

Scottish Secession: Prospects for Independence after Blair?

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Abstract

The introduction of a Scottish parliament was, in many regards, the most important constitutional change in the United Kingdom since the Anglo-Irish Act of 1921. Given the stewardship of Tony Blair, Scottish independence was always unlikely; however, are prospects for secession any different under new leadership? Under Gordon Brown, a Scotsman, the nationalist sentiment in Scotland is not likely to rise. However, given the new devolved parliament, the desire for Scottish independence may increase under a staunchly English or conservative leader possibly in the mould of David Cameron. This is all the more possible given a YouGov poll¹ in September which suggested that a majority of Scots backed independence over the status quo. While there is still a long way to go before Scottish secession, it is more plausible with a parliament. A referendum on independence is also possible citing the example of Quebec in Canada and would only require the Scottish National Party (SNP) to gain power in the Scottish parliament. A 50% plus one vote would then provide legal grounds to dissolve the 1707 Act of Union. If, in fact, the Scottish desire for independence is realized, does this change Blair's legacy? John Major once warned against devolution calling it, "the Trojan horse to independence". An independent Scotland would allow Scots the opportunity for representation at the United Nations and the European Union. Until now, Scotland has only known representation on the world stage via football and rugby pitches. Will this change after Blair leaves Number 10 Downing Street?

Introduction

Given Tony Blair's three terms as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), his retirement from Number 10 Downing Street on June 27th marked a significant change in the political life of Britain. There was immense constitutional change under his leadership with the successful referendum on devolution in 1997 which culminated in a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly in 1999.² This then raised the prospect of Scottish independence for the first time since it was amalgamated into Great Britain in 1707 with an Act of Union (it later became the United Kingdom in 1800 after Ireland entered the union). Scottish independence, tangibly, has been in the public eye since Tom Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain* in 1977 and much of this had to do with its history (Nairn 1977). Scotland was known for its independent spirit in famous victories such as the Battle of Stirling

¹ http://www.yougov.com/archives/pdf/STI060101004_1.pdf

² Northern Ireland, too, has an assembly, but it has yet to function in the legislative sense.

Bridge in 1297 and the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 where the Scots claimed victory in the Wars of Scottish independence (1296-1328). This is where mystical characters such as William Wallace and Robert the Bruce gained notoriety; it was certainly an era of high profile personalities and triumphant Scottish nationalism. The most important document most Scots point to here is the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) which declared Scotland's independence (Ichijo 2004:22). Yet, it seems as though their history has been somewhat more reserved since the Act of Union in 1707. A contemporary question, therefore, is whether this could all change with devolution and the exit of Tony Blair?

Moreover, in September 2006, a YouGov poll (a British market research firm), for the first time in history, showed that a majority of Scottish people advocated independence. Granted, this figure shows that 44% of Scots prefer independence to 42% who favor continued union in the UK.³ This was not an outright majority, as would be required for a successful referendum, but it did show that independence is now a viable option for Scottish voters. Since the polling now indicates that Scotland could secede and that the Scottish National Party (SNP) is governing Scotland in a minority situation, we should examine how an attempt at independence may occur. After all, independence for Scotland may be most likely to occur now, than at any other point since 1707. In order to build a case for the possibilities of secession, a few things must be done including: examining the history of Scotland, exploring the literature on nationalism and why it is important to secessionist movements, showing the rise of the SNP and investigating how secession has occurred in other peaceful democratic countries. I will then discuss the differences between autonomy and independence after Tony Blair and what the new roles of Gordon Brown and

³ http://www.yougov.com/archives/pdf/STI060101004_1.pdf

Alex Salmond mean for Scotland's future. From these discussions, several conclusions can be drawn as to the possibilities for Scottish independence in a post-Blair Britain.

Since the SNP is the party that advocates independence, I will highlight their electoral performances to show how voters have responded to their various platforms in select elections. Since Scottish voters now get to vote in the UK, the European Union (EU) and in the Scottish Parliament, there is much to view alongside polling data. The performance of the SNP, after all, will show whether an independent Scotland is likely in Britain after Blair. It is, however, important to start with the history of Scotland to see why independence is a modern reality.

History of Scotland

To examine the question of possible Scottish independence, we must first examine the historical situation to understand why Scotland became part of the United Kingdom. Scotland emerged, for the most part, as a united kingdom/entity in the ninth and tenth centuries and has long distinguished itself from England (Bogdanor 1999:7). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, England initially invaded Scotland and the respective countries to war over the status of Scotland. As mentioned in the introduction, the Wars of Scottish independence were pivotal to the political and legal autonomy of the British Isles with England (Wales was amalgamated in Acts of Union in 1536 and 1543) and Scotland controlling separate states. In 1603, however, the crowns of England and Scotland under James I (James VI in Scotland) were united meaning that the two countries now shared the same monarch (Colley 1992:11). This was known as the Union of Crowns. James I then ruled England and Scotland until his death in 1625. England and Scotland continued to

share the same crown from 1603 onwards, but each retained their own parliament and, therefore, has legal control over its own jurisdiction. This was, however, until the aforementioned Act of Union in 1707 which formally brought Scotland into a union with England and Wales (Bogdanor 1999:7)

The first real challenge to union with England, aside from the Jacobite Rebellions, came in the form of Home Rule. This became an election issue in 1885 when William Gladstone proposed the idea of greater autonomy for Scotland in an attempt to allow for greater self government. Under Gladstone, Home Rule became a cornerstone of Liberal Party policy in an attempt to solve questions of the British state through autonomy rather than unitary style governance. On the other hand, Conservatives opposed this measure (and continued to do so until 1999) (McCrone, 2004:217). The proposal, however, was never realized and Gladstone left office having been unable to implement devolved authority. Home Rule, therefore, petered out around 1914 (due to the start of World War One) and was left for a later time (Nairn, 1977:95).

The discovery of oil in the North Sea in the 1960's, once again, brought up the notion of greater autonomy for Scotland since a great deal of wealth came from the sale of oil and many considered this resource to be Scottish property. This is when the SNP started to make some significant electoral breakthroughs in Westminster and, although it cannot be fully substantiated, natural resources in Scotland may have played a leading role. Why, as Jack Brand poses, did the SNP move from being a tiny fringe party only in 1961 when the modern nationalist movement began in 1928? (Brand 1978:19)

Regardless of why they emerged, the SNP built upon their earlier electoral breakthroughs and obtained over 30% of the Scottish vote in the General Election of

October 1974 and moved further into the mainstream.⁴ Eventually, these factors led to a referendum for a Scottish Parliament in 1979. The referendum, however, was proposed in such a way as to peg voter turnout to the result. Consequently, at least 50% of the population had to vote in favor of devolution regardless of how many actually showed up to the polls. While 51% of Scots did indeed vote for devolution, only 63% of the overall population turned out to vote (Lynch 2005:10). This meant that, under the rules established before the election with regards to turnout, only 32% of the entire population voted for devolution and the referendum was therefore defeated (Robbins 1998:105). By the time Tony Blair came to power, the rules were changed to allow for a straight percentage figure to be accepted as the actual outcome regardless of participation. In the end, 74% of Scots voted for devolution in 1997 which meant that a Scottish Parliament came to fruition (Robbins 1998:105).⁵ The Scottish Parliament was then introduced in 1999, although, the power within the parliament does have significant limits. With the initiation of the Scottish Parliament comes a further question pertaining to Scotland's ability to operate as an independent country. The SNP have lobbied for this for decades and it is rooted in nationalism. It is, therefore, important to take a closer look at the major literature on nationalism.

Nationalism

Nationalism, the sense of pride in one's nation, has the ability to rally a given people for political means. Nation here is meant to infer a culturally homogenous group of people

⁴ <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-059.pdf>

⁵ Wales also voted, in a majority, for devolution. Since the vote was closer, however, they were given an Assembly instead of a Parliament which means that the laws passed by Assembly Members (AM) are subject to potential veto by the Secretary of State for Wales or Westminster.

versus a state, which is often heterogeneous and requires a form of governance, secure borders and an enclosed population. Nationalism, therefore, can be used to celebrate one's nation within a given state or promote its independence outright. This is a complex subject especially when considering Scotland's claims for secession from the United Kingdom, but some major scholars have delved into this subject in ample depth and their discussion should be engaged further.

Benedict Anderson discusses "imagined communities", for example, a theme that showcases the ability, for the individual, to rally around a larger cause other than his/her own personal preferences. His suggestion that nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time is certainly apt given that nationalism has not gone away even in an era of regional integration and globalization (Anderson 1983:12). Anderson discusses the religious foundation of the state system and the sovereignty found under God, which is a symbol of freedom, the enduring emblem of a sovereign state (Anderson 1983:16). There is a comradeship within a given state and it provides a freedom for the "imagined community" to unite. This is one of the most widely acclaimed sources on nationalism and provides much thought for discussion on "submerged nations" such as Scotland.

Anthony D. Smith argues that nationalism has to fulfill three criteria. These three include: national autonomy, national unity and national identity (Smith 2001:9). Nationalism is an ideological movement that serves the purpose of continuing identity. Smith argues that nationalism is not limited to independence movements but can retain the spirit of national identity in any state or region (Smith 2001:9). This is certainly relevant given that any political leader may seek to increase his/her appeal this way and nationalism

is not limited by any given time period. There is, however, one shortcoming of Smith's analysis and that is the rise of regional economic blocs. The EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are two of these regional blocs. The EU especially has served to decrease overt nationalism in some parts of Europe (Mayer and Palmowski 2004:575). Therefore, the avenues by which nationalism is expressed, for example through the SNP, become all the more important.

John Breuilly's approach to nationalism is much more direct than other scholars. To Breuilly, nationalism is primarily about power and asserts that other factors such as culture, ideology, identity and class are secondary factors (Breuilly 1982:2). With power comes control of the state which is why nationalism is so powerful. This analysis, however, overlooks power sharing agreements. What Breuilly neglects, is whether greater autonomy satisfies a given population's desire for power and therefore, for an independent state? Power then may be subservient to the recognition of culture, ideology, identity and class through power sharing. As Breuilly correctly identifies power is relevant in demands for statehood.

Eric Hobsbawm is a unique contributor to the literature because he discusses mainstream nationalist movements but also adds valuable insight into the use of sport, specifically football, and how it contributes to the rise of nationalism. This discussion takes place in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* whereby a nation such as Scotland can showcase its heritage and identity on the world stage through sport (as I will discuss later in the section on autonomy or independence). The link between sport and politics is relatively easy given that "even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation" (Hobsbawm 1992:143). Moreover, this is a prime venue for political socialization whereby

belief in the nation or movement can be built. The SNP has, in various sections, stated this in its 2005 manifesto which is why this is the next logical step in the chain for evaluating whether Scotland will become independent in a post-Blair Britain.⁶

Why the SNP?

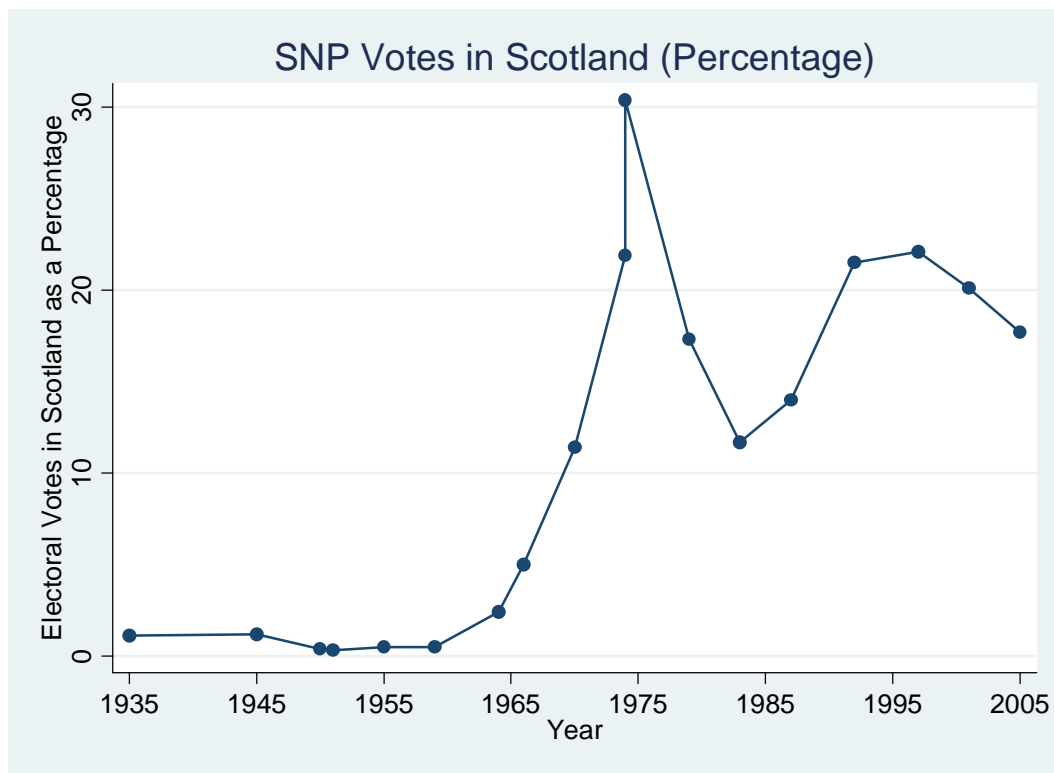
The SNP was founded in 1934 after a merger between parties supporting outright independence (the National Party of Scotland formed in 1928) and greater autonomy (the Scottish Party formed in 1931) within the United Kingdom (Hanham 1969:163). The SNP subscribes to the historical notion of Scotland as an independent state with national homogeneity. However, it also embraces a new heterogeneous Scotland that is inclusive and abides by regular standards for liberal democracies (Ichijo 2004:32). The SNP, in the political realm, filled the vacuum of electoral choice for Scottish nationalism that had been non-existent since the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 (Ichijo 2004:33).

The SNP first ran in the General Election of 1935, however, the party only succeeded in getting a small percentage of the popular vote in Scotland and existed mainly on the electoral fringes (Brand 1978:3). It remained this way until the discovery of North Sea Oil in the 1960's when the SNP was able to use this as a tangible argument for independence. The General Election of 1970 proved to be a breakthrough for the SNP when they obtained over 10% of the vote and won their first (non by-election) seat in the House of Commons. The 1970's proved to be a peak for the SNP, specifically in October 1974, when they won over 30% of the vote. This provided the catalyst for the devolution referendum in 1979. The SNP then fell in popularity during the 1980's before surging over

⁶ www.snp.org.uk "Our Manifesto for Independence", 1 April 2005.

20% again in the 1990's.⁷ Figure 1 provides an idea of how the SNP has performed over the years in Westminster and, despite the fact that some SNP voters do not want independence (which I will discuss further in the autonomy or independence section), the party advocates this platform and will likely attempt to hold a referendum in independence. Study of their electoral success, therefore, is pivotal to understanding if and/or when Scotland may become independent.

Figure 1. SNP Votes in Scotland as a Percentage in the Westminster Elections, 1935-2005



Despite the success of the SNP in Scotland, there were very few actual seats in the House of Commons that went to the SNP. The high point came in October 1974 when the

⁷ <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-059.pdf>

SNP won 11 seats. However, this is still a mere fraction of the over 600 seats in Westminster which meant that their voice remained relatively small. It was not enough to satisfy their hunger for more representation and another referendum on devolution was tabled under Tony Blair in 1997.

Figure 2. SNP Seats in Westminster Elections, 1935-2005

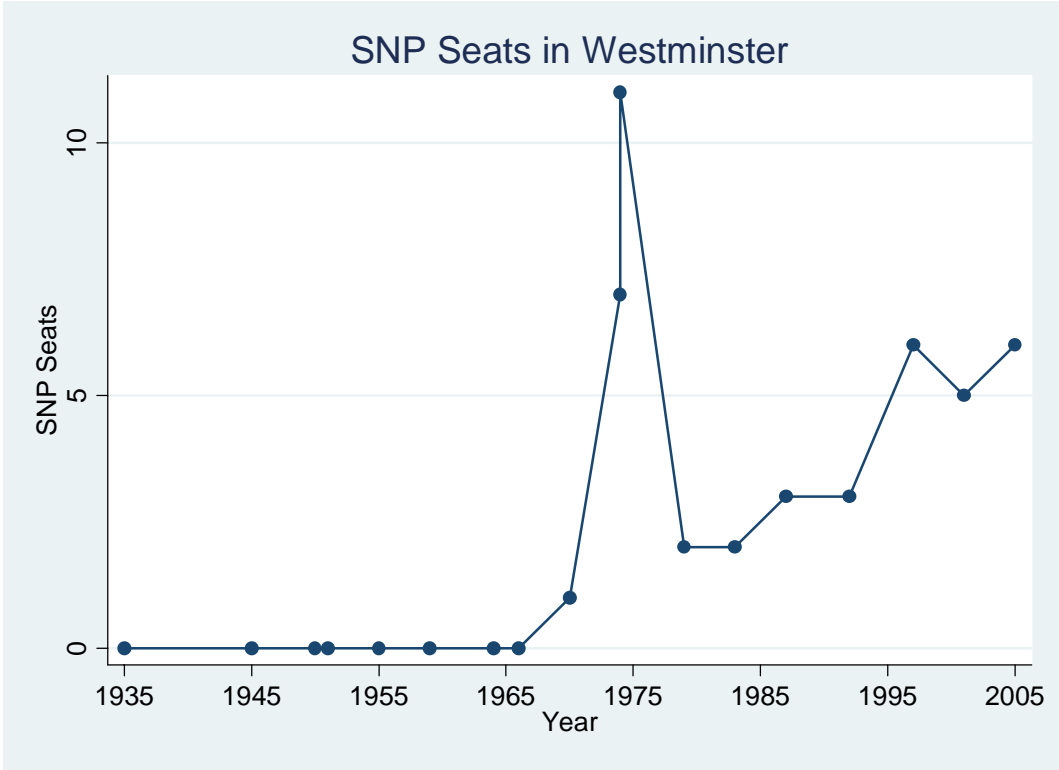
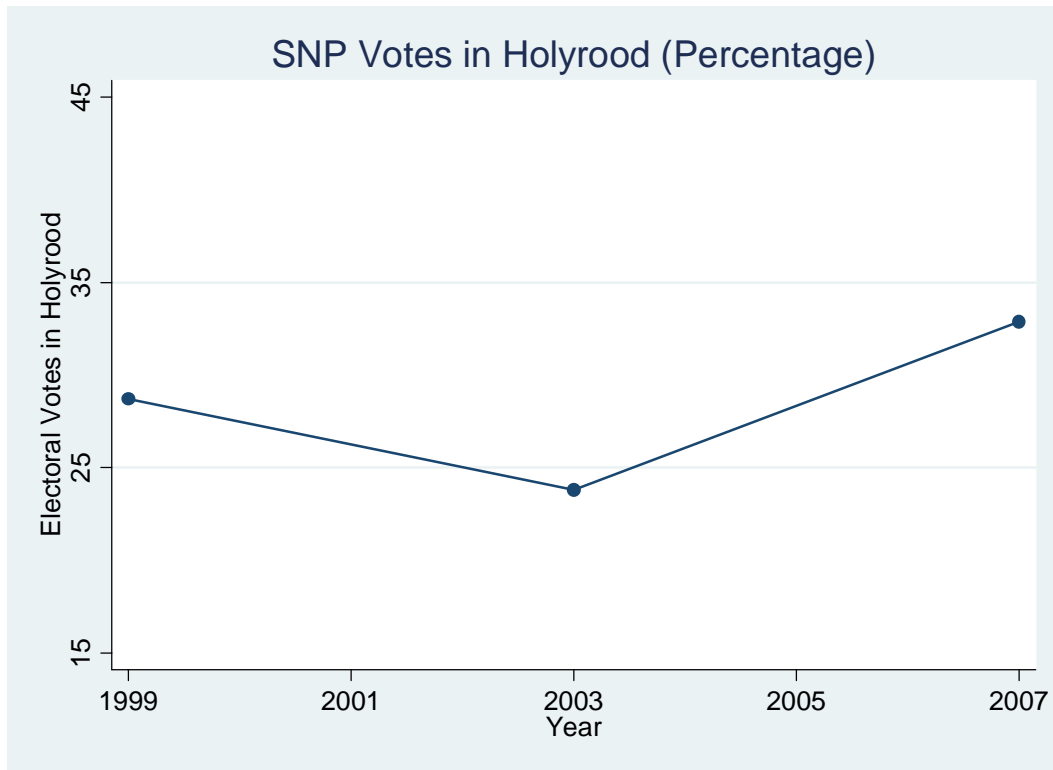


Figure 2 shows the number of SNP Seats in the House of Commons from 1935 through 2005. In total, the number of Scottish seats in Westminster reached its high point of 72 (659 overall). For the 2005 election, however, it was reduced to 59 of 646 seats due to The Scotland Act (which created the Scottish Parliament) and contained an agreement to

end Scotland's overrepresentation in Westminster.⁸ Figure 3 below shows the number of SNP votes as a percentage in Scottish elections.

Figure 3. SNP Votes as a Percentage in Scottish Elections, 1999-2007



Since Scotland's seats in Westminster have decreased, the new Scottish Parliament may well show how Scots seek to determine their future and the Scottish elections may well be more important than those for Westminster. To account for this, the Scottish Parliament was set-up in such a way so as to make majority governance difficult and, therefore, dissuade independence from the government agenda. Seats can be obtained through both constituency and regional votes, but this will likely require approximately 45% of the popular vote to get a majority of seats in parliament. Given a threshold of 50%

⁸ BBC News. "Scottish constituency cull begins" http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/4093765.stm

of the seats to have the power to table any legislation, it will be difficult for the SNP to successfully table a referendum. This is true unless, of course, other parties help them if and when legislation is introduced to hold a referendum on independence.

The Comparative Politics of Peaceful Secession

There are two specific ways in which peaceful secession can occur. First, a parliament can vote for secession as was the case with Norway seceding from Sweden in 1905 and the “Velvet Divorce” of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 (Young, 1995; Leff, 1996). This may take further wrangling before secession is allowed, but it can happen this way (even if it is unlikely). Second, if a referendum is tabled, then a successful vote can lead to secession. Again, there may be further wrangling, but if the referendum is legitimate and supported by the international community, then the result will likely stand. The most recent example of a successful referendum in which secession occurred was in 2006 when Montenegro voted to secede from its union with Serbia even after the European Union set a 55% threshold.⁹ This, it has been argued, was undemocratic on the part of the EU and may have led to violence if Montenegrins had voted in favor of independence with 50-54.9% of the vote. Understandably, the EU was still dealing with the former Yugoslavia, a country that ripped itself apart in the early and mid 1990’s, but it has certainly made future referendum votes more difficult to assess, especially when the expectation, in a democracy, is for a straight majority vote.

Scotland could, in theory, secede using either the parliamentary vote or a referendum. The parliamentary vote is unlikely because it will be seen as less legitimate by

⁹ BBC News. “Country Profile: Montenegro”
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/5033274.stm

voters, some of which may have voted for the SNP for reasons other than independence. Yet, this was the way in which the Czech and Slovak Republics split in 1993 and is therefore a feasible option that should be considered. We could also see, as the SNP have proposed, a referendum on independence. First Minister, Alex Salmond has repeatedly made promises of tabling this referendum and, therefore, we must take his public policy seriously.¹⁰

There are plenty of legal precedents then for Scotland to become an independent state in the near future. Moreover, secession has a precedent in liberal democratic countries and referendums have been set to decide this fate. The SNP has proposed a referendum on Scottish independence in the near future and there are precedents for this. Despite the ability to set a referendum, some territories¹¹ such as Quebec, have opted for autonomy over secession in their two defeated plebiscites of 1980 and 1995 (Young 1995). The mechanism of a referendum has precedence with Quebec and this serves as a tangible model for Scottish independence (Lynch 2005). It is, therefore, worth exploring whether Scottish voters would be happy with autonomy and a Parliament (as Blair argued) or outright independence (as Salmond desires).

Autonomy versus Independence

While there is certainly precedent for secession even amongst consolidated democracies, it is unclear as to whether Scottish voters actually advocated outright independence or merely significant autonomy within the British state? David McCrone's (2004) work is superior in

¹⁰ BBC News. "Salmond in independence promise"
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/6255222.stm

¹¹ Quebec is a province of Canada, but I am using the term "territory" because, depending on the jurisdiction, many different names are used (state, province, county, canton, department etc.)

this area and it is not the intention of this work to add to this, but to raise some additional points. The arrival of the Scottish parliament, after all, in 1999 brought about the most radical upheaval of the British constitution since the secession of Ireland in 1921. With the secession of Ireland, there is a precedent for independence to be obtained by one of the 'home nations' of the United Kingdom. While the circumstances were very different, the end result continues to drive the expectations of the SNP. Ireland is held up as an example of a modern state excelling in Europe despite its size. Indeed, there are many similarities between Ireland and Scotland. Both have a very similar Celtic history, both have similar sized populations and both were/are under the rule of Westminster. Ireland is certainly more Roman Catholic than Scotland, but the Scots also have a significant Catholic population. If religion can still be determined as a reason for separate identity in a secular United Kingdom and Europe, then claims of independence based on identity differences including religion can be advanced.

McCrone argues that Scotland is not a nation, at least on linguistic or religious grounds as Wales or Catalonia might be, rather it has a more mature nationalism celebrating idea of being Scottish over being British (McCrone 2004:215). Thus Scotland has more in common with Ireland and Denmark (as well as independence in Europe which will be discussed in the next section) than it does to Wales or Catalonia. Even with the SNP, however, the line between independence and autonomy is not as clear as votes for a political party suggest. For example, one-third of SNP voters do not want independence, yet one-third of Labour voters do want independence (McCrone 2004:217). The lines are blurred here, but nonetheless, votes for the SNP do give some sense of overall Scottish

feelings towards independence (which is why I have left the four graphs in throughout the paper).

Sport, since the popularization of international competition has provided perhaps the most visible expression of Scotland on the world stage, is an important issue that helps to rally Scottish nationalism. Scotland's endeavors, especially on football and rugby pitches, have provided this small nation of 5 million people with a vast recognition well beyond their size and economy. Sport has also allowed Scottish people to celebrate their successes (and failures) against England and the rest of the world. It is an important part of the study of nationalism as alluded to by Eric Hobsbawm. There are some famous victories in football that are worth highlighting with regards to nationalism because they accentuate Scottish nationalism. One such victory includes Scotland's 1977 victory at Wembley whereby Scottish fans invaded the pitch after the match and chanted, "Give us an assembly, we'll give you back your Wembley" (Holt and Mason 2000:134). There are times, consequently, when politics and sport meet and the lines between enjoyable competition and serious political debate become blurred. Perhaps autonomy is enough for these fans, but perhaps they want more than that. This is all the more important in contemporary British politics.

The question of whether autonomy is enough to satisfy the Scottish population is a pertinent one after the departure of Blair. He certainly played an integral part in creating a devolved parliament ignoring calls from his predecessor, John Major, that "devolution was the Trojan horse to independence" (Major 1999). To the contrary, Blair sought to end provide autonomy in order to minimize the appeal of the SNP (Stephens 2004:97). This is, in many regards, Tony Blair's gamble with regards to autonomy or independence. If he

passes, he will have perhaps cured Britain's worst political complexions; if he fails, his leadership will have been responsible for opening the door to independence and Tom Nairn's prophecy of Britain breaking-up may well become reality.

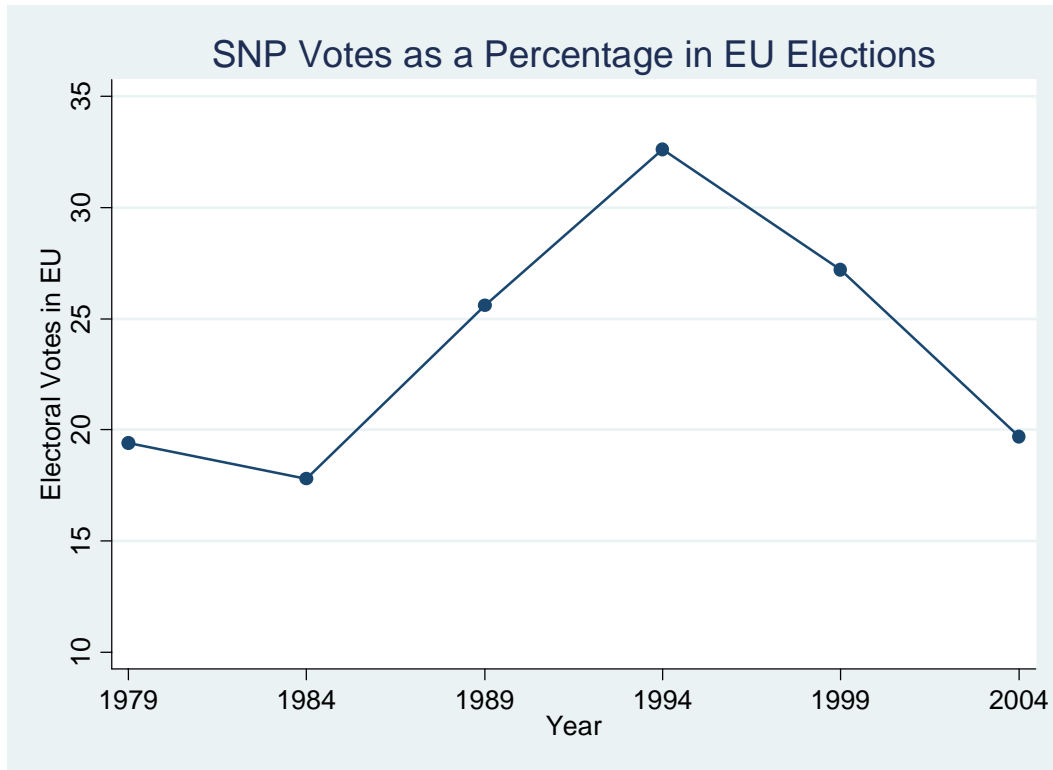
Scotland, however, is not alone in dealing with this question. Many other regions in consolidated democracies are also trying to resolve issues surrounding a significant lobby for peaceful secession. Catalonia in Spain, Quebec in Canada and Flanders in Belgium, among others, are all dealing with similar situations so international standards too will have their bearing on what happens in the United Kingdom. The debate is all the more pertinent with the rise of the European Union and the concept of being independent in a supranational Europe.

Independence in Europe?

The contemporary debate between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism in Europe is one that still has no definitive answers. In many ways the jurisdiction of the European Union trumps that of national governments, but this debate is quite different in the United Kingdom given its historic animosity to excessive continental integration. It is evident from the success of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) that staying out of Europe is a successful electoral platform in the UK.

Likewise, the SNP, historically, opposed the EU (Ichijo 2004:1). This all changed, however, in 1988 when the SNP launched their election promise of "independence in Europe" in order to better state its *raison d'être* (Ichijo 2004:48). Supranationalism is still a viable option for Europe and while it may not become a political state in the near future, there are some signs that it could happen.

Figure 4. SNP Votes as a Percentage in EU Elections, 1979-2004



As we can see in Figure 4, the votes for the SNP increased significantly after the 1988 platform of “independence in Europe”. The high water mark came in 1994 when the SNP passed 30% of the vote. The problem, however, with EU elections is that a) turnout is very low which leads to discussions of democratic deficit and illegitimacy and b) the SNP has only ever won 2 seats in the now 785 seats European Parliament. Independence in Europe, therefore, is worth mentioning, but is not likely to bring about the realization of a new Scotland post-Blair.

Britain after Blair

Tony Blair left Number 10 Downing Street on June 27, 2007 and was replaced by his Chancellor of the Exchequer and longtime friend and foe, Gordon Brown. This was not a

major shift given that Blair and Brown have long been linked in the Labour Party and it was, for the vast majority of time, expected that Brown would eventually take over from Blair. The prospects for Scottish independence may, therefore, be quelled given that Brown, a Scotsman, will be leading the United Kingdom, but the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary election does seem to suggest otherwise.¹²

With the SNP coming to power at Holyrood and Alex Salmond becoming First Minister, the prospects for Scottish independence are certainly more feasible than at any time since the Act of Union in 1707. The 2007 election saw the SNP win 47 seats which, while still a minority, was the largest number of seats in parliament. Alex Salmond then announced that he would like to timetable a referendum in his first 100 days in office and he has reiterated this point on numerous occasions.¹³

Salmond, however, despite his bullish nature, is still in a precarious position due to governing in a minority situation, so he must be careful not to overstep his boundaries or potentially cause massive defeat in the next election. Unlike other parliamentary systems, Scotland has fixed elections so Salmond will not have to face the public again before 2011. However, there are other means to take power away from him. Some of these are more difficult to accomplish which is, in part, why Salmond continues to be so outspoken about the prospects of holding a referendum on independence.

The Scottish Parliament alone does not have the final say on issues in the United Kingdom. Westminster can still amend what occurs at Holyrood, but it too has to be careful given the propensity of Scottish voters to decide in the next elections (in Scotland and the United Kingdom). However, the Prime Minister is still vitally important to the process of

¹² <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-07/SB07-21.pdf>

¹³ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/6255222.stm

holding a referendum on independence in Scotland. The next national election in the United Kingdom may have significant ramifications for the independence movement in Scotland. While it is too early to speculate for a Westminster election in 2009 or 2010, polling in February 2007¹⁴ suggested that Conservative leader David Cameron may win and become the next Prime Minister (although this has changed now). At the present, however, two new leaders have emerged and they will, in the interim, have to deal with the Scottish question of autonomy or independence.

Brown and Salmond

This is an interesting time for the United Kingdom with recent changes to the Prime Minister position and the Scottish First Minister. Gordon Brown and Alex Salmond have come into power at similar times and this could be a time of great upheaval. Since, both leaders are relatively new to their respective offices, it is difficult to assess what they will really do in office. Anything more would be mere speculation. It is, however, worth taking a brief look at what could happen here, but it is important not to overstep boundaries and assume that certain public policies will be implemented.

In the interim, and fortunately for Brown, he does not have to face a Scottish referendum on independence immediately as this could have been terrible for him and his legacy. If Scotland were to secede, he certainly would have been remembered as one of the worst Prime Minister's in history (and his tenure would likely have been short). This is the key issue with regards to this paper, but he does not have to deal with it as of yet.

¹⁴ Glover, Julian. "Brown v Cameron- exclusive poll puts Labour behind 13 points"
<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/polls/story/0,,2017078,00.html> (20 February 2007)

If the Scottish Parliament were to table a referendum on independence in the next few years, then the situation facing Gordon Brown (if he is still in power) would be very similar to that of Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1995 with Quebec's referendum. Chrétien, after laughing off Quebec's chances for an 'oui' vote, found himself in an epic struggle late in the campaign to keep the country together (Young 1995). It would have been extremely embarrassing for Chrétien had he lost the referendum and his tenure as Prime Minister would almost certainly have come to a quick conclusion. In addition, the fact that Jean Chrétien was a Quebecer did not help him avoid a referendum. Likewise, just because Gordon Brown is a Scot, does not mean that he will be immune from a referendum on independence during his tenure as Prime Minister.

While predicting the future can be a dangerous occupation, it is likely that Alex Salmond will attempt to call a referendum on independence because his party has stood for this since its inception. Salmond continues to advance the notion that he would table a referendum and that he openly seeks independence.¹⁵

Conclusions

Scottish independence has, in some regards, captured the imagination of some Scots since 1707 as evidenced by the early Jacobite Rebellions. In more recent years, however, with the founding of the Scottish National Party in 1934, the idea has become much more pragmatic. It did take until 1961 for a real electoral breakthrough to occur and for the 1970 election for SNP to gain notoriety for politics rather than the fringes. Moreover, the SNP has now emerged as a force to be reckoned. With devolution, Scots now have a voice over their own constituency; although, the powers are quite limited. The SNP now controls the

¹⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/6255222.stm

Parliament and the likelihood of independence is, perhaps, the greatest it has ever been. Scottish nationalism is on a high and the opportunity and desire, therefore, still exist after 300 years of union. Tony Blair, during his reign as Prime Minister, facilitated and watched over the creation of the Scottish Parliament and this may well provide the vehicle through which Scotland can achieve independence through a referendum. Should Scotland hold a referendum on independence, then it will directly affect the legacy of Tony Blair because he sanctioned the existence of its parliament and this mode for independence to come to fruition. To be fair to Blair, he did seek to eliminate an ongoing grievance in Scotland over their lack of autonomy (Stephens 2004:97), but this does not shirk his responsibility of the outcomes it creates.

Part of Tony Blair's legacy will also hinge upon the performance of Gordon Brown in office. Unfortunately for Brown, the SNP has come to power in the Scottish parliament and, therefore, the secession of Scotland is a viable prospect within his tenure. Devolution, as tabled by Blair's Labour party, created the scenario through which the SNP could gain power and secede from the United Kingdom. The SNP has now capitalized on the Scottish Parliamentary election of 2007 and its leader, Alex Salmond has often called for Scotland to become an independent state. Indeed, devolution may well have become the "Trojan horse to independence" as described by John Major (Major 1999). With the SNP in power, Scotland is, perhaps, the most likely it has been since 1707 to reversing the Act of Union bringing it into Great Britain. If this were to happen in the near future, Blair's legacy will certainly be affected by it. Scottish secession could well become a viable outcome in Britain after Blair.

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