in the Middle Ages, when landlords possessed almost absolute power over their vassals. In short, the concept of independence remained partly an incentive aim of the nations.

However, ancient societies were involved in constant struggle for independence since they were forced to defend their lands, which had not been legally partitioned between the adversary tribes. This was a phenomenon that neither the pre-historic and ancient Wales nor Scotland could avoid. As a result, Wales was brought under the sway of England very soon, (officially in 1536, but Wales's operation had been determined by England even before this date), while Scotland was able to operate as a sovereign state until the Treaty of Union, which united England, Scotland, and Wales in 1707. Furthermore, Scotland got the privilege to preserve many of its rights, such as pursuing independent education policy, lawmaking, or securing the freedom of church.²



Map 1: The Welsh March

In other words, historical differences between the two territories have been outstanding. Wales, for example, could only experience some kind of autonomy when the Principality of Wales and the so-called March³ was established there. Map 1⁴ shows how

¹ Christopher Smart, ed., *The fables of Phaedrus*, accessed October 13, 2012, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0119%3Abook%3D3%3Apoem%3D7>

² T. M. Devine, "In bed with an elephant: almost three hundred years of the Anglo-Scottish union," *Scottish Affairs* 57, (2006): 9.

³ This territory was almost independent of both from England and the Principality. It was ruled by powerful barons.

Welsh territories were divided in the 13th century; in fact, two separate, almost-independent territories existed, the March and Pura Wallia. However, these territories ceased to exist due to the death of the Welsh Prince, Dafydd, who was killed by the English. Moreover, in the 15th century, Owain Glyndŵr, a local nobleman organised a revolt against the English king, Henry IV. His military activity proved itself to be so effective that he managed to rule Wales for several years, but the English retaliated by imposing legal sanctions on Wales. For example, several laws were initiated that forbade them to bear arms or hold offices. Wales was gradually integrated within England. On the other hand, the Scottish succeeded in securing their independence until 1517 since warriors like William Wallace and Robert the Bruce organised powerful armies against the English. As a result, they officially won their independence in 1328.

These historical differences might have also contributed to the fact that currently, the number of people living in Scotland exceeds the population of Wales⁵ significantly. This phenomenon is likely to contribute to the fact that Scottish national identity is currently stronger than the Welsh; therefore, this contributes to establishing stronger and more extensive political institutions in Scotland than in Wales.

In fact, the changing of the status of Wales and Scotland can be viewed as a continuous process because this kind of union did not mean the final stage in the history of these areas. Currently, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are officially controlled by devolved governments.

The Northern Irish devolution issue is not included in this research paper since it is too complex to compare it to the Scottish and Welsh devolution issues. First of all, it is a question why Northern Ireland can delegate only 18 representatives to the Westminster, while Wales, whose autonomy has been affected by England's invasions to a greater extent, delegates 40⁶. Northern Ireland has always had stronger autonomy than Wales because it was not occupied

⁴ Wrexham Country Borough Council. "The Princes and the Marcher Lords" accessed October 4, 2012, http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/heritage/medieval_exhibition/princes_marcher_lords.htm

⁵ According to the 2011 census in Wales on mid-year population, 3,063,800 people lived in Wales. By comparison, the population of Scotland is almost bigger by half (5,200,000 people). Welsh Government. "Mid-year Estimates of the Population, 2011." Accessed October 3, 2012. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/population2012/120925/?lang=en> and Scotland "Population of Scotland" accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.scotland.org/about-scotland/the-scottish-people/population-of-scotland>

⁶ Koller Inez, "A devolúció folyamata az Egyesült Királyságban," *Publikon*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.publikon.hu/htmls/tanulmanyok.html?ID=28&essayID=310>

by England. Moreover, it is likely to happen that radical powers are going to decide about the future of Northern Ireland. This is exemplified by the fact that many radical groups, such as Catholic Republicans favour a union with Ireland; if this happened, opponents of this concept would unleash a civil war or some kind of an armed conflict in Northern Ireland.⁷ Consequently, in case of a union with Ireland, the Northern Irish devolution would cease to exist in its present form, and it would not undergo further development. These are only small pieces taken from problems of the Northern Irish devolution, but it is apparent that these problems derive from different sources than those of Wales and Scotland.

The other two observed territories, Wales and Scotland accepted *devolution* in the 1997 referenda, and the areas officially accepted this new system in international treaties. It is not apparent, however, if these members of the United Kingdom remain content with this political system.

1.1. Subject of Research

Political relations within the United Kingdom are unique; in fact, it is difficult to recall other countries that are governed by devolved institutions and government. Some parts of Peru, Spain, France, Italy, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Kenya might be among the few exceptions since some of the local nationalities and a small number of districts enjoy autonomy and the advantages of devolution in these countries. On the other hand, devolution in the United Kingdom is a major governing factor because political, social, and other fields of life are determined by devolution. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate why it is worth operating by a political system that determines conditions in a country where the intentions and interests of nationalities differ from each other to a great extent.

1.2. Aim of research

It became apparent that both Wales and Scotland are objects of devolution, which provides sub national groups with authority, and unitary systems apply devolution to “reduce the power of central governments by devolving power to local or regional governments”.⁸ At the same time, the devolution system unambiguously controls sub national groups, so both territories enjoy merely restrained authority to possess rights peculiar to sovereign countries. Even so,

⁷ “Kisebbségi alternatívák Nyugat Európa kelta régióiban a XXI. század hajnalán /2. rész/”, last modified September 18, 2008,

http://archiv.ringmagazin.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3968&catid=121:kultura&Itemid=63

⁸ “devolution,” last modified October 16, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/155042/devolution>

Scotland's chances for developing independence in the future are much higher than Wales's; consequently, one might assume that Scotland will secede from the United Kingdom after the 2014 referendum.⁹ On the other hand, though Wales might also have the opportunity to vote in favour of being independent from the United Kingdom in a possible future referendum, it is not likely to happen in the near future due to several reasons. However, Wales's political representative, the National Assembly for Wales is gradually becoming more powerful.

In short, the aim of this research is to explore the main factors of the devolution policies of Wales and Scotland by comparing the issues of the Welsh devolution to the Scottish ones in order to contend that though Wales appears to be politically weaker than Scotland, it should be taken more seriously on the political agenda because of the increasingly credible ambitions of the National Assembly.

2. Methodological approaches

It is important to define the status of Wales and Scotland within the United Kingdom since it is difficult to determine what kind of political entities these areas are. It is obvious that one cannot find a phrasing that would define the political status of Wales and Scotland precisely, so a wide range of possible terms can be taken into account. These territories are necessarily existing, more or less autonomous entities for a variety of reasons, so theoretically they are able to self-determine themselves.

2.1. Self-determination of Wales and Scotland

According to international law, every nation has the right to *self-determination*,¹⁰ which involves the choice of political, social, and economical characteristics among others. In the case of Scotland, it is not difficult to prove that the habitants of this area had already developed self-determination since the connection between Scotland and the United Kingdom is not an oppressive one. On the contrary, this connection is based on two parliament acts and an international treaty. Moreover, as it has already been mentioned, the area could preserve

⁹ Scotland organises this referendum in order to decide about the final political independence of the country. The Scottish National Party, the leading party of Scotland after the 2011 devolved governmental elections decided that they would hold the referendum in 2014 or 2015. Hugh Muir, "Guaridan Focus podcast: Disunited Kingdom?" *The Guardian*, October 14, 2011, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/audio/2011/oct/14/focus-podcast-disunited-kingdom>

¹⁰ Bokorné Szegő Hanna, "Creation and cessation of states and contemporary international law," *Society and economy* 20, no. 1-2, (1997), accessed September 26, 2012, <http://www.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/tartalom/socsec/98-1-2/bhanna.htm>

many of its unique rights and could form a parliament, which define its political status. On the other hand, despite the fact that Wales also accepted devolution in the 1997 referendum and several treaties, their self-determination remains ambiguous. The area is traditionally involved in the English legal and political system, and the majority of the population speaks the official language of administrative life, English.¹¹ Moreover, it had been suggested in the preliminary negotiations of the Welsh devolution that Wales should be regarded as a strong historical region and not a separate nation like Scotland.¹² This might be a reason for establishing only an assembly in Wales compared to Scotland, where politicians come to decisions on their national issues in a parliament. All these suggest that Welsh choices in political, cultural, and other fields of life are not authoritative.

2.2. The difference between devolution and federalism

It is also important to note that devolution is different from *federalism*, which is a “[p]olitical system that binds a group of states into a larger, noncentralized, superior state while allowing them to maintain their own political identities.”¹³ The main difference between the two systems is the phenomenon of centralisation, which is the dominant characteristic of the British devolution system.

2.3. The ambiguous status of Wales and Scotland

It is apparent now that Scotland and Wales have different relations towards self-determination, and neither of them are federal states within the United Kingdom. Defining the status of Scotland is less ambiguous than the state of Wales. As a matter of fact, Scotland could be regarded as a *country* according to the definition of *state*, which applies to every presently existing country: “It is a unit (entity) which comprises a group of individuals living under the authority of an effectively ruling government in a determined territory.”¹⁴ This definition does appear to be acceptable since Scotland disposes of definite borders, and its parliament and governing body can be viewed as effective institutions within the area.

¹¹ R. D. Kernohan, “THE STILL-UNITED KINGDOM: DEVOLUTION AND AFTER,” *Contemporary Review* 279, no. 1627, (2006): 72.

¹² Kaiser Tamás, “A devolúciós folyamat kihívásai és alternatívái Nagy-Britanniában,” *Valóság* 51, no. 12, (2008), accessed August 22, 2012, <http://www.valosagonline.hu/index.php?oldal=cikk&cazon=357&lap=0>

¹³ Anita Wolff, ed., *Encyclopaedia Concise Britannica* (Chicago, London, New Delhi, Paris, Seoul, Sydney, Taipei, Tokyo: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2006:663. Accessed September 20, 2012. <http://www.amazon.com/Britannica-Concise-Encyclopedia/dp/1593392931>

¹⁴ Bokorné Szegő Hanna, “Creation and cessation of states and contemporary international law”

‘Country’ is the term that Scotland is the closest to, but a problem emerges when one notes that Scotland is not entirely sovereign.

However, the above definition of country does not correspond with the status of Wales, since despite the fact that the National Assembly is gathering more political power, England is still a major decisive phenomenon in the area. Furthermore, the determination of the borders of Wales is beyond possibility because of some historical debates over Offa’s Dyke. Some parts of this ancient earthwork serve as the dividing line between England and Wales; however, several experts dispute this approach.¹⁵ According to another approach, Wales may be quite close to being a *province*, which involves that a country (in this case, the United Kingdom) is divided into smaller districts or colonies.¹⁶ It might be a relevant definition because Wales is not powerful and autonomous enough to be regarded as a country. At the same time, Wales is a much more organised and integrated entity within the United Kingdom to be called a province since it is governed by its own government accompanied by English political influence.

On the whole, the determination of Wales and Scotland as political entities still remains a scientific challenge because due to the ambiguous political and legal characteristics of the examined areas, they cannot be decidedly categorised as countries or provinces. At this point of the research, it appears to be the most suitable solution to regard both Wales and Scotland as countries in order to avoid further inconveniences.

3. Party politics

The first and most essential factor that enabled Wales and Scotland to take a great leap towards devolution was the “softening” political attitude of the British government. The British political life is traditionally determined by the two historical parties, the Conservative and the Labour Party. In most of the cases, the differences of their (and other parties’) political views also occurred in the issues connected to devolution, so the following part of the research aims to explain why the formation of devolution had been impossible in both countries before the 1997 referenda. In general, the effects of party politics on devolution were different in the two countries.

¹⁵ Ian Bapty, “The Final Word on Offa’s Dyke?” review of *Offa’s Dyke: History and Guide*, by David Hill and Margaret Worthington, *The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust*, last modified June 19, 2002. <http://www.cpat.org.uk/offa/offrev.htm>

¹⁶ “What is province?” last modified October 16, 2012, <http://thelawdictionary.org>

3.1. Party Politics in Wales before devolution

First of all, it is crucial to take a closer look at the changing political life of Wales because this allows us to understand Welsh people's underlying reasons for sustaining devolution within the United Kingdom. In this part of the study, changing political attitudes will be presented in a chronological way in order to review the continuity of political and other events.

3.1.1. The Thatcherian times in Wales

The Conservative victory in the 1979 and 1983 elections meant an apparently negative effect on the political life of Wales. As a result, the country's opportunities for an autonomous government significantly decreased, and a major transformation of its reputation became almost impossible.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's intentions to make innovative arrangements in the United Kingdom led to the almost complete elimination of one of Wales's dominant characteristics, the large public sector.¹⁷ This decision had several negative effects in Wales concerning society; for instance, extensive unemployment occurred in the coal and steel industries.”¹⁸ As presented in Table 1¹⁹, the largest change of manpower between 1971 and 1981 can be demonstrated in the most significant areas of the Welsh industry, manufacturing (- 8.1%) and energy and water sector (-1.2%). Agriculture and forestry sector also lost a great number of employees. As a result, everyday life was adversely affected since Wales has not been a traditional agricultural country, so an agricultural decline meant a decline in food provision. The only sector that was able to develop was services (+10.8%); however, the development of a single unit of labour did not bring Wales closer to autonomy. In fact, Thatcher did not endeavour to allow Wales to hope for any kind of autonomy.

	1971 (%)	1981 (%)	1991 (%)
<i>Agriculture and forestry</i>	2.9	2.4	2.0
<i>Energy and water</i>	7.7	6.5	2.5
<i>Manufacturing</i>	33.7	25.6	22.6
<i>Construction</i>	6.7	5.8	4.4
<i>Services</i>	49.1	59.9	68.5

Table 1, Changes in the distribution of labour in the Welsh economy

¹⁷ Denis Balsom, "Political Developments in Wales 1979-1997," in *The road to the National Assembly for Wales*, ed. by J. Barry Jones et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 6.

¹⁸ "A new society", accessed August 22, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/guide/ch21_a_new_society.shtml

¹⁹ Balsom, "Political developments in Wales 1979-1997," 7.

Moreover, in this period of the Conservative rule, the population of Wales decreased because of the war Thatcher initiated in the Falkland Islands against Argentina. The Welsh have special connections with the Argentineans because of the colonisation of Patagonia in 1865, and so it was unfortunate that Welsh troops must attack people they are attached to in this way.

Finally, the Welsh could not completely identify with the Conservatives because their national roots were different. “[t]he Conservative Party has historically been perceived as the ‘English’ party in Wales”,²⁰ and this did not change despite some Conservative endeavours to approximate Wales politically, such as appointing a Minister of Welsh Affairs.

Therefore, it was not only the political opportunities of Wales that were affected in a negative way but also the identity of the locals, which strengthened their future will to choose devolution.

3.1.2. A change in the Welsh political life

Meanwhile, the Labour Party secured its traditional leading role in Wales, and this meant that the country did not support the former and present arrangements of the Conservatives. However, at that point of time, Labour did not favour the question of devolution either, since a new representative, Neil Kinnock was elected for the post. MP Kinnock “was . . . renowned as the arch-opponent of devolution”, and he “had led the devolution campaign to defeat the 1979 proposals for a Welsh Assembly”.²¹ Consequently, since Kinnock’s opinion was dominant within the Labour Party until his resignation as party leader in 1992, Wales was not provided with positive perspective concerning devolution from the Labour side either.

On the other hand, the Conservatives had to face a gradual decline of popularity due to several reasons, so Labour celebrated an overwhelming victory in the 1997 elections. From that moment, the Welsh (and Scottish) devolution issue got into the limelight since Labour changed its attitude for a variety of reasons, so reaching autonomy became possible for these countries.

Most importantly, Labour might have formerly realised that the development and increasing influence of the national parties in Wales and Scotland were not unintentional. Plaid Cymru, formed in 1925 in Wales, expressed its need for independence more and more emphatically, and the devolution question gained such a great importance there that it could

²⁰ Alys Thomas, “Politics in Wales: a new era?” in *Wales today*, ed. by David Dunkerley et al. (Cardiff University of Wales Press, 1999), 294.

²¹ Balsom, “Political Developments in Wales 1979-1997,” 8.

not have been left unanswered. As a result, Welsh politicians commenced devolution arrangements in Wales. The major figure of promoting devolution in Wales and Scotland was John Smith, who knew that “irrespective of the referendum defeat in Wales in 1979, devolution to Scotland could not proceed alone”.²² It is apparent that if Wales had not got the chance for devolution, the present unity of the United Kingdom would be in danger.

Party	% vote	MPs
<i>Conservative</i>	19.6	0
<i>Labour</i>	54.7	34
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	12.4	2
<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	9.9	4
<i>Referendum Party</i>	2.4	0
<i>Others</i>	1.0	0
<i>Turnout</i>	73.6	40

Table 2, 1997 general election results in Wales

Furthermore, Labour might have also thought that the party needed to increase its reputation despite the fact that they were the most popular party in Wales; consequently, by involving the Welsh devolution on their agenda, they were able to win more seats in Wales in the 1997 general elections. “The massive swing to Labour nationally gave the party over 50 per cent of the vote for the first time since 1970”.²³ This is also proven by the statistics of the 1997 election, which are presented in Table 2.²⁴ Labour won almost every seat in the Parliament, and even smaller parties such as Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats showed stronger performance than the Conservatives if the number of MPs is concerned. The Conservatives did not win any of the seats, which is surprising even if one considers that Welsh people do not favour the Tory party. There is also a striking contrast between the achievements of the rest of the minority parties and the ones mentioned before. The Referendum Party and the others not mentioned in the table did not have the opportunity to send MPs to the Assembly, and this has not changed since then. According to these data, Wales has formed a solid political system with “permanent members” or parties. This system is not likely to change in the future, and it can be advantageous for the development of devolution. Labour, which supports devolution to the highest extent, can only work on the devolution issue if it is able to secure its leading role within the country. Plaid Cymru, which also works on strengthening devolution, did not turn out to be successful in 1997, and according to the data involved in Table 4 on page 22, this has not changed since then.

²² Balsom, “Political Developments in Wales 1979-1997,” 10.

²³ Thomas, “Politics in Wales: a new era?” 294.

²⁴ Ibid., 294.

Therefore, the main life and soul of devolution in Wales was the Labour Party because it understood that successful devolution was among the interests of Wales, Scotland, and the party itself.

3.2. Scotland's status before devolution and its high chances for independence

Scotland's connection to devolution appears to be a much more unambiguous issue than in the case of Wales since Scotland has always been more independent from England than Wales from several aspects.

It can be stated that devolution originated from Scotland's special status within the United Kingdom since it "retained and nurtured her own church, legal and judicial systems, criminal and civil law, local government, and educational system"²⁵ even after the Act of Union in 1707. However, Scotland could not avoid joining the union with England because without the support of England, they might have got into an economic catastrophe since they lacked trade connections.²⁶

Moreover, the activity of the traditional Scottish nobility also contributed to the fact that the Scottish national identity is well-founded and stronger than the Welsh. This is proven by the fact that "by 1900 the aristocracy owned virtually every square inch of Scotland",²⁷ so a local group determined Scotland's life instead of English governors, which was not the case in Wales. Nobility was also significantly involved in political life, so their enlightened way of life further strengthened Scottish identity. It is important, for instance, that though the most important administrative issues were negotiated in London, the opinion of the Scottish nobility had never been ignored before the final political decisions.²⁸ Thus, their stronger attitude towards their national identity involves that devolution and independence are more debated issues in Scotland than in Wales.

Another reason for the fact that the Scots also adapted to the British identity might be the feeling that they had to be loyal to a country that supported them. However, this type of correspondence appears to be looser today due to several reasons. Nowadays, for example, one of the key components of national identity, the Gaelic language is being followed with increasing attention in Scotland. This is proven by the Gaelic language (Scotland) Bill

²⁵ Rodney Braizer, "The Constitution of the United Kingdom," *Cambridge Law Journal* 58, no.1, (1999): 98.

²⁶ Devine, "In bed with an elephant: almost three hundred years of the Anglo-Scottish union," (2006): 8.

²⁷ Dave McNicoll, 2012, "The Scottish Nobility," *Bletherskite*, June 16, 2012, accessed September 30, 2012, <http://www.bletherskite.net/2012/06/16/the-scottish-nobility/>

²⁸ Anne McClaren, "Noble Power in Scotland from the Reformation to Revolution," review of *Noble Power in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution*, by Keith M. Brown, *Scottish Historical Review*, 2011, 180.

introduced in 2004, which aims to strengthen the social rank of their national tongue.²⁹ As compared to Scotland, Wales has only been able to develop the status of Welsh language in a small compass despite the fact that a *Welsh Language Society* had been established.³⁰ It can also be observed that there is a decreasing tendency of Welsh language knowledge because according to a recent report of the Welsh Language Board, “around 6,500 Welsh speakers die annually and 5,200 move away, out-pacing adult learners and children learning or raised in Welsh.”³¹ In short, these features of national identity show that Scotland has higher chances for independence, but Wales also tries to survive.

3.2.1. Party politics in Scotland before devolution

Taken everything into account, however, party politics still did not make it possible for Scotland to approach independence or even devolution. The Thatcherian anti-devolution arrangements also imposed negative effects on Scotland. “With the imposition of hugely unpopular social and economic policies by the Thatcher governments”,³² the new aim of Scotland was approaching some kind of independence since “[t]hat experience put more steel into the Scottish electorate and their politicians.”³³

As a result, Scottish voters have never decided to repose confidence in the Conservative Party, and a general Labour popularity was the characteristic of Scottish political life, similarly to Wales. According to the statistics of the Scottish elections (Table 3³⁴), Labour usually managed to preserve its preference, though it could not always win the majority of the votes.³⁵ The party reached its nadir in 1955, when the Conservative Party reached 50.1%, and therefore they won 36 seats. After this year, however, the leading role of the Labour has been undiminished. One reason for this is that the Labour Party favoured devolution in Scotland to the greatest extent apart from the Scottish National Party due to the reasons already mentioned in section 2.1.2. The leading Labour figure then was Donald Dewar, who took the issue with the Conservatives on Scotland’s devolution. This dominant

²⁹ James Oliver, “Scottish Gaelic Identities: Contexts and Contingencies,” *Scottish Affairs* 51, no.1, (2005), accessed September 30, 2012, http://www.scottishaffairs.org/onlinepub/sa/oliver_sa51_spr05.html

³⁰ John Aitchison and Harold Carter, “The Welsh Language Today,” in *Wales today*, ed. by David Dunkerley et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 93.

³¹ “Report says Welsh language ‘losing 3,000 people a year’,” accessed October 2, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-17020261>

³² Devine, “In bed with an elephant: almost three hundred years of the Anglo-Scottish union,” 15.

³³ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁴ Bryn Morgan and Joseph Connelly, “UK Election Statistics: 1945-2000” *House of Commons Library*, 2001, 12.

³⁵ Morgan and Connelly, “UK Election Statistics: 1945-2000,” 12.

political figure was something that the Welsh lacked when they stepped on the road towards devolution.

General Election Results: 1945-1997: Scotland

	Votes (thousands)						Share of vote (%)					
	Con ^(a)	Lab	Lib ^(b)	SNP	Other	Total	Con ^(a)	Lab	Lib ^(b)	SNP	Other	Total
1945	964.1	1,144.3	132.8	30.6	118.0	2,389.9	40.3%	47.9%	5.6%	1.3%	4.9%	100.0%
1950	1,222.0	1,259.4	180.3	9.7	55.3	2,726.7	44.8%	46.2%	6.6%	0.4%	2.0%	100.0%
1951	1,349.3	1,330.2	76.3	7.3	14.7	2,777.8	48.6%	47.9%	2.7%	0.3%	0.5%	100.0%
1955	1,273.9	1,188.1	47.3	12.1	21.9	2,543.3	50.1%	46.7%	1.9%	0.5%	0.9%	100.0%
1959	1,260.3	1,245.3	109.0	21.7	31.3	2,667.5	47.2%	46.7%	4.1%	0.8%	1.2%	100.0%
1964	1,069.7	1,283.7	200.1	64.0	17.1	2,634.5	40.6%	48.7%	7.6%	2.4%	0.6%	100.0%
1966	960.7	1,273.9	172.4	128.5	16.9	2,552.4	37.6%	49.9%	6.8%	5.0%	0.7%	100.0%
1970	1,020.7	1,197.1	147.7	306.8	16.0	2,688.2	38.0%	44.5%	5.5%	11.4%	0.6%	100.0%
1974 Feb	950.7	1,057.6	229.2	633.2	16.5	2,887.1	32.9%	36.6%	7.9%	21.9%	0.6%	100.0%
1974 Oct	681.3	1,000.6	228.9	839.6	7.7	2,758.1	24.7%	36.3%	8.3%	30.4%	0.3%	100.0%
1979	916.2	1,211.4	262.2	504.3	22.6	2,916.6	31.4%	41.5%	9.0%	17.3%	0.8%	100.0%
1983	801.5	990.7	692.6	332.0	7.8	2,824.6	28.4%	35.1%	24.5%	11.8%	0.3%	100.0%
1987	713.1	1,258.1	570.1	416.5	10.1	2,967.8	24.0%	42.4%	19.2%	14.0%	0.3%	100.0%
1992	752.0	1,142.9	383.9	629.6	23.4	2,931.7	25.6%	39.0%	13.1%	21.5%	0.8%	100.0%
1997	493.1	1,283.4	365.4	621.6	53.4	2,816.7	17.5%	45.6%	13.0%	22.1%	1.9%	100.0%

	Candidates						Seats won					
	Con ^(a)	Lab	Lib ^(b)	SNP	Other	Total	Con ^(a)	Lab	Lib ^(b)	SNP	Other	Total
1945	68	68	22	8	18	184	27	37			7	71
1950	68	71	41	3	29	212	31	37	2		1	71
1951	70	71	9	2	8	160	35	35	1			71
1955	71	71	5	2	7	156	36	34	1			71
1959	70	71	16	5	10	172	31	38	1		1	71
1964	71	71	26	5	24	197	24	43	4			71
1966	71	71	24	23	17	206	20	46	5			71
1970	71	71	27	65	22	256	23	44	3	1		71
1974 Feb	71	71	34	70	19	265	21	40	3	7		71
1974 Oct	71	71	68	71	12	293	16	41	3	11		71
1979	71	71	43	71	28	284	22	44	3	2		71
1983	72	72	72	72	26	314	21	41	8	2		72
1987	72	72	72	71	21	308	10	50	9	3		72
1992	72	72	72	72	53	341	11	49	9	3		72
1997	72	72	72	72	143	431		56	10	6		72

(a) Includes National and National Liberal for 1945; includes National Liberal and Conservative 1945-1970

(b) Liberal/SDP Alliance 1983-87; Liberal Democrats from 1992

Sources: *British Electoral Facts: 1832-1999*, Rallings and Thrasher, Parliamentary Research Services, 2000
House of Commons Library

Table 3: General election results in Scotland between 1945 and 1997

Dewar along with many of his fellow party members thought that devolution is among the main interests of Scotland for a variety of reasons. For example, they did not agree with the fact that “Thatcher had control at Westminster while Scotland was returning a majority of Labour MPs”,³⁶ and it was apparent that Conservative ideologies did not include devolution because it “would create constitutional anomalies and hasten Scottish independence.”³⁷ It appears that this was an opinion that a nation with strong national identity could not leave unanswered. Therefore, Dewar and other Scottish Labour MPs considered leaving

³⁶ Ewen McAskill, “Donald Dewar,” *The Guardian*, October 12, 2000, accessed October 2, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2000/oct/12/guardianobituaries.labour>

³⁷ Mark Garnett and Philip Lynch, *Exploring British Politics* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2007): 245, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://books.google.hu/books?id=-YI5u5PIHgQC&pg=PA245&lpg=PA245&dq=Conservatives+oppose+devolution+garnett&source=bl&ots=mIj0FU3heQ&sig=mTpYVLYWEq82hXzBwEWcrpofygU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=OPhpUIvTI4nEsgaX9IDABQ&sqi=2&ved=0CDUQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=Conservatives%20oppose%20devolution%20garnett&f=false>

Westminster when the results (the Conservative victory) of the 1987 general elections were released.³⁸ Moreover, Dewar also participated in important political events, which Wales did not have the opportunity to organise in order to develop the devolution issue. For example, Dewar undertook to participate in the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which played an important role in convincing the Labour Party to support the Scottish devolution. Several representative bodies, such as trade unions, the church, and the other political parties gathered in order to compose the plans of the Scottish Parliament.³⁹ Despite the fact that the SNP and the Conservatives did not participate, the Conservatives commenced to support devolution after a while; in other words, this convention and the activity of Dewar were phenomena that affected future politics.

The Scottish National Party went on its own way before 1997, similarly to Plaid Cymru; however, their policies were much more radical and originated from different roots than the Welsh ones. Supposedly, their major issue appears to be their defensive attitude towards the oil fields, which were explored in the 1960s. Despite the fact that Order 1968 states that the United Kingdom North Sea maritime area of latitude 55 degrees north is ruled by Scottish law, the majority of the fields were controlled by England. Therefore, Scotland did not have access to the proceeds of oil industry, and their economy could not be effectively ameliorated. By stressing the slogan “It’s Scotland’s oil” and pursuing successful politics over the increasingly unpopular Conservatives, the SNP secured its place among the major parties even in the era after the 1997 referendum.

In brief, several fortunate political events contributed to the success of the Scottish devolution, and these effects are still maintained today in the picture of initiatives concerning Scotland’s independence.

3.3. Current political issues concerning devolution

The history of devolution does not stop in 1997, when both the Welsh and Scottish referenda on devolution brought positive results. The fulfilment of devolution in these countries is not only jurisdictionally legitimate but also psychologically since “the Scots voted by a two to one majority, . . . and the Welsh vote represented a . . . 30% increase in positive votes

³⁸ McAskill, “Donald Dewar”

³⁹ Ibid.

compared with the [referendum] in 1979.”⁴⁰ However, leading and minority parties still pursue several debates on whether to widen or narrow devolution rights in the examined countries.

3.3.1. Party politics and devolution debates in Scotland after the 1997 referendum

Apparently, politicians concentrated on one major issue after 1997 in Scotland: the road towards independence. Since the country reached a stage so close to its former independent state, and the SNP showed increasing popularity, the idea of complete sovereignty came into the foreground. In other words, debates on devolution issues formed “only” parts of negotiating a wider issue, independence.

The first component of this process was the total “impairment” of the Scottish Conservatives, who did not have much influence on devolution after their defeat in the Scottish elections. This phenomenon has not changed much since then because Tories are still the fourth party in the country. Prime Minister David Cameron blamed his party’s anti-devolution policies for this political crash. “[w]e should have spent more time in government thinking, how do we give legitimate help to those people . . . who want to have a greater expression of self-government.”⁴¹ This means that Scotland lost a party that would possibly withhold the success of devolution and independence. Consequently, Scotland’s chances for sovereignty suddenly rose by a great extent, and by the almost total lack of Conservative presence in Scotland, it is likely that European international relations are going to change in the future.

Another component of this process might be Labour’s loss of trustworthiness despite their initial support by voters, as it can be seen in Figure 1⁴². By the middle of 1998, their popularity fell almost by 20%⁴³ due to the public opinion that *New Labour*⁴⁴ did not work for the interests of the working class and Scotland.⁴⁵ Scottish Labour also weakened because the

⁴⁰ John Osmond, “Wales and the building of a political nation,” *The Guardian*, October 11, 2011, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/oct/11/wales-political-nation-welsh-devolution>

⁴¹ “Tories were wrong on devolution,” BBC News, June 27, 2009, accessed October 4, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/8122065.stm

⁴² Nicola McEwen, “Is Devolution at Risk?: Examining attitudes towards the Scottish Parliament in light of the 2003 Election” *Scottish Affairs* 44, no. 2, 2003, accessed September 23, 2012, http://www.scottishaffairs.org/onlinepub/sa/mcewen_sa44_sum03.html

⁴³ David McCrone, “Opinion Polls in Scotland: July 1997 – June 1998,” *Scottish Affairs*, no. 24, (1998), accessed October 5, 2012, http://www.scottishaffairs.org/onlinepub/sa/mccrone_1997-98polls.html

⁴⁴ New Labour was Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair’s (1997-2005) new concept of his party’s politics.

⁴⁵ Lindsay Paterson, “Scottish Democracy and Scottish Utopias: The First Year of the Scottish Parliament,” *Scottish Affairs*, No. 33, (2000), accessed October 5, 2012, http://www.scottishaffairs.org/onlinepub/sa/paterson_sa33_aut00.html

formerly mentioned Donald Dewar, the biggest Labour supporter of devolution died in illness. When he became Secretary of State for Scotland, he stated that “I believe that . . . the Scottish identity does indeed demand Scottish self-government. Devolution is in my mind the ideal solution. . . .”⁴⁶ This means that Scottish Labour was originally absolutely supportive towards the aims of devolution, but not independence since it is too venturesome for the country. However, the successor, Henry McLeish did not prove himself to be the appropriate person for facilitating further strengthening of rights given by devolution.

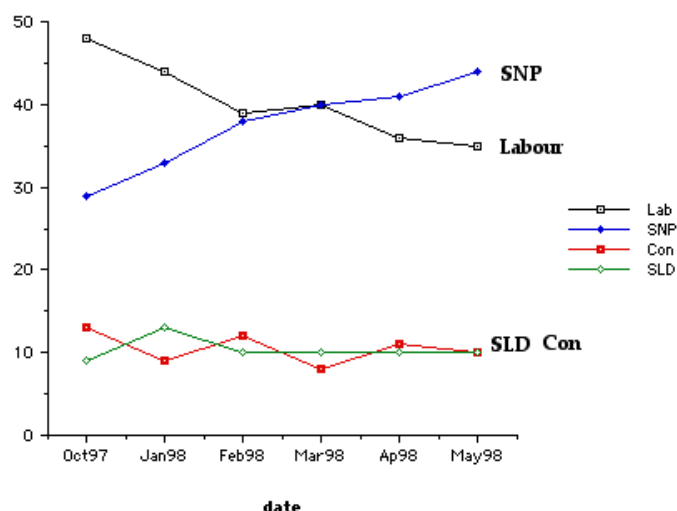


Figure 1: The change of voting intention for Scottish Parliament

The Labour Party was not able to separate Scotland from England either. Firstly, problematic issues traditionally managed in accordance with the rules of the English administration could not be solved in the period governed by Labour. For instance, Scotland and England could not come to an agreement over finance or policy.⁴⁷ Secondly, there does not appear to be any evidence that major parties (including New Labour) applied those important privileges that Scotland gained after the referendum. This includes the ignorance of Scotland’s right to increase the rate of income tax.⁴⁸ This was a major failure since this privilege was regarded as the most significant result of the devolution referendum. In short, Scottish parties (except for the SNP) offended locals by ignoring one of their major fundamental rights.

⁴⁶ “Devolution will enhance the state of the union - Donald Dewar tells American audience,” accessed October 4, 2012, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/1997/11/fe17d1ff-c962-4b7e-a5d8-074b2b5051bb>

⁴⁷ Kernohan, “The still-United Kingdom,” 73.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 75.

All these suggest that the emergence of the SNP was inevitable. As it can be seen in Figure 2,⁴⁹ by 2002, almost 60% of Scottish people favoured the idea of independence, similarly to the SNP, and only about 15% of the population insisted upon sustaining the Scottish Parliament. The outcome of this political wobbliness was SNP's groundbreaking success in the 2007 and 2011 Scottish general elections. This kind of achievement of a nationalist minority party is unprecedented in the United Kingdom, including Wales.

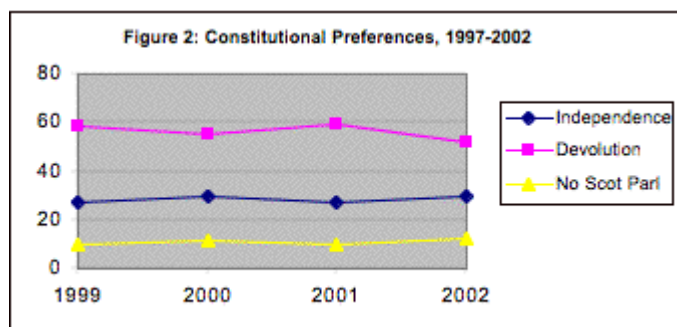


Figure 2: Constitutional preferences in Scotland between 1997 and 2002

Additionally, this is the point from which Scotland commences to distance itself from Wales, which is not likely to follow the Scottish example. On the other hand, the current leader of Plaid Cymru, Leanne Wood stated that Scottish independence would force Wales to reconsider its position in the United Kingdom and think about its own independence since by the succession of Scotland, the union could not work as it had worked before.⁵⁰

Even so, Scotland might have the possibility to build upon its achievements of devolution and develop them into a sovereign system. However, this procedure would not appear to succeed without the application of devolution issues because long standing regulations usually form solid foundation for a major change. Among others, maintenance of good relationships with the London government proved to be essential even after the victory of the SNP because the Scottish Parliament needed the permission of the UK government in order to initiate a referendum.⁵¹ Furthermore, Scotland might not be able to control its oil policies⁵² without the influence of the Westminster; it is likely that this would cause new

⁴⁹ McEwen, "Is Devolution at Risk?: Examining attitudes towards the Scottish Parliament in light of the 2003 Election,"

⁵⁰ Andrew Sparrow, "Plaid Cymru leader: we can only prosper if we do things for ourselves," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/sep/12/plaid-cymru-leader-wales-prosper>

⁵¹ This was necessary because "the constitution is a reserved responsibility for Westminster", Ian McWhirter, "Independent Scotland: A bet each way?" *Public Policy Research*, 18, no. 2, (2011): 97

⁵² Westminster currently controls issues connected to oil (and electricity, coal, and gas) in Scotland since these are so-called "reserved matters" Ros Taylor, "What powers will the Scottish parliament have?" *The Guardian*, April 13, 1999, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/1999/apr/13/scotlanddevolution.devolution2?INTCMP=SRCH>

financial hardships for Scotland, which a newly born country is usually not prepared for. Apart from the fact that the water level of the North Sea is gradually decreasing and Scotland will not be able to depend on its oil resources, the Scottish must also struggle for improving the state of finance and the bank sector.⁵³ For instance, “[i]n 2008, the British government bailed out Scotland’s two biggest banks . . . which was acquired by Lloyds Banking Group. These would probably be broken up as part of an independence settlement.”⁵⁴ This is a type of state intervention or rather assistance that Wales stands in need for as well. In fact, the decline in Welsh economy gives a handle for every kind of support since the rate of unemployment is higher in Wales than in Scotland because the public sector is still full,⁵⁵ as it was mentioned in 3.1.1.

Taken everything into account, the aims of the leading party in Scotland are ambiguous. On the average, their economic accomplishments are more than outstanding

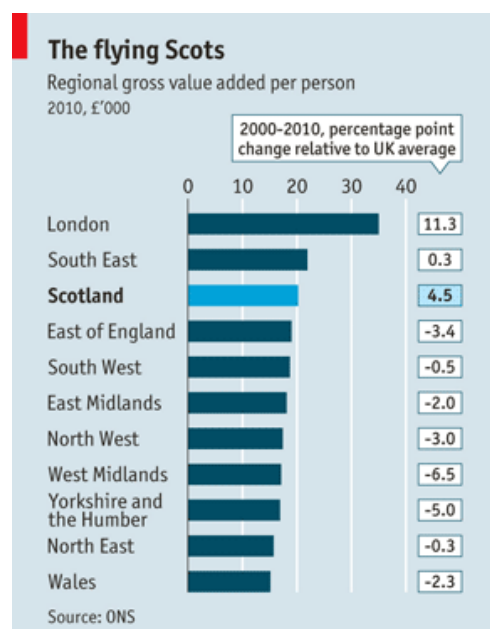


Figure 3: Scotland’s third place according to regional gross value

within the United Kingdom; unequivocally, their results connected to the regional gross value enabled them to secure their place among the most powerful economical forces in the UK, as it can be seen in Figure 3⁵⁶. (In the same figure, Wales occupies the very last place, though several regions were left out from the chart.) At the same time, it is not at all obvious that Scotland and mainly the SNP should give up security provided by devolution in order to get into a financially risky situation instead.

3.3.2. Party politics and devolution debates in Wales after the 1997 referendum

Though Welsh post-referendum political events resemble those of Scotland from several aspects, the main focus in Wales is still on developing and widening its rights provided by the devolution process. These purposes do not appear to be preposterous at all due to the fact that the National Assembly for Wales is constructing its political competence by small and small.

⁵³ “The economics of home rule: The Scottish play”

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Sparrow, “Plaid Cymru leader: we can only prosper if we do things for ourselves”

⁵⁶ “The economics of home rule: The Scottish play,” *The Economist*, April 14, 2012, last modified October 16, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21552572>

Basically, it appears that Wales tends to pursue similar policies to the ones that Scotland does in some fields of politics; however, these issues are about to increase the chances of Wales of gaining stronger autonomy. By contrast, for example, the representatives of Welsh party politics do not welcome Conservatives either despite the fact that the Tories tend to profit a lot from the list vote system⁵⁷ and gain a considerable amount of votes. An event in 2007 is a perfect example of how the Conservatives were almost excluded from the political life. Then, the Conservative Party would not have been greeted well even in a hypothetical *rainbow coalition*⁵⁸ with the Liberal Democrats and the SNP because these parties pursue thoroughly different politics and devolution ideologies.⁵⁹ As a result, pro-devolutionists do not have to count with the major opponent of widening devolution either. This is especially reassuring if a 2008 Conservative review on the Welsh devolution is concerned.⁶⁰ Though the review claims that Conservatives would like the Welsh devolution to be prosperous, some of its statements give evidence of the contrary. For example, it is suggested that a possible Conservative government must inspect the efficiency of devolution in the future, and they would also oppose a referendum that might deal with the expansion of Welsh devolution rights.

Apparently, this opinion incensed those parties that favour devolution at least to a certain extent, and their reactions illustrate that devolution disposes of more supporters in Wales than opponents. Liberal Democrats, for example, regarded the Tory review as nonsense or “fudge”,⁶¹ and other major parties, such as Plaid Cymru agreed with the Liberals’ when they noted that Tories pursue “inherently anti-devolution”⁶² policies. Thus, it appears that the Liberals are more determining in Wales than in Scotland since the party is able to give voice to its opinions in quite an effective way, while Scottish Liberals are not able to represent themselves to that extent. The reason for this might be the 2003 coalition with the Labour Party, when Liberals gathered new voters due to this political partnership. This event proved itself to be a stepping stone for the party. The effect of this turning point can be sensed even today, and it is especially beneficial if the development of devolution policies is concerned. It can be stated, for example, that devolution benefits a lot from occasional Liberal-Labour cooperation, which is not the case in Scotland; on the contrary, Scottish devolution politics are controlled by the SNP, but sometimes mutually accepted decisions prove themselves to be

⁵⁷ Rosanne Palmer, “Coalition and Minority Government in Wales: Lessons for the United Kingdom?” *The Political Quarterly* 82, no. 2, (2011): 270.

⁵⁸ Rainbow coalition is a type of coalition that includes parties with completely different political ideas.

⁵⁹ Palmer, “Coalition and Minority Government in Wales: Lessons for the United Kingdom?” 274.

⁶⁰ Adrian Browne, “Tory study urges devolution probe” *BBC News*, November 5, 2008, accessed October 2, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/wales_politics/7710828.stm.

more effective. In 2011, the leading Welsh party, Labour managed to expand one of its major devolution powers, education with the votes of the Liberals. The two parties achieved to pass the new budget plan, which is about to help the poorest students within schools.⁶³

Thus, it is not the national party which is getting stronger in Wales but the Liberal Democrats, which lost the least number of voters in the 2011 devolved elections within the three countries according to the data of Table 4⁶⁴. However, the extent of this loss was significant in Scotland (8.2%) but not of great consequence in Wales compared to Scotland (only 4.2%). Most of the minority parties managed to increase the number of their voters in Scotland along with the SNP. This did not happen in Wales; on the contrary, the Labour Party managed to achieve a 10,1% growth, which shows that while minority parties are getting stronger in Scotland, Labour is still able to strengthen its foundations in Wales.

Table 1: Change in party support, 2007 to 2011			
	England	Scotland	Wales
Conservative	-1.5	-2.7	+2.6
Labour	+12.3	-0.5	+10.1
Liberal Democrats	-9.1	-8.2	-4.2
SNP/PC	–	+12.5	-3.1
Greens	+0.3	+0.3	0.0
UKIP	+1.1	+0.5	+0.7
BNP	-7.1	-0.4	-1.9

England: Figures for Con, Lab and Lib Dem are mean change in vote share in wards fought by all three parties in 2007 and 2011. Figures for Greens, UKIP and BNP are mean change in vote share in wards fought by that party in 2007 and 2011.

Scotland and Wales: Voters had two votes, one for a single constituency representative and one for a party list. Figures for Con, Lab, Lib Dem and the nationalist parties are change in overall share of constituency vote since 2007. Figures for Greens, UKIP and BNP are change in overall share of the list vote since 2007.

Source: BBC. Figures for England based on results in a sample of 921 wards located in 50 local authorities.

Table 4: Change in party supports between 2007 and 2011

Until this point, the above mentioned phenomena (the weakening of the Conservatives and the fruitful pro-devolution cooperation of the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party) all contributed to the success of the Welsh devolution. However, one should not forget to observe the current achievements and relations to the other parties of the Welsh national party, Plaid Cymru. According to Table 4, Plaid started to lose voters (3.1%), whereas the Scottish National Party has every right to pride itself on its growing popularity (an extra 12.5%

⁶¹ Browne, "Tory study urges devolution probe"

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Steven Morris, "Labour-led Welsh government passes first budget with Lib-Dem support," *The Guardian*, December 6, 2011, accessed October 2, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/dec/06/welsh-budget-labour-liberal-democrats>

⁶⁴ John Curtice, "Lessons from the 2011 local and devolved elections," *Public Policy Research* 18, no. 2, (2011): 90.

thought the SNP deserved the support of voters). These results reflect that there are major differences between these nationalist parties, and these distinctions are in parallel with the countries' relations to devolution issues. Leanne Wood, the leader of Plaid Cymru emphasised, for instance, that "[w]hat's been successful in Scotland was extending a very good settlement that they had to start with. We started from a very different position in Wales."⁶⁵ In other words, Scottish people were traditionally and historically more supportive towards devolution, but Welsh nationalism is not based on a strong sense of identity. Moreover, Wales also has to deal with the heavily declining economy, which precedes the issue of independence.

On the other hand, a unique phenomenon in Wales further develops chances of strong devolution powers. In detail, major Welsh parties that favour integrity within the United Kingdom tend to agree with many of Plaid's current proposals, such as securing the state of the Welsh language,⁶⁶ which is one of the prior yet quite symbolic claims of the national party. Welsh Labour government also decided to support devolution issues that work completely differently in England; for example, Westminster decisions concerning the National Health Service will not have any effect on the Welsh National Health Service, and what is more, the government promised to "meet the cost of the increase for any student who lives in Wales" after Westminster "raised tuition fees to £9,000".⁶⁷ Agreement between the parties also appeared to be solid concerning the issues of the successful 2011 referendum, in which Welsh inhabitants came to the decision that the National Assembly for Wales should expand its rights for direct law-making in fields like jurisdiction or bureaucracy.⁶⁸ Though these new rights do not bring major change to Welsh political life due to the fact that the most important resolutions are still decided about in Westminster, but the strategy to gain more power for the Assembly step by step might be beneficial in the future.

In fact, the mutually accepted aims of the referendum might make one wonder how it is possible that Plaid leaders do not consider suggesting independence for Wales especially that Scotland is organising a referendum on this topic. Though Welsh nationalists are certain of the fact that "[i]n a world that is becoming more Coca-Cola . . ., [Welsh] people are going to want to find ways that mark their identity out as a bit different", they still understand that

⁶⁵ Sparrow, "Plaid Cymru leader: we can only prosper if we do things for ourselves"

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ John Harris, "Could Wales leave the United Kingdom?" *The Guardian*, February 1, 2012, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/feb/01/could-wales-leave-united-kingdom>

⁶⁸ Abby O'Reilly, "Wales must wake up to this referendum," February 7, 2011, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/07/wales-referendum-welsh-assembly?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>

regulating economy has priority over independence.⁶⁹ Furthermore, reaching independence is the point that cannot be fully compared to the possible succession of Scotland due to several reasons. Most importantly, as it has already been highlighted, Wales does not have any pattern of how separate governance works because of its historical features. As a result, Welsh livelihood is strongly attached to England; in fact, the biggest area of the country is mostly English-speaking, so it is not surprising that usually about 10% of the population favours independence.⁷⁰ Therefore, the question emerges whether Plaid will be strong enough to find a path towards independence in the future similarly to the SNP, or another party will work on this issue, if they regard this question as important at all.

The Labour Party intends to be the one who defines Wales's way if not towards full-scale independence, but expanded devolution rights. This is supported by the 2011 election results, which shows that Welsh Labour is a great deal stronger than its Scottish partner since they managed to form a *single party government* with Carwyn Jones as the First Minister for Wales. Jones is expected to follow the considerably pro-devolution path of his party if one claims that it was under Labour's previous administration that they accepted the Government of Wales Act in 2006. This act was the stepping stone towards the 2011 referendum, and it widened the authority of the Assembly by integrating certain issues to its agenda, like passing legislation on local government, health, or education.⁷¹ It appears that the party plans to pursue the same type of politics; as a matter of fact, they do not have another opportunity because the inhabitants would not be content with a different kind of political strategy, especially if they compare their status to the Scottish one. They do not conceal that they regard similar issues as important as Plaid Cymru. For instance, Owen Smith, the newly elected Shadow Welsh Secretary from the Labour party highlighted that "the Labour government in Wales was championing progressive policies designed to create more jobs and business and protect the health service."⁷² In short, it is not at all impossible that a major unionist party will work with the idea of developing devolution, but it is only possible if there is at least a minimal extent of cooperation with the national party.

⁶⁹ Sparrow, "Plaid Cymru leader: we can only prosper if we do things for ourselves"

⁷⁰ Harris, "Could Wales leave the United Kingdom?"

⁷¹ Paul Owen, "What powers does the Welsh assembly have?" July 16, 2007, accessed October 2, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2007/jul/16/wales.devolution>

⁷² Steven Morris, "Labour must show Cardiff credentials, says incoming Welsh shadow secretary," May 16, 2012, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/may/16/labour-shadow-welsh-secretary>

3.4. Party politics and the European Union

One might be clear about the fact that both Scotland and Wales have the potential for sovereignty or at least for some kind of expanded authority in the case of Wales due to the developed status of their devolution processes. This suggests that these countries show growing interest in their relationship with the *European Union* since both of them are parts of the EU because the 1707 Treaties of Union integrated them within the United Kingdom. Consequently, it is not only England who communicates with EU representatives but also the EU officials of Wales and Scotland. However, the differences between the observed countries reveal themselves in this field of politics as well; Scotland pursue EU-politics actively, sometimes even without including England's opinion, while Wales is not able to vindicate its rights.

On the other hand, one might ask the question whether these countries deposit of rights within the EU at all since they are not qualified as sovereign countries. According to the opinions of most of the EU experts, Scotland would have the right to treat itself as a *full member* in case they manage to reach secession from the United Kingdom. The Former Director General of the European Commission argues that “[i]f Scotland is willing and able to meet the demands and requirements of Community membership, then the EU ought to be flexible enough to resolve any institutional matters . . .”⁷³ According to this argument, Wales would be treated in the same way if it happened to be independent in the future; however, it is apparent that Wales has not approached this kind of status to the extent Scotland has, but nothing appears to be impossible with a strengthening Assembly.

3.4.1. Scotland and the European Union

The party which deals with the EU issue the most in Scotland is the SNP. Its agenda includes a wide range of radical plans, and among these plans one might find the one called “Independence in Europe”, which appears to be the “European Unionised” version of their main aim, reaching independence. In other words, the national party believes they have every right to be full EU members as an independent state,⁷⁴ and they even insist upon this idea if the UK government does not agree with it. It does not seem to discourage the party either that according to recent data, their economic state is not appropriate for being a member of the

⁷³ Jo E. Murkens, *Scotland's Place in Europe: The Constitution Unit* (London: University College London, 2001): 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

European Union. The recent decision of Alex Salmond demonstrates this phenomenon because he declared the SNP did not want to join the Euro zone anymore.⁷⁵ As a result, the Scottish government would have only one chance to gain money if they joined the EU: application to the UK government for financial help. However, Westminster representatives have always rejected the idea of a rebate; for example, the general viewpoint of Labour was that the party the party would "not for one moment believe that other countries of the European Union would allow [an independent] Scotland to retain the budget rebate from which taxpayers in Scotland benefit".⁷⁶ Thus, Scotland was not able to get a solution for its fiscal problems from the United Kingdom.

It is also highly probable that the European Union would not welcome a new member which carries out debates with its neighbour that determines its economical life. This is especially true if one points out that The Royal Bank of Scotland is 83% owned by the taxpayers of Great Britain.⁷⁷ Thus, if Scotland got the full supervision of the bank in case of independence, it would have to face a serious deficit since Westminster would not assist in arranging the issues of the RBS. Consequently, a big number of issues that the Scottish population benefits from would not get enough money, such as free education or elderly care. These are elements that strongly impacts the future independence of Scotland, and these effects weaken the aims of the SNP as well.

Nevertheless, certain segments of Westminster's EU politics make it possible to get a handle on how the will of Scottish parties, especially the currently leading SNP's, are ignored in London. One might point out that if the opinion of a country's government is not taken into account, that government (and country) is likely to lose its authority in that region or even continent. It is to be feared that this will be the case in Scotland if PM Cameron does not involve Scottish (and Welsh) MPs in his work connected to the European Union, especially if one emphasises that several devolution issues are dealt with within the EU.⁷⁸ A good example might be Cameron's 2011 decision to take advantage of the UK's right for veto and say no for the changes of certain treaties that might assist in securing the Euro; however, "[the UK member states' first ministers] remain deeply concerned that the UK government did so without

⁷⁵ "The economics of home rule: The Scottish play"

⁷⁶ Murkens, *Scotland's Place in Europe: The Constitution Unit*, 27.

⁷⁷ "Royal Bank of Scotland: keep it public," The Guardian, March 28, 2012, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/28/royal-bank-scotland-public-ownership-editorial?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁷⁸ Among these issues one might find transport, fisheries, justice, agriculture, or health, for example. Murkens, *Scotland's Place in Europe: The Constitution Unit*

consulting the devolved administrations”.⁷⁹ From Cameron’s point of view, Westminster’s decisions are beneficial for the member countries. Consequently, both Scotland and Wales must reconsider its inner politics in order to be more successful concerning the European Union.

3.4.2. Wales and the European Union

As it could already be seen, the connection of Wales to the EU is ambiguous since it might be left out from the most important UK decisions with regard to economical issues. On the other hand, several Welsh political parties emphasise that the country traditionally develops its own point of view on the Welsh EU membership,⁸⁰ similarly to the ideas of the SNP. This attitude might have occurred due to the changeable sense of Welsh identity; it appears that the country aims to provide itself with issues that might determine them as an authoritative power within the UK. This is further proven by the fact that the Welsh are still represented in the EU by the London government.⁸¹ One finds only a small number of British representatives in the EU institutions that come from Wales. For example, the UK representative in the European Commission, Lady Ashton comes from an English family. Furthermore, one might only find four Welsh MEPs in the European Parliament; in contrast, Scotland could send six MEPs⁸² to the Parliament.⁸³

Wales has been traditionally underrepresented in the European Union, but the EU representatives sometimes appear to reach more serious results concerning Welsh interests than those working within the country. For example, according to the Labour MEP Derek Vaughan’s⁸⁴ online diary, he personally meets several EU-related committees in a week, and as a result, he is able to coordinate issues more swiftly and accurately. In the diary, he mentioned many important guests and committees he met, such as the Socialist and Democrat group budget secretariat, European External Action Service, or the Committee of the Regions, which is proven to work the most efficiently if “the two members . . . are representatives of a

⁷⁹ “Scottish and Welsh ministers call for Cameron meeting over EU veto”, *The Guardian*, December 21, 2011, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/dec/21/salmond-jones-cameron-eu-veto>

⁸⁰ Andrew Thompson, “Wales in Europe,” in *Wales today*, ed. by David Dunkerley et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999): 305.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁸² MEP stands for Member of the European Parliament.

⁸³ “European Parliament MEPs,” accessed October 9, 2012, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/performsearch.html>

⁸⁴ Derek Vaughan, “Seven days – a week in the life of Derek Vaughan,” *Public Service Europe*, September 17, 2012, accessed October 8, 2012, <http://www.publicserviceeurope.com/article/2462/seven-days-a-week-in-the-life-of-derek-vaughan>

devolved government rather than nominated representatives of local government.”⁸⁵ Moreover, politicians and civilians also have the opportunity to work for the country in institutions like the Wales European Centre or so-called Eurogroups; however, every UK-led Eurogroup is located in England instead of Scotland or Wales, such as the European Medicines Agency or the European Police College.

It is apparent that Wales intends to be stronger in the EU level not only because of the above mentioned institutions but also because of the more positive attitude of the Welsh parties. Firstly, the Labour Party realised that because of the Conservative hegemony and anti-EU attitude until 1997, Wales was not fully represented in Europe; therefore, the country could not work on its full potential. This might have been one of the reasons for their proposal for an Assembly,⁸⁶ which would develop this field of Welsh policies as well. Moreover, the 1997 campaign for the Assembly included arguments that also encouraged the future Assembly to enhance Wales’s power in the EU; for instance, they emphasised the slogan “giving Wales more voice”.⁸⁷ The campaign proved itself to be successful since from that point of time, Wales is receiving increasing amounts of money from the European Union in order to improve its economic life. With this fiscal assistance, Wales managed to revitalise its disused industrial areas and struggling agriculture,⁸⁸ which meant that more people commenced working again. This may have been the turning point for Plaid Cymru; they started to support autonomy and “giving Wales more voice” in the EU more since the party’s major aim is that there (still) should be more jobs available in the country. However, Plaid is still hesitant about the future and the status of an independent Wales within the EU, which is not surprising if one compare Plaid’s strength as a national party to the SNP’s. Leanne Wood mentioned, for example, that her party cannot decide about the fate of the euro if a hypothetical Wales independence is concerned: “I know they have to come down with a view on that in Scotland. We are not in the same place. We don’t know where the euro is going . . .”⁸⁹ In short, though the parties are open to establish still closer links with the European Union, the authority of the London government is still stronger in Wales. It is the Assembly that should further develop economic relations with the EU to show that their mutual cooperation by excluding England can be fruitful. In this way, the country might get closer to a referendum on independence.

⁸⁵ Thompson “Wales in Europe,” 308.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 311.

⁸⁷ Kevin Williams, “No Dreads, only Some Doubts: The Press and the Referendum Campaign,” in *The road to the National Assembly for Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press): 109.

⁸⁸ Thompson, “Wales in Europe,” 311.

⁸⁹ Sparrow, “Plaid Cymru leader: we can only prosper if we do things for ourselves”

5. Quangoland

5.1. Definition of *quangos* and quango-related problems

Throughout the research, it has been regularly highlighted that both Scotland and Wales commence new politics; the SNP is advocating independence more intensively, and the Assembly is becoming more domineering, and it should further develop its EU relations. However, the countries do not have the opportunity for such major changes if they do not minimise the power of institutions that might distract attention and energy from the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales.

The mentioned institutions are those *quangos* that devolved administrations had to share power with, and therefore they “have largely grown as intermediary bodies between central government departments and local government”.⁹⁰ These institutions also include non-departmental and quasi-autonomous public bodies. As it can be seen, the status of these bodies is more than ambiguous; it is even difficult to decide which body belongs into the category “quango” or “government-related institution”. Consequently, “there is no theoretical framework that dictates which functions should be under the direct control of politicians or quangos.”⁹¹

In reality, it must be a difficult task to develop the devolution process if the existence of these institutions consumes the attraction of both the devolved governments and the Westminster. This phenomenon is broadly supported by the fact that while the Conservatives tried to minimise the number of quangos, the money these bodies needed grew to a significantly high extent.⁹² Moreover, the Conservatives appeared to use these intermediary bodies to solidify their status within Wales because they sent (mainly male) Conservative representatives in the quangos. As a result, London, Wales, and Scotland needs devolution as a device to pursue more democratic politics in connection with reducing the number of quangos and employing people (and more women) from other parties as well.

⁹⁰ Derek Birrell, “Devolution and quangos in the United Kingdom: the implementation of principles and policies for rationalisation and democratisation,” *Policy Studies* 29, no. 1, (2008):36.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁹² J. Barry Jones, “Changes to the government of Wales 1979-1997,” in *The Road to the National Assembly for Wales*, ed. by J. Barry Jones et al., (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000): 20.

5.2. Quangos in Wales and Scotland

The quango issue does not differ significantly in the two countries since the nature of quango problem derives from the same stem. Therefore, the main aims are also the same in Scotland and Wales.

Firstly, it is the interest of both countries that important issues like health and education should be decided about in centralised, well-operating institutions and not in quangos, which tend to exist “in the semi secret-world of the executive branch of government.”⁹³ In other words, devolved governmental departments, where issues are debated seriously, are likely to treat significant issues more effectively than quangos, whose operating depends on the different opinions of its members.

Most importantly, however, the democratic operating of the countries cannot be fully carried out because of the self-autonomous bodies. One solution for this might be transporting the main functions to the Welsh and Scottish governments⁹⁴ because there is no need to run two institutions with the same working aims; what is more, government institutions must exist because without them, devolution and future independence cannot be supported. In the case of Scotland, this had happened to two quangos until 2008, while Wales was more effective from this respect according to the data of Table 5,⁹⁵ the functions of seven quangos were transferred to the devolved government, such as the National Training and Education Council or the Welsh Development Agency. As it can be seen, the functions of quangos connected to the most important issues like education or national development were transferred to the Assembly, so Plaid Cymru must have been content with this solution. However, Wales was not successful in connection with the *abolition* of quangos (only one has been eliminated so far, while eight Scottish quangos disappeared). The same applies to the *amalgamation* process, in which the number of certain quangos is reduced, and a smaller number of quangos are responsible for the duties of the others. According to the data of Table 5, Wales did not succeed in amalgamating either, at least compared to Scotland, which could amalgamate 35 quangos. Despite all these, however, amalgamation is still the most effective way of dealing with the problem of quangos.

⁹³ Jones, “Changes to the government of Wales 1979-1997,” 21.

⁹⁴ Birrell, “Devolution and quangos in the United Kingdom: the implementation of principles and policies for rationalisation and democratisation,” 38.

⁹⁵ Birrell, “Devolution and quangos in the United Kingdom: the implementation of principles and policies for rationalisation and democratisation,” 40.

	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Abolition	8	1	3
Declassification	6	–	2
Amalgamation	35	12	37
Transfer to devolved government	2	7	5
Transfer to local government	–	–	3
Division of functions	–	3	7

Table 5: Proposals to rationalise new quangos

Taken everything into account, the quango issue is not as successful as it should be, but the countries commenced a good path towards entire democracy and full-scale devolution as well.

6. Final conclusions

Devolution proved itself to be a unique phenomenon in the United Kingdom and almost within the world as well; moreover, it is apparently a gradually changing process since the member states of the United Kingdom aim to change it into independence or a higher level of devolution. Scotland is in constant political struggle for reaching full-scale autonomy, and its pro-independence policies motivate Wales from this respect. Therefore, it was important to observe how these countries relate to each other from a political point of view, and how their status is likely to change in the future. It became apparent that Scotland appears to be stronger concerning most devolution-related issues, but Wales is not behindhand either due to the successful operating of the National Assembly.

Since these territories are integrated within the United Kingdom, it is difficult to decide the status of these sub entities of the United Kingdom. In the case of Scotland, the term country applies to the area less ambiguously than in the case of Wales since Scotland possesses powers that provide it with rights peculiar to sovereign countries. These powers include rights it could preserve from the past and the opportunity to form a national parliament, while Wales can only be regulated by the National Assembly. However, Wales possesses its own government, and an organised group of institutions assist in its effective operating. According to these phenomena, both areas can be treated as countries because they have more rights than oppressed territories. This is the basic foundation of working for a possible independence or wider devolution.

The foundations of political development are given. In the next stage, the former and present deeds of the major Welsh and Scottish parties contribute to the development. Before the 1997 referenda, the changing attitudes of the Conservative and the Labour Party determined the path towards the referenda. The Tory opposition towards devolution created unbearable social effects in Wales, which resulted in the other parties increasing support towards the referendum. It was especially the Labour party that gained popularity because it could adapt to the needs of the country. Scotland faced similar events since Conservatives lost their popularity there as well, and a Labour politician, Donald Dewar was the major supporter of the idea of devolution in Scotland. However, the SNP also joined the political elite in this country, so instead of the Welsh “one-party model”, the Scottish used a “two-party model”. This might be a reason among others why they could approach independence to a great extent.

After 1997, the nature of the two countries’ paths separated because in Scotland, pro-independence politics and the national party have become dominant, the Conservatives have almost left political life, and the Labour did not prove itself to be effective concerning devolution. Meanwhile, a more concrete agreement exists among Welsh parties. The Conservatives are becoming less significant similarly to Scotland, but Labour, in coalition with the Liberals, made significant headway on the road to devolution. Moreover, these parties within the Assembly agree with many of the national party’s propositions, which makes Wales a unique member of the UK. All these might result in widening devolution in the future, but the country is apparently not ready for independence because of identity and economical reasons, and it is not clear either if Scotland should head towards complete autonomy due to its similar economic hardships. It might be a solution that the two countries approach similar aims: similarly liberal rights guaranteed by devolution.

Internal party politics appear to guarantee the success of future devolution aims, which are also represented on the European Union level. It appears that Scotland intends to decide about its issues without the interference of the Westminster. However, since its main aim is reaching independence, Scotland cannot fully separate itself from England, who decides about its referendum. It is also true that according to the international law, Scotland could be a full member of the EU in case of its independence, which is strongly objected by Westminster. Similar debates concerning Wales do not occur, and the country is considerably ignored when EU decisions are made. All these show that its status is far from full sovereignty. At the same time, it is proven that since the existence of the Assembly, economic and employment statistics are more positive because the Assembly formed profitable connections with the EU.

It appears that both countries still have to strengthen their connections with both the EU and the UK government to reach their final aims.

The final stage of the devolution issue is connected to intermediary institutions called quangos, which should be weakened in order to gain more rights from Westminster. These bodies consume the attraction and money from the issues of devolved governments, so Wales and Scotland should uphold their proceeding of abolishing, amalgamating, and rationalising quangos to reach democracy and autonomous treatment of important local issues.

In conclusion, the difference between Scottish and Welsh devolution exemplifies two different models of devolution, which date back to earlier centuries. However, if the leading political parties in these countries continue to cooperate, then neither the breakup, nor the inorganic fragmentation of UK may be avoided.

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