

Scottish Independence Referendum 2014

A nation gradually moving towards independence
or a nationality leading by example?

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Introduction

“I believe every Scotsman should be a Scottish Nationalist.”¹

Unionist MP John Buchan (Cited in Stewart, 2009, pg19)

1.1 Throughout the 20th Century one party, more than any other, dominated Scottish Politics. They hammered the first nail into their own coffin in 1965, however, when they changed their name in an effort to appear more contemporary and modern. Up until that point they had been known as the Scottish Unionist party although they weren't named after the Union of 1707 that bonded the Kingdoms of England and Scotland in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Union in their name referred to the Union between Ireland and Great Britain that took place in 1801. The dominant political party in Scotland of the 20th Century was born out of opposition to Irish home rule. It is telling that so entrenched was Scotland in the Union of Great Britain that not only was it not campaigning for its own independence, its most popular party was campaigning against the independence of another of the Union's nations. It is also telling that when they changed their name, in an effort to modernise, they took the first steps towards their complete alienation from the Scottish electorate. In 1965, realising that the Irish Union of 1801 didn't hold much relevance in contemporary Scottish politics the Unionists decided to change their name so that they'd share the name of the party they were associated with in England. They became the Scottish Conservatives.

1.2 Although they were associated with the conservatives, they weren't simply an arm of the English Conservative party which goes some way to explaining why they were so successful. Unionist MPs may have taken the Conservative Whip at Westminster and prominent Unionist leaders like Andrew Bonar Law and Sir Alec Douglas-Home may have served as Conservative Prime Ministers of Great Britain but in Scotland the Unionists were seen as progressives because of the policies they supported whilst in local government including providing subsidies to build 200,000 houses in the 1920s and 1930s and the promotion of social housing. The key to their success was their independence from the English conservatives which allowed them to promote their own solutions to Scotland's problems. The name change in

¹ Stewart, David. (2009) *The Path to Devolution and Change: A Political History of Scotland Under Margaret Thatcher*. London, Tauris Academic Studies.

1965 didn't change this but after it they became identified with the English Conservatives who had never been popular in Scotland. They lost their Scottish identity, so brilliantly exemplified by the Unionist MP John Buchan. Their decline followed and the rise of Labour in Scotland began.

1.3 The story of the Unionist Party in Scotland highlights the key truths at the heart of the Scottish Independence issue today. They enjoyed great success as an independent unionist party within the UK. They were able to employ progressive social democratic policies based on the egalitarian principles that were held by the Scottish nation. They were even given the keys to the welfare state when they were elected in 1951 because they were trusted to ensure its success whilst not being committed to the centralisation, in London, of the new enlarged state like the Labour Party was. In 1951 Winston Churchill (Cited in Devine, 2008) had brilliantly capitalised on Labour's centralising policies by saying, "I would never adopt the view that Scotland should be forced into the serfdom of socialism by a vote in the House of Commons."² When Scots were voting for the Unionists they knew they were voting for a party that had based its policies on the problems that were effecting Scotland. Their demise began when they lost their distinctly Scottish identity and became associated the English Conservatives.

1.4 English Conservative politics had never fit well with Scotland's egalitarian ethic. Although the Labour Party would dominate Scottish Politics for the rest of the 20th Century it would never gain the hold that the Unionists enjoyed due to its lack of a vision for Scotland and it's over emphasis on the centralisation of the institutions of state in the South East of England leaving Scotland feeling like a marginalised province. As the Conservatives of the late 70's and 80's took England more to the right and began the systematic dismantling of the state Scotland stayed where it was politically, often bemoaning the fact that they were voting for a Labour government but being given a Conservative one. Although Labour returned to Westminster in 1997 it was under the auspicious title of New Labour and its policies in many ways marked a continuation of the Neo-Liberal policies that the Conservatives had been enacting for the previous 18 years. Even though they delivered devolution to Scotland the Scottish people never really saw Labour as anything other than a Westminster party during the New Labour years and the new Scottish Parliament provided the space for the Scottish

² Devine, Tom M. (2008). *Scotland and the Union: 1707 – 2007*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

National Party (SNP) to show the Scottish Electorate that they were best suited to provide them with the Social Democratic society that they wanted. Labour's downfall in Scotland came about due to them being unable to provide a coherent idea about what they wanted Scottish society to look like and ultimately becoming associated with a Westminster type of politics that wasn't too different from that of the English Conservatives.

1.5 The rise and fall of Labour in Scotland shows that the Scots are prepared to vote in the party that they most believe will fulfil the Scottish vision of how the country should be run. Even giving greater political power to the Scots, through devolution, isn't enough for a party as long as there is no clear idea of what the party will do with that extra power. The SNP was originally an apolitical movement (Maxwell, 2013, pg34)³ which welcomed people from across the political spectrum who were united in the belief that Scotland would fare better as an independent nation than it did as a part of Great Britain. It was only after it evolved into a party that portrayed itself as social democratic party to the left of the Labour Party that it began to gain traction, beyond the odd by-election victory, with the Scottish electorate. The SNP started to make clear its vision for Scottish society and when Labour shifted to the right under Tony Blair and the Labour Party in Scotland duly followed it was able to move into the space left behind. It was operating within the political area that Scotland had stayed true to throughout the 20th century but was also demonstrating a clear vision for Scotland as they were distinctly uninterested in how the UK was run south of the border as long as it didn't affect how Scotland was being run north of it. By 2007 they had risen to power in the Scottish Parliament, where they presided over a minority government until 2011 when they won a landslide delivering an outright majority. Outright majorities were something the Scottish Parliament's proportional representation electoral system was supposed to prevent. With this outright majority they believed they had the mandate required to take the country to an independence referendum.

1.6 Nothing so far tells us that the Scots want to break up the Union and be an independent nation. In fact one of the things that made the SNP so electable to the Scottish electorate in 2011 was the pledge by Alex Salmond, the then leader of the SNP, that a vote for the SNP was not a vote for independence. The SNP were saying that only a referendum could provide the

³ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

mandate required to break away from the UK (SNP – Manifesto, 2011, pg28)⁴ meaning that even unionist Scots could vote for the SNP. Furthermore, the results of the Independence referendum itself tell us that Scots do not want to be independent from the UK. On Thursday 18th September 2014, 3,623,344 people in Scotland voted in the Scottish Independence Referendum which asked the question, ‘Should Scotland be an independent country?’ The turnout for the referendum was 84.6% which was the highest turnout at a nationwide referendum or parliamentary election since the franchise was extended to women in 1918. The result; 1,617,989 (44.65%) people voted Yes, Scotland should be an independent country and 2,001,926 (55.25%) voted No, Scotland shouldn’t be an independent country and so should remain a part of the United Kingdom (Elections Scotland, 2014)⁵.

1.7 So Scotland doesn’t want to be an independent country but the rise of the SNP cannot be ignored and in the run up to the referendum opinion polls were suggesting that the Scots might just vote for independence which prompted the leaders of the three main Westminster parties to make a vow to devolve more power to the Scots which seemed to keep Union intact. In fact, even before campaigning for the referendum began opinion polls were suggesting that this was the case. A poll in July 2012 showed 37% Scots favouring the transfer of more powers from Westminster to Holyrood with only 29% favouring full independence and 23% favouring the status quo (Eynon, July 2012)⁶. It seems then that greater devolution to Scotland is what the Scots want but that was the one thing they never had the chance to vote for. They were promised “Extensive new powers” (Clegg, 2014)⁷ in order to ensure a vote for the union in the referendum but the Smith Commission that was set up in the aftermath of the referendum to deliver it has since failed and according to the YouGov Poll “Why Scots Voted No” (as cited in The Guardian on March 26th 2015)⁸ is seen by many Scots as a betrayal. On it the SNP says, “The Smith Commission’s recommendations were already underwhelming

⁴ Murrell, Peter. Scottish National Party - Manifesto 2011, Re-Elect: A Scottish Government working for Scotland. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1qECRIh>

⁵ Elections Scotland. *Scottish Independence Referendum*. Retrieved August 1st, 2015 from <http://scotlandreferendum.info/>

⁶ Eynon, Chris. (2012, July 2th). Poll on Independence in Scotland, *TNS MMRB*, Edinburgh. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1QCSzYD>

⁷ Clegg, David. (2014, Septmber 15th). David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg sign joint historic promise which guarantees more devolved powers for Scotland and protection of NHS if we vote No. *The Daily Herald*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1OcrAok>

⁸ Brooks, Libby. (2015, March 26th). The Vow was "not a decisive factor" in Scotland voting no to independence. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1FKp2pD>. 41.3% of yes voters believe that no voters voted no because they had been misled by the government.

and were then watered down further by the UK government's paper." They then went on to say that, "The debate in Scotland is about how to get maximum power in order in order to counter Westminster's continued cuts programme." (Robertson, 2015)⁹ What we have is a Scotland that wants to remain part of the UK but wants to be able to shield itself from Westminster policies that it does not agree with.

1.8 Scottish Nationalism is not a traditional nationalism in the sense that it is fighting for the independence of an oppressed people so that they may rule over themselves in their own sovereign state. A closer examination of the SNP's white paper for independence will show that even the independence option on the 2014 referendum still ceded much sovereignty to London. What I aim to show with this thesis, however, is that Scottish Nationalism has acted as a galvanising factor that has allowed the Scottish Nation to stand up for itself much more effectively than other parts of the UK when it hasn't agreed with the policies coming from Westminster. In particular, I believe that it is Margaret Thatcher's Neo-Liberal right wing policies of the 1980's that galvanised Scottish Nationalism due to their devastating effects on Scottish communities. While Scots were able to rally around their nationality and fight back other parts of England didn't have that and as such are still exposed to Westminster policies even though they felt the full force of Thatcher's policies too. This has caused the Devolution of significant powers to Edinburgh resulting in significant constitutional irregularities like the West-Lothian question, which deals with Scottish MPs being able to vote on English issues whilst English MPs aren't able to vote on the same issues in Scotland as the matters have been devolved to the Scottish parliament. Due to the apparent betrayal of Westminster following the independence referendum, SNP leaders (Cited in the Guardian on July 26th 2015) are already talking about the inevitability¹⁰ of a second referendum but I will conclude that any referendum that is to come should not just be about devolving power to Scotland but should also include the possibility of devolving powers to English regions. This would correct all of the constitutional irregularities caused by Devolution but would also provide a counterweight against the centralised politics of Westminster that have had devastating effects on communities all over the UK and not just to those who have national flags to rally

⁹ Robertson, Angus MP. (2015, March 24th). *SNP comments on Smith Commission report*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1MTNirM>

¹⁰ Brooks, Libby. (2015, July 26th). Second Scottish referendum inevitable, says Alex Salmond. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1S9sd1d>

round. Also the growing outrage over the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system resulting in an unrepresentative parliament could provide support for such a referendum as proportionally represented regional assemblies, following on from the Scottish model all over England as well as in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could provide answer to another of the UK's democratic and constitutional problems. For the Scots, if such a deal were ever to be brokered they could have faith that no betrayal could take place afterwards as a Westminster government wouldn't so easily betray the English electorate like they've done with the Scots in the past.

2. Who are the Scots and what do they stand for?

2.1 “In the quiet moments today, we might hear some echoes of the past: the shout of the welder in the din of the great Clyde shipyards; the speak of the Mearns, with its soul in the land; the discourse of the Enlightenment, when Edinburgh and Glasgow where a light held to the intellectual life of Europe; the wild cry of the Great Pipes; and back to the distance cries of the battles of Bruce and Wallace ...honesty and simple dignity are priceless virtues imparted not by rank or birth or privilege but part of the soul ...I look forward to the days ahead when this chamber will with debate, argument and passion. When men and women from all over Scotland will meet to work together for a future built from the first principles of social justice.” (Dewar, 1999)¹¹

Donald Dewar addressing the official state opening of the Scottish Parliament on July 1st 1999.

2.1.1 The Scottish Parliament, reopened again after 300 years because of the Scotland Act 1998, did not have the most glorious of starts. Labour didn't really know what they wanted to do with the place and early legislative programs didn't really set the Scottish public on fire. Also there was the scandal of the parliament building through which Labour's Donald Dewar, Scotland's inaugural First Minister, wanted to make a statement about how Scotland was looking forward to being a modern progressive nation. It had been promised by Dewar that the building would cost £40million but prices kept spiralling out of control and the scandal of the Scottish Parliament would outlive the First Minister himself. Not much went right in the early days of the Scottish Parliament but one thing that did was the state opening of the Scottish Parliament on 1st July 1999. In front of the queen and the Scottish nation as a whole Dewar delivered a speech in which he talked about how Scottish people could carry themselves and how who they were would be fundamentally changed by the opening of the parliament. His section on the Scottish nation, quoted above, completely summed up the enduring image that Scotland had of itself built on honest and hard work but also with a belief that all were equal and entitled to fruits of their countries labours.

¹¹ Dewar, Donald (1999, July 1st). *Speech at the opening of the Scottish Parliament*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1jRrmH4>

2.2 History

“For as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom — for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.” (Cited in Burns, 2009, pg76)¹²

From The Declaration of Arbroath 1320

2.2.1 The Declaration of Arbroath is seen, by many, as the first expression of national unity and nationalism ever laid down on paper that defended the rights of a people to be free from the dominion of a foreign power. Written over four hundred and fifty years before the American Constitution began with ‘We the people...’ it was written as a letter to the pope as an attempt to confirm Scotland’s status as an independent, sovereign state. It bore the seals of eight Earls and forty-five barons of Scotland and was written in support of the Scottish claimant Robert the Bruce.

“Yet if he should give up what he has begun, seeking to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or to the English, we would strive at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his right and ours, and we would make some other man who was able to defend us our king;” (Burns, 2009, pg76)¹³

A crucial part of the declaration. It is the “us” and “our kingdom” that sets out the people of Scotland as sovereign with Bruce being only the best man to defend the people as their king. It may have been written by the aristocracy without reference of or inference towards the common man but there is clear inference that the kingdom is not the dominion of the king alone. The nation as the sovereign would come in to the public domain nearly five hundred years later after the French Revolution, in a more modern and recognised form, but here the Scots were saying that it was the people of Scotland and not the hammer of the Scots Edward I or even Robert the Bruce who held sovereignty over Scottish lands. Written in the midst of the Scottish Wars of Independence, famous for its heroes William Wallace and Bruce, the Declaration of Arbroath bound the Scottish nation with wonderfully patriotic language. The Wars of Independence had been sparked Edward I proclaiming himself “superior and direct

¹² Burns, William. (2009). *A Brief History of Great Britain*, New York, Facts on File.

¹³ Ibid.

lord of the Kingdom of Scotland” (Burns, 2009, pg 75)¹⁴ whilst arbitrating on who should be the next Scottish king following the death of the final Canmore monarch in 1290. Even though it was nobles and barons who wrote the declaration in support of their own interests it stirred the heart of the common man. This has undoubtedly continued throughout Scottish history as in 1707 when the Act of the Union dissolved the Scottish Parliament it was the everyday folk of Edinburgh who took to the streets to fight for their Parliament even though they themselves enjoyed no right to vote.

2.3 Attitudes

Despite centuries old beautifully eloquent declarations of national sovereignty Scottish nationalism today does not march to the ancient beat of Bruce and Wallace’s war drums. The effects of the wars of independence are still felt today but Scotland was never conquered by military campaign and forced to submit to the English Parliament. When James VI of Scotland became James I of England, following the death of Queen Elisabeth I in 1603, he unified the English and Scottish crowns. This triggered a century of religious wars that produced no clear winner. At the beginning of the 18th century the Scottish nation sat down to negotiations with their richer and more powerful neighbour and the Scottish Parliament surrendered voluntarily for equal access to England’s colonies and all of the trading opportunities that came with them. Scotland was a willing participant in the Act of Union and it is perhaps for that reason that nobody in Scotland today legitimately feels like they’re being oppressed by the English. The Scots were able to resist the English militarily but ambitious enough to know that Union would bring riches to the nation that they wouldn’t be able to bring by themselves. Had it been different, had England conquered Scotland militarily and taken her parliament away by force then maybe things would be different. As it is Scotland went into the project of the British Empire as willing partners which enabled them to claim ownership of it and the subsequent history allowed the space into which modern Scottish identity grew. The willingness to dissolve the Scottish Parliament for greater access to material benefits is a pragmatic way of seeing things through the weight of their pros and cons. When the Act of Union was ratified, after almost a century of religious warfare that also meant lack of access to England’s ports or those of her colonies or allies, it secured Scots their religion and it gave

¹⁴ Ibid.

them greater access to the markets. It was seen as a deal worth making and this is exactly how Independence is looked at today. A poll for the Scottish Social Attitudes (as cited by the BBC on the 5th December 2011)¹⁵ highlights exactly this point. The poll showed that 65% of Scots would vote for independence if it made them £500 better off but only 21% for vote for it if they were made £500 worse off. This attitude means that Nationalists can't rely on recitations of Burns' poetry or the Declaration of Arbroath to get Scots to vote for an independent Scotland they have to convincingly persuade them of how an independent Scotland will be materially better than Scotland is as a part of the United Kingdom.

2.4 Religion and Education

When Scotland wearily signed up to the Act of Union one of the reasons was because the country was tired of the violence, strife and turmoil that been kicked off by the Union of the English and Scottish Crowns that occurred in 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England. After ascending the throne, James promptly upped sticks and moved down to London taking his court with him. This meant that when his son was born, the ill-fated Charles I, he was of Scottish heritage but by the time he ascended to the throne in 1625 he possessed a distinctly English demeanour. He didn't fully understand Scottish attitudes and attempted to bring in to line religious practice both north and south of the border. This kicked off a century of religious wars due to the fact Scotland had taken the reformation more seriously than the English and had developed their own practices which they did not simply want to surrender. Also due to the lack of a royal court for the preceding twenty three years the Church of Scotland, known as the Kirk, had been unofficially filling its role through guidance and gaining a tight hold on the Scottish nation. It would be the Kirk and the British Empire that would be the main drivers behind Scottish society and subsequent Scottish identity. The influence of both would come to an end almost simultaneously with the UK being unceremoniously ordered by the Americans to halt their invasion of Egypt during the Suez crisis and the secularisation of Scottish society during the 1960s. In the space of twenty years the Kirk lost 65% of its membership (Macwhirter, 2014, pg165)¹⁶ with some commentators believing that the short sharp shock has left modern Scots disconnected from the preceding

¹⁵ BBC, Scotland Politics. (2011, December 5th). Scots count price of independence. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1OYRcpA>

¹⁶ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

250 years history¹⁷. Although the direct influence of both the Empire and the Kirk over Scottish society was almost gone completely they did leave behind powerful legacies both in terms of education and egalitarianism. Although Scots may have been involved in numerous nefarious activities across the empire ranging from drug dealing (The Scotsman, September 6th 2005)¹⁸ to slavery (The Scotsman, March 20th 2007)¹⁹ they still saw themselves, via their stricter take on Protestantism, as the moral partner in the British Empire.

2.4.1 Scottish Presbyterianism portrayed Scots as Gods chosen flock with a mission to enlighten those who were not. Also Presbyterianism can be seen as a much more democratic and egalitarian than other religions (Macwhirter, 2014, pg170)²⁰ because it portrayed all members of God's flock as equal before God and due to this fact it is found at the very foundation of Scotland's heritage as an enlightened nation due to its well educated population. Scotland was able to claim extremely high literacy rates with twice as many Scots as English able to read and write in the middle of the 19th Century (Macwhirter, 2014, pg115)²¹, mostly due to the drive by the Kirk to ensure that as many as possible were able to read the Holy Scripture. The "lad o' pairts" myth of the boy of low birth being able to rise up through Scottish society due to its open to all university system is still today a cherished piece of Scottish heritage. It might have only ever been a half-truth but the powers that myths have on national identity cannot be understated and today Scotland has five universities in the top two hundred²² which is more than other much larger countries including France and offers free university places to all Scots.

2.4.2 It is this open to all system for education and egalitarian ethic that lies at the heart of modern Scotland's social democratic ethos that has remained pretty consistent since the end of the Second World War. What has changed, however, has been the political parties that have been seen by the Scottish electorate as the guardians of that ethos in Scotland. Not only that but the UK wide policies coming from Westminster have also changed considerably and

¹⁷ Ibid. pg 171

¹⁸ The Scotsman. (2005, September 6th). The Opium Wars: how Scottish traders fed the habit. *The Scotsman*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1LCa35Z>

¹⁹ The Scotsman. (2007, March 20th). Glasgow's Dark Secret. *The Scotsman*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1N8fHPy>

²⁰ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

²¹ Ibid.

²² World University Rankings. (2014-15). Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1PUy8la>

have become quite at odds with Scotland's national ethos. In particular the Neo-Liberal policies of the Thatcher administration enacted throughout the 1980s were not only at odds with how the Scottish believed their society should be run, and there are decisive election results to show it²³, they also enacted devastating economic recessions on Scotland. This would lead to a rise in Nationalism that would eventually result in the 2014 independence referendum which was the greatest threat to Union of the Kingdoms of England Scotland since the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

²³ See figures 1.1 – 1.9 All retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1P7qWsZ>

3. Neo-Liberalism in the UK

“What Margaret Thatcher did was turn the Scottish Parliament from being a nice idea – democratic advance to being something absolutely essential”²⁴

Alex Salmond (Cited by the BBC on 8th April 2013)

3.1 Becoming British

After the Battle of Culloden in 1745 put a final end to the Jacobite rebellion the quick turnaround for the Highland Warriors who had been fighting for Charles Stuart to begin fighting for Great Britain was stunning. It wasn't long before they were fighting in the same army as the Hanoverians (Mitchison, 2002, pg291)²⁵ they had so recently been fighting and not long after that they were earning a reputation for bravery and fierceness that would spread all over the British Empire. For over 250 years there would be no great existential threat to the United Kingdom of Great Britain. After Culloden, Scotland quickly became a major player in the British Empire project. One of the reasons they sought the Act of Union in 1707 was that they'd recently failed in their attempts to set up a Scottish Colony in the Isthmus of Panama at a place that is today completely uninhabitable called Darien. Without colonies of their own the Scots became Brits and took to spreading themselves all over the British Empire (Mitchison, 2002, pg239)²⁶ with such gusto and success that there simply was not enough time for a genuine campaign for home rule to gain ground back in Scotland. As a major player in the British Empire Scotland also had a front row seat for the Industrial Revolution and quickly became one of the most industrialised 'high-tech' nations on the planet. With business booming and no conceivable difference between communities north and south of the border it was difficult for any real conception of nationalism to take hold in Scotland while it was a major player in the world through its part in the British Empire. The concept of British unionism stifled nationalism in the home nations due to its recognition of the plurality of the UK constitution. Then when the Empire declined after the Second World War it was the British Welfare State that provided the centre of gravity that was strong enough to keep Scotland a happy and willing member of the UK. Here we are, however, in

²⁴ Buchanan, Raymond. (2013, April 8th). Margaret Thatcher: The woman who changed Scotland. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1Nao3Gk>

²⁵ Mitchison, Rosalind. (2002). *A History of Scotland 3rd Ed*. Routledge

²⁶ *Ibid*. pg239

2015 in the aftermath of an Independence Referendum that went right to the wire and in this chapter we are going to examine when the first seeds of discontent were sown in Scotland that would eventually grow into a full blown push for political secession from the 300 year old union. The time all this happened was the 1980's and the main architect, whether deliberately or not, was the Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who would begin unleashing a Neo-Liberal Revolution that, via tackling its main aims of lowering inflation and taking on powerful unions, would unleash a devastating number of manufacturing recessions across the UK and use Scotland as an apparent petri dish within which to try out controversial economic policies before taking them to the rest of the country.

3.2 The Break-up of British Society and Scottish Re-Awakening

"I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society."

Margaret Thatcher, talking to Women's Own magazine, October 31 1987 (Cited in Brittain, 1996, pg89)²⁷

3.2 Thatcher believed that everybody must look after themselves first and only think about their neighbour second. Accordingly she scaled back the state as for her and her administration it simply was not the job of the state to look after its citizens. A large and cumbersome state slowed innovation, prevented economic growth and facilitated increased inflation. When she came to power bringing high inflation, having reached peaks of 25% in the preceding decade, under control was one of her main goals. (Thatcher, 1993, pg33)²⁸ Also the Unions in the 1970s were extremely powerful with 13.2m people, or one in four of the population, a member of a union (Rogers, 2013)²⁹. Relations had been strained between the Conservatives and the unions due to the Industrial Relations Act 1971 which led to the Unions having a huge part to play in the undermining of Edward Heath's Conservative government in 1974. This meant that when Thatcher came to power she viewed the unions as the enemy

²⁷ Brittain, Samuel. (1996). *Capitalism With a Human Face*, Harvard University Press

²⁸ Thatcher, Margaret. (1993). *The Downing Street Years*. HarperCollins.

²⁹ Rogers, Simon. (2013, 8th April). How Britain changed under Margaret Thatcher. In 15 charts. *The Guardian* [Datablog post]. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1ilceAd>

within that needed to be brought into line at all costs. She would declare war upon them and their defeat would leave open the industries, which had been in decline throughout the 1970s, to be dismantled and the workers who'd serviced them to be cast adrift. Many of them would find themselves in poverty and their communities in decline. Thatcher presided over a rise from 13.4% of the population living below the poverty line, when she took office in 1979, to 22.2% living below it when she left office in 1990 (Institute for Fiscal Studies)³⁰. Manufacturing was seen as a necessary casualty in the war that Thatcher declared on inflation and the unions as she tried to tear down the very fabric of society in the UK.

3.2.a In Scotland the industries hit hardest where the mines, the steel industry, the car factories and the shipbuilding and engineering industries. These had all been proud Scottish industries that had harked all way the way back to the days of the industrial revolution and whilst Thatcher was proclaiming in the News of the World,

“My policies are not based on some economics theory, but on things I and millions like me were brought up with – an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay, live within your means, put by a nest egg for a rainy day, pay your bills on time.” (News of the World, September 20th 1982)³¹

She was taking thousands of jobs from hard working communities and giving nothing in return.

3.2.1 Privatisation

Another of the methods Thatcher used to scale back the state was privatisation. By the time she would leave office in 1990 more than 40 UK state-owned businesses employing 600,000 workers had been privatised (Groom and Pfeifer, 2011)³². Among these included Jaguar, British Telecom, Cable and Wireless, Britoil and British Gas. This was all designed to increase the profitability of the UK and increase competition in the jobs market by exposing the British workers to the harsh realities of the 1980s global economy. The government was seen as no longer responsible for employing the workers in its industries even if they were the crucial

³⁰ Institute for Fiscal Studies. *Incomes in the UK: Relative poverty rates 1961 – 2012*. Retrieved 12th August 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1rp8248>

³¹(1982, September 20th). [News of the World Article]. Retrieved from <http://nbcnews.to/1Bnw7tB>

³² Groom, Brian and Pfeifer, Sylvia. (2011, December 7th). Privatisation defined Thatcher. *The Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://on.ft.com/20cm5ue>

industries needed for the country to run smoothly. In privatising the state owned businesses all that Thatcher was doing, however, was cementing the South-East of England's position as the hub for all financial and economic activity. These newly privatised industries became parts of conglomerates whose head offices were, more often than not, in London. They would have other smaller offices around the country but the main decisions would always come from London (Dickens, 1988, pg22)³³.

3.2.3 Deregulation

It might have been of Attlee's Labour government after the Second World War that bloated the centralised state but Thatcher's scaling back of the state did nothing to redress the balance. The privatisation of state industries didn't disperse economic or political power all over the UK and neither would the other main tenet of neo-liberalism, deregulation. In shifting control of the economic factors from the public to private sector she further centralised capital in the South. The Deregulation of the city of London's finance sector caused a boom in the mid-80s but only in the South East of England. The deregulation became known as the big bang due to the increased amount of market activity the deregulation created and London's place as a financial capital was strengthened considerably. This led to an increase in wealth in the South that was not met anywhere else as more and more people in the rest of the UK lost their jobs and fell into poverty.

3.2.4 Community Charge or 'Poll Tax'

Then after all of this came the 'Poll Tax' which was levied at first in Scotland to see if it would be successful before being rolled out across the whole of the UK. The problem with the 'Poll Tax' is that it wasn't a progressive tax but one that charged everybody the same. Lords and Ladies would be charged the same amount of tax as the man who emptied their bins. It was a very unpopular initiative that would eventually cause Thatcher to be toppled as leader of the Conservative party and the country but it being rolled out first in Scotland shook the Union for two reasons. The first was that it made Scotland appear to the Scots to be a provincial plaything of the Westminster political elite where they could experiment with controversial economic policies to find out whether they were good enough for the rest of the country. Second, however, was what happened when it was to be rolled out in England. Scotland had

³³ Dickens, Peter. (1988). *One Nation? Social Change and the Politics of Locality*, The University of Michigan

been the sight of civilised protest against the Poll Tax with organised group oppositions to the seizing of people's property who could not pay it. Scenes reminiscent of the PAH here would see 'Can't Pay! Won't Pay!' groups arriving at houses where bailiffs were expected and making sure they were unable to enter the debtors' property and take their property. These protests and more, however, were rejected by the government who kept levying the tax but when it was to be taken to England there were riots in London and the government promptly backed down. The Scots had not only been shown that they were to be experimented upon but that their protestations would not be listened to in the same manner as would those of an angry mob in London (Macwhirter, 2014, pg223)³⁴. The 'poll tax' issue was seen as a moral issue that united Scotland against the law makers in Scotland. It showed the Scottish people that the laws coming from London went against everything that they stood for and also that the government in Westminster paid little attention to their protestations.

3.3 Neo-Liberalism vs Social Democracy

Neo-liberalism is at a stark contrast to the social-democratic ethos that lies at the heart of Scottish society. Whereas social democracy rests on five tenets; political liberalism, a mixed economy of not just publically owned services, the welfare state, Keynesian economics and a belief in equality (Maxwell, 2013, pg35)³⁵ neo-liberalism suggests that governments reduce deficit spending, limit subsidies, privatize state-run businesses and back deregulation (Investopedia)³⁶. We've seen how these policies did little to redress the balance of power in the UK between the South and Scotland in the North and how whilst they were being enacted the sweeping recessions caused by the deindustrialisation of the north pushed hundreds of thousands into poverty and left them with a much smaller state to turn to for help. Throughout all of this Scotland had been voting for a Labour government but had been getting a Conservative one. In 1997, however, this changed and landslide victory for Labour handed them the keys to Westminster allowing many to hope that it would all be different.

³⁴ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

³⁵ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

³⁶ Investopedia. Definition of 'Neoliberalism' [Investopedia dictionary entry] Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1F0kkcp>

4. How Labour Lost Scotland

“I don’t fear the verdict of the Scottish people. Bring it on.”

Wendy Alexander (BBC, Politics Show, May 6th 2008)³⁷

4.1 Delivering Devolution

Many Nationalists today view The Scotland bill, which laid out the terms of Scottish Devolution, as it was written by Donald Dewar and Wendy Alexander was something of a coup. When Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party he knew that Devolution would have to play a major part in his manifesto for the 1997 general election otherwise Labour would struggle to take Scotland and therefore the UK. Blair, however, was no major fan of devolving power away from Westminster and upon winning the General Election began to feel out just how much he could water down his commitment to Devolution. Donald Dewar, however, who at the time was UK Secretary of State for Scotland was a true believer and he and Wendy Alexander would set about creating a Bill that would create enough space for Scottish society to grow into so that it could be true to itself. Rather than devolving one or two legislative issues for the new Scottish executive to deliberate Dewar and Alexander wrote a bill (Scotland Act 1998)³⁸ that devolved everything apart from those specific issues that were laid out to be reserved to Westminster. The Scotland Act created a Scottish Parliament with enough power to create a society that reflected itself rather than simply had to reflect what was coming from Westminster.

4.1 Lack of Vision

The problem for the Labour Party, however, was that it never really had an idea for Scotland about what its image of itself was or how best to go about making Scottish society best reflect it. Add to this a tight leash held on Scottish Labour by Westminster and in many ways a continuation of the Neo-Liberal Policies of the Conservatives before them and you start to see why just 15 years after the executive came into existence the unionist Labour Party had lost its hold on Scotland with the Scottish Nationalists claiming that only they had the best interests of Scotland at heart. Wendy Alexander who was one of the chief architects of the

³⁷ BBC. *Politics Show*. (2008, May 6th). [Television Broadcast]. Scotland: BBC.

³⁸ Scotland Act 1998. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1MkfWCO>

Scotland Act would become one of a long line of Scottish Labour leaders to be rebuked by the Labour leader in Westminster. Her crime had been calling out the SNP in 2008 and saying that if they could commit to a date for an independence referendum that Labour would commit to it also without first consulting with the then leader of the Labour party Gordon Brown.

4.3 Lack of Understanding

Scotland was by no means always a Labour country so it was always dangerous for the Labour Party to take them for granted. Their intrepid founder James Keir Hardie, who in 1892 became the first parliamentarian to represent the working class, may have been from Scotland but he had to leave Scotland to get elected instead winning in the constituency of West Ham South in Essex (BBC History)³⁹. We've already seen how it was the Conservative Unionists, known in local elections as the progressives who dominated 20th century Scottish politics. Even after setting up the social institutions of the welfare state and the NHS the Labour Party lost out in Scotland to the Unionists in 1951 due to their centralising of the enlarged institutions of the state and the significant shifting of public opinion post second world war that meant the Unionists could be trusted with protecting the new social institutions of government. Also, we have already seen that Labour only really inherited the ascendancy in Scottish politics when the Unionists became associated with English conservatism due to their disastrous name change in 1965. No, despite a Scottish founder and delivering devolution at the end of the 20th century, going into the 21st century there was no empirical reason for the Labour Party to believe that Scotland owed them their loyalty. In fact throughout the 1980s there was a clear message being put across by the Scots that what they believed was at odds with what the rest of the UK believed. Consistently voting for a Labour government and consistently being delivered a Conservative government both highlighted that the UK was becoming a country of two different political nations with Scotland sticking to its social democratic roots on the left of the political spectrum whilst England lurched to the right. Despite this, however, there was never really an effort from the Labour Party to show that they understood Scottish problems. Scotland was more taken for granted by Labour, so much so that whenever somebody in Scottish Labour showed that they did understand Scottish politics they would be quickly brought into line with Westminster thinking which had begun

³⁹ BBC History. James Keir Hardie (1856 – 1915). *BBC History*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1sUZpeo>

to move away from the political leanings that had allowed it to inherit the ascendancy in Scottish politics back in 1965.

4.3.1 Continued Neo-Liberalism

“The Labour Party in Scotland was born of a desire to challenge the class structure of power. Today it reflects and sustains both the class structure of Scottish society and Scotland’s subordinate role within the United Kingdom power struggle.”

Stephen Maxwell (Maxwell, 2013, pg98)⁴⁰

New Labour didn’t seem to understand that their shift to the centre-right that had been engineered by Tony Blair, when he took the Labour leadership in 1994, in a bid to court Tory votes south of the border meant that they were betraying the Scottish Labour voters that had stuck with them throughout 1980s. Blair had perceived the drift to the right of the English electorate that had occurred due to Thatcher’s assault on society and portrayal of the UK as a nation where everybody is out for themselves as a UK wide phenomenon when, if anything quite the opposite had occurred in Scotland. Whereas talk of public sector reform through Private Finance Initiatives (Seymour, 2012)⁴¹ and allowing private sector involvement in the clearing of NHS waiting lists may have been attractive to voters in the South East of England, in Scotland it went against the egalitarian social democratic ethos that had remained constant. With the public institutions set up in the years following the Second World War being brought into existential arguments by New Labour, Scots started to wonder whether they were the best party to represent them. If Labour in Scotland had been able to portray itself as independent of the Labour Party in Westminster, much like the Conservative Unionists had been able to up until 1965, then maybe they’d have been able to enjoy electoral success on a par with the Unionists in 1931 when they returned 58 of the 73 seats available⁴². Instead, beholden to centralised policies that resembled those of the conservatives before them Labour’s level of influence in Scotland soon plateaued before quickly falling into decline.

⁴⁰ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

⁴¹Seymour, Richard. (2012, March 29th). A short history of Privatisation in the UK: 1979-2012. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1nBRkcb>

⁴²Wikipedia. Unionist Party (Scotland) [Wikipedia article]. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1kdmA6p>

4.3.2 More Privatisation and Deregulation

In the last chapter we saw how the neo-liberal policies of the Thatcher administration scaled back the state and exposed hundreds of thousands in the north of the UK to market forces at a time of deindustrialisation whilst increasing the level of capital in the south-east of the country via deregulation and privatisation. This continued throughout Tony Blair's time as Prime Minister as financial controls on the city of London's financial sector would become so lax that wild speculation on financial markets would contribute to a global financial meltdown, the effects of which are still being felt today as state level social institutions are being scaled back to help pay off the enormous bailout packages that were paid by the government to prevent a number of prominent high street banks collapsing. Privatisation continued also with the biggest example coming as Tony Blair pushed forward John Major's Private Finance Initiative to finance and build public facilities. It enabled New Labour to build a number of new NHS hospitals via borrowing private capital (Seymour, 2012)⁴³. Again the problems from these decisions are still being felt today as many NHS hospitals are racked with unmanageable levels of debt at extremely high interests (Owen, 2015)⁴⁴ which in turn is pushing it towards the commercialisation of services as more and more private companies are taking over the running of NHS services. New Labour's continuation of Neo-Liberal policies was putting the social institutions at the heart of what the British state had been under threat. Whilst this was happening, however, Scotland was enjoying new levels of political autonomy via the Scottish Parliament so it could have been possible for Scottish Labour to counter these Neo-Liberal policies in Scotland via their running of the Scottish Parliament but that wasn't to be the case.

4.3.3 No Room to Manoeuvre in Scotland

Tragedy befell both Scotland and the Labour Party at the beginning of the new millennium when their inaugural First Minister, who had affectionately been known as "the father of the nation" (Macwhirter, 2014, pg260)⁴⁵ died of a brain haemorrhage. The first legislative

⁴³ Seymour, Richard. (2012, March 29th). A short history of Privatisation in the UK: 1979-2012. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1nBRkcb>

⁴⁴ Owen, Johnathan. (2015, April 11th). Crippling PFI deals leave Britain £222bn in debt. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://ind.pn/1akRIRI>

⁴⁵ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

program of the brand new Scottish executive that Dewar launched had been described as unambitious and dry and he had also presided over the scandal of the Scottish Parliament building but his loss was no doubt a huge blow to both his nation and party. His successor Henry Mcleish would sum up two of the problems facing the Labour Party in Scotland. The first was that due to the selection policies of New Labour and the political pull of Westminster the ranks of bright and talented Labour politicians north of the border were rather thin with the party, and the parliament at large to be fair, filled with politicians like Mcleish whose feet were never too far from their mouths. Mcleish became known as “McCliche” (Macwhirter, 2014, pg261)⁴⁶ as bemusing comment after bemusing comment gave both Labour and the new Scottish Parliament a rather disappointing air of farce. He was, however, aware of the fact that Labour in Scotland should be able to respond dynamically to issues and problems north of the border. He knew that if Labour was to do well in Scotland it would have to distance itself from New Labour in Westminster. Much to the irk of Labour in Westminster he supported the plan of Labour’s coalition partners the Liberal Democrats to provide free personal care for the elderly⁴⁷. New Labour tried their hardest, and failed, to circumvent the decision with Labour’s Alistair Darling, the then UK Work and Pensions Secretary preventing money from being used to fund the project.⁴⁸ Whereas New Labour had been unable to prevent the provision of free personal care to the elderly in Scotland, a testament to the new constitutional arrangements of the UK, they’d shown their teeth to the Scots in a manner that exemplified Westminster Labour’s cluelessness when it came to understanding what was happening in Scotland. Mcleish didn’t last long, however, as financial irregularities forced him to resign with his successor Jack McConnell knowing all too well that as they approached 2003 Scottish Parliamentary elections that his campaign,

“would be completely overshadowed by the Iraq War and the general perception of Labour at Westminster ...and that there was a very, very clear feeling amongst the population of Scotland that the Parliament had underperformed under Labour.”⁴⁹

4.3.3.1 He was right with the proportionally represented Scottish Parliament delivering seats to a whole array of smaller parties. Labour were still in charge but their number of seats had

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. pg262

⁴⁹ Ibid. pg264

dropped from 53 to 50 (BBC News, 2003)⁵⁰. Throughout the parliament McConnell would clash with Westminster developing a clear sense north of the border that the Scottish Parliament was being held in check Westminster. The biggest of these confrontations was on the smoking ban in public places (Macwhirter, 2014 pg269)⁵¹. Despite these confrontations, however, he never really towed an independent line. The sense in Scotland was that if Labour were in charge in the Scottish Parliament then the Scottish Parliament would be getting held back by Westminster and the voting in the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary elections reflected this. The number of Labour politicians dropped again from 50 to 46 but that meant they were only the second largest party as the Scottish National Party ended up with 47 (BBC News, 2007)⁵².

⁵⁰ BBC News. (2003). Scottish Parliament Election. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1MvJLn>

⁵¹ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

⁵² BBC News. (2007). Scottish Elections 2007. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1P7qI95>

5. The SNP and the mandate for the Independence referendum

“Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on.”

Winnie Ewing, 1967 (Cited in the BBC on 5th April 2010)⁵³

5.1 History as an Umbrella Organisation for Nationalists of all Political Creeds

The SNP formed on 7th April 1934 (The SNP, Our Party)⁵⁴ when Scottish Nationalism was more of a bourgeoisie hobby than something that was likely to direct a nation. They wouldn't win a seat at parliament in 1945 when Robert McIntyre, who would become known as The Patriarch of the Party (Marr, 2013, pg94)⁵⁵, was elected in the Motherwell by-election.⁵⁶ McIntyre's tenure was a short one, however, as he lost the seat only 3 months later in the general election.⁵⁷ The SNP wouldn't win their second seat for another 22 years but Winnie Ewing's victory in the constituency of Hamilton would have a much more galvanising effect on the party causing political momentum to grow. She only held the seat for one term but many commentators believe that it was the surge in SNP support that got her elected that caused Labour to establish the Kilbrandon Commission that would look into the establishment of a devolved Scottish Assembly.⁵⁸ It is now a well-worn Nationalist slogan in Scotland that Westminster only ever pays attention to Scotland when the SNP are enjoying success. Well today the SNP hold 56 of 59 Scottish seats at Westminster and enjoy a majority government in Holyrood even though the proportional representative electoral system used there was specifically developed to promote coalition governments and prevent outright majorities (The Scottish Parliament).⁵⁹ They've come a long way from their humble beginnings and years in the political wilderness for they are now a party who enjoy huge popularity in Scotland, and even in some parts of England, (Reported in the Guardian, 2015)⁶⁰ so it is important to

⁵³ Black, Andrew. (2010, April 5th). Profile: Scottish National Party. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1NCMfzv>

⁵⁴ The SNP. Our Party. Retrieved 1st September, 2015 from <http://snp.org/about-us>

⁵⁵ Marr, Andrew. (2013) *The Battle For Scotland*. London, Penguin Group.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. pg95

⁵⁸ Ibid. pg120

⁵⁹ The Scottish Parliament. *The Electoral System for the Scottish Parliament*. Retrieved 31st August 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1kduRqR>

⁶⁰ The question of whether non-residents of Scotland could vote SNP was one of the most-searched for terms on Google in the UK after the UK General Election Party Leadership Debate on 2nd April 2015. *The Guardian*. Retrieved April 3rd, 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1jTMeOD> see 10.23pm

examine more closely what is it exactly that they stand for today. Also another important question that needs asking; even in the wake of a no vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum can there be stability in the UK if a party that was set up with the main aim of making Scotland an independent country enjoys continued electoral success in Scotland?

5.2 Development into a Party that Assesses Economic and Social Needs of Scotland

“Realists ... will accept that the inspiration of a new Scottish nationality will not be found among the wreckage of Scotland’s past but in the ambitions for Scotland’s future.”

Stephen Maxwell (Maxwell, 2013, pg82)⁶¹

In 1979 Scotland went to the polls to vote on the creation of a devolved deliberative assembly for Scotland as proposed in the Scotland Act 1978 (Dewdney, 1997)⁶². 51.6% of those that voted supported the proposal but a crucial amendment had been added by the Labour MP, George Cunningham, which stated that 40% of the total electorate needed to vote yes or the Act would be repealed (Fry, 1991)⁶³. This meant that the 51.6% of the 64% turnout who voted yes only accounted for 32.9% of the total electorate.⁶⁴ In essence, the amendment meant that everybody who didn’t vote voted no. After the referendum and upon analysis of the results the SNP realised that the working class had supported devolution whilst the middle classes had not. This caused some in the party to believe that they should be representing the working classes via more left wing politics. This group became known as the 79 group and they based their politics on their principal political theorist Stephen Maxwell’s pamphlet “The Case for Left Wing Nationalism” (Maxwell, 2013, pg76)⁶⁵. Maxwell and the 79 group were calling for romantic conceptions of nationhood to be disregarded and for the social and economic interests of the Scottish people to be taken into account. This caused a split in the party with many members believing that achieving independence was the single most

⁶¹ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

⁶² Dewdney, Richard. (1997, November 10th). *Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 & 1997)*. [Research Paper No 97/113], House of Commons Library. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1GP3RIC>

⁶³ Fry, Michael. (1991). *Patronage and Principle: A Political History of Modern Scotland*, Aberdeen University Press pg248

⁶⁴ Ibid. pg249

⁶⁵ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

important aim for the party. The leading members of the 79 group were eventually expelled from the SNP including Stephen Maxwell and Alex Salmond (Marr, 2013, pg190)⁶⁶. Their expulsion was commuted to suspension, however, and Alex Salmond went on to lead the party twice, the second time becoming the SNP's inaugural First Minister of Scotland. Stephen Maxwell is today seen as a political prophet who has since been proved right on a number of his assertions.⁶⁷ In pushing for the SNP to become representative of Scotland's economic and social interests the 79 group were advocating for a party that would appear electable and capable of governing rather than one that simply believed in independence. We've already seen the cold hard realities that were dished out to the Scots during the 80s as deindustrialisation sent hundreds of thousands of Scots home from work. Maxwell had been trying to get the party to address the issues that were attractive to those most exposed to British economic decline even before this happened. The 79 group may have been expelled from the party but the reintroduction of their leading members and their subsequent ascendancy within the party and Scottish society itself show that it is here where they became a party that could gain popular appeal right across Scotland.

5.3 Fundamental Nationalism vs Gradual Nationalism

The SNP, upon its inception, was a cross party organisation that was supposed to appeal to Scottish nationalists across the political spectrum. It was meant to be a place where nationalists of all creeds could work together to further the cause of Scottish Independence. A lifetime in the political wilderness, however, and the harsh economic realities afflicted upon Scotland in the 1980s meant that it had to address fundamental existential issues about itself. The issue of fundamentalist nationalism and gradualist nationalism had caused a split in the party since John MacCormick had left the party in 1942 to set up the Scottish Convention to promote home rule (Fry, 1991, pg248)⁶⁸. MacCormick was a gradualist who believed that little by little Scotland could inch its way towards independence with devolution being an acceptable first step. He'd been forced to leave the party by Douglas Young who was a fundamentalist who believed the SNP should only talk about full independence with devolved

⁶⁶ Marr, Andrew. (2013) *The Battle For Scotland*. London, Penguin Group.

⁶⁷ "He lived to perceive the political dawn coming, and in his final collection of texts this quiet man summed up much of what that should stand for." Nairn, Tom – Forward: A Nation's Blueprint. Found in Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh pg9

⁶⁸ Fry, Michael. (1991). *Patronage and Principle: A Political History of Modern Scotland*. Aberdeen University Press

home rule being nothing more than a distraction.⁶⁹ This split in the party was at the heart of the 79 groups expulsion but gradualism would become the default position of the SNP when former 79 Group member Alex Salmond became the leader of the party in 1990. As leader he would preside over middling success in two general elections but would gain wider public appeal through his involvement in the campaign for Scottish devolution in the run up to the 1997 referendum. He campaigned with the leaders of Scottish Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Greens for the creation of a Scottish Parliament with tax varying powers (Macwhirter, 2014, pg242)⁷⁰ This was a position that would have been impossible for a fundamentalist but it allowed Salmond and the SNP to be seen as respectable and responsible politicians with Scotland's best interest at heart who were not simply slaves to romantic nationalist dogma. Also the creation of the Scottish parliament created political space for the SNP to move into. Whereas Westminster was elected via a first past the post system, delivering decisive even if sometimes not wholly representative results, the Scottish Parliament would be elected using proportional representation meaning that each party would have a number of politicians that was proportional to their share of the vote. In the 1997 UK General Election they won 6 out of 72 contested seats but in the first Scottish Parliament election in 1999 they delivered 35 out of the 129 seats, becoming the second biggest party in the process, due to their 27% share of the vote. The party was still second to Labour but had enjoyed unprecedented success and were positioning themselves as the "Radical Scottish alternative to the Labour Party." (Maxwell, 2013, pg99)⁷¹ Just as Stephen Maxwell had written 30 years earlier.

5.4 Party of Government

In the last chapter we saw how despite finally getting the Labour government that they had voted for for so long it didn't take long for Labour to lose their grip on Scotland through a combination of the continued neo-liberal policies of the Conservative government before it and through the lack of a vision for Scotland. We've also just seen how the SNP transformed itself from a fundamental nationalist organisation with a single overriding issue at its heart to

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Macwhirter, Iain. (2014) *Road to Referendum: The Essential Guide to the Scottish Referendum*, Cargo Publishing.

⁷¹ Maxwell, Stephen. (Ed.). (2013). *The Case for Left Wing Nationalism: Essays and Articles*. Luath Press Limited, Edinburgh

one that analysed the economic and social problems of Scotland in order to devise its policies. Today, Labour only holds one Scottish seat in Westminster and it faces total annihilation by the SNP in the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections. The SNP is very much in the ascendancy in Scottish politics and the years in government, first as a minority and then as a majority government, that followed the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections have allowed the SNP to show Scotland that they are capable of delivering the socially democratic society that it wants. Also since 2007 they have been delivering on key policies like free university tuition (The SNP, Education)⁷² and free prescriptions (BBC, 2011)⁷³ that strengthen the social democratic tradition in Scotland whilst simultaneously the coalition government in charge at Westminster have been continuing the neo-liberal tradition in the rest of the UK with great vigour. Public institutions like the Royal Mail have been sold off as well as probation services, large sections of education and even parts of the NHS whilst the country is still paying for the neo-liberal crisis brought about by the deregulation of the financial services. The SNP very much has a vision for Scotland, knows what it wants to achieve and is not beholden to a more powerful Westminster wing of its party. They've accordingly gone from strength to strength in Scotland. They've governed responsibly and have pushed an independence referendum to the very brink of breaking up the union, or have they? In their independence yes campaign did their gradualism turn to pragmatism as they realised that despite an SNP landslide victory in the Scottish Parliament perhaps it was their shiny new politics that were causing them to gain popularity and not their nationalist origins. They'd been elected to govern and not to break up the union but they had their mandate for an independence referendum. They knew that if Scotland was going to vote for independence the yes campaign would have to make sure that it was going to appear as if an independent Scotland wouldn't be too different from the Scotland that the Scots already had.

⁷² The SNP. *Education*. Retrieved 12th August, 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1GBh6Nm>

⁷³ BBC. (2011, April 1st). Prescription charges abolished in Scotland. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1GBhtri>

6. Independence White Paper: “Scotland’s Future” and the Referendum

“Will independence change the tax I pay? What will happen to my pension? How can Scotland be independent if we keep the pound? What will happen to our relationships with the rest of the UK?” (The Scottish Government, 2012)⁷⁴

A number of questions asked of the Scottish Government by Scottish voters after it became apparent there would be an independence referendum.

6.1 How Independent is Independent?

With the independence white paper, “Scotland’s Future” the Scottish government was trying to answer 650 questions that they had received from voters about what independence would mean for Scotland since the SNPs landslide victory in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election. Many of the questions were simple enough but some represented deep issues about what it would mean to have political independence from the UK and what effect it would have on Scotland’s standing in the world at large. The white paper was designed to allay all fears that independence was something that was beyond the Scottish nation. In parts it read more like a manifesto for the SNP than a document laying out the possibilities of a fundamental constitutional change. Rather than saying an independent Scotland would have the power to decide for itself whether it would provide free childcare it said that an independent Scotland would provide free childcare. A lot of it, however, seemed to indicate that many things would stay the same but that after independence they would stay the same because it was the will of Scotland rather than the will of Westminster. It seemed that the White Paper was laying out Scotland’s Future as very much part of a union with the rest of the UK and that it was only the political union that it hoped to be rid of. Despite wanting to be rid of nuclear weapons on the river Clyde Scotland would remain a member of NATO and the EU, it would retain the pound and the Bank of England as its central bank, the social union would remain intact and Scotland would also retain the queen as head of state.⁷⁵ Broadcasting would remain linked with joint ventures between the SBS (Scottish Broadcasting Service) and the BBC (British

⁷⁴ The Scottish Government. (2013.) Scotland’s Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland, pp24-29 Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1SingTF>

⁷⁵ Ibid. pgX

Broadcasting Corporation).⁷⁶ There would also be an energy union with one of the government's key pledges of having Scotland fulfilling all of its energy needs via renewable energies by 2020 being reliant on UK wide renewable energy subsidies.⁷⁷ The NHS would continue; as well as equality of benefits across the UK and there would even be a citizenship union which meant there could be common passports and no borders between the two countries.⁷⁸ Whereas the White Paper aimed to answer 650 questions that had been asked of the government it left many unanswered and upon closer scrutiny of what was being proposed it raised another rather startling question. What would independence actually mean if Scotland was still so inexplicably linked to its old way of life and to rest of the UK?

6.2 The Right Referendum?

On the 21st March 2013 Alex Salmond announced that 545 days later on the 18th September 2014 Scotland would hold a single question referendum asking, "Should Scotland become an independent country?" It was a fantastic moment for the UK as it was allowing itself to ask fundamental questions of itself despite the existential and very real world dangers it was exposing itself to. It was, however, not as glorious as it could have been as there were democratic deficiencies in the nature of the referendum. In October 2011 the polling organisation TNS-BMRB asked the Scottish public whether they preferred "Full Independence for Scotland", to "Keep the current arrangement of a Scottish Parliament with its existing powers", or a third option to "Transfer more powers from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament, including tax and welfare but excluding defence and foreign affairs." (Eynon, 2011)⁷⁹ The third option took 33% of the vote with independence trailing behind on 28% and the status quo on 29%. By July 2012 the numbers were even more telling with 37% voting for more powers and 23% and 29% voting for independence and the status quo respectively (Eynon, 2012)⁸⁰. Independence was the least popular option. Here was conclusive polling data saying that the pragmatic nature of the Scots was holding them back from desiring full independence and preferring the transfer of more powers to Holyrood yet that option, the

⁷⁶ Ibid. pg20

⁷⁷ Ibid. pg776

⁷⁸ Ibid. pg272

⁷⁹ Eynon, Chris. (2011, November 6th). Poll on Future Government of Scotland. *TNS BMRB*, Edinburgh, Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1LLQNTA>

⁸⁰ Eynon, Chris. (2012, July 2th). Poll on Independence in Scotland, *TNS MMRB*, Edinburgh. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1QCSzYD>

most popular, would never make it to the referendum ballot paper. Who could blame Scots for wanting greater control over their society? Between 1979 and 1997 they were constantly given central governments at odds with they had voted for and the effects on Scottish society were devastating. Then when they finally got the Labour government they'd been voting for they found out that it wasn't actually the Labour government that they'd been voting for all those years. New Labour were still privatising the NHS little by little and deregulating London's financial services, in a similar manner to how Thatcher had done in the 80s which had resulted in a huge concentration of the UK's wealth in the South East of England. Then the coalition government, between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, which gained power in 2010 began imposing cuts on public services, as a response to the global financial crash, which even Thatcher wouldn't have dared. They even went into people's houses to levy the much maligned bedroom tax which cut the benefits of those living in social housing who had spare bedrooms. The crash had been born out of the deregulation of the financial services, in line with neo-liberal dogma, but it was the social democratic institutions of the UK that were having to foot the bill. UK wide the social democratic institutions like the NHS, social housing and welfare were coming under fire whilst in Scotland devolution had allowed them to preserve their institutions and in many ways improve upon them implementing free personal care for the elderly and free university tuition amongst other initiatives. More swinging cuts from Westminster, however, could make these initiatives unaffordable and put at risk the socially democratic society that Scotland was beginning to carve out despite having voted for it for decades. The preferred option for Scots was an improved form of devolution allowing them to protect the social democratic institutions in Scotland from the neo-liberal policies that were coming from Westminster and the two main variants being suggested were devo plus and devo max.

6.2.1 Devo plus would give control of welfare benefits, income tax, corporation tax and oil revenues to Holyrood whilst Devo max would do the same but would also give Holyrood control over pensions, national insurance and VAT. Obviously due to the fact that the options never found their way on to the ballot paper there was no 670 page white paper created to flesh out exactly what they meant but it is still possible to compare them to the independence that was on offer on September 14th. If we look at what Scottish politicians say about Devo Max we can see that really there isn't much between each of them say.

"I think the common understood definition of devolution max is that it is full devolution of all powers with the exception of defence and foreign affairs."

Stewart Maxwell, SNP MSP (cited by the BBC on February 20th, 2012)⁸¹

"What we are looking at is substantial fiscal powers being devolved and getting to the point where Scotland raises its money and spends its money and to me that is a big selling point in England because there has been much criticism of the fact that we spend money but don't have the responsibility of raising it."

Former Labour Leader first minister Henry McLeish (cited by the BBC on February 20th, 2012)⁸²

McLeish is highlighting the key problem that Scots see with their current situation, a lack of responsibility for raising the money they spend and the resulting lack of control they enjoy over their society. In the "Scotland's Future" White Paper the Scottish government were talking about initiatives, like childcare, that they would be able to do now if they were able to collect the taxes that they would need to pay for them. The SNP offered a proposal whereby they would try to get mothers into work so that they could use the resulting taxes to pay for the free childcare initiative. If Devo max were to deliver these tax raising powers whilst retaining defence and foreign affairs there would be little difference to the independence that was on offer in the referendum when you consider all of the unions with the rest of the UK that would have remained intact, including defence and a considerable amount of foreign affairs, after a yes vote. It seems that the White Paper on Scotland's future turned the referendum into more of a decision of prestige rather than a breaking of the union. It was an attempt to renegotiate the relationship between Scotland and the UK within the union rather than an attempt to break it. It presented independence as an improved version of the union, independence-lite if you will. It very nearly worked as well. As we've already seen before the campaigning began there was very little interest in independence before the official campaigning began but by the time Scotland was going to the ballot box poll after poll were showing very slim leads for the no vote with the number of undecided voters being enough to potentially push the yes vote over the line. The last TNS BMRB poll, taken between 27th

⁸¹ Buchanan, Michael. (2012, February 20th). Scottish independence referendum: What is devolution max? *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1ixQfWL>

⁸² Ibid.

August and 4th September 2014, showed only a one point difference with yes taking 38% and no 39%. A whopping 23% were still undecided (Graham, 2014)⁸³ which meant at that point it was still anyone's game. As we get closer an Ipsos MORI poll for STV, taken between 15th and 16th September, put it at 47% for no and 49% for yes with 5% still undecided (Diffley, 2014)⁸⁴. A mere three days before the referendum and nobody could really predict what was going to happen. Scotland had been persuaded by the Yes campaign that its way of life would not be heavily disrupted by a vote for independence and that they would still remain very much a part of a United British Isles but that they would do so as an equal and independent nation and it seemed as though they might vote accordingly. It was in the final few days of the campaign that the no campaign changed its tack from negative campaigning about how bad it would be for Scotland to leave the Union to a positive one offering the promise of increased powers to the Scottish Parliament if they were prepared to give the union one more chance. A famous "Vow" was printed on the front of the Daily Herald, a leading Scottish tabloid newspaper, signed by the leaders of the three main parties at Westminster that promised "extensive new powers" (Clegg, 2014)⁸⁵.

6.3 Post Referendum Blues

After the referendum delivered a no vote with 55.25% voting to remain in the UK YouGov (Cited in the Guardian, 2015) conducted a poll that showed that 3.4% of those who voted no did so due to the vow. A swing of 6.8% wouldn't have changed the outcome but it would have made the result a lot less conclusive. Interestingly enough 29.5% believed that they still believed in the Union and 28.8% felt that there were still too many unanswered questions. The same poll however, showed that of yes voters 41.3% believed that Westminster leaders had misled Scots over more powers (Brookes, 2015)⁸⁶. The Smith Commission that had been set up to deliver the "extensive new powers" was widely regarded as a let-down and high profile SNP and Scottish government figures as well as SNP MPs at Westminster began talking

⁸³ Graham, Alastair. (2014, September 9th). Poll on Independence in Scotland. *TNS MMRB*, Edinburgh, Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1MsYDyz>

⁸⁴ Diffley, Mark. (2014, September 17th) Poll for STV. *Ipsos MORI*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1RJyAr5>

⁸⁵ Clegg, David. (2014, September 15th). David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg sign joint historic promise which guarantees more devolved powers for Scotland and protection of NHS if we vote No. *The Daily Herald*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1OcrAok>

⁸⁶ Brooks, Libby. (2015, March 26th). The Vow was "not a decisive factor" in Scotland voting no to independence. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1FKp2pD>

about the inevitability of a second independence referendum. It seems like a failed referendum could be just another gradual step towards the SNPs stated aim of an independent Scotland. Next time round maybe voters will not have their heads turned by vague promises of extensive powers and there will be much more time to provide more concrete answers to the unanswered questions that seemed to be haunting so many of the eventual no voters. It seems then that a no vote in a “once in a generation” independence referendum is by no means the end of the matter. The UK Prime Minister David Cameron only seemed to antagonise the Scots further when the day after the referendum rather than talking about the exact new powers that would be heading north to Holyrood he spoke about English votes for English laws (Wintour, 2014)⁸⁷. A crude solution to the constitutional irregularity that arose after devolution whereby Scottish MPs can vote on English laws even though English MPs have no input on similar Scottish matters seeing as they have been devolved to Holyrood. English votes for English laws would exempt Scottish MPs from voting on issues in Westminster that only effected constituencies in England. This could seem callous to Scots, only a day after a vote to stay in the union but there are issues like this that need to be addressed and an unstable union under the constant threat of a national secession is not a sustainable situation. A situation needs to be reached that is suitable to Scotland so that the need to push for a better and better deal isn’t constantly a part of the national conversation. Also England is a much larger country than Scotland that is by no means homogeneous politically. Many communities in the north of the country felt the full effects Thatcher’s economic policies yet they didn’t have nationality to rally around to enable them to fight effectively for better protection of what they believe in within the UK. In fixing the constitutional irregularities thrown up by devolution perhaps it could be possible for the rest of the UK to hitch a ride on Scotland’s nationalism and use the progress that Scotland has made as a template for setting up devolved regional assemblies in the regions of England.

⁸⁷ Wintour, Patrick (2014, September 19th). David Cameron raises West Lothian question after Scotland vote: 'English votes for English laws'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1kmdh4f>

7. Conclusion: A Federal Future for the UK with England as Regions

7.1 Same Problems on Both Sides of the Border

It wasn't just north of the border where communities were left feeling as though there were seen as provincial and not a part of the central government's plans. In the early 1990s South Yorkshire Police were ordered to pay out £425,000 compensation to 39 miners who had been arrested during one of the grizzliest encounters of the 1980s (Harvey, Metcalf and Jenkinson, 2014, pgg96)⁸⁸. They were arrested during what became known as the Battle of Orgreave when 8,000 picketing miners and 4,500 police clashed at a British Steel coking plant in Orgreave, South Yorkshire.⁸⁹ An awful affair brought about by the belief that the government would have no problem shedding miners' jobs from an industry that was in trouble. Whole communities had sprung up around the British mining industry and whole communities would be left without their primary sources of income. The National Union of Miners and their leader Arthur Scargill had pledged to stand against potential job losses whilst the government saw Scargill and his like as "the enemy within" even sending MI5 infiltrators into their midst (Milne, 2004)⁹⁰ leading to horrific clashes. This may have been the standout incident in the miners' strike but it was by no means the only one. Throughout the 1980s communities across the north of the UK were fighting for survival against the policies and institutions of the central government.

7.1.1 If we cross the Pennines from Yorkshire to city of Liverpool in the North West of England we see a city that lost 80,000 jobs between 1972 and 1982 (Grady, 2014)⁹¹. The Liverpool docks had been closed and its manufacturing industry had shrunk by 50%. An ultra-left-wing organisation, called the Militants, that was part of the Labour party came to power in the city on a promise of home-building projects and new public works that would be funded by increased revenues that they would lobby central government to provide.⁹² They were denied the funding and at the time Thatcher's government was actually toying with the idea of denying all government funding to the city and advising residents to move out to the

⁸⁸ Harvey, Mark; Metcalf, Mark; Jenkinson, Martin. (2014). *Images of the Past: The Miner's Strike*. Barnsley, Pen and Sword Books Ltd.

⁸⁹ Ibid. pg89

⁹⁰ Milne, Seamus. (2004). *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against The Miners 4th Edition*. Verso, London

⁹¹ Grady, Helen (2014, November 8). The English city that wanted to 'break away' from the UK [BBC Magazine Story]. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1pzgPCc>

⁹² Ibid.

surrounding areas.⁹³ The feeling in Liverpool at the time was very much that the wealth of the city depended on being able to provide capital for the South. Labour councillor at the time Roy Gladden recalls thinking, “They were happy for us to have the factories and make the money that then got shifted to the South, to London. But when it came for that to be returned it didn’t happen.”⁹⁴ Local musician Peter Hooton went even further saying that, “When Thatcher was in power, we felt that she looked at Liverpool and thought: ‘Well they’re not really English, are they?’”⁹⁵ But for lack of another nationality the people of Liverpool were English. Rather than being able to connect to a national movement that grew from a failed bid for devolution in 1979 to the successful opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 Liverpool gathered around a version Trotskyism that faded away when the main leaders took to questionable methods for furthering the cause that would discredit the movement. The militants would eventually be thrown out of the Labour party.

7.2 Lack of Local Mandate

We are not just talking about during the 1980s either. Today there are vibrant local government movements pushing ahead in places around England as diverse as Stoke (Barnes, 2015)⁹⁶ and Devon (East Devon Alliance)⁹⁷ born out of frustration at the democratic deficit that comes from an overly centralised political system that is able to place, at will, a choke hold on local government finances and dictate policy based on the policies of the Westminster government. If we look at UK wide general election results from 1979 onwards⁹⁸ we can see that certain regions around the UK consistently voted the same way just as Scotland consistently voted during the same period. The North West and North East of England as well as the Midlands consistently returned Labour majorities between 1979 and 1992 and were consistently delivered Conservative governments just as the Scots were whilst regions in the South consistently voted Conservative but were delivered Labour governments between 1997 and 2010. If we jump forward to the 2010 and 2015 campaigns the constituencies that remained red throughout the last three decades have been subjected to extreme austerity

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Barnes, Mike (2015, January 6th) Stoke On Trent Independents Manifesto includes using “home grown talent”, a “listening democratic system”. *Potteries Eye*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1WtyG7C>

⁹⁷ East Devon Alliance. *History*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/20nE15b on August 27th 2015>

⁹⁸ See figures 1.1 – 1.9 All retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1P7qWsZ>

and cuts to public services despite remaining true, and voting accordingly, to the same socially minded beliefs that they'd been expressing throughout the preceding decades. Scotland, however, has been able to provide its citizens with free university places, free prescriptions and free personal care for the elderly as well as being able to hold off many of the privatising advances that have been made on hospitals south of the border. The 2015 map now shows a Scotland almost completely SNP yellow. What the constituency maps show us is that the fortunes of the whole of the UK are dependent on the whim of a few swing constituencies. If you think about the democratic outcome on a UK wide basis of a yes vote for independence by the Scots it becomes quite troubling for anyone left in the UK who falls to the left of the political spectrum. We've discussed the problems at length that the English Conservatives have always had in Scotland so it isn't hard to imagine the benefit it would have for them if Scotland were to leave the Union. If it did then the 56 SNP MPs who argue for Social Democracy in Westminster will no longer be a thorn in their side and in future general elections there would be little stopping the Conservatives gaining powerful majorities. It seems that devolution and the SNP's gradualist tactic has led to a constitutional crisis that goes beyond the West Lothian question. A UK without Scotland could leave many of its citizens in a democratic wilderness with little hope of a Westminster government representing their views. This is all without looking at the other major representative politics scandal that has been gripping the UK recently, that of its electoral system first past the post.

7.2.1 Unrepresentative Electoral System

The first past the post electoral system is designed to provide stability in government. The electorate are split into geographical constituencies and voters get presented with a choice of candidates for their constituency and are allowed to pick one. The candidate with the most votes wins the election. It is simple to understand and allows the voter to make a clear choice about who they want in government but it has clear democratic deficiencies that have caused uproar after recent elections. For starters after the 2010 general election it was called into disrepute because it was supposed to deliver clear and concise results yet when all the votes had been counted there were no clear winners and the government was formed based on secret deals made between politicians. Other criticisms thrown at it are that the government it delivers is not generally representative of the government the electorate wanted. If we look

at the 2015 general election results (BBC News, 2015)⁹⁹ we can see that the Conservative Party took 36.8% of the votes but ended up with an outright majority in Westminster with 50.8% of the MPs. Even Labour, who could feel unfairly treated due to only receiving 6.3% less votes than the Conservatives but getting 15.1% less MPs, received a higher percentage of MPs than votes received. The truly staggering figure from the election comes from the UK Independence Party (UKIP) who took 12.7% of the vote but only returned one MP, a mere 0.2% of the MPs that sit at Westminster. The Green party should also be mentioned for receiving well over a million votes but only ending up with one MP. In Scotland it would be the SNP who would benefit from first past the posts tendency to favour bigger stronger parties as they would take just over half of the vote share but would return 56 of the 59 MPs from Scotland who get sent to Westminster. First past the post favours the big parties but one of the smaller parties got into the government via coalition government after the hung parliament of 2010. The Liberal Democrats as members of the coalition pushed for the United Kingdom Alternative Vote referendum of 2011. Alternative vote allows voters to list their preference of all candidates with their first choice being the candidate that would receive their vote. If after the votes have been counted there is no clear winner the bottom candidate is eliminated and the votes for that candidate will be transferred to the voter's next preference. The country overwhelmingly voted no (Electoral Commission, 2011)¹⁰⁰. AV, although an improvement on first past the post, is nowhere near as popular a system as a proportional representation system which would see the number of MPs each party gets corresponding to their proportion of the vote. Scotland employs a form of proportional representation through their Additional Member System (AMS) (Scottish Parliament)¹⁰¹ which gives members 2 votes, one for their constituency MSP which is elected on a first past the post basis and one for a regional MSP which they choose via selecting a party rather than a candidate and each party receiving a proportional number of MSPs to the number of votes they received.

⁹⁹ BBC News. (2015, May 8th). Election 2015: UK Results. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://bbc.in/1F2gMnB>

¹⁰⁰ The Electoral Commission. (2011) UK Wide Referendum on the Parliamentary Voting System Retrieved September 3rd 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1xCJNCi>

¹⁰¹ The Scottish Parliament. The Electoral System for the Scottish Parliament. Retrieved 31st August 2015 from <http://bit.ly/1kduRqR>

7.3 A Federal UK with England as Regions

In the last five years then the UK has held referendums on two constitutional issues and both have delivered unsatisfactory results due to the problems that led to the calling of them in the first place still plaguing British democracy. If you add to that the constitutional irregularities caused by devolution and the lack of Westminster representation for a number of English regions similar to Scotland before devolution I believe there is cause for consideration of a future UK wide referendum on devolving local parliaments to the regions of England based on a similar deal that Scotland got via the Scotland Act which legislated for the opening of the Scottish Parliament. If, whilst the regions of England were going to the polls on whether to set up local parliaments, Scotland was given the option to increase the power that Holyrood has over Scottish affairs it would be a true nationwide referendum held locally. The nation would be deciding on devolution together even if the ballot papers in each region would read slightly different. Scotland would be able to vote for the added powers preferred over independence and would be able to remain a happy and content part of the union. An asymmetrical federalism would allow the unfettered development of Scotland's parliament whilst giving regions in England an equal constitutional footing even if the powers they yield are significantly more watered down than those yielded in the national assemblies. This would take momentum away from independence campaigners in Scotland whilst also dealing with constitutional crises faced by the wider UK. Also there would be an opportunity to decide on which electoral system the new local parliaments would have and if proportional representation was selected they would become much more representative of what the regional electorates would want than the central government they currently get at Westminster. Devolving power to local parliaments that would be elected proportionally would seem to be able to solve all of the constitutional crises that are affecting British politics at the moment. Of course these issues would need to be taken to the people and in 2004 regional assemblies were to be taken to the people but referendums in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber were abandoned after a decisive rejection of the plan in the North East (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2009)¹⁰². The situation is very different now, however, with Scotland having come so close to leaving the union and some politicians

¹⁰² House of Commons Justice Committee. (2009). *Devolution: A Decade On Vol.1*. House of London, Commons. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1LLWml0>

already kicking up a fuss about the inevitability of another referendum; and with a wider call across the UK for constitutional change to the electoral system. The possibility of the North of England having to contest national elections with the South without their Scottish brethren could cause people to look at devolution differently and see local parliaments as their most likely route to a government that best represents the society that they live in. Also the formation of these devolved local parliaments would at once deal with the constitutional irregularity of Scottish MPs being able to vote on English affairs whilst English MPs have no say over devolved Scottish affairs. It would then be possible for the regions of England to legislate themselves to create local solutions for local problems in a manner that would not leave them feeling like they receive a raw deal compared to the Scots. Rather than Scottish nationalism being seen as only looking out for itself it could be celebrated as a standard bearer leading the charge towards the strong local representation that is needed for a fair and equal society to thrive.

8.1 Figures

Figure 1.1 UK General Election Result 1979

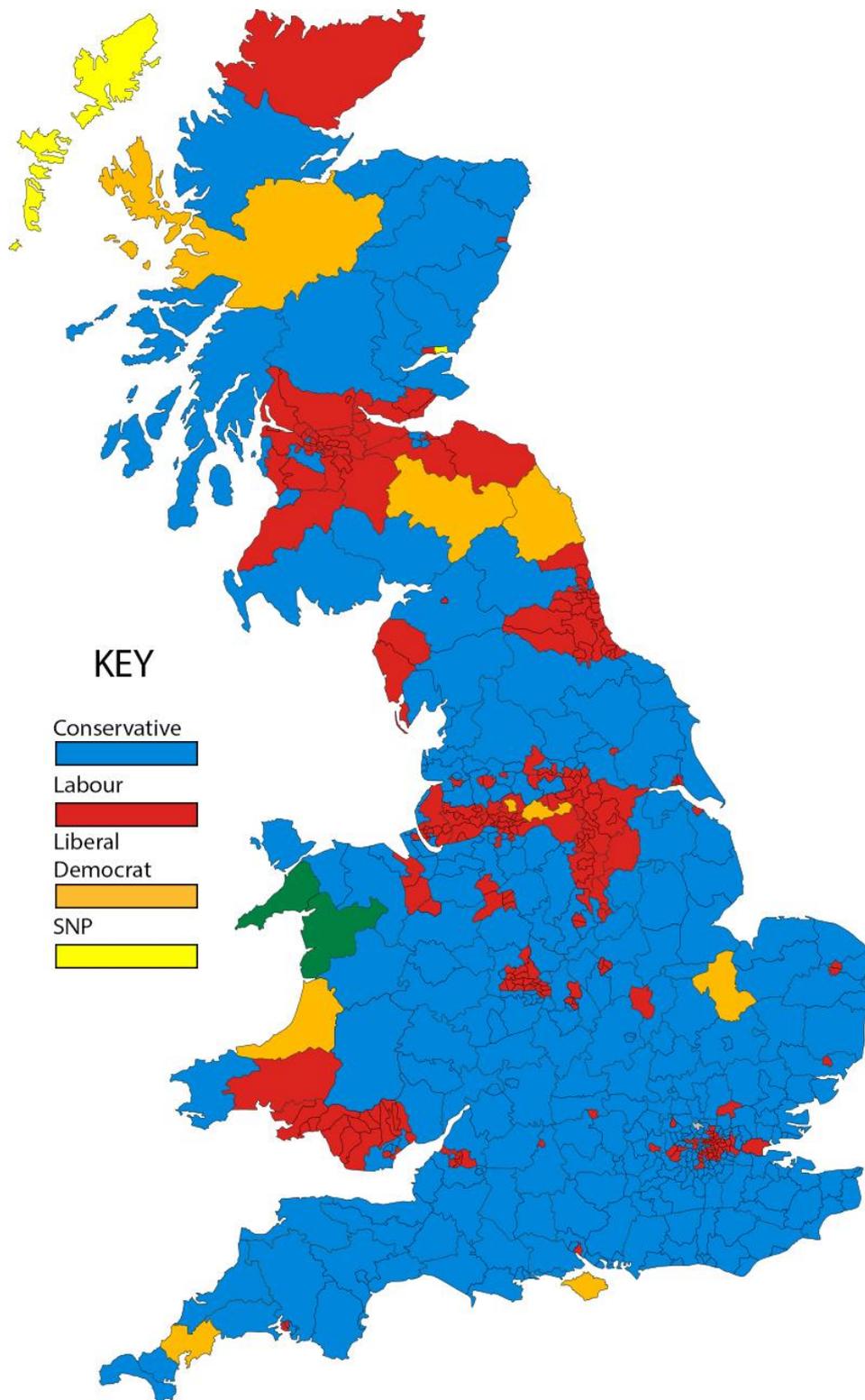


Figure 1.2 UK General Election Results 1983

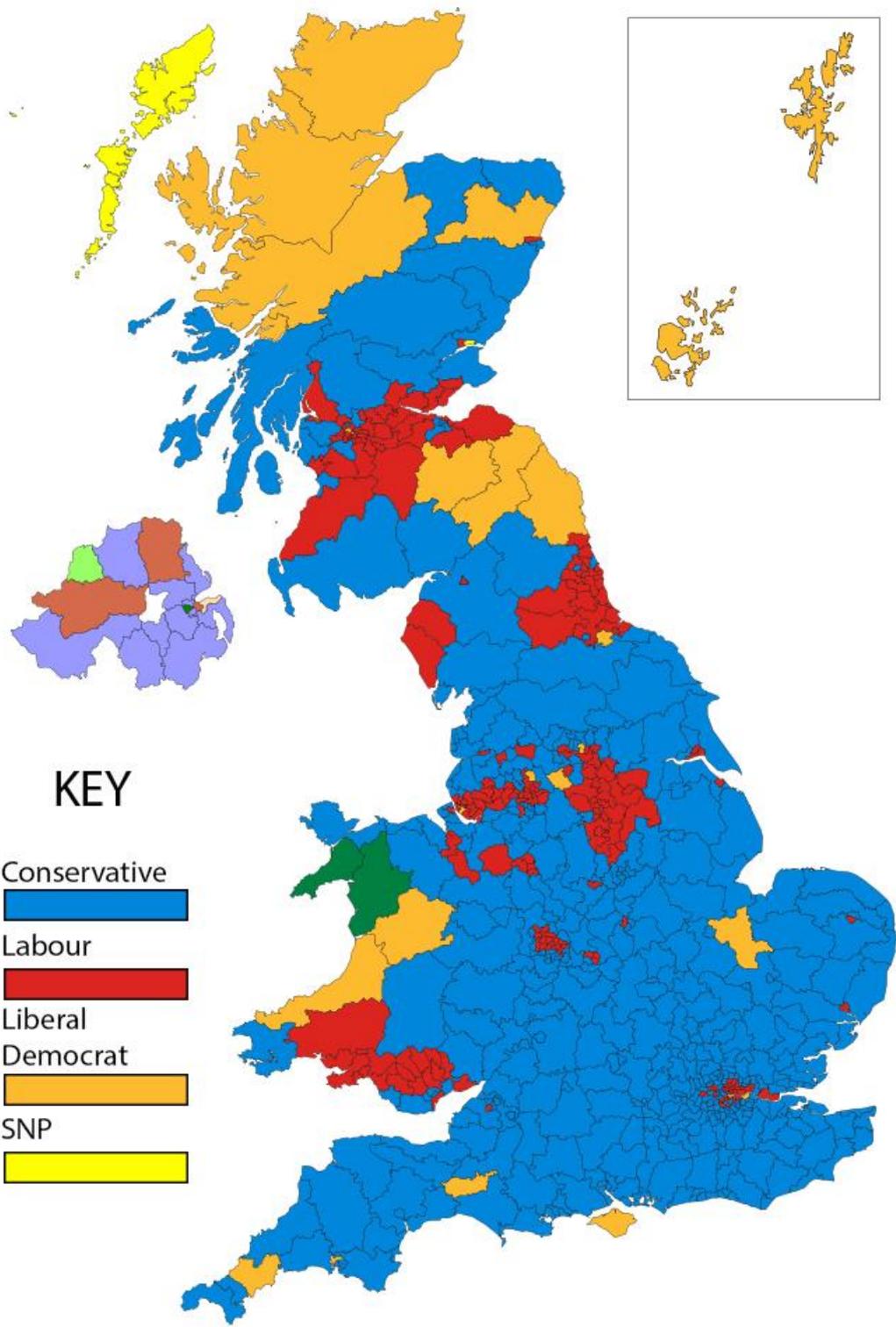


Figure 1.3 UK General Election Results 1987

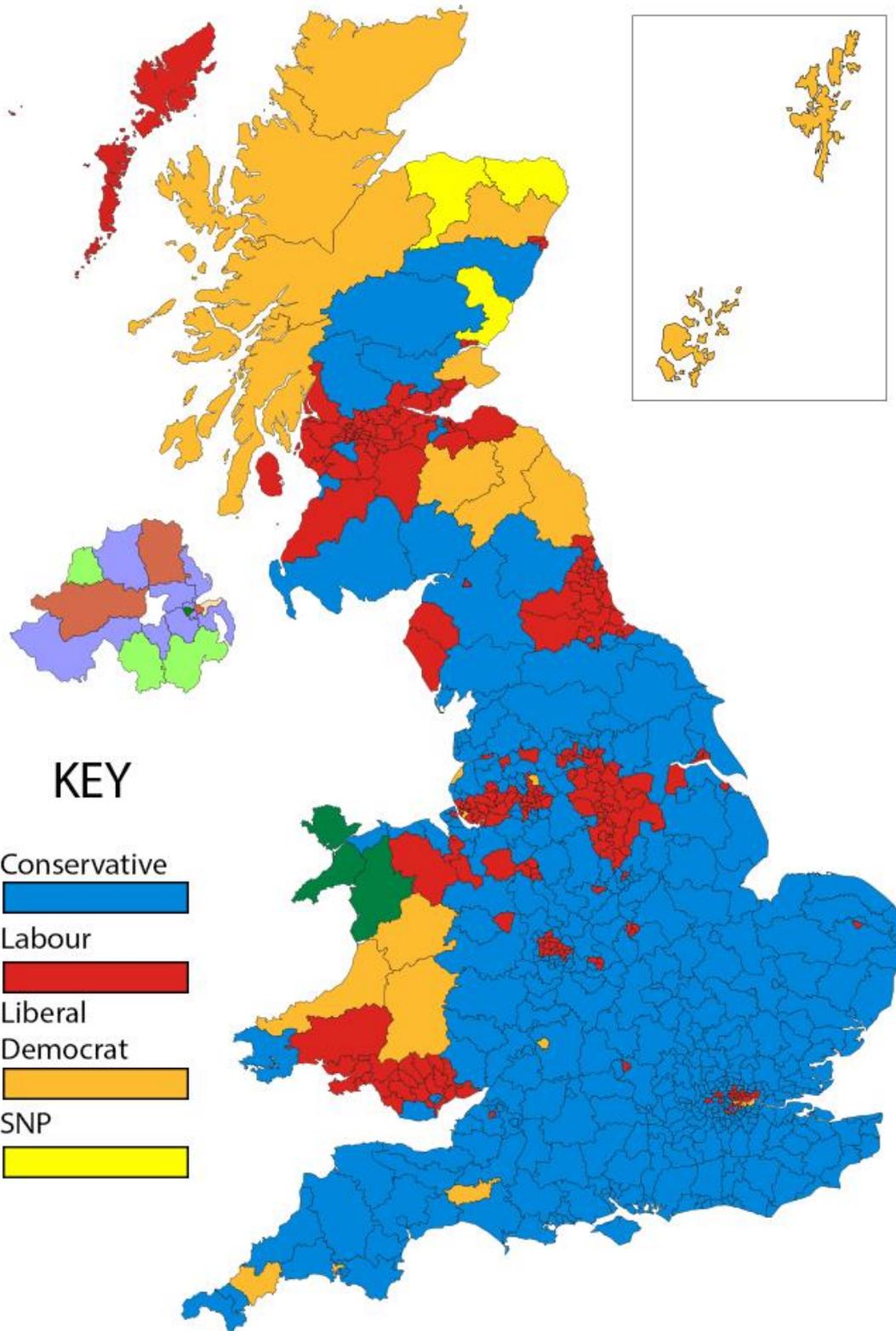


Figure 1.4 UK General Election Results 1992

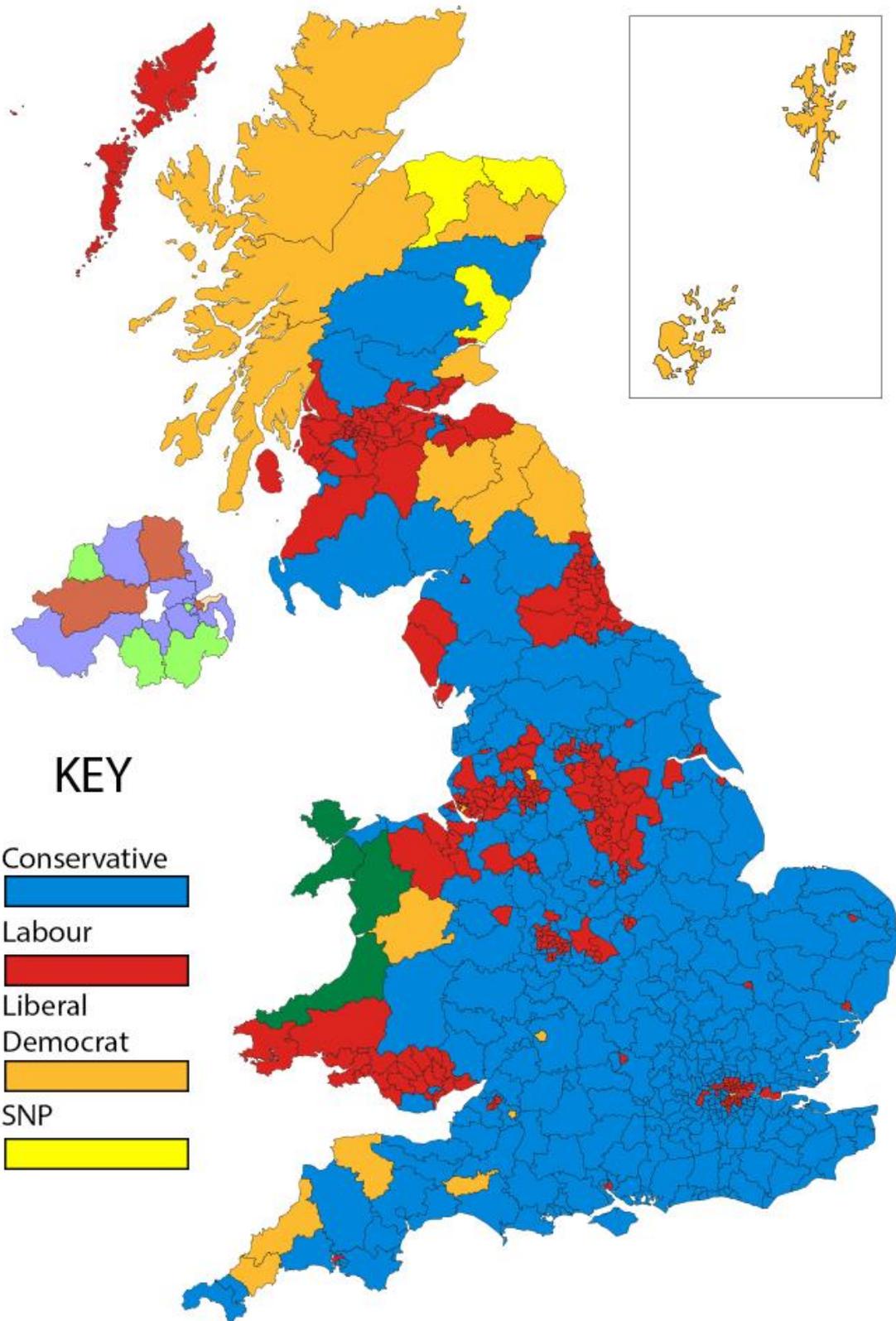


Figure 1.5 UK General Election Results 1997

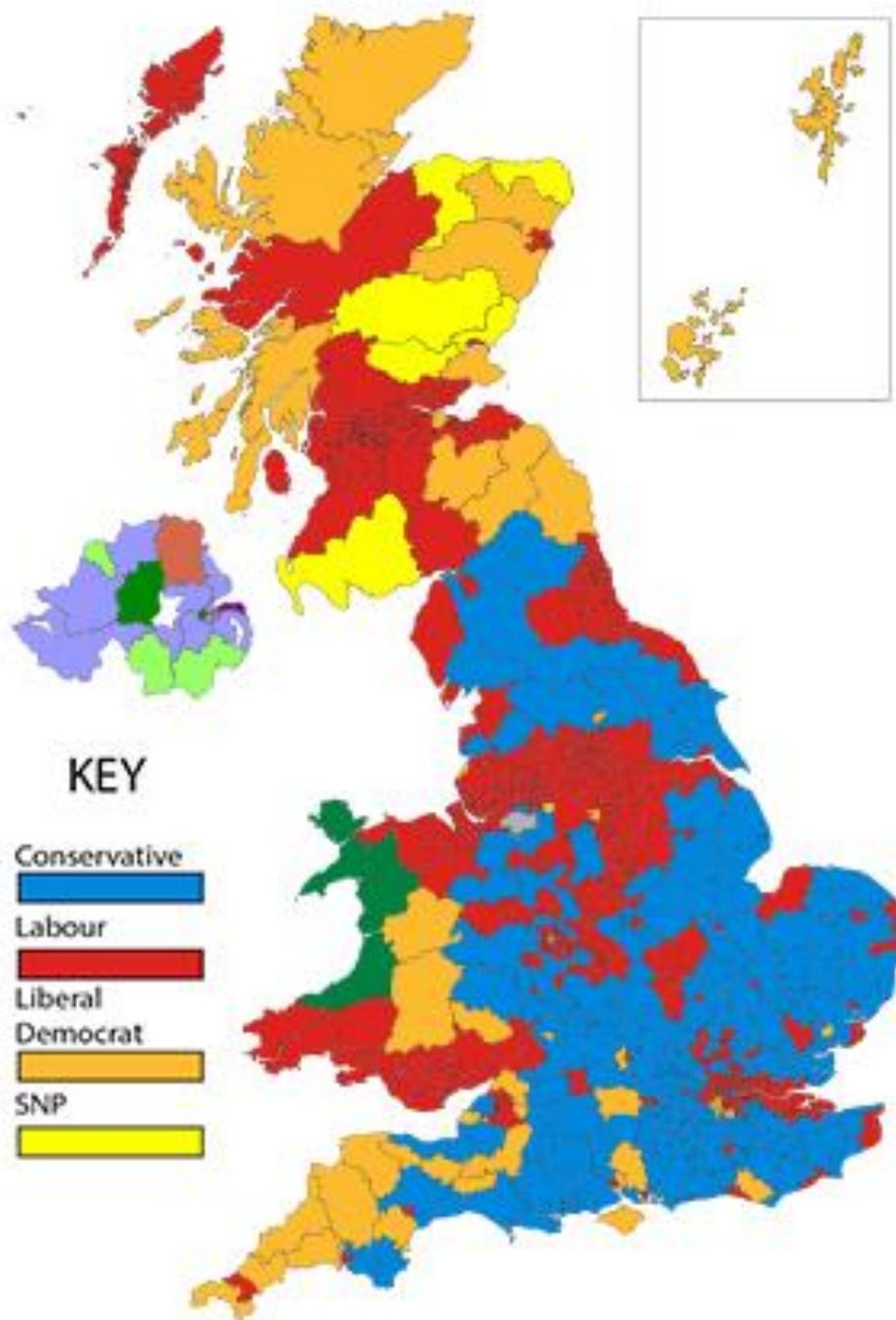


Figure 1.6 UK General Election Results 2001

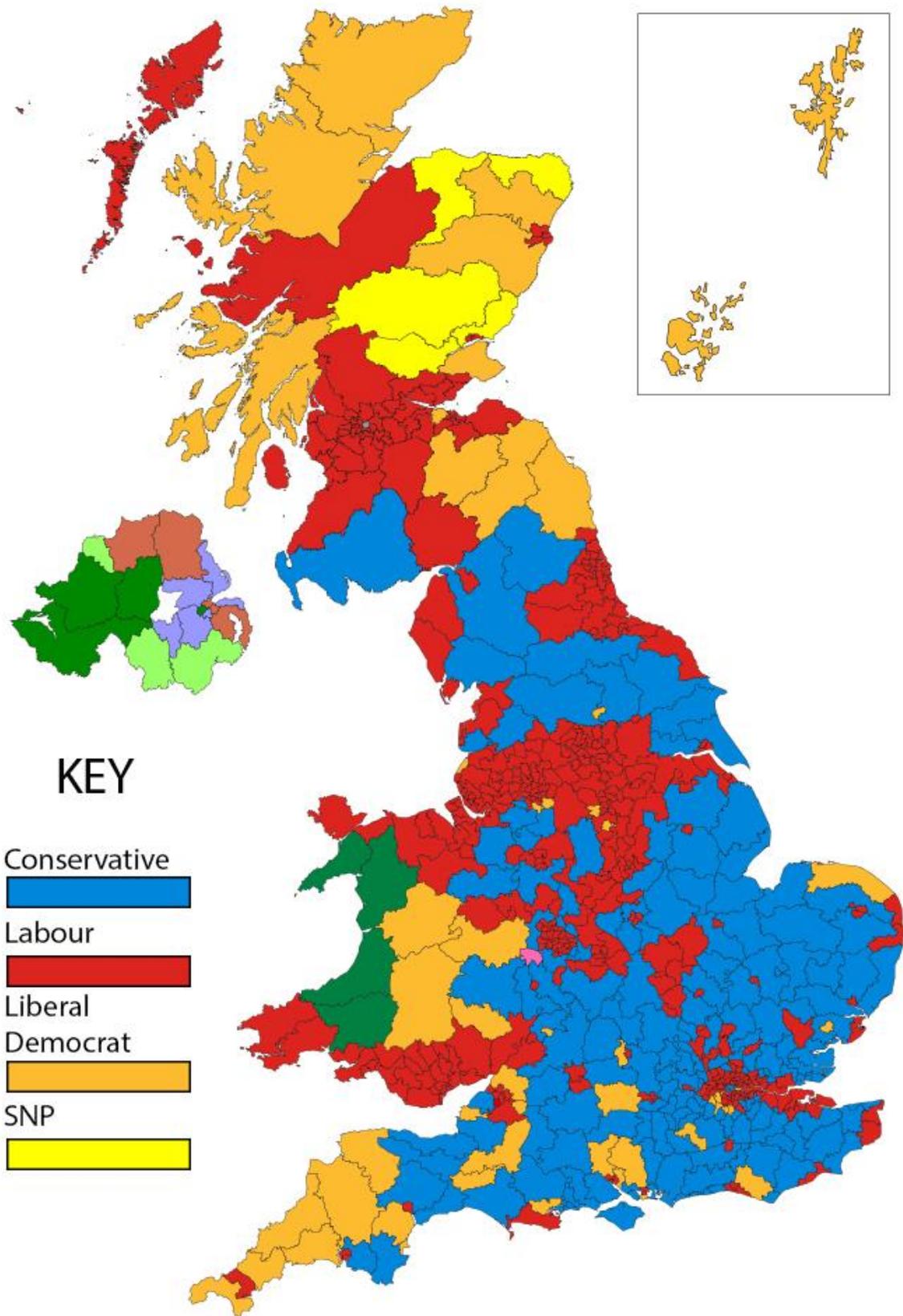


Figure 1.7 UK General Election Results 2005

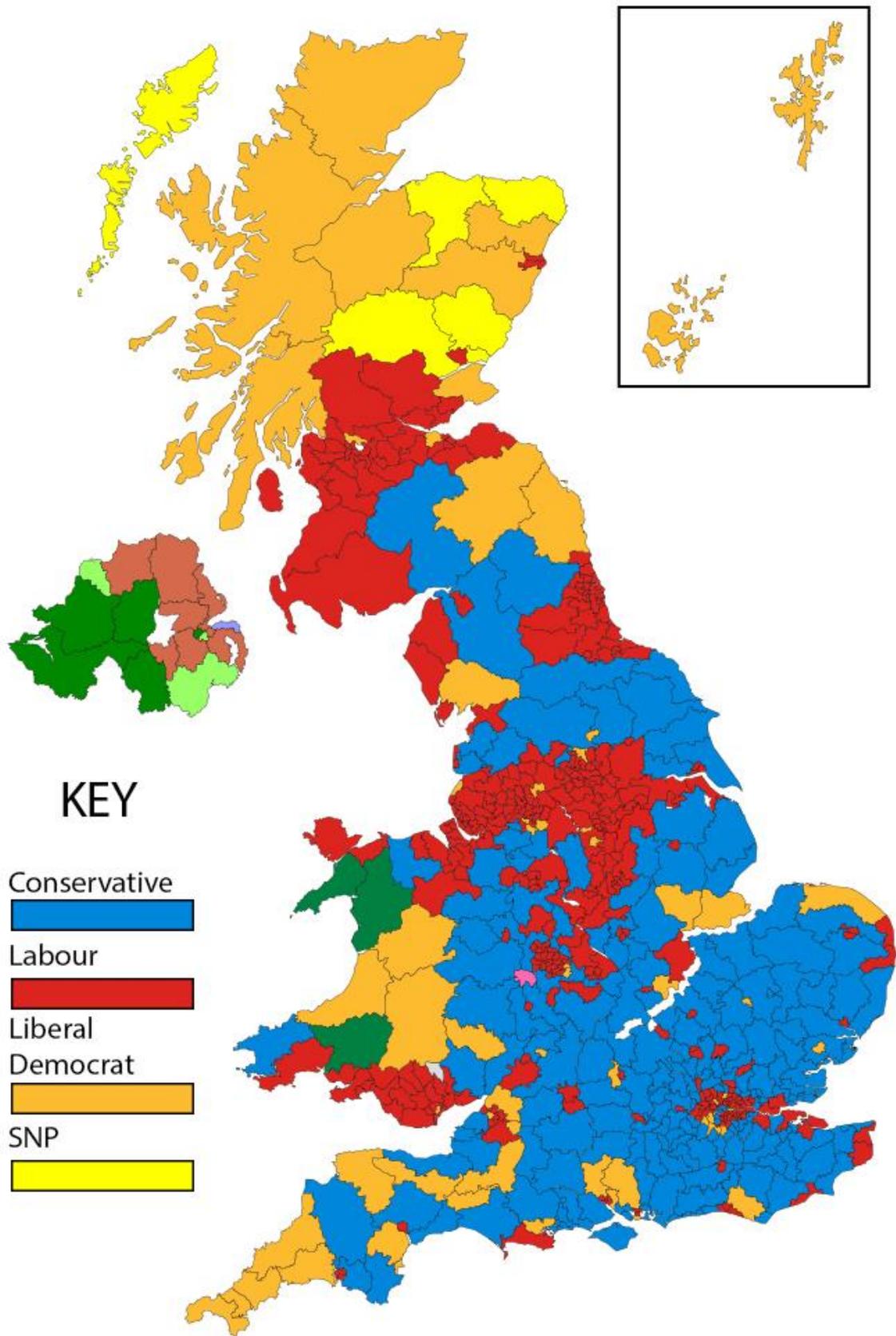


Figure 1.8 UK General Election Results 2010

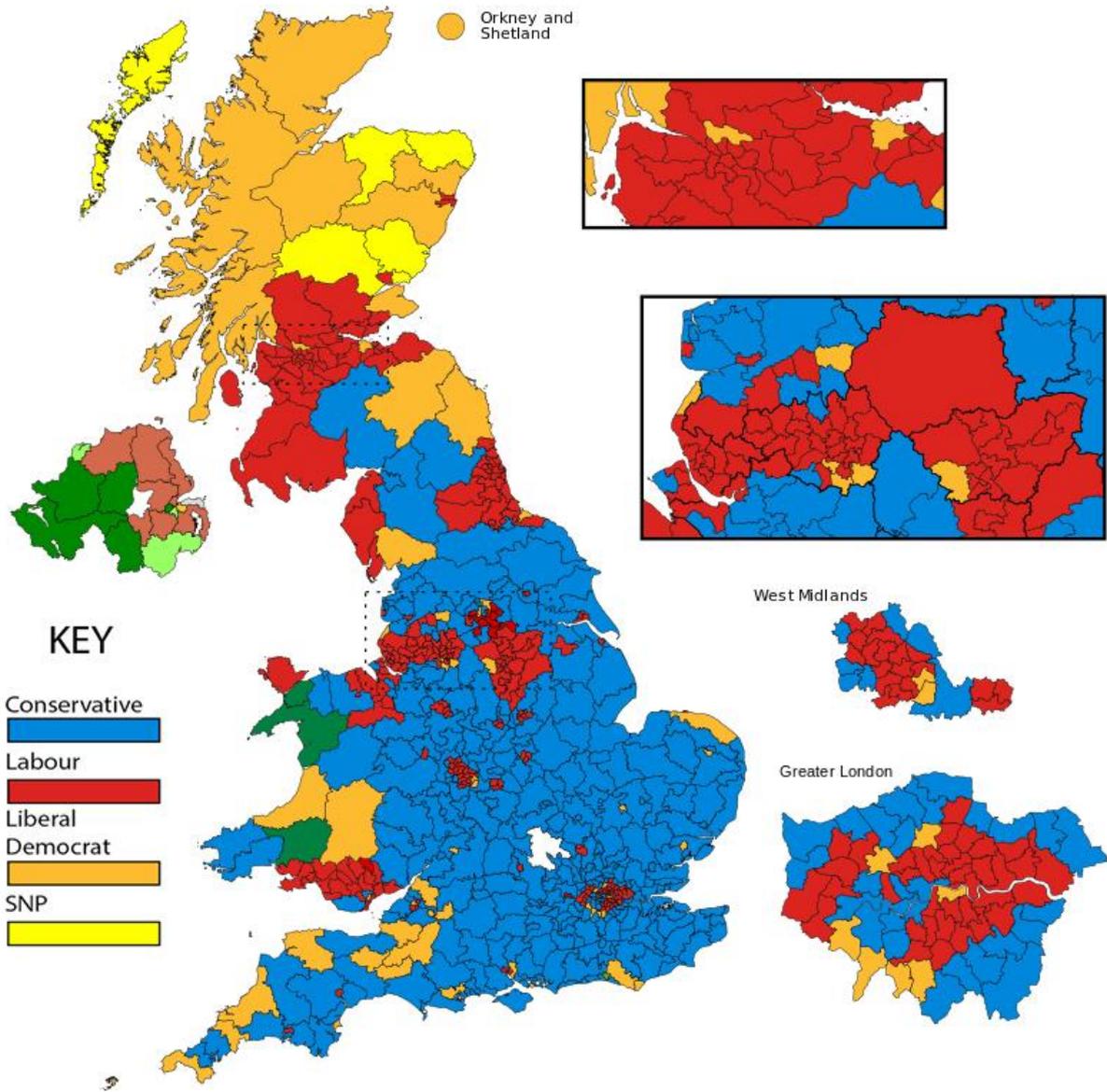
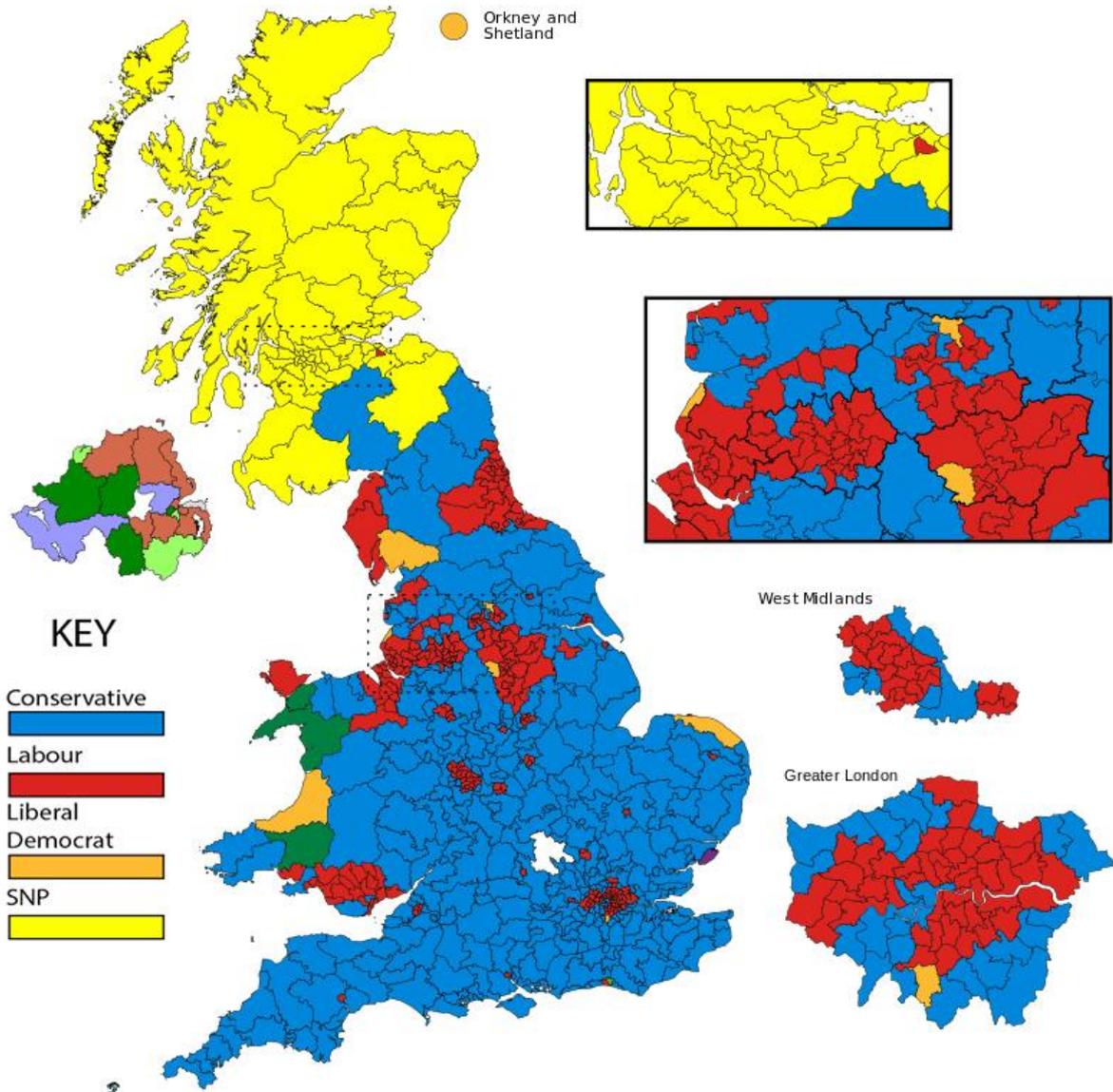


Figure 1.9 UK General Election Results 2015



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