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## Scotland as perceived through its two referenda on devolution

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Postrzeganie Szkocji z perspektywy dwukrotnego referendum  
w sprawie przekazania władzy

### SUMMARY

The paper looks at the notion of hybridity of the Scottish devolution narrative from the perspective of two breakthrough events shaping the political discourse about Scotland's future as part of the United Kingdom. Such discourse, steeped in heated debates and polemics held over the last three hundred years of the Scottish and English union, has been repeatedly initiated at the institutional level, twice taking the form of referenda, of which the first one held in 1979 saw bitter defeat, and the other, held eighteen years later in 1997, was successfully endorsed, opening up a wide array of possibilities as part of the so-called "new opening" of the Scottish political scene. A brief analysis of the essence of the defeat suffered and subsequent victory gained helps one better understand the dynamics of the changes which, over the last eighteen years, significantly impacted a so very diverse perception of Scotland's place and role in a new reality both as part of the UK and of the European Union.

**Keywords:** Scottish narrative, political discourse, English-Scottish union, Scotland's role in the new reality

The United Kingdom was long held up as a model of a state-society overwhelmed by centralization. Putting aside Northern Ireland's case, there was no division of political authority in the UK, despite a limited number of intermediary institutions between the national government and the localities. Although regional authorities were in operation, and a certain degree of recognition acknowledged Scotland's local needs, with a Secretary of State in the Cabinet, there were no states or provinces which could share power with the national government. It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century that the enactment of unprecedented

measures of constitutional significance was finalised, triggering off a series of vast changes within the country's political, social and economic framework.

Devolution, one of the most far-reaching changes in the British constitution since the secession of part of Ireland in the 1920s, has impacted both the institutional structure and the distribution of power between the state and sub-state levels. Over the last couple of decades, the UK has witnessed a huge dynamics of changing demand for different degrees of self-government in Scotland, especially through the perspective of the 1979 and 1997 referenda. Manifesting themselves as two distinctive moments in the post-war history of devolution, both revealed two starkly different attitudes to the notion of Scottish home rule: that of 1979, when devolution was rejected; and that of 1997, when it was emphatically endorsed.

In the discussion of the complex nature of the referenda, it is necessary to consider the multifarious network of Scotland's power relations, embedded in the historical arrangement known under the name of the Union Compact, the peculiar pre-modern formation of the United Kingdom, which Tom Nairn, a writer and expert on nationalism, British institutions and Scotland, once referred to as "occluded multinationalism"<sup>1</sup>, whereby Scotland, one of the three provincial components of the new state, merged with England, the hegemon, consolidating over time into a territorial, political and monetary union, without, however, assimilating entirely.

Scotland's formal amalgamation with England, dating back to 1707, did not imply formal subjugation, but rather a conspicuous process in which the formation of Scotland's territorial shape became contingent upon entering a unique bargain with the English rulers, thus allowing for consensual unification of respective governments as a natural consequence of the earlier Union of Crowns of 1603. Much of the agency for this alliance emanated from indigenous capitalists, and their prospective access to the technological and economic resources offered by England, including the numerous possibilities of trade in the vast markets of the Empire.

Although surrendering political statehood, Scotland did not become fully incorporated by its southern neighbour, retaining, as part of a unique geopolitical consensus, a considerable measure of civil and cultural autonomy. In particular, it could preserve its system of local government, and it held on to its "holy trinity" of legal, religious and educational institutions, including its four universities. Over the years, all these factors have significantly contributed to fashioning the country's conceptual and symbolic shape, as well as its institutional texture. Essentially, despite being set within the constitutional parameters of the British Crown and governmental apparatus, the Union safeguarded Scotland's position

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<sup>1</sup> T. Nairn, *Sovereignty after the election*, "New Left Review" 224 (1997): 4.

as a “territorial unit” with a “sufficiently diversified civil society and institutional practice to render its identity much more complex than in those countries where state and society are one”.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the 1707 treaty did not abolish the nation of Scotland, but left all the pivotal components underlying the territorial and conceptual shape of a region: the name, boundary and spatial structure virtually intact. In short, the legacy of the Union could be succinctly expressed as a step towards rendering Scotland a hybrid society, in which people’s lives and actions began to be shaped by a multitude of what Paasi refers to as “narratives of space”.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Celtic background of the Scottish people was recognized, and certain unique regional elements, including separate educational and legal systems, were taken for granted, the so-called mainstream view was that the Scots were rather “picturesque cousins of the English”,<sup>4</sup> blending their family differences comfortably within the idea of a unified nationality and culture artfully embedded in the notion of Britishness. Protesting against the assumptions of this idea, some of the Scottish dissenters in the latter half of the nineteenth century intensified their demands for a separate branch of administration, and in response to it, a Scottish Office, headed by a minister, was established in 1885. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the National Covenant, asking for parliamentary devolution, was enhanced by almost two million supporters. Only a certain number of people, however, who shared the separatist sentiments were committed enough to the Scottish cause to break with the UK’s political consensus and vote for a nationalist party. Thus, until 1970, the SNP was almost completely unrepresented in Parliament, with their popular vote usually relegated under “others” in the party election statistics.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of the unprecedented rise in the SNP’s popularity, followed in the 1970s by the government’s response with its devolutionary proposal, it is clear to see its radically new dimension of internal policy venturing into territory, admittedly, relatively strange and uncharted not only by British experience, but by that of other countries as well. As outlined in one of the pertinent White Papers, “the constitutional changes proposed [were] the most fundamental of their kind in Great Britain for centuries, and [raised] complex and far-reaching problems. There [were] few parallels anywhere for dividing between two levels of government, the powers and functions long exercised centrally in a unitary state”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> D. McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: the Sociology of a Stateless Nation*. Routledge, London, 1998, 21.

<sup>3</sup> A. Paasi, *Region and place: regional identity in question*. “Progress in Human Geography” 4 (2003): 476.

<sup>4</sup> H. Lazer, *Devolution, Ethnic Nationalism and Populism in the United Kingdom*. “Federalism and Ethnicity” 7.4 (1977): 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Parliament Command Paper, *Our Changing Democracy: Devolution to Scotland and Wales*. Cmnd 6348, HMSO. 1975: 1.

The history of the devolutionary development began with the 1969 founding of the Royal Commission on the Constitution, commonly referred to as the Kilbrandon Commission, which issued its major report in October 1973. Its recommendations were developed into prospective legislation in two successive White Papers: *Democracy and Devolution: Proposals for Scotland and Wales*, issued in September 1974, and *Our Changing Democracy: Devolution to Scotland and Wales*, issued in November 1975. One of the pivotal structural changes within the UK's constitutional framework was that the future Scottish Assembly would be democratically elected and would have the power to legislate on a number of devolved matters that pertained exclusively to Scotland. Among these subjects, the Kilbrandon Commission had recommended local government, roads, education (aside from universities), arts and culture, agriculture, social work, health, sports, tourism, the police, and justice. Since this Scottish legislative power covered such a wide range of subjects, "control of the great bulk of public services which affect the people of Scotland [was] in the hands of the new Scottish institutions".<sup>7</sup>

However, despite being endowed with its own legislature, Scotland was still to be represented in the national Parliament at Westminster. There were two significant constitutional limitations to the Assembly's powers. First, the British Government could check any of its actions, reserving for itself the right to refuse to submit to the Royal Assent measures considered *ultra vires* or those not in line with the Government's policy. Second, a limitation was set upon the actual use of power insofar as the Assembly was denied any taxation powers unless it wanted to impose further taxes upon its constituents over and above the regular tax which all citizens would pay to the British national government. Its revenue, therefore, would come, as usual, through block grants from Parliament. The new Scottish governmental structure, in turn, would not be limited to a legislature. It would have an executive and a prime minister similar to that of a typical parliamentary regime. Nevertheless, the institution of Secretary of State for Scotland would remain within the British Cabinet, and the civil service would be national rather than epitomise local and/or regional Scottish features.<sup>8</sup> The major reason for the shift of the tone of urgency in the devolution debate throughout the 1970s was a growing Scottish discontent with existing political and economic conditions and trends in the overall functioning of the United Kingdom. In political terms, this dissatisfaction reflected a number of considerations, one of them being that the political machinery which had evolved over the years to handle Scottish affairs within Parliament had become outmoded and in need of reform. Amidst a multitude of contentions was the feeling that England failed to recognise Scotland's specificity, which led to shaping a conspicuous perception of the English as indif-

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> H. Lazer, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

ferent at best, and hostile at worst, towards their Caledonian neighbours. As Scots saw things, they lacked an effective voice within the government, with Parliament dominated by English interests, the cabinet notoriously failing to adopt a local and/or regional perspective, and even Scottish Westminster MPs being elected with the support of particular economic interests, rather than those in line with Scottish national interests.<sup>9</sup>

Within British political tradition, referenda have an extremely short history. So far, several referenda have been held in the UK, but only two at a nationwide level: the 1975 post-legislative referendum to gauge support for the country's continued membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), commonly known as the Common Market; and the 2011 alternative vote (AV) referendum as part of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Agreement drawn up after the 2010 general election to replace the first-past-the-post system of electing MPs at subsequent general elections. In two (the 1975 EEC referendum and the 1979 Scottish and Welsh devolution referenda), the transfer of the decision-making function was of paramount significance, proving deep divisions within the Labour government and Party. From a cross-national perspective, the 1979 Scotland and Wales referendum reveals two significant aspects. It was territorially specific: by being restricted to Scotland and Wales, it involved only about one seventh of the entire electorate of the UK. Although territorial issues occupied the second largest group of questions posed in referenda in twentieth-century Europe, their exclusive application to specific parts of a country's territory was comparatively rare. In both referenda, a threshold was imposed to determine a successful vote: 40% of the electorate were required to vote in favour of the measure. Although thresholds of voters are relatively common, those requiring proportions of the electorate to vote in favour of a given proposal seem rare.<sup>10</sup> The referendum<sup>11</sup> held on 1 March 1979 resulted in a 51.6% support for the proposal which, with a turnout of 63.8%, fell short of the required 40% condition for the Scotland Act 1978 to be implemented.

The new Conservative government appointed in the aftermath of the 1979 elections<sup>12</sup> did not support devolution in the form proposed in the 1978 Act, as

<sup>9</sup> R. Rose, *The Future of Scottish Politics: A Dynamic Analysis*. Edinburgh, 1975, 8–9.

<sup>10</sup> D. Balsom, I. McAllister, *The Scottish and Welsh Devolution Referenda of 1979: Constitutional Change and Popular Choice*. "Parliamentary Affairs" 32. 1 (1979): 394.

<sup>11</sup> The following question was asked: "Do you want the provisions of the Scotland Act 1978 to be put into effect?"

<sup>12</sup> Labour soon lost a vote of confidence, being forced to call a General Election. Although they won in Scotland, English votes elected Margaret Thatcher as Britain's first woman Prime Minister. Although ex-Tory Prime Minister Lord Home had promised that the Conservatives would come up with a better assembly plan, one of the first acts of the Thatcher government was to repeal the Scotland Act. Although Labour won the General Elections of 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992 in

Figure 1. Distribution of votes and turnout in the 1979 Referendum

Region/Islands area	Yes votes	% votes	% electorate	No votes	% votes	% electorate	Turnout
Shetland Islands	2,020	27	14	5,466	73	36	50
Orkney Islands	2,104	28	15	5,439	72	39	54
Borders	20,746	40	27	30,780	60	40	67
Dumfries & Galloway	27,162	40	26	40,239	60	38	64
Grampian	94,944	48	28	101,485	52	30	58
Tayside	91,482	49	31	93,325	51	32	63
Lothian	187,221	50	33	186,421	50	33	66
Highland	44,973	51	33	43,274	49	32	65
Fife	86,252	54	35	74,436	46	30	65
Strathclyde	596,519	54	34	508,599	46	29	63
Central	71,296	55	36	59,105	45	30	66
Western Isles	6,218	56	28	4,933	44	22	50
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>1,230,937</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1,153,502</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>63.8</b>

Source: Electoral Geography, *Scottish Devolution Referendum, 1979*. <[www.electoralgeography.com](http://www.electoralgeography.com)> (5 May 2011).

they feared it would lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom. Instead, they brought in various measures to further devolve the administrative government of Scotland, allowing for special treatment of Scottish business in Parliament.<sup>13</sup> Unsurprisingly, local government was one of the many interests which felt alienated during the years of Conservative rule. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the body representing all Scottish councils, joined forces with many others in the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC).<sup>14</sup> The work of the

Scotland, the party lost each time in the rest of the UK and Scotland was governed by a Conservative government who had hardly enough MPs to appoint as Scottish Ministers, between 1979 and 1997.

<sup>13</sup> A. McConnell, *Governance in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland*. In: R. Pyper and L. Robins (eds.). *United Kingdom Governance*. Macmillan, 2000, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> The SCC first met in 1989 as a broad movement committed to social and political change. Its membership included COSLA, the Scottish Labour Party, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Green Party, Scottish Trades Unions Congress (STUC), the Federation of Small Businesses and Scottish Women's Forum. The only major non-participants were the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (the beleaguered Scottish version of the party in government at Westminster) and the Scottish National Party (SNP), which refused to participate in a campaign for devolution as opposed to full independence (see: A. McConnell, *ibid.*, p. 221).

Convention proposed a Scottish Parliament, elected by the people of Scotland, with primary law making powers to include areas then under the remit of the Scottish Office. The intention was a strong measure of Scottish self-determination. Among the many aspects of Scottish society which the Convention considered would be rejuvenated by these proposals, was local government, as epitomized in the 1995 report:

The creation of the Scottish parliament [would] mark a distinct change of approach, by placing a culture of cooperation and stability at the heart of the relationship between the Parliament and local authorities. In any future review of local government, the Convention believes that the aim of the parliament should be, firstly, to safeguard and, where possible, increase the area of discretion available at the level of the local authority.<sup>15</sup>

The 1997 New Labour's landslide victory seemed to be the first stage in achieving these goals. Following eighteen years in opposition, Labour took over at Westminster with 44% of the vote and an unprecedented 179 seat majority in the House of Commons. In Scotland, the Conservatives lost all their Parliamentary seats, which was coupled with the fact that at that moment, they did not control a single Scottish local authority.<sup>16</sup> Labour offered Britain an unprecedented programme of "constitutional modernization",<sup>17</sup> couched in a language of democratic opportunity, as highlighted by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair "the government's progressive programme of constitutional reform [was] moving [the country] from a centralised Britain, where power flowed top-down, to a devolved and plural state. A new Britain [was] emerging with a revitalised conception of citizenship".<sup>18</sup>

The SCC report formed the basis of the devolution policy presented in the Labour Party manifesto for the May 1997 general election. The report was also supported by the Liberal Democrats. After election, the Labour government arranged for a referendum on its proposals, set out in *Scotland's Parliament*, a White Paper of July 1997. Unlike 1979, this referendum was held before the relevant devolution Bill was introduced into Parliament, not after it had been enacted. Apparently, this was to ensure that devolution was the expressed will of the people of Scotland and not merely another abstract policy of the government. The referendum, held on 11 September 1997, produced clear majorities for the two propositions about the creation of a Scottish Parliament and its having certain tax-varying powers.

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<sup>15</sup> Scottish Constitutional Convention, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> A. McConnell, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>17</sup> As devised by New Labour, it featured, among others, an elected Parliament for Scotland, a National Assembly for Wales, an Assembly for Northern Ireland, an elected Assembly and Mayor for London, alongside Regional Development Agencies for the English regions.

<sup>18</sup> T. Blair, *Speech on Britishness*. The Labour Party, Millbank, London 2000, p. 1.

Figure 2. The 1997 Referendum results

Question 1. Should there be a Scottish Parliament?

	Votes	% of turnout	% of electorate
Agree	1,775,054	74.3%	44.87%
Disagree	614,400	25.7%	15.53%
Turnout	2,389,445		60.40%

Question 2. Should the Scottish Parliament have tax-raising powers?

	Votes	% of turnout	% of electorate
Agree	1,512,889	63.5%	38.24%
Disagree	870,263	36.5%	22.00%
Turnout	2,383,152		60.24%

Source: The Scottish Parliament. *History*, <[www.scottishparliament.uk](http://www.scottishparliament.uk)> (10 July 2011).

As illustrated above, the outcome of the referenda held in Scotland and Wales in September 1997 opened up the certainty of a far-reaching change in the government of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, the turnout was around 60%. Three-quarters of those voting (74.3%) were in favour of the Scottish parliament proposed by the government and 63.5% were in favour of it, having tax-raising powers. The proportion of the total Scottish electorate voting “yes” exceeded the 40% hurdle which had applied in 1979, and which had nullified the majority (33% of the electorate) in favour of the scheme proposed in 1979. Moreover, in 1997 all thirty-two local authority areas in Scotland voted strongly for the parliament, and only two areas (at the opposite ends of the country: Orkney, and Dumfries and Galloway) voted against tax-varying powers. In the capital, Edinburgh, 72% favoured the parliament which would be located there.<sup>19</sup>

The Secretary of State for Scotland appointed a Consultative Steering Group in November 1997, whose membership was representative of the major political parties in Scotland, without excluding other civic groups and interests. The remit was to develop proposals for the practical operation of the new Parliament. After a period of detailed examination and consultation, the CSG produced a report in January 1999, *Shaping Scotland’s Parliament*, which was used as the blueprint for the Parliament’s initial set of Standing Orders.

The Scotland Act 1999 led to the establishing of a Scottish Parliament in May 1999, as conceived by the McIntosh Commission. The devolution of limited political powers to Scotland in 1999 re-kindled debates over the meaning

<sup>19</sup> The Scottish Parliament. *History*. 2009. Web. 10 July 2011. <<http://www.scottishparliament.uk>>



and relevance of Scotland as a national container for social, economic and political processes. The devolution settlement “reserved” certain powers at Westminster, including foreign affairs, defence, monetary policy and social security; the remainder, including local government, health, education, criminal justice and transport, would be “devolved” entirely to Edinburgh. The UK government remains responsible for national policy on all matters that have not been devolved, including foreign affairs, defence, social security, macro-economic management and trade. It is also responsible for government policy in England on all the matters devolved to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. The UK Parliament is still able to pass legislation for any part of the UK, though in practice it only deals with devolved matters with the agreement of the devolved governments. Within the UK government, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for the Scotland Office, the Wales Office and the Northern Ireland Office. They ensure that devolution works smoothly, and help to resolve any disputes. They represent their parts of the country in the UK government, and represent the UK government in those parts of the country. Most contact between the UK government and the devolved administrations takes place between the individual government departments that deal with particular matters.

Clearly, the Scottish devolution referendum marked the end of an era. For the major part of the twentieth century, the home rule debate had formed a backdrop to Scottish politics, being only sporadically taken to the fore as part of Scotland’s mainstream political agenda; in essence, it was just below the surface.<sup>20</sup> The decisive “Yes & Yes” vote provided a clear mandate for a parliament which many were looking forward to after almost three hundred years, since the last Scottish parliament had abolished itself.

It is difficult to neglect the thesis that the decisive outcome, so markedly in contrast with the 1979 result, was largely a product of the experience of the preceding eighteen years of Conservative government in the UK. Reportedly, late in the referendum campaign, Margaret Thatcher kept a long-planned speaking engagement in Scotland. Such was the animus against her, seven years after she had stepped down, that a leading Scottish tabloid featured her photograph on its front page, along with the headline: “If you still need a reason to vote Yes: here’s one!”<sup>21</sup>

The referendum achieved an unquestionable objective: the result conferred a potent legitimacy on the new Scottish Parliament, which might have been contested if the government had proceeded without a referendum. Clearly, the results were strongly related to the levels of support for the Conservative and Labour

<sup>20</sup> See also: J. Mitchell, *Strategies for Self-Government: The Campaigns for a Scottish Parliament*, Polygon, Edinburgh 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Ch. Pattie et al., *The 1997 Scottish Referendum: An Analysis of the Results*. “Scottish Affairs” 22 (1998): 16.

Figure 3. Key devolved and retained powers to the Scottish Parliament

**Devolved powers/responsibilities:***Health:*

The NHS in Scotland – Public health – Mental health – Training and service of medical staff

*Education and Training:*

Teacher training and terms of service – Further and higher education – Training and vocational qualifications

*Local Government, Social Work and Housing:*

Finance, domestic and non-domestic local taxation – Social work and children's hearings – Housing including Scottish Homes – Enterprise Zones etc. – Land use planning and building control

*Economic Development and Transport:*

Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Financial assistance to businesses, within UK guidelines and consultation – Inward investment, including Locate in Scotland – Promotion of trade and export – Scottish Tourist Board – Passenger and road transport – Air and sea transport

*Law and Home Affairs:*

Criminal Law – Civil Law (non-reserved matters) – Most judicial appointments – Criminal justice and prosecution – Scottish courts – Tribunals – Legal aid – Prisons and parole – Police and Fire services – Civil defence

*Environment:*

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency – Policies to help UK international

commitments – Scottish Natural Heritage – Historic Scotland Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: Implementing the European CAP – Domestic agriculture – Food Standards, with UK coordination

*Sport and the Arts:*

Scottish Sports Council – Arts, museums and libraries

*Other:*

Statistics, registers and records – Debate on any other issues not circumscribed

**Powers/responsibilities retained at Westminster:***The Constitution:*

– Queen remains Head of State  
– UK Parliament will be sovereign  
– Reserved matters will be listed  
– Possibility for future adjustment to reserved/non-reserved issues

*Electoral Law**The Civil Service**Foreign Policy**EU and International Development**Borders, Immigration, Nationality and Extradition**Drugs, Firearms and Drug Regulations**UK Fiscal and Economic Stability and the Monetary System**Company and Business Law and the Regulation of Financial Services Provision**Competition Policy, Consumer Protection*

Source: The Scottish Parliament, *Devolved Matters*, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/education/resources/teachingResources/devolvedReserved.htm>. (20.05.2011)

parties at both moments in question. The 1997 Referendum was held early in the term of office of the new government, which was still enjoying a honeymoon with the electorate and Tony Blair was hugely popular, while the Conservatives were weak and discredited. The 1979 Referendum was held when the government was less popular, which, in turn, proved it being much more difficult to get its proposals so massively endorsed.

Dardanelli goes much further, diagnosing the reasons underlying the discrepancy in Scottish attitudes to the devolution proposal, as manifested in the results of the 1979 and 1997 Referenda, through the perspective of what he labels a “referendum dynamic,” identifying the “interaction effect” between the attitudes to devolution and the attitudes to independence, shaped differently as a result of a given context of alternatives.<sup>22</sup> As such, Scotland’s quest for self-government was constituted by two discrete elements: demand for devolution and demand for independence, two factors deemed distinct at the level of opinion surveys, but highly intertwined at the level of the referendum vote, given that independence was not provided as a choice in either of the referenda in question.

Considering these factors at the two above mentioned turning points, it is assumed that attitudes to devolution and to independence are a function of the perceived utility of these constitutional statuses relative to the *status quo*. The “interaction effect” between devolution and independence is discernible in the 1979 referendum, proving a large gap between virtual and real support for Scotland’s self-government. The gap hinged on two elements: the hierarchical distribution of preferences between status quo (SQ), devolution (D) and independence (I), and the existence of an interaction effect between the latter two. Dardanelli argues that hierarchical distribution of preferences can take one of the following forms:<sup>23</sup>

Figure 4. Distribution algorithm: *status quo* – devolution – independence

- 1 D > I > SQ = devolution preferred to independence and independence preferred to *status quo*
- 2 D > SQ > I = devolution preferred to *status quo* but *status quo* preferred to independence
- 3 I > D > SQ = independence preferred to devolution and devolution preferred to *status quo*
- 4 I > SQ > D = independence preferred to *status quo* but *status quo* preferred to devolution

Arguably, the 1979 Referendum proved that the two distributions took the forms 2 and 3, while in 1997 they took the forms 1 and 3. Thus, positive attitudes to devolution co-existed with negative attitudes to independence. In other words, in 1979 advocates of devolution preferred it to the then *status quo* and *status quo* to independence (cf. form 2), while supporters of independence preferred it to devolution and devolution to the *status quo* (cf. form 3). Supporters of the *status quo* had devolution as a second preference and independence as the third one. In this case, the “yes” vote was determined by the sum of support for independence added to support for devolution discounted by the commonly held assumption that devolution would lead to independence. Thus, supporters of devolution would

<sup>22</sup> P. Dardanelli, *Democratic Deficit or the Europeanisation of Secession? Explaining the Devolution Referendums in Scotland*. “Political Studies” 53 (2005): 326.

<sup>23</sup> P. Dardanelli, *Europeanisation and Devolution of Power: Evidence from a Comparative Analysis of Scotland Over Time*, 30th ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Workshop No. 19: “Europeanisation and National Political Institutions”, Turin, Piedmont, Italy 22–27 March 2002: 9.

vote in favour of it only insofar as they perceived that the risk deriving from devolution facilitating independence would not outweigh the expected benefits associated with it.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, eighteen years later, supporters of devolution had independence as a second preference and the *status quo* as third. This change in their preference order neutralised the interaction effect, since there was no longer any need for assessment whether devolution would be likely to lead to secession as both outcomes were preferred to the *status quo*.

Likewise, considering what Dardanelli refers to as the “intra-state” and “extra-state” dimensions<sup>25</sup>, it is clear to see the impact of the international environment, primarily that pertaining to the growing significance of the European Union context at all levels of both Scottish and UK public discourse, and its frequent adoption by the SNP. The perceived costs of secession were, thus, primarily determined by the perception of the European environment, bearing in mind that Scotland’s status as a nation and the “union” nature of the British state implied that Scotland had always enjoyed an implicit right to secede from the United Kingdom. The impact of the European dimension can thus be measured on the basis of two variables: first, whether voters demanding self-government for Scotland had a positive or negative perception of the European Union itself; second, whether an independent Scotland would be part of the EU or not. Admittedly, both issues had a different resonance throughout the eighteen years between the first and second referendum. The rejection of the European dimension, as defined by negative attitudes towards the EU and the placing of an independent Scotland outside it, lowered the proportion of voters supporting secession, while embracing it led to more voters favouring independence.<sup>26</sup>

As such, the notion of self-government seems to have been less important to Scottish voters in 1979 than it was in 1997. At the time of the second referendum, support for self-government was higher and more clearly defined, rising from 61 to 78 per cent, while preferences for the preservation of the *status quo* dropped from 26 to 19 per cent with “don’t knows” declining from 13 to 3 per cent. However, this overall rise in support was a combination of two opposite trends. While support for devolution declined from 54 to 43 per cent, support for independence increased five-fold from 7 to 35 per cent. This increase was almost entirely due to the popularity of the new “independence in the EU” option, absent in 1979, which became the second most preferred constitutional option, attracting a 26-per-cent support.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> P. Dardanelli, *Democratic ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 328.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*. For further reference on the impact of the European dimension and changed perceptions of the EU at mass public level, see: Dardanelli, P., *Europeanisation ...*, *op. cit.* See also: P. Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions. Europeanisation and Scottish Politics*. MUP, Manchester: 2005.

<sup>27</sup> P. Dardanelli, *Democratic ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

Concluding, the struggle to locate Scotland in a relevant discourse in a specific social and political context offers an undisputable opportunity to gain a better insight into the multifaceted nature of its identity and status, shaped, among others, in the two decades prior to the long expected endorsement of the 1997 referendum proposals. For some, steeped in the territorial and symbolic shape of Scotland itself; for others, evoking powerful connotations typical of a region-based sensitivity, Scotland's case provides fertile ground for further studies on its future status. Admittedly, in view of a prospective Scottish independence referendum; the multifarious processes taking place in local, national and international politics; cultural identity issues and territoriality, are ripe for follow-up research aimed at grasping the intricacies of Scottish selfhood.

#### STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę hybrydalności szkockiej narracji dewolucyjnej z perspektywy dwóch przełomowych wydarzeń kształtujących dyskurs polityczny o przyszłości Szkocji w ramach Zjednoczonego Królestwa. Dyskurs ten, mający swe źródła w burzliwych debatach i polemikach toczących się w ciągu trzystu lat istnienia unii angielsko-szkockiej, był podejmowany na szczeblu instytucjonalnym wielokrotnie, w tym dwukrotnie w formie referendum, z których pierwsze – w 1979 r. – okazało się porażką, podczas, gdy drugie, pomyślnie przeprowadzone w 1997 r., otworzyło szeroki wachlarz możliwości w ramach tzw. „nowego otwarcia” szkockiej sceny politycznej. Krótka analiza istoty poniesionej porażki i odniesionego sukcesu pomaga zrozumieć dynamikę zmian, które w ciągu osiemnastu lat znacząco wpłynęły na odmienne postrzeganie miejsca i roli Szkocji w nowej rzeczywistości zarówno w ramach Zjednoczonego Królestwa, jak i na znaczenie szerszym szczeblu Unii Europejskiej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** szkocka narracja, dyskurs polityczny, unia angielsko-szkocka, rola Szkocji w nowej rzeczywistości

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