

# *Scotland and Separatism: Reverberations of the Scottish Independence Referendum on Separatist Politics*

A Report by Dr Kieran McConaghy



### *About the author*

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## Scotland and Separatism: Reverberations of the Scottish Independence Referendum on Separatist Politics

On 18 September 2014, the Scottish electorate voted in a referendum on independence. While the result was decisive, indicating a preference for Scotland to remain within the Union, that the Independence campaign had gained so much support was a shock to many unionist politicians. Furthermore, the issue is far from solved, and the impact of the Scottish referendum and the strength of nationalist sentiment in Scotland will have important political and social effects not only in Scotland, but across the United Kingdom.

This report is intended to address two issues. Firstly, it will compare and contrast the development and fortunes of nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It will reflect on their similarities and differences, on the effect that the Scottish independence campaign and referendum has had on separatist politics in Wales and Northern Ireland, and on the UK as a whole.

Secondly, it looks to Catalonia, where a consultative and non-binding poll on independence from Spain was held just two months after Scotland's referendum. Again, the nationalist movements in Catalonia and Scotland will be examined comparatively, and I will suggest common features which could help to account for the growing popularity of nationalism in some stateless nations. Before proceeding, I wish to set out some disclaimers.

As I write, relatively little time has passed since the Scottish referendum. Thus, it is difficult to judge what the long-term and lasting effect of the vote to remain in the Union, as well as a strengthened SNP, buoyed by a veritable flood of new members is likely to be. In the May 2015 General Election, the SNP took 56 of the available 59 seats in Scotland, throwing the differing political appetites north and south of the border into sharp relief. Whether this transforms into a long-term characteristic of politics in Scotland remains to be seen, and I make no predictive claims regarding potential constitutional or political futures for United Kingdom or the nations which compose it. Similarly, while Scotland and the United Kingdom would doubtless look very different had the referendum result been a 'Yes' for independence, making counter-factual arguments and expounding upon what might have been is unlikely to advance our knowledge or understanding of non-state nationalist movements, and so they will be avoided.

### *The Scottish Referendum*

On 18 September 2014, the Scottish electorate voted in a referendum on Scottish independence. The question was answered decisively, (though perhaps not resoundingly) in the negative with 55.3 per cent of the voted being cast as NO and 44.7 per cent voting YES in response to the question 'Should Scotland be an independent country?' The referendum saw an unprecedented 84.59 per cent of the eligible electorate turn out to vote, touted as a 'triumph of democracy'.<sup>1</sup> The turnout is particularly impressive when compared with the turnout of the Scottish Parliamentary Election in 2011 (50.4 per cent) and the Scottish turnout in the UK General Election of 2011 (63.8 per cent).

Despite the vote against Scotland becoming an independent country, it is clear that there will be no return to the status quo in UK politics following the vote. The leaders of the three largest political parties in the UK, Labour, The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats signed a pledge, published on the front page of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/19/scottish-referendum-david-cameron-devolution-revolution> accessed 4/11/2014

Scotland's *Daily Record* newspaper just two days before referendum day promising an extensive devolution of further powers to Scotland in the event of a NO vote.<sup>2</sup>

The Scottish National Party has complained about the manner in which the debate on the further devolution of powers has been conducted. They have highlighted that despite the unequivocal promises of Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives, prior to the referendum, that the debate is not being taken seriously enough by the London based political parties.<sup>3</sup> Meagre turnouts in the House of Commons for the debates and a railroading of the debate towards a conversation on 'English votes for English laws', seen as a way for the Conservative Party to answer their critics from UKIP have been highlighted as evidence by SNP leader and Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond that the Scottish public had been duped into voting NO with empty promises.<sup>4</sup>

While the YES campaign might have been defeated at the polls, the political parties behind the campaign were eager to capitalise on what had been a massive surge in support for independence. In July 1998, an ICM opinion poll highlighted that 56 per cent of Scottish people would vote for an independent Scotland.<sup>5</sup> However, this represented the high point of nationalist sentiment in Scotland, coming between the referendum on devolution to Scotland in September 1997 and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in May 1999. Upon the signing of the Edinburgh Agreement between the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron and the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond on 15 October 2012, which set up the independence referendum for September 2014, a YouGov poll put a YES vote at 29 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the period of the referendum campaign, from October 2012 to September 2014 marked a surge of support for independence.

The General Election results of May 2015, which saw the SNP claim a remarkable victory, claiming 56 seats, all but three of the 59 contested in Scotland. In many cases, the SNP were able to overturn Labour majorities of several thousand. While the resolutely unionist Conservative Party have formed the government, this time without their former coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats, the sheer size of the SNP in Westminster means that Scotland's relationship to the rest of the UK is likely to remain a hot topic for the duration of the parliament. The Conservative government and indeed the other unionist parties will have a difficult time in attempting to restore the faith of the Scottish electorate in their abilities and in the future of a Scotland within the UK.

Beyond the obvious effect that the referendum has had on shaping the political landscape and debate in Scotland, there will be, and has already been repercussions in other parts of the United Kingdom and indeed across Europe. During the referendum campaign, separatist movements around Western Europe announced their solidarity with the Scottish independence movement, and state elites across Europe warned of the impact that a Yes vote would have on Scotland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

Scottish nationalism, as a movement which in contemporary times has been civic in its outlook and which has been both peaceful and democratic, seeking to achieve independence through the existing constitutional and legal order and coming close in 2014 stands as an example to other movements who seek to either

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron-ed-miliband-nick-4265992> accessed 5/11/2014

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.snp.org/media-centre/news/2014/oct/westminster-leaders-missing-devolution-debate> accessed 5/11/2014

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-29296282> accessed 5/11/14

<sup>5</sup> G. Hassan and P. Lynch, *The Almanac of Scottish Politics* (London: Politico's, 2001), p. 395.

<sup>6</sup> [http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus\\_uploads/document/4s8ieqi4i7/DC%20Thompson%20Results%20121024\\_Website.pdf](http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/4s8ieqi4i7/DC%20Thompson%20Results%20121024_Website.pdf) accessed 5/11/14

separate from existing nation states or reconfigure the relationship of the regions to the central government. This report aims to investigate the effects that the Scottish referendum campaign and result has had on separatist politics in Western Europe.

### *A brief history of Scottish nationalism*

The struggle to maintain Scotland's independence from its closest neighbour is an ancient one. As Gallagher and Linklater have noted, Sir Walter Scott believed that 314 battles were fought between Scottish and English forces during the various wars that took place before the Union of 1707.<sup>7</sup> Scotland has been constitutionally linked to England since King James VI of Scotland acceded the throne of England as James I in 1603.<sup>8</sup>

The seeds of anti-Union sentiment had been sown early on, as rumours regarding underhanded deals between England and members of the Scottish Parliament who voted to dissolve their own parliament in favour of the Union between 1706 and 1707.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the truth in those claims, anti-Union sentiment lived on (albeit as an undercurrent) throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, surviving more so in the Romantic nationalism of Scotland's literary figures than as a popular political movement. As Webb highlights, Scottish nationalism existed in late 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century, but often as a manifestation of radicalism, rather than a discrete nationalist movement on its own.<sup>10</sup>

The Scottish Home Rule Association was established in 1886, initially an organisation advocating home rule for all parts of the United Kingdom in an effort to protect the Union from the potential of Irish Home Rule alone.<sup>11</sup> Thus the organisation at its foundation was much more concerned with the protection of Scottish interest within the Union. The organisation was re-established in 1918, with the goal being Scottish home rule within the British Empire. A number of Bills on home rule throughout the 1920s were killed off with stiff opposition from within the Labour Party, which had considerable control over the SHRA at that point. The resulting dissatisfaction with the ability of the SHRA to influence the debate led to the formation of the National Party of Scotland in 1928.<sup>12</sup> The 1932 merger of the National Party of Scotland and the smaller Scottish Party led to the foundation in 1934 of the Scottish National Party (SNP). The Scottish nationalist movements of the 1920s and 1930s did not draw their inspiration from Ireland, not seek comparisons with their own movement across the Irish sea.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps understandably given the scale of violence in the Irish revolution and Civil War that came to a close in 1923, early 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalists looked to Scandinavia for the blueprint of what an independent Scotland might look like.<sup>14</sup>

With the amalgamation of the principal nationalist parties in the 1930s, the SNOP became almost the sole arbiter of nationalism (politically) in Scotland. As Roger Levy pointed out in his book *Scottish Nationalism at the Crossroads*, 'the distinction between Scottish nationalism as a political movement and the SNP is still

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<sup>7</sup> E. Linklater, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, (London: Routledge, 1935), p. 35, cited in T. Gallagher, *The Illusion of Freedom: Scotland Under Nationalism*, (London: Hurst, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> T. Gallagher, *The Illusion of Freedom: Scotland Under Nationalism*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> C.A. Whatley 'The Making of the Union of 1707: History With a History', in T.M. Devine (ed), *Scotland and the Union 1707-2007* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 23-4.

<sup>10</sup> K. Webb, *The Growth of Nationalism in Scotland* (Glasgow: Molendinar Press, 1977), p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> E.A. Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland Since 1880* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 76-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 168.

<sup>13</sup> J. Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.

unclear, perhaps deliberately so in the context of Nationalist ideology, and necessarily so in the context of the origins of the party.<sup>15</sup>

The party made a relatively small impact electorally, taking only a modest percentage of the overall Scottish votes through the first three decades of its existence. The election of The SNP made a substantial mark on electoral politics in Scotland in 1970, gaining 11 per cent of the vote, the third largest party by share of vote in Scotland.<sup>16</sup> Such a shock for the UK political system was the SNP victory in 1970 and in a by-election in 1967, that Westminster and Whitehall 'exhibited signs of panic'.<sup>17</sup> So momentous were the fortunes of the SNP in the late 1960s and early 1970s that James Mitchell has pinpointed it as the time when 'Modern Scottish politics was born'.<sup>18</sup> The party increased its share of the vote to 30 per cent by the second General Election of 1974, overtaking the Conservative Party on 25 per cent.<sup>19</sup> The Kilbrandon Report a report of The Royal Commission on the Constitution which had been commissioned by Harold Wilson's government as a result of the growing sentiment in favour of devolution or outright independence for Wales and Scotland in the late 1960s was delivered in 1973. The report highlighted a considerable amount of desire for devolution in Scotland, with Communists, Trade Unions, Liberals, Tories and the Church of Scotland all in favour, in addition to the SNP.<sup>20</sup>

A referendum on Scottish devolution in 1979 gave an inconclusive result. While a majority of those who voted, supported devolution, with 51.6 per cent voting 'Yes', the margin of victory was slim. Furthermore, because of the low turnout, with only 63.8 per cent of the eligible electorate voting, the 'Yes' vote represented less than third of the eligible electorate. The law that established the referendum required 40 per cent of the eligible electorate to vote for devolution before it would be enacted.<sup>21</sup> The 1980s was a decade spent under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, and a decade in which industry and the economy at large in Scotland suffered heavily. As Richard Finlay notes, it was a decade in which the Scottish Conservative party were to be reduced to a 'fringe political movement', and 'made most Scots question their faith in the efficacy of the existing constitutional relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom'.<sup>22</sup> It was not until 1998 however, under the Labour government of Tony Blair, that referenda were held in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on devolution, as the Westminster government attempted to deal with the democratic deficit in Scotland and Wales and cement the peace process in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, and had more powers than both the Northern Ireland Assembly and National Assembly of Wales. This extra level of political representation was fertile ground for the SNP, who consistently polled higher in the Scottish Parliamentary elections than they did at the Westminster elections.<sup>23</sup> Devolution, far from leaving nationalism 'stone dead' as one former Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland had claimed, it was only eight years after devolution when SNP leader Alex

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<sup>15</sup> R. Levy, *Scottish Nationalism at the Crossroads*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990), p.1.

<sup>16</sup> R. Levy, *Scottish Nationalism at the Crossroads*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> J. Mitchell, 'From Breakthrough to Mainstream: The Politics of Potential and Blackmail', in G. Hassan, (ed) *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> R. Levy, *Scottish Nationalism at the Crossroads*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> C. Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707-1977* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p.260.

<sup>21</sup> T.M. Devine, 'The Challenge of Nationalism' in, T.M. Devine, (ed), *Scotland and the Union*, p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> R.J. Finlay, 'Thatcherism and the Union' in, T.M. Devine (ed), *Scotland and the Union*, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> J. Curtice, 'Devolution, the SNP and the Electorate' in G. Hassan, (ed), *The Modern SNP*, p. 60.

Salmond became First Minister.<sup>24</sup> Soon after taking the office of First Minister, Salmond introduced a White Paper on Independence. In the White Paper, while the SNP clearly stated that its preference was full independence, they opted for a multi-option referendum including the choice of ‘enhanced devolution.’<sup>25</sup>

Following the Scottish Parliamentary elections of 2011, the SNP once again formed the government, this time with a clear majority. A referendum on independence had been a manifesto pledge, and the final preparations were put in place for the referendum to go ahead through the Edinburgh Agreement in 2012.

The Scottish National Party have been the main political proponents of Scottish nationalism since the 1930s. Their success in growing to become the largest party in Scotland and the third largest by membership in the United Kingdom owes much to the strategic adjustment of their message and the image of the party and of an independent Scotland over time. In one of its predecessor parties, the National Party of Scotland, more virulent and less tolerant strains of nationalism existed, and members of that party had brief dalliances with paramilitarism, forming ‘Clann Alban’ in 1930.<sup>26</sup> Indeed Hugh McDiarmid, the modernist literary figure who was an early member of the National Party of Scotland had visions of a future independent Scotland based on fascist ideals and attempts at Gaelic revivalism.<sup>27</sup> The SNP did well to ensure that these niche and extremist elements within nationalism carried little favour within the party, expelling members whose views were militant, fascist, or Anglophobic. Ethnic nationalism was given short shrift in the SNP.<sup>28</sup>

Later, the success of the SNP could be seen to be incumbent upon the party’s flexibility in its message. While the party was divided over the 1979 support of devolution, it abandoned its former policy of ‘independence – nothing less’ in favour of accepting devolution as a more gradualist approach to achieving independence.<sup>29</sup> As Thomsen notes, the party has been careful to promote an idea of Scottish identity throughout the 1990s and 2000s which is inclusive rather than exclusive, civic rather than ethnic.<sup>30</sup>

## *Northern Ireland*

*At the core of the Ulster problem is the problem of the Scots...*

A.T.Q Stewart

The claim made by historian A.T.Q Stewart that ‘at the core of the Ulster problem is the problem of the Scots’ gives some indication of the linkages between Scottish and Irish politics and societies.<sup>31</sup> These linkages between Northern Ireland and Scotland are a result of their geographical proximity and migration in both directions over centuries which intertwined their histories both before and after the establishment of the United Kingdom. Indeed, as Graham Walker has noted, while the linkages between the two places has been

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> C. Mackay, ‘The SNP and the Scottish Parliament: The Start of a New Sang?’ in G. Hassan, (ed) *The Modern SNP*, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> J. Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland*, p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> See for example G. Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2013) p. 133-5.

<sup>28</sup> See again G. Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right*, pp. 252-7, on the expulsion of members of the extremist 1320 Club and Siol nanGaidheal from the ranks of the SNP.

<sup>29</sup> R.C. Thomsen, *Nationalism in Stateless Nations: Selves and Others in Scotland and Newfoundland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010) p.89.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 89-91.

<sup>31</sup> A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground: Aspects of Ulster 1609-1969* (London: Faber, 1977) p. 34.

subject to much exaggeration and mythologizing, the importance of these linkages remains strong in popular imagination.<sup>32</sup>

While Ireland was joined in parliamentary union with Great Britain through the Acts of Union of 1800, England, Scotland and Ireland had long since been joined together in a monarchical union, and had experienced parliamentary union before, albeit briefly under Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s.<sup>33</sup> Less formal linkages between the two islands had existed for centuries. Migration and trade, especially between the north-eastern province of Ireland, Ulster and the west of Scotland has occurred since ancient times. The Plantation of Ulster in the early 1600s at the behest of King James I of England (James VI of Scotland), was an attempt to cement the power of the Crown in the most rebellious province of Ireland that had previously been largely beyond the Crown's sphere of control. Many Presbyterian aristocrats from Scotland were offered land and titles in Ulster under the colonial project which was viewed as a way to bring civilisation to the Catholic, Gaelic speaking Irish of the north, and to prevent further rebellion. Unlike in previous waves of migration from Scotland to Ireland and vice versa, this time there was little in the way of assimilation, and there existed a stark separation, based on religion between the native Catholic Irish population and the Protestant landlords from Scotland and England. The numbers of Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster was once again bolstered in the 1690s as a result of famine in Scotland, where perhaps 50,000 Presbyterians left the south west of Scotland for areas known to have considerable Presbyterian populations in Ulster.<sup>34</sup> While there were some fleeting moments of solidarity between Presbyterians and Catholics in Ireland, generated by the Anglican Ascendancy and the Penal Laws enacted between 1695 and 1707 under William III,<sup>35</sup> which excluded both Catholics and Presbyterians socially and politically, and the radical brand of Presbyterian politics, indicative in movements such as the United Irishmen and their rebellion of 1798, the divide in Irish society principally remained along sectarian lines, a chasm which was widened by movements such as the protestant Orange Order and Peep O' Day Boys, and the catholic Defenders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As Jackson notes, however, the experiences of Ireland and Scotland and their entry into union with England bear some similarities both practically and in discourse. In practical terms, he highlights that immediately before both of the Unions (Scotland and England in 1707 and Ireland and Great Britain in 1800), there had been acrimonious struggles and debate regarding the freedom of the Irish and Scottish parliaments and their relationship to the London government.<sup>36</sup> With regards to discourse on the Union, Jackson points out how in the aftermath, the Unions would both come to be seen by some elements of Scottish and Irish society at that time as a betrayal, secured through corruption,<sup>37</sup> and how at times the Unions have been portrayed, particularly by unionist historians of the Victorian era as inevitabilities,<sup>38</sup> shaping how future generations would come to understand and characterise the unions from opposing perspectives.

As a result of the Irish revolution of the early twentieth centuries, culminating in the War of Independence from 1919-1921, Ireland was partitioned following the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, designed to end hostilities between republican forces and the forces of the Crown. The treaty established home rule in the two

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<sup>32</sup> G. Walker, *Intimate Strangers: Political and Cultural Interactions Between Scotland and Ulster in Modern Times* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> A. Jackson, *The Two Unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the Survival of the United Kingdom, 1707-2007*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> M. Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (New York; NY: Basic Books, 2001), p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> A. Jackson, *The Two Unions*, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

jurisdictions that were created, the Irish Free State in the southern 26 counties of Ireland, which was granted dominion status, and in Northern Ireland, created from the six north-eastern counties, which remained part of the United Kingdom, but with its own parliament in Belfast. The borders of Northern Ireland were set to ensure a strong Unionist majority. Ulster unionists, overwhelmingly Protestant by religion, were mostly descendants who settled in Ulster during and after the plantation. As such, the sense of Ulster-Scots heritage has been an important element in unionist identity, and continues to play an important role today, even if, as claimed by Graham Walker, the linkages are often caricatured and mythologised to a degree.

Ulster unionists have suffered from something of a crisis of identity. Westminster had signed off on the Home Rule Bill of 1912 which was to establish Home Rule for Ireland. Unionists felt this meant that they would become second class citizens and would be subjected to religious persecution as the majority Catholic parliament would have embarked on a crusade to restrict their religious liberties inspired by the authoritarian nature of the Roman Catholic Church. With the outbreak of World War I, Home Rule was suspended. After the war, the plans to implement Home Rule were eventually scrapped. The decision was influenced in no small way by the fact that the loyalist militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force which had organised to resist home rule by force,<sup>39</sup> had signed up en-masse for the British Army, suffering heavy casualties in the Battle of the Somme.

Despite the scrapping of Home Rule plans for Ulster, Unionist suspicion of Westminster governments and their commitment to the maintenance of Northern Ireland grew. The relationship between Ulster unionists and politicians in Great Britain was to remain strained. Distrust of Westminster governments either as being ambivalent towards the maintenance of the Union or lacking the resolve to defend it, has been a recurrent theme in Unionist politics.<sup>40</sup> While central government thus was often something not to be trusted, the linkages between Scotland and Ulster and their shared experiences was something that could be meaningfully expounded to demonstrate the Britishness of Ulster unionists and their similarity to their Scottish cousins. As Graham Walker points out, 'no neat, tidy mythological narrative of the Ulster Protestants' progress was constructed to match the kind fashioned by such as Patrick Pearse to serve the Irish Nationalist cause'.<sup>41</sup> The societal and political cultures of Ulster and Scotland were by no means mirror images, with Scotland largely adopting the two party British system of politics where Northern Ireland did not. And while the Protestant Churches, the Orange Order and the minor Unionist parties playing different roles in Scotland than they did in Ulster, the principal actors were the same, which strengthened the connection between Scotland and Ulster and solidified the connection as an integral element of Ulster unionist identity.<sup>42</sup>

To some degree, while the political problems and the violence associated with Northern Ireland since the foundation of the state, and particularly since the 1960s did not vanish with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, the constitutional reforms across the United Kingdom in the 1990s perhaps recalibrated the relationship of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to Westminster with the devolution referenda, and thus recalibrated the Union. Northern Ireland was thus, no longer the exceptional case, in terms of being the only

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<sup>39</sup> G. Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> See P. Bew, P. Gibbon, and H. Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921/2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 2002), pp. 175-6 on the idea of unreliability of Britain as an ally to Ulster unionists, and p. 186. On Bill Craig's Vanguard Movement and their view of the British government in 1972. Also see B. Faulkner, *Memoirs of a Statesman* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978), p. 161, G. Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 233-5.

<sup>41</sup> G. Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> G. Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 62.

constituent part of the United Kingdom to have legislative control of its own affairs, but the once distinctly un-British practice of devolved administration became less so with the creation of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, alongside the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Given the degree of importance placed by some Unionists on a Scots-Irish or Ulster-Scots ancestry and element to their identity, a YES vote in the Scottish referendum of 2014 which saw Scotland eventually leaving the Union would have surely left some sections of Ulster unionism with a renewed identity crisis. However, perhaps the referendum has already had an impact on Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland was previously seen as the only constituent part of the United Kingdom whose continued membership of the Union was conditional, contingent upon the majority of the population wishing it to be so. With the signing of the Edinburgh Agreement between the United Kingdom government and the Scottish Government, Scotland too became a conditional member of the Union. The surge in support for Scottish independence to almost 45 per cent of the voting electorate furthermore serves to somewhat undermine the idea held by some sections of Ulster unionists that their experience of Britishness and the Union is the same as the Scottish experience.

The independence referendum has had further reverberations on Northern Ireland's politics. We have already seen rhetoric more familiar in debates on Scotland enter the political lexicon in Northern Ireland, with the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Mike Nesbitt called for a UK wide debate on transfer of further powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly.<sup>43</sup>

Northern Ireland was from 1921-1972 peculiar in the sense of being the only constituent part of the United Kingdom to have devolved government, a recognition of the exceptionalism of Northern Ireland in terms of its geographical disconnection from Great Britain, and an acknowledgement of the need for extraordinary measures to deal with the difficult political situation there. With the devolution of power to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly as well as to the new Northern Ireland Assembly, agreed upon in the Good Friday Agreement and legitimised through the referendum in 1998, Northern Ireland was no longer the exception to the rule.. While Northern Ireland maintained some obvious differences to the devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales, with its safeguards against majoritarian politics and stipulation of mandatory cross-community power sharing, devolution itself was no longer an aberration from the British norm, but was a thoroughly British practice.

The principle of consent regarding the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, the idea that Northern Ireland would remain a part of the United Kingdom for as long as the majority of the electorate of Northern Ireland wished it to be so had been spoken about since the mid 1970s, and the principle was enshrined in the Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, with the referendum in the Republic of Ireland in 1998 allowing the constitutional amendment which removed the territorial claim to Northern Ireland from the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland, reducing their 'claim' to an aspiration for reunification of the entirety of the island. With the referendum in the Republic of Ireland in 1998 allowing the constitutional amendment which removed the territorial claim to Northern Ireland from the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland, reducing their 'claim' to an aspiration for reunification of the entirety of the island.

Since the Scottish referendum, the rhetoric of Irish Republicans in Northern Ireland regarding a poll on Irish unification has increased. While reunification has always been a principle aim of Sinn Féin, the party has given reunification more prominence since the referendum. Northern Ireland deputy First Minister and Sinn

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<sup>43</sup> <http://uup.org/news/3047/Scottish-referendum-result-is-a-victory-for-common-sense-Mike-Nesbitt-MLA#.VGERWYusWG8>  
accessed 10/11/14

Féin deputy leader, Martin McGuinness called for a border poll the day after the Scottish referendum.<sup>44</sup> His remarks were reiterated by Michelle Gildernew commenting at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (Party Conference) in March 2015, that an all-Ireland border poll should take place within the cycle of the next parliaments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.<sup>45</sup> A poll conducted by the Belfast Telegraph two weeks after the Scottish referendum has shown that there is an appetite for a border poll, with 56.2 per cent favouring a referendum.<sup>46</sup> However, a firm majority of those polled, (59.8 per cent) stated their opposition to a united Ireland.

Of course, the situation in Ireland differs from Scotland in the sense that Northern Ireland's nationalist community don't seek *independence* as such for Northern Ireland but unification with the Republic of Ireland, and any change to the constitutional position is contingent upon a majority of support in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, rather than just in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin have been performing well in opinion polls conducted in the Republic of Ireland, with one poll naming them as the most popular party in the state in February 2015 on 26 percent.<sup>47</sup> Their popularity cannot however be taken as an indicative of the strength of feeling for Irish unification. These high levels of support are more likely a result of their opposition to the Irish government's unpopular austerity program, and the imposition of water charges, which has sparked wide scale protests and some incidents of civil disobedience. While Sinn Féin may seek to capitalise upon the increased profile of the Scottish independence debate to push their own campaign for unification, it is far from clear that the Scottish referendum has resulted in a rise in popular support for Irish reunification.

The basis of nationalism in Ireland differs greatly from that of Scotland. The two countries might have commonalities in terms of a shared sense of Celtic identity, but it not deployed equally in Scotland and Ireland by those seeking independence. Irish nationalists have highlighted the importance of Celtic and Gaelic identity, relying heavily at times on cultural movements such as the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the Gaelic League to perpetuate a sense of distinctive identity reliant on culture and language. Mainstream Scottish nationalism however has not relied on language, or on a sense of Celtic identity (which is not common to all of Scotland) in the hope to further their cause. Similarly, while Scottish nationalism has managed to separate itself from any perceived sectarianism, drawing support from both Catholics and Protestants, Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland, largely as a result of the sectarian legacy of the conflict over the last four and a half decades there, has failed to widen its appeal to significant numbers of Protestants.

Scotland, having more progressive attitudes on a range of economic and social issues than the rest of the United Kingdom, allows Scottish nationalists to highlight the potential for an independent Scotland to escape the conservatism that is imposed on them as a result of their membership of the United Kingdom. A similar argument in Northern Ireland is difficult to make, as Northern Ireland tends to be more conservative on social issues than the rest of the United Kingdom, and it unclear that reunification with the Republic of

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/scotland-independence-vote/scottish-referendum-sinn-feins-martin-mcguinness-calls-for-northern-ireland-border-poll-following-scotland-result-30600629.html> accessed 7/4/2015.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/sinn-f%C3%A9in-calls-for-border-poll-on-a-united-ireland-1.2130814> accessed 7/4/2015

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-ireland-says-yes-to-a-border-poll-but-a-firm-no-to-united-ireland-30622987.html> accessed 12/4/2015.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/revealed-sinn-fein-the-most-popular-party-in-ireland-30992727.html> accessed 7/4/2015.

Ireland would result in the development of a progressive political and social change, given the dominance of the two centre-right, conservative parties in national politics since the foundation of the state.

The nature of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, where parties are bound into a mandatory coalition in the Executive also means that political parties (whether they advocate Unionism or Nationalism) leads to a problem with political accountability. Not having a party of government or a voluntary coalition means that it is difficult for parties to take credit for the fruits of their good government and to build a reputation for reliability. Similarly, responsibility for mistakes or poor decision-making can be foisted upon mandatory coalition partners or shifted to the structure of the devolved institutions themselves. In Scotland, the SNP's strength in government after coming to power in 2011, despite being a minority government no doubt helped reassure sceptical voters of the party's validity as an alternative to the Westminster based parties, and perhaps even of the attractiveness of an independent Scotland.

### *Wales*

Wales and England have been joined politically since 1282, when Edward I of England defeated the armies of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd.<sup>48</sup> The Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542 were designed to give Welsh representation in the English Parliament, but also had the effect of outlawing the use of the Welsh language in relation to official and legal business in Wales. It was not until the growth of industry in the early nineteenth century that provided employment and relative economic prosperity for towns across Wales that national sentiment began to develop. As Morgan put it 'If there was one outstanding cradle of the Welsh national revival, it can be found not in the agrarian hinterland...but amid the blast furnaces and winding-shafts of the working class metropolis of Merthyr Tydfil.'<sup>49</sup> The other spur of Welsh nationalism was the rise of religious Nonconformity, as a result of the Methodist revival.<sup>50</sup> The religious census of 1851 demonstrated that by then, almost four-fifths of the population could be counted as nonconformists, rather than as members of the established Anglican Church.

The political radicalism that accompanied religious nonconformism resulted in a coalescing around the issue of the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales in the early twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> After some heel dragging by Liberal governments and a series of defeated Bills, an Act disestablishing the Anglican Church was passed in 1914, taking effect after World War One in 1920. Like Ireland and Scotland, Wales had a Home Rule movement in the early twentieth century, but a Home Rule movement put forward by Welsh National League leader E.T. John foundered in 1914 as concerns regarding the War took precedence.<sup>52</sup>

In 1925 however, dissatisfaction with the performance of the Liberal and Labour Parties, as well as interest in nationalism in Wales generated by the birth of the Irish Free State, led to the formation of Plaid Cymru, mostly from the ranks of nationalist groups at the University of Wales.<sup>53</sup> However, the party's electoral performances were negligent until the mid 1960s. At the 1966 General Election, only two of the 22 candidates fielded by the party retained their deposits.<sup>54</sup> Making their electoral breakthrough at roughly the same time

<sup>48</sup> A.B. Philip, *The Welsh Question: Nationalism in Welsh Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975) p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> K.O. Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995) p. 199.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 200.

<sup>51</sup> D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) p.69.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

<sup>53</sup> A.B. Philip, *The Welsh Question* pp. 12-3.

<sup>54</sup> K.O. Morgan, *Modern Wales*, p. 211.

as the SNP in Scotland, Plaid Cymru took two seats in by-elections in 1967 and 1968, and by 1970, the party ran candidates in all Welsh constituencies for the first time.<sup>55</sup> From the foundation of the party, the defence of the Welsh language had been a principal aim of the party, but it was a policy which was to become divisive in the 1970s. While Scottish nationalism was careful to cultivate a sense of Scottish identity that was not based on any narrow or exclusivist definition, the language issue in Wales and its centrality for Plaid Cymru made the party less attractive to non-Welsh speakers. Some non-Welsh speakers worried that any constitutional arrangement which saw Wales as a single political entity would see Welsh speakers impose their language on the majority.<sup>56</sup> The party had taken an exclusivist stance on the Welsh language until the mid-1960s, when it adopted bilingualism and softened its rhetoric on language.<sup>57</sup> However, while the shift in stance on the language issue in the mid-1960s might have caused internal unrest, the party's recalibration to adopt socio-economic policies and a clear call for self government for Wales, as well as eschewing direct action made the party more successful and popular in the long run.<sup>58</sup> The Kilbrandon Report of 1973 which was conducted in response to nationalist gains in Scotland and Wales recommended administrative devolution in Wales, though with fewer Commissioners advocating the 'advanced form' than had advocated it for Scotland.<sup>59</sup> Wales held its referendum on devolution on 1 March 1979, and the Welsh electorate rejected devolution resoundingly with 956,330 voting against and only 243,048 voting for.<sup>60</sup> The 1980s had a similar effect in Wales economically as the decade had in Scotland. Politically, the Conservative Party, while not being reduced to a fringe party as it was in Scotland, suffered losses throughout the decade, while Plaid Cymru demonstrated their credibility through their role in securing the Welsh language TV channel S4C in 1982, and on pushing the language issue in education.<sup>61</sup> Further policy shifts, from Euro-scepticism to Euro-enthusiasm in the 1980s and 1990s meant that the party were able to widen their appeal.<sup>62</sup> They adopted the neo-nationalist stance that Europe would mean that the transfer of power would be upwards, to EU institutions or downwards to sub-state nations like Wales, putting more power in the hands of Welsh people.

The 1998 devolution referendum resulted in a narrow vote for devolution with a majority of only 6,721 out of a total 1,112,117 in favour, just 50.3 per cent of the vote.<sup>63</sup> The resulting Welsh Assembly had fewer powers than Scotland and Northern Ireland's devolved institutions initially, but since then, more powers have been devolved in 2006, 2011 and 2013, and as a result of legislation passed in 2014, a referendum is to be scheduled on the transfer of control of income tax to the Welsh Assembly. While the Welsh electorate were initially wary of devolved government, they are now embracing a degree of self-government from Cardiff. Plaid Cymru were kept out of government in Wales from 1999 until 2007, when they were able to enter government as junior coalition partner with Labour. Since then however, Plaid lost seats in the 2011 election, leaving a strengthened Labour Party to form the government on their own. Despite the vocal support of Plaid Cymru for Scottish independence, with the party's leadership and many rank and file members travelling to Scotland to canvass in the 'Yes Scotland' campaign, support in Wales for independence remains extremely low. A poll

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<sup>55</sup> D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000*, p. 214.

<sup>56</sup> J. Mitchell, *Devolution in the UK* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> T. Christiansen, 'Plaid Cymru: Dilemmas and Ambiguities of Welsh Regional Nationalism', in L. De Winter, and H. Türsan, (eds.), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 126.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> J. Mitchell, *Devolution in the UK*, p. 147.

<sup>60</sup> L. Andrews, *Wales Says Yes: The Inside Story of the Yes for Wales Referendum Campaign* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999), p.29.

<sup>61</sup> T. Christiansen, 'Plaid Cymru: Dilemmas and Ambiguities of Welsh Regional Nationalism', p. 128.

<sup>62</sup> R. Wyn Jones, 'From Utopia to Reality: Plaid Cymru and Europe', *Nations and Nationalism*, 15/1 (2009), p. 138.

<sup>63</sup> J. Mitchell, *Devolution in the UK*, p. 160.

conducted in September 2014 put support for Welsh independence at around 3 per cent, and only around half of those polled supporting further devolution.<sup>64</sup> Whatever the public appetite for further devolution, Plaid Cymru have taken the opportunity of the surge in support for Scottish nationalism and pledges by the Westminster government to devolve further control to Edinburgh to put Welsh devolution back on the agenda. The party issued a policy document entitled 'Bring Our Government Home' which outlines the party's aims for greater self government for Wales.<sup>65</sup> Despite the low desire for Welsh independence indicated by opinion polls around the time of the Scottish referendum, Plaid will be hoping that a buoyant pro-independence lobby in Scotland despite their defeat will help to shift attitudes towards Welsh independence in the long term. In February 2015, the Westminster coalition government announced the 'St David's Day Agreement', outlining extra powers to be devolved to Wales, based on the report of an independent commission examining further devolution requirements for Wales, but also taking into consideration the Smith Commission and its report into devolution for Scotland as a result of the referendum.

### *Catalonia*

In November 2014, a consultative referendum took place in Catalonia on the constitutional future of the nation. The Spanish government had forewarned the Catalan government that any such referendum would be unenforceable and not legally binding, due to a conflict with the Spanish constitution. The politicking between Madrid and Barcelona in the run up to the vote, and the decision by the Catalan government to hold the referendum as a consultative and unofficial referendum doubtless impacted upon the turnout, which was approximately 35 per cent of the eligible electorate.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the 80.8 per cent vote in favour of Catalonian secession from Spain buoyed the Catalonian independence movement. Artur Mas, President of the Catalan government and leader of *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) the federation of centre right parties which is currently in power in Catalonia, is planning on holding the Catalan parliamentary elections early, on 27 September 2015, with the election campaign beginning on 11 September, Catalonia's national day.<sup>67</sup> While the vote is expected to result in a majority of seats being awarded to pro-independence parties, the effect of the new left-wing *Podemos* party (which is active across Spain) is difficult to judge, given that they only recently entered the political arena.

Widespread disaffection with the PP and their handling of the austerity of recent years was represented at the polls in the municipal elections of May 2015 in Spain. *Podemos* did not field candidates under the party name and so their impact is hard to quantify, with many candidates, such as Barcelona en Comú candidate Ada Colau, who will become Barcelona's new mayor receiving the support of left wing pro and anti Catalan independence parties alike. Artur Mas's CiU lost a total of 534 while the more left wing ERC gained 999 seats. Overall though, the results simply reflect a widening of the two party system and frustrating with both

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-29331475> accessed 3/4/2015.

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.partyof.wales/uploads/policies/Bring\\_our\\_Government\\_Home.pdf](https://www.partyof.wales/uploads/policies/Bring_our_Government_Home.pdf) accessed 3/4/2015

<sup>66</sup> A. Elias, 'Catalan Independence and the Challenge of Credibility: The Causes and Consequences of Catalan Nationalist Parties' Strategic Behaviour', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 21/1 (2015), p. 84. The turnout looks especially low when compared with the turnout for the Catalonian Parliament in 2012, which was around 68 per cent of the eligible electorate. Although Artur Mas, President of the Catalan Government has pointed out that the turnout is largely in line with the turnout for the European Parliament elections.

<sup>67</sup> [http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/01/15/inenglish/1421314320\\_146772.html](http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/01/15/inenglish/1421314320_146772.html) accessed 11/4/2015.

the PP and PSOE and it remains to be seen whether the September General Election will show continued or declining appetite for Catalan independence.

The Spanish government under Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's *Partidad Popular* (PP) have remained steadfast in their refusal to sanction an official referendum in Catalonia, highlighting the illegality of secession as per the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Nevertheless, a landslide victory in September for the Catalanist parties would increase the pressure on the Spanish government to make more decisive action with regards to Catalonia. The timing of the Catalan independence referendum, coming two months after Scotland held theirs has made it an interesting case for comparison.

The histories of the United Kingdom and Spain are different in a number of ways. The United Kingdom is notable for its relative political stability and general steadfast adherence to parliamentary democracy, while Spain has suffered great political instability and long durations of authoritarian rule. While state elites in the United Kingdom have more readily accepted that the UK is a multi-nation state with each member nation having a complex relationship to the state, the Spanish state has been more forthright in promoting a singular identity hinged upon a certain understanding of Spain, and a reluctance to view minorities within Spain as nations, referring to them only as AACC (Autonomous Communities)<sup>68</sup>

The emergence of Catalan nationalism was a gradual process. First exhibiting itself in a Catalanness and a sense of the different customs between Barcelona and Madrid. Catalonia's autonomy within the Kingdom of Spain was brought to an end in 1716 by Philip V, and at the same time the *Neuva Planta* decree banned most Catalan institutions, laws, and the language. While clearly a sense of particular Catalan identity had existed prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the political turbulence of that century with the Carlist Wars and the *pronunciamientos* which saw the establishment and fall of the First Republic were instrumental in generating an awareness and association with that Catalan identity. Daniele Conversi points to the view of some local historians that Catalan nationalism was born in that century of four strains: 'cultural revival, traditionalist Carlism, Republican federalism and industrial protectionism'.<sup>69</sup>

That said, the expression of Catalan identity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century confined mostly to cultural expression as a result of the Catalan cultural *Renaixença*, and while political movements began to emerge advocating regionalism, there was nothing that represented a consolidated nationalism.<sup>70</sup>

After the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War, Catalan cultural organisations were banned, 25,000 civil servants were dismissed, schoolteachers suspected of pro-Catalanist views were redeployed to other regions of Spain, and the use of the Catalan language, singing of the anthem and display of Catalan symbols were banned.<sup>71</sup> As Conversi and Friend have highlighted, the attempts by Francoists to suppress Catalan cultural identity for fear of its political content, had the effect of politicising it even further, and drawing together the disparate factions of pro-Catalan society into a loose but broad front.<sup>72</sup> Thus, speaking Catalan,

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<sup>68</sup> M. Guibernau, 'Secession in Catalonia: After Democracy', *Ethnopolitics*, 12/4 (2013), p. 369.

<sup>69</sup> D. Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* (London, Hurst: 1997) p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> M. Guibernau, 'Secession in Catalonia: After Democracy', p. 373.

<sup>71</sup> J.W. Friend, *Stateless Nations: Western European Regional Nationalisms and the Old Nations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 92.

<sup>72</sup> See J.W. Friend, *Stateless Nations*, p. 94, and D. Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain*, p. 122-4.

displaying Catalan symbols or engaging in cultural activities became a channel in Catalonia through which one could oppose Francoism, Hispanification, and the erosion of Catalan identity.

Despite the prohibitions of the Franco regime on expressions of Catalan identity, after the death of Franco and the transition to democracy, when Catalan nationalism found its vocal and outward expression once again, it was overwhelmingly a moderate expression. The centre right parties, banded together under the federation the CiU, soaked up most of the political support for Catalan nationalism, with less support for the more radical ERC. As Dowling put it, 'Catalanism has been, since its conception, a byword for moderation, caution and incremental change.'<sup>73</sup> As such, the pro-Catalan parties constrained their demands from Madrid to calls for greater autonomy and more regional control, rather than outright secession.

Demands from the Catalan government in the early 2000s, first from the CiU government under Jordi Pujol until 2003, and then from the more radical coalition government under the leadership of socialist Pasqual Maragall, fell on deaf ears. The Spanish government under the right wing PP, led by José María Aznar refused to take any action. Furthermore, the Spanish government's mounting of a legal challenge against a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia which had already passed through the Catalan parliament in 2006 enraged Catalan nationalists.<sup>74</sup> The Spanish Constitutional Court, ruling in 2010 struck out several articles from the Statute, ruling them unconstitutional. Adding to the tension between Barcelona and Madrid in the period, was the rising unemployment rate as the global economic crisis began to take its toll, bring unemployment to over 40 per cent among young people in Catalonia. The economic strife accompanied by the denial of greater autonomy from Madrid during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century generated a shift in attitudes in Catalonia, with many individuals who had desired greater autonomy, shifting to supporting outright independence.

While the Catalan parties were instrumental in opening up space for the expression of Catalan cultural identity in the shape of legislation which came in the 1980s, and on pushing for greater powers to be devolved to Catalonia, the appetite for Catalan independence has come from below. Predominantly, the rising support for independence was generated by a grassroots led movement, articulated not by political parties, but by cultural movements, civic organisations and the formation of *Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir* (Plaform for the Right to Decide), and *Assemblea Nacional Catalana*.<sup>75</sup> As Dowling points out, this means that Catalonia is at odds with both Scotland, and the Basque Country, where in both instances, the push in recent years for independence has been an elite driven process.<sup>76</sup> The main Catalanist parties in Catalonia, the CiU, and the ERC have in recent years, made strategic adjustments to their positions, calling openly for secession, and adding their voices to an already vast popular movement seeking independence from Spain. Whether the Catalan independence movement can exert enough pressure on Madrid to force concessions, either in the form of greater autonomy or arrangements to establish a legally binding referendum on Catalonia's constitutional future remains to be seen.

## **Conclusion**

The political instability and turmoil of 19<sup>th</sup> century Spain and the vehement suppression of Catalan identity by the authoritarian regime under Franco have no match in scale or intensity in the United Kingdom. Additionally, while language has historically a central role in Catalan nationalism, the same cannot be

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<sup>73</sup> A. Dowling, 'Accounting for the Turn Towards Secession in Catalonia', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 27/2&3, p. 220.

<sup>74</sup> M. Guibernau, 'Secession in Catalonia: After Democracy', p. 381.

<sup>75</sup> See A. Dowling, 'Accounting for the Turn Towards Secession in Catalonia', p. 222.

<sup>76</sup> A. Dowling, 'Accounting for the Turn Towards Secession in Catalonia', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 27/2&3, p. 220.

said for Scotland, with the SNP making only piecemeal commitments to protection of Scottish Gaelic, a language which is spoke by only a few thousand people out of a population of 7 million. That said, despite the important central role that language rights and language education has had in generating a strong Catalan identity, the most recent surge in support for Catalan independence has not been generated by linguistic grievances, but rather from a sense of injustice and mistreatment from Madrid, calls for greater autonomy falling on deaf ears, and the effects of the worsening economic crisis. Both Scottish and Catalan nationalist movements have had flirtations with exclusivist, xenophobic, and ethnic bases for their calls for independence in the past.<sup>77</sup> While no doubt the broader nationalist movements will find support amongst some for xenophobic or racist reasons, the parties which have given these nationalisms their political expression have steered clear of narrow and exclusivist understandings of Catalan and Scottish identity, and if anything have become more inclusive in recent years.

It is striking that in both the United Kingdom and Spain, that the regions where prolonged campaigns of political violence has taken place over decades, the Basque Country and Northern Ireland look less likely to secede or even to command majorities in favour of secession in the short to medium term than Catalonia and Scotland. As we have seen, the surge in support for Catalan independence, particularly post-2006 is attributable to bottom up activism, with the grassroots led campaign relying primarily on non-violent mass rallies and demonstrations. While Scotland's independence campaign in the run up to the 2014 referendum was also entirely non-violent, the appetite for independence was largely elite driven, with the SNP capturing and driving the campaign, the total non-violence of the independence campaigns in both countries is a notable factor. It is striking that in both Catalonia and Scotland despite quite clearly impassioned campaigns to achieve independence that there has not been a violent fringe. That violence has so seldom been associated with these independence movements might, in no small way help to account for their success. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J Stephan demonstrate in their book *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Non-Violence*, that non-violent campaigns seeking regime change are frequently more effective, and highlight a range of factors which contribute to this.<sup>78</sup> One of the central reasons that Chenoweth and Stephan outline is that:

*...nonviolent campaigns have a participation advantage over violent insurgencies, which is an important factor in determining campaign outcomes. The moral, physical, informational, and commitment barriers to participation are much lower for nonviolent resistance than for violent insurgency.*<sup>79</sup>

They highlight how the higher levels of participation contribute to success as a result of the difficulty and cost of suppressing or ignoring the movement and maintaining the status quo by states.<sup>80</sup> While movements aiming to achieve secession are different in character than those attempting to secure regime change within a particular territory, there are perhaps elements from Chenoweth and Stephan's theory that might be amended so as to be instructive in our analysis of the relative success or failure of secessionist movements in stateless nations.

We might argue, for example that the Catalan and Scottish independence movements have come closer to achieving their end goal, and have garnered more popular support than movements in the Basque Country

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<sup>77</sup> See for example, J.F. Miley, 'Blocked Articulation and Nationalist Hegemony in Catalonia', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 23/1, (2013), p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> E. Chenoweth, and M.J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*.

and Northern Ireland because of lower barriers to participation and support. The absence of violence from these campaigns has meant that there are reduced barriers to participation. Furthermore, in terms of moral barriers, when these campaigns do not utilise violence, constrain their campaigns to legal means, and present secession as a progressive political choice rather than a radical political and social upheaval, the barriers to supporting such movements are lower.

The changing image of a movement, from one of radical in nature, to a mass movement, and one seeking positive progressive change while perhaps abandoning radical rhetoric of social upheaval, might be key to the spike in popularity for both the Scottish and Catalan independence movements. Dowling notes that the Catalan push for independence in recent years has been devoid of a commitment to 'emancipatory project of social change', and points to the importance of its non-violent and legal tactics as instrumental in helping the movement gain momentum.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, in the 1990s there was a 'decoupling' of the radical Marxist agenda of the ERC with the goal of independence, something which Dowling has also highlighted as instrumental.<sup>82</sup>

Of course, there are a number of other factors which contribute to the popularity of secession movements which cannot be held constant or explained away. The economic feasibility of an independent Scotland for example was a hotly contested matter in the run up to the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014, and Scottish nationalists made a strong case for the nation's economic viability post-independence. Sorens has highlighted, voters tend to be much more concerned with socioeconomic issues than with history and tradition.<sup>83</sup> He claims that 'ethnic identity can provide a sense of separateness, but voters consider this separateness relevant only when it can be mobilized to achieve political and economic goals that are important to them.'<sup>84</sup> There are rather striking contrasts between the Catalan and Scottish nationalist movements at times, and yet both have seen the support for independence shift from being a niche political aspiration founded on radical political ideology and often on an exclusive political identity to becoming serious mainstream and arguably progressive movements centring their aspirations on calls for social justice and economic arguments. Whether the national governments of Spain and the United Kingdom can stem the rising tide of secessionism remains to be seen.

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<sup>81</sup> Dowling p. 223.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 225.

<sup>83</sup> J. Sorens, 'The Cross-Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies', *Comparative Political Studies*, 38/3 (2005), p. 307

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

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