

# Devolution in the uk | analysis



**ASSIGN  
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This essay has explained the process of devolution in the UK. It has also compared the UK with other countries, such as, Iran, Iraq, Spain, Belgium and Bahrain in respect of devolution.

It has been discussed the differences between the above countries in respect of continental, geopolitical, cultural and religious factors.

The process of devolution in the UK has been mentioned as a democratic process, and how nations have been allowed to express their political and cultural solicitations.

Comparisons and the differences between Catalans, Flanders and Bahrainians have been analysed. The essay also compared the differences between Wales and Kurdistan in respect of devolution.

It has been found that the people of Catalonia in Spain and Flanders in Belgium have got similar problems which are based on linguistic and historical conflicts.

It has been considered that the main problem between people in Bahrain, based on religious differences, because of the Sunni Muslim being in minority rule the Shi`i Muslims are in the majority.

According to the content of this essay, one of the main factors that encourage the minority nations towards separation and devolution is based on discriminatory policies by central government.

It has been mentioned that in democratic countries the process of devolution is more peaceful and more successful in comparison to non-democratic countries.

## Devolution in the UK

### Introduction

This assignment explains and covers the process of devolution in the UK and the advantages and disadvantages of devolution. It also compares the UK to other countries with similar situations, in respect of political, geopolitical, national, cultural and historical factors.

It will also discuss what shifts the nations towards devolution, why nations want more power from central government what are the barriers in the front of the process of devolution, who is slowing down the speed of decentralisation.

In order to compare and contrast the process of devolution in the UK , with other countries in Europe and even other countries outside of Europe, for example, countries such as Iran, Iraq, Spain, Belgium, Turkey and Bahrain.

To explore these information within this essay some sources need to be searched, such as, internet, books and journals.

This essay will cover the history and foundation of devolution in the UK; it will explain the process of devolution in countries within the UK, such as, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In terms of barriers in the fore front of devolution by political parties in the UK, this assignment discuss and discover the reasons, why those parties preventing the process of devolution, such as , Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

Main body

History and foundation of devolution in the UK

It looks at the history of devolution in the UK, how a form of administrative devolution started in Scotland in 1885, when the Scottish Office was established as a department of the UK government. The Scottish Office for some issues had more responsibility which in England and Wales was dealt with by Whitehall departments. (Jennifer, 2008)

There were some other attempts by the Scottish government such as the referendum in 1979 to establish a Scottish Assembly which wasn't supported by the majority of the electorate. In 1989 the Scottish Constitutional Convention was established which was supported by the people of Scotland and political parties to draw up a detailed blueprint for devolution including a proposal for a directly elected Parliament for Scottish with wide legislative power. (Jennifer, 2008)

There are some other countries with similar geopolitical situation as the UK. The comparison of the UK with countries like Iran, Iraq, Syria, Spain and Belgium, there are differences between each country, in respect of geographical, cultural, political, and economical factors and religion but they have something in common. All of them have been established by a variety

of nations, and these countries have been ruled by one nation which is in the majority, however, the nation rule such countries often is not in majority. For example, over 70% of the population in Bahrain are Shi`i Muslim but the government run by Sunnis in the minority. (Ojallan, 1999, p 120)

There are some reasons why other nations in those countries want more power, autonomy or independence. A reason could be that the nation which is in power deprives and tries to assimilate the smaller nations, therefore, deprived nations attempt to obtain their own independence or autonomy or to have more power to make appropriate and enthusiastic decisions for their own regions. (Ojallan, 1999, p 134)

To gain these kinds of powers two things have usually been used as political tools, devolution and revolution. In terms of devolution there are some similarities between the UK and Spain in respect of multinationals, there are other nations in Spain such as Catalonia and the Basques, they have their own autonomy. (Ojallan, 1999, p 140)

The effect of devolution in the UK and how nations such as Wales, Scotland, and Ireland have been affected by devolution, People who lives in Wales see the advantages of devolution in Wales. As Welsh people are in the process of devolution they see how devolution create a greater regional identity and develops those structures that support the growth of business, political power, social welfare and culture which suit the people in the region. (Mitchell, 2009)

Devolution enables Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to have more power to make their own decisions on the basis of cultural, politics and economical factors relevant for their regional demands. (Ryder, 2004)

## HISTORY OF DEVOLUTION IN WALES

To really understand the importance of devolution in Wales, people need to look at the history of the country. As in every country in the world, the people of Wales have got their own geographical, cultural and political identity. People in the Wales faced a linguistic challenge from 18th century till 20th century, when the Welsh language was forbidden by the government in Westminster. In 1845 the Minister of State of Education was summoned to the Westminster parliament for an inquiry.

As a result of that a commission of 3 young English advocates carried out an examination and ended up with a report which was published in 1847.

Finally, they came to the conclusion that as well as poverty and degradation, the Welsh background and language had created barriers and affected the economical, educational and moral progress. As Sir Reginald Coupland mentioned " It is not surprising that the Commissioners should have swept aside the ancient language of Wales as ruthlessly as Macauley a decade earlier had swept aside the ancient languages of India". But the commissioners ignored the fact that the reasons for poor educational, economical, moral conditions and poverty in Wales were discriminatory policies in central government. Thus, people of Wales had no chance except being poor and that is why Wales wanted more power and the people of Wales continued to fight to protect their identity and prevent the English

ruling class from considering Welsh people as the same contempt with the people of Africa and India 50 years ago. (Kireey, 2007)

By looking at the history of the United Kingdom's flag how introduced and imposed to the UK by two Acts then you see the advantages of devolution in Wales. Henry VIII announced himself as king of Wales. Those acts forbade the Welsh language from being used in official places, this encouraged young wealthy Welsh man to go to London for their fortune and influence, and stop speaking Welsh.

The English rulers attempted to change or remove the Welsh cultural principles and identity. This trend continued until 1746 when a Law was passed by parliament stating any Act by English Parliament automatically would include Wales, this process continued until 1967. (Kireey, 2007)

In the 20th century Wales started getting back what they had lost in identity, accordingly, the Ministry of Education was created in 1907 and in 1957 Wales got Minister of State and gradually in 1964 he was given a position in the cabinet of the UK.

From 1979 till 1997 when the Tory party was lead by Thatcher and Major, unemployment rose, coal, steel mines were destroyed, thus, the relationship between Tories and the Welsh people got darker and people lost their hope with the Tories. These poor policies and (historical conflict and cultural differences) were a good start for Welsh nationalists to encourage the public to decentralise the power and prepare Wales for a referendum in 1979 when the Labour Party took over the government.

By the time Labour came to power in 1979 devolution was promised along with Scotland and Ireland. The first referendum occurred in 1979 whether to have a devolved Assembly or not. However, the majority of Welsh the people voted against devolution in the referendum. (Kireey, 2007)

Discriminatory policies from Central Government towards Wales were sceptically considered as factors of devolution in Wales. Three decades ago majority of Welsh voters rejected the government Wales devolution Act in a Referendum in 1979 by 79. 8% to 20. 20%. Nearly two decades later Welsh people voted in a referendum in 1997 for devolution which resulted in 50. 3% in favour and 49. 7% against .( Kireey, 2007)

Therefore, the referendum in 1997 delivered the establishment of the National Assembly of Wales; this referendum shows how people`s opinion has changed in Wales during these two decades.

According to E. S. R. C (2004), (Economic and Social research Council) in a series of surveys they found out how Welsh people welcomed devolution and the continuation of that process and even in some cases demand a strong and powerful parliament for Wales and how these trend became a popular opinion. (Wyn , 2004)

According to the same survey, nearly two -thirds of the Welsh population are now in favour of devolution compare to 1979. People in Wales have more trust in National Assembly of Wales to act in Wales than the central government in Westminster. For instance, the same survey shows that 67. 6% of Welsh people trusted in the Welsh Assembly at least most of the time,



to act in Wales but only 23.1% of people said it doesn't make any difference for them.

Wales as other nations has got internal differences, thus, these differences undoubtedly played a great role to change people's attitude to welcome the referendum in 1997 and 1999 National Assembly for Wales election.

Politician in Wales focused on three suggestions in order to encourage Welsh voters to vote in favour of devolution, these were:

“ Strengthen the sense of Welsh national identity

Help to develop a more civic (rather than ethnic) Welsh identity

Strengthen Wales affinity with Britain”

According to ESRC (2004) the sense of Welsh national identity is stronger amongst younger voters. For example, this table in below shows the differences by age. (Wyn , 2004)

National Identity

**18-24**

**25-34**

**35-44**

**45-54**

**55-59**

**60-64**

**65+**

Welsh, Not British

27.4

22.3

25.9

23.1

20.0

20.0

20.8

More Welsh than British

36.9

32.5

30.7

24.5

25.0

28.8

21.9

British not Welsh

8.3

9.5

11.6

12.5

5.0

9.8

9.8

## **NATION IDENTITY BY AGE COHORT, 2003 (%) (Wyn, 2004)**

The three referendums in Wales

It was for the third time that the Welsh people voted for devolution in a referendum since 1979. There are some differences between the referendum in 1979, 1997 and 2011. The referendum in 1979 was the foundation of

devolution for further referendums in Wales. In spite of that, Welsh people voted against devolution in the first referendum.

The first referendum in 1979 created a positive atmosphere, however, the majority of the Welsh people voted against devolution because it was an informative start for future devolution referendums in Wales. The comparison of the second and third referendums shows the difference between now and thirty years ago in respect of people`s understanding about the advantages of devolution for the Welsh economy and cultural identities. (O`Reilly, 2011)

In a speech in Cardiff University the Former First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan, said that since the first devolution in 1979, Wales has created 120,000 more jobs and he believed it was the right time for Wales to have what Scotland and Northern Ireland had obtained decades ago.

On the other side, unofficial spokeswoman for True Wales group “ NO” campaigner, Rachel Banner, believes that Wales is in different stage compared to Scotland and Northern Ireland. She said, “ Northern Ireland has got its own particular traditions and Scotland has got its own educational system for hundred years”. (Withers, 2011)

Abby O`Reilly a news paper writer, believes that one of the main reasons that the majority of people voted against devolution in 1979 referendum was because people weren`t informed about the content and advantages of the devolution. She believes that a lot of the Welsh people were still confused whether vote ‘ yes’ or ‘ no’.

She also mentioned in her Guardian article, February 2011, “ My friends either have no interest in voting, or plan to vote ‘ yes’ ” . A vast number of the electorate currently range from confused to indifferent, with 29% unsure how to vote or planning to abstain. (O`Reilly, 2011)

She believes over 90% of welsh people read English newspapers which are devoid of Welsh news. She also believes Welsh politics are marginalised by English press.

However, one of the most effective tools to inform people about the content of voting is an official campaigns which is absent in the most of the time in Wales. (O`Reilly, 2011)

O`Reilly claims that, the main campaigner for True Wales tactically was short sighted and her aim wasn't only to inform people about the risk of yes vote for referendum, However, she was confused and didn't know the exact aim of referendum.

Banner was supported by Welsh rugby union executive Roger Lewis, however, she said, “ Yes for Wales was nonetheless denied public funding because legally campaigns must be funded on both sides, or not at all”.

(O`Reilly, 2011)

The common interest of nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland

The referendum in 1979 was a good opportunity for the nationalist parties in the UK to accelerate their political activities, such as Plaid Cymru and SNP

(Scottish National Party). Nationalism is used as a strong political method in politics in the UK. (Fusaro, 1979)

Unlike Nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, the two nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales they weren't violent and they were less familiar to the English people. Plaid Cymru and SNP both used the logical method of the referendum to raise people's attention and they have been more successful in elections in recent years.

The important ideological differences between SNP and Plaid Cymru were based on historical differences between Wales and Scotland. Another difference is Plaid Cymru usually is to the left in respect of politics, whilst SNP usually stands to the right of the centre. But they have got common interests to support each other in order to reduce the power of Westminster. (Fusaro, 1979)

The last referendum on 3th of May 2011, gives more power to Wales. This referendum was very vital and important for Welsh people in general and politicians in particular. Politicians as true representatives of the public in Wales can pass its own laws without asking for permission from Westminster.

The majority of constituencies in Wales voted in favour of allowing the Welsh Assembly to legislate instead of Westminster in devolved policy areas, such as health, education and transport. These new powers will be executed in May 2011. This is a clear indicator of a new history of true Wales to determine its own destiny and take the appropriate steps for a better Wales.

However, there are areas which will remain within the responsibility of central government; these are economy policies, defence and foreign affairs, policing, criminal justice, social security, employment and energy. (Wyn J, 2011)

Political parties have different views about devolution in Wales

Most of the Conservatives in Wales believed that the Plaid Cymru see devolution as a tool towards independence, thus, they were opposing Plaid Cymru idea of devolution. They were determined to confront further devolution in Wales, but in recent referendum on 3th of March 2011, the leadership of Conservatives in Wales was supporting the “ YES” campaign. (Jones, 2010)

This change in Conservatives policy towards devolution in Wales shows that people in Wales are determined to continue the process of devolution.

On the other side, Labour, Plaid and Liberal Democrats as usual supporting the process of devolution for further referendum, however, there are some members of Labour and Liberal Democrats are have no desire to show further devolution in Wales. The coalition between Labour and Plaid could squeeze the power of the Conservatives in Wales. (Copus, 2009)

Other significant reason that might help Nationalist Parties and Labour in Wales and Scotland was the discriminatory and wrong policies by the government of Thatcher before 1997.

During 1979 and 1990 when Thatcher was prime minster she changed the economical policies and deregulated the financial sector then as a result of <https://assignbuster.com/devolution-in-the-uk-analysis/>

that unemployment rose rapidly especially in Wales. All these factors and discriminatory policies of Conservatives made Thatcher the most unpopular prime minister in Wales.

The only political party in the UK that uniformly antagonised the devolution when it was approved in 1997 was Conservatives. (Jones, 2010)

One of the main reasons that Plaid Cymru is more successful, in compare to other political parties in Wales, Plaid Cymru was established in Wales in 1925 and the main ideology of the party was independence for Wales and Social Democracy.

Plaid Cymru unlike other parties in Wales concentrated on promoting and defending the culture and identity of Wales. The majority of Plaid Cymru supporters are located in the Welsh speaking areas in Wales; this is an indicator of how successful it was the nationalism slogans and policies of the party. (Simon, 2008)

The leaders of plaid Cymru focuses on Wales's economy, culture, language and identity. In the most of their speeches they don't mention England or other part of the UK. For instance, in a speech the leader of Plaid Cymru said that our party guaranteed over 50, 000 jobs and 30, 000 apprenticeships for Wales. He also said that Plaid `s policies have protected thousands of jobs in Wales during the hard recession and he also added that Wales economy will recover and once again will grow and the nation became wealthier. (Simon, 2008)

Brief comparison of Kurdistan and Wales



The first kingdom of Kurdistan was established 2711 years ago by king Dieko and they were known as median. Medians were in power until 580 BC, then gradually Cyrus the Great became the king of Median and Persian and incorporated both Median and Persian.

One of the main reasons that Cyrus could rule these two nations was because his mother was Median and his father was Persian, thus, it was more possible for him to incorporate both nations under his kingdom.

(Atroushi, 1994)

In the 19th century Kurdistan was divided by two emperors the Sunni Muslim Ottomans and the Shi`i Muslim Safavids until the last Kurdish prince of Ardlan in 1865. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, President Woodrow Wilson tried to help to establish the Kurdish state in 1919. The Lausanne Treaty in 1923 completely undermined the issue of an independent Kurdistan. Having an independent country among Kurdish people anywhere in the world became a dream.

One of the main differences between Wales and Kurdistan is the geopolitical location; the place where Wales is located in is Europe, this continent is the epicentre of democracy, tolerance and socialism in the world but the place where Kurdistan located is a place where countries still execute, imprison and torture the political activists. Unlike Wales Kurdistan has been occupied by some non democratic and dictator countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey they don't allow the Kurds to have referendum on independence.

Kurdistan unlike other occupied nations in the world has got more potential to be an independent state. Kurdistan is rich in oil and other minerals such

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as; copper, iron, coal. Kurdistan is one of the best places in the earth for agriculture and as we know Kurdistan is the mother of Neolithic revolution in Mesopotamia which is now known as Kurdistan. (Atroushi, 1994)

In March 1988 the world witnessed genocide against humanity in Halabja Kurdistan of Iraq. Friday March 1988 over 5000 humans lost their life by the chauvinist Arab government of Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people fled Kurdistan to neighbouring countries to save their lives.

However, after second Gulf War the resolution 688 of no fly zone was imposed to on the Iraqi government, under that resolution a part of Kurdistan got half autonomy. After the war against Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the collapse of the regime of Saddam Hussein in the same, Kurds in Iraq changed their solicitation from autonomy to federalism and this solicitation has been admired and accepted by international society and the majority of the Iraqi parliament. (Atroushi, 1994)

The differences between Catalan and Wales in respect of devolution

Catalonia incorporated with Spain for nearly 300 years, the existence of Catalonia goes back for more than 2000 years. Catalonia declared independence many time but hasn't been recognised by the Spanish government. Catalonia was a separate country and they had their own law and privileges until Felipe IV died in 1700.

Gradually Catalonia`s ancient right were abolished and they were banned from speaking, reading and writing and Catalan, it was a crime for anyone to speak Catalan and they were imprisoned and punished for it. They closed

down all Catalonia`s universities and replaced them with censored universities, they tried to destroy the Catalan culture and identity.

Finally, the first Spanish Republic was formed in 1873, the most important thing which surprised the Catalonia was, and the first two presidents of the Spanish republic were Catalan. However, this republic didn`t last more than one year but it was a good start and the opportunity for political parties to express themselves freely in other regions of Spain such as, Galicia and Basque country.

In spite of all barriers, attempts and ethnocentrism by the Spanish central government, Catalan not only didn`t become a lost nation, the Catalan language and traditions once again continued and showed its enriched culture. The Catalan economy`s success in the 19th century surprised the world and Spanish people in particular, these successes convinced central government, to accept and to believe in the ability of Catalonia .

The great culture, economy, politics and traditions of Catalans encouraged central government and various political parties in Spain with different ideologies such as, socialists, Republicans and Carlists to pay more attention and to show more support to the Lliga Regionalista.

Finally, in 1914 central government was convinced to offer some autonomy to Catalonia. But once again these concessions didn`t last long, in the beginning of the 20th century, when Miguel Primo de Rivera came to power in 1923 he executed his as a dictator in Spain, thus, once again the Catalan language was banned, his dictatorship lasted until 1930.

In 1931 the president of Generalitat came to power and he declared the federal republic of Catalonia but two years later a right wing government came to power in Madrid by general election. In 1936 dictator Franco became head of state of Spain. Franco was supported by his fascist allies, Italy and Germany. He killed, tortured and imprisoned many people in Spain. (Harris, 2008)

President Luis Companys was captured by Nazis in France and extradited to Spain where he was executed in 1940. Catalonia was under bad economical, political, cultural and linguistic repressions. In the 1950s some Catalan groups organised under cover activities. Abbot Escare of Montserrat, a religious leader, who was supported by the Vatican, determined to fight against Franco. Catalan once again took control of Catalan society after the death of Franco in 1975.

Finally, in 1980 the democratically elected Catalan parliament officially opened under the presidency of Jordi Pujol. In 2005 a new statute of autonomy was passed which guaranteed the Catalans identity as a nation but within the Spanish state. (Harris, 2008)

#### Devolution in the Northern Ireland

As we know the Northern Ireland and the republic of Ireland they were one nation and one country in 1169. Ireland was occupied by the Romans in 1169 and they ruled Ireland until middle Ages. After British victory in 1603 over Ulster, Britain controlled completely whole Ireland until 1801, but Irish people like other occupied nations resisted freeing their country. (NK, 2003)

Finally, Britain inevitably signed a truce in 1921 which was considered as final “ solution of Irish problems” to solve the dispute between the Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants and the ends of British occupation on the whole country. The above Armistice recognised the Free State of Republic of Ireland and continuation of the Northern part of Ireland as a part of United Kingdom.

One of the main factors which encouraged the division of the Ireland and separated Ireland to the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland was religion. Majority of the southern part of Ireland are Catholics and the majority of the Northern part of Ireland is Protestants, thus, these religious differences since the Romans occupation in 1169 created conflict between Irish people in North and south of country. (NK, 2003)

In 1997 along side of the Scotland and Wales, devolution return to the Northern Ireland in 1998 under the Good Friday Agreement, as the result of this agreement, the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and power sharing executive was occurred.

In March 2010 the Hillsborough Agreement, transferred the power of policing and justice to the Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement in 1998, transferred the below matters to the Northern Ireland:

Transferred Matters: Education, Health and Agriculture.

Reserved Matters: Policing and Criminal Law, which will be transferred to the assembly at the later date.

Excepted Matters: Matters of National importance, such as defence, taxation and foreign policy.( NK, 2003)

### The devolution in Belgium

To find out the conflict between Dutch speaking Flanders and French speaking Francophone Wallonia we have to look at the history of Belgium.

The name Belgium comes from Begae a Celtic tribe. Belgium existed before the first century. Belgium was occupied by Romans during the first century. Gradually, Romans lost their control over Belgium, and then Spain in 1519 invaded Belgium until 1713. The Belgium was occupied by Austria in 1713 to 1794.

Belgium was ruled by different invaders since first century, but after all these rulers, once again Belgium was occupied by Napoleonic France in 1795. During the French Revolution but after the defeat of Napoleon`s army, Belgium divided from French territory and joined the Netherland as a part of the country by the congress of Vienna in 1815. (Humperdink, 2011)

Finally, Belgium became independent from the Netherlands via an uprising of Belgians. The celebration of an independent Belgium didn't last longer than 1914. Belgium was occupied twice during 1914 and 1940 by Germany.

Belgium was liberated by British, Canadian and American armies in 1944; these liberties helped Belgium to regain the economic and political power. But the language and political differences between Dutch Speaking Flanders and French speaking Wallonia encouraged the increase of division between them.

The linguistic differences in Belgium encouraged Flanders and Wallonia people toward separation. According to a poll by Le Soir newspaper, over 49% of Wallonia people who are French speakers would like to become French if their country broke up.

The majority of Flanders welcome autonomy because Flemish people are richer than Francophone's. Flanders comprises 60% of Belgium population and they produce 75% of GDP and they pay more than 80% of the net taxes. Therefore the above economical differences might encourage the Flanders to attempt for more devolution and these kinds of nationalist movements alarmed the Francophone's that Flanders nationalist encouraging Dutch speakers towards independence. (Humperdinck, 2011)

However, Kriss Peeters the Ministry - President of Flanders, in an interview with to BBC News said " I am not in favour of independence ", he also insisted the " solidarity " between Flanders and others will remain". Gie Goris the editor of Mo Magazine believes the countries which the political parties formed on the basis of ethnics, for instance, " like Sri Lanka are inherently unstable".

The aim of the New Flemish Alliance (NVA) separatist party is an independence country for Flanders the Dutch speakers in the Belgium. In an election in 2010 NVA took 27 seats of 150 seats of Belgium parliament. This support by Flanders, to NVA in the above election, indicates the interest of Flanders towards an independence country for Flanders. (Hughes, 2010)

These Linguistic borders are one of the main factors to create fundamental division within the countries like Belgium. The comparison of countries, such <https://assignbuster.com/devolution-in-the-uk-analysis/>

as Belgium and Wales in respect of devolution, explains the impact of nationalism on public policies and how this ethnic linguistic differences divide the societies and creates separatist opinion and accelerate the this kind division towards independence. (Erk, 2003)

## Conclusion

This assignment has discussed the idea of nationalism as one of the main factors that encourage people towards devolution. The activities of nationalists based on geopolitical, cultural differences and these differences created a kind of cultural and political hegemony. Thus, the countries such as Wales and Scotland, feel that their culture and identity assimilated, they believe the way central government dealing with their regions is based on discriminatory policies. It has been found that Religion as culture and linguistic differences is also one of the factors that divided the nations.

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