

# Decentralisation as a means to Conflict Resolution: the cases of Wales and the Kurdish Region of Turkey

*by* Jordan Shapiro

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Kurdish Region of Turkey

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*Abstract:* This paper seeks to posit recommendations from Wales in solving territorially concentrated ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey. This paper will argue that the most effective way to solve these conflicts is through territorial decentralisation, or a territorial substate. Other scholarship suggests federalisation or examines successful or failed substates. This paper will attempt to create a model for new substate creation. Substates, like Wales in the United Kingdom, have semi-autonomy over language, culture, local, and regional affairs, offering them greater self-determination and consideration of their unique situation. Other nations, like the Kurds in Turkey, fight for, but have failed to achieve self-determination and have their rights continuously exploited. This paper seeks to understand: What can we learn from Welsh devolution to solve ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey? It will identify key mechanisms that are essential in creating peaceful, decentralised settlements: history of violence, leadership, and institutional inclusivity.

## **Introduction**

Land is life. It provides our food, our homes, our livelihoods, and is an essential resource for survival. Its significance provokes battles and wars for land and resources, which have been relentless throughout history and today. However, when one group has their lives overtaken and controlled by another, conflict can arise between conqueror and subjugated. These conflicts can be from the conqueror in the form of tax levying or culture, language, and religious restrictions. They can also come from the subjugated as well in the form of protests, subversive organisations, and sometimes even violence. Some conflicts have become increasingly intractable, such as the conflict between Palestine and Israel, while others are solved, such as the one within the former Yugoslavia. The reasons some conflicts remain unsolved is elusive, however, there are mechanisms that increase likelihood of creating resolutions to intractable conflicts over land, including state fragmentation and territorial substates.

This paper will examine the territorial substate as a means to conflict resolution, which is formed via a decentralisation of power from the state to a territorial entity within the state. This is because by their very nature they seek to move beyond violence and promote joint settlements. Substates currently exist around the world all with different types of settlements between a minority nation and the state: Wales in the United Kingdom, Catalonia in Spain, the Province of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in the

Philippines. While the larger states maintain the foreign policy and armies, each territory has a set of subjects they have full or partial command over.

The majority of the literature discussing territorial substates as a solution to ethnic conflict examines one or two specific case studies and their successes or failures, or explores other scholars' perspectives on decentralisation in an attempt to analyse and synthesise different perspectives (Cornell 2002, Coakley 1994, Bächler 2001, Bardhan 2002, Wolff 2011). This paper seeks to push beyond previous work by asking by investigating a case of successful decentralisation, or devolution, in Wales to see if the mechanisms and institutions in this case could inform and help other attempts at state decentralisation, specifically that of the Kurdish region of Turkey. It will seek to understand: What can be learned from Welsh devolution as a means to solve ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey? It will attempt to accomplish this in four sections. The first section is a literature review examining territorial approaches to ethnic conflict, asking: what are the most effective mechanisms for decentralisation as a means for ethnic conflict resolution between a minority group and the state? The second section looks at the Welsh case of conflict and the onset of devolution: What mechanisms of Welsh devolution have successfully resolved ethnic conflict? The third section looks at the Kurdish region of Turkey: Can the mechanisms from the Welsh case influence a solution to ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey? The paper will conclude with a discussion an analysis of findings and limitations about devolution as successful or unsuccessful model to resolve ethnic conflict.

The UK has been extensively examined for its lack of a written constitution and non-federal national structure. This paper will argue that they allow the country to be flexible and asymmetric, which allows devolution to flourish. Due to their lack of a written constitution, the UK is able to change and modify the state structure more easily than, for example, the United States or Germany, which have strong and less flexible constitutions. The flexibility has allowed for the creation of a parliament within Wales and Scotland via referendum, it also allows for those arrangements to modified and changed as the times change. Ron Davies, a Welsh Politician, famously coined the

phrase, “Devolution is a process, not an event,” which exemplifies the changing nature of the agreement (Davies 1999). Another important reason for choosing the UK is that it is not federal. Federations generally have a few, or many, smaller states that come together and rule the central state. Many states are federal. Federal systems have been extensively examined and perpetuated a strong democratic arrangement; they help create a unitary and equal state. Non-federal states have been less closely examined perhaps because they place emphasis on the central government rather than on the states. Furthermore, the UK has territorially concentrated minorities who seek home rule and autonomy from the state. The UK’s form of decentralisation, devolution, is a superb example of tailoring each decentralised arrangement to each nation’s specific needs because Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales all possess different devolutionary arrangements.

The Welsh case may not be the most obvious example of ethnic conflict; perhaps Northern Ireland would have been a more obvious case. However, Northern Ireland has been extensively researched, and ultimately the case between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland resulted in state fragmentation, not a territorial substate. Furthermore, the Welsh narrative of internal colonialism and ethnic conflict has largely been ignored in the literature and the greater UK history. Although the colonisation of the Welsh has largely been non-violent, if not peaceful, the tensions between the Welsh and the English exist though perhaps under the radar.

In the case of Turkey, no current devolutionary arrangement exists. Turkey possesses certain characteristics, a flexible constitution and a centralised, non-federated state, which would perhaps allow it to create asymmetric decentralisation. Unlike the UK, Turkey does have a constitution, however, this constitution is very flexible. It has been modified constantly and since the founding of Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the country has had many different constitutions. The nature of their constitutional arrangements implies that a mandate for a substate could be added to it. Finally, the reason to examine the Kurdish region of Turkey is because Turkey exists in a strategically important location. It has the largest army in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

(NATO) and Anatolia is the bridge between Europe and the Middle East, many countries have a stake in its stability.

Both the Welsh and the Kurds lived under powerful, international empires for hundreds of years, they are culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinct and both have experienced, or continue to experience, violent separatist groups fighting for home rule of their territory. Violent pressure from these groups affects the country and the government in many different ways. Though the governments do not necessarily have to negotiate with separatists, in both cases we see concessions made by the government despite political violence. In Wales, the home rule supporters, who emerged in the early and middle 1800s slowly gained decentralised departments, and ultimately gained a decentralised state nearly 150 years later. In Turkey, the government has begun to thaw its relations with the Kurds and negotiate with the violent groups.<sup>1</sup>

While no two countries in the world are alike, these two cases seem particularly distinct. One, a fairly homogeneous, Christian, western social democratic state, the other, diverse, Muslim and secular state, that toes the line between a democratic and authoritative. While this paper is not a comparison between the Welsh and the Kurdish people of Turkey were chosen deliberately for certain similarities in their situation, two minority nations seeking greater autonomy from the state. What this paper is trying to accomplish is to outline a set of recommendations for a resolution to ethnic conflict using a successful case, Wales, and a still developing case, the Kurdish region of Turkey.

This paper will only look at the Welsh case from the beginnings of these home rule protests in the early 1800s to the onset of devolution in 1997. Unlike the Welsh case, the case of the Kurds in Turkey has yet to be resolved. In the twenty-first century, we have begun to see concessions being made by the Turkish government regarding the rights and interests of the Kurds, however as

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<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges that despite the aforementioned thaw in relations between the Kurdistan Worker's Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK), Kurds, and the Turkish Government recently, this thaw has been reverted. While this return to hostility has not reached pre-2000 levels, this change of events from the 2013 ceasefire with the PKK is concerning for the future of peace between the Kurds and the Turkish Government.

of yet there are no plans to create a Kurdish sub-state. To limit the Kurdish case, this paper will only examine their situation from the late Ottoman Empire, 1880s, until the 2014 election. This period is important because the 1880s were a precursor to modern Kurdish nationalism and in 2014 the People's Democracy Party (Halkarların Demokratik Partisi, HDP), a Kurdish rights party gained 36 seats in parliament, an unprecedented win for the coalition party.

As previously mentioned, there are many aspects involved in resolving conflict, creating territorial sub-states, and engaging with minority groups within a country. This paper, while unable to fully explore the many nuances of these arrangements will identify a few aspects this author deems most important in dealing with conflict resolution: history, leadership, and institutions that are involved in supporting and creating sub-states. A true comparison between the two nations will also not be possible, partially because the situations are quite different. The author is more interested in what aspects of the Welsh case have been successful in appeasing both the home rule advocates and the centralised state to see if aspects of the Welsh case could inform decentralisation for the Kurdish nation. This paper hopes to add to the decentralisation literature by examining a non-federal state and looking more closely at a successful substate as a model to create other substates in places with ethnic conflict.

### **Literature Review**

In-group and out-group politics have shaped historical conflicts and continue to shape contemporary inter-ethnic relations. In the twentieth century, especially after World War II or the shift toward the sovereign state system, violence between minorities and the state shifted to the forefront. Awareness of historical groups, minorities, and the colonised as people who deserved self-determination, or group rights to land, resulted in uprisings and inter-ethnic conflict. These issues brought tensions, inequalities, to the forefront with new demands for greater autonomy and consideration for the subjugated groups (Lapidoth 1997:9, Isajiw 2000: 106, Horowitz 1985: 166). Sometimes these demands resulted in peaceful negotiations, sometimes they resulted in violence,



and sometimes they exacerbated current inter-ethnic tensions. Not all states possessed institutions and precedents to deal with these grievances, which in some cases can affect how conflict unfolds or is mitigated (Sisk 1996: 13-14, 18).

While there is no one-size-fits-all to ethnic conflict, or solutions to it, many scholars and political scientists have attempted to understand which mechanisms and institutions help or hurt the potential for violence. One method is to either fragment the territory or create a substate within the country. This paper will examine the territorial substate because by their very nature they seek to move beyond violence and promote joint settlements. Substates currently exist around the world all with different types of settlements between the nation and the state: Wales in the United Kingdom, Catalonia in Spain, the Province of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines. While the larger states maintain the foreign policy and armies, each territory has a set of subjects they have full or partial command over. Examining other literature will help place this research in context. This section wants to understand what mechanisms and institutions the literature suggests are important in mediating ethnic conflict through decentralisation. It will evaluate these mechanisms and use them to understand the Welsh and Kurdish cases.

Can decentralisation be used to solve ethnic conflict? What mechanisms does the literature highlight? Can the literature contextualise the history of decentralisation used for ethnic conflict? This chapter will ask: What is ethnicity and ethnic conflict? What are the most significant mechanisms for decentralisation as a tool for mediation of ethnic conflict between a minority group and the state? It will accomplish this in three sections: first a definition and exploration of ethnic groups, second a definition and overview ethnic conflict and solutions, and third a more in depth exploration of territorial decentralisation.

### *Ethnicity*

Identity and community make up a significant portion of the human experience: name, family, city, and nationality are just a few portions of this identity, another, is ethnicity. Ethnicity is an academically frustrating aspect of identity because it is defined in many different ways, two of which are: primordial, inherent and instrumental, constructed. Cynthia Enloe, in her book "Ethnic Conflict and Political Development," wrote that ethnicity is "biologically self-perpetuating," passed through genetics (Enloe 1972: 17). Her primordialist take on ethnic identity fits into three categories, tribal, national, and racial suggesting, characteristics you are born with are passed through reproduction. This perspective is historical and spatial; genes pass throughout time within a community is what creates an ethnicity. Another perspective from James Fearon and David Laitin in *Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity*, described ethnicity as a social construction, a "social category," which encapsulates qualities of pride and shame, some changeable, others not but all are labels that only matter within a societal context (Fearon and Laitin 1997: 848). By social context, they elaborate to say that the, "rules of membership..., cultural attributes, such as religion, language..., and shared historical myths," can change over time, making them transient and constructed (Fearon and Laitin 1997: 848). Their definition compresses both the primordial and instrumental versions of ethnicity into one because they do not deny the significance of inherent characteristics but they indicate that in different time periods, in different social situations, those characteristics mean different things and can be capitalised on in different ways.

Finally, Ruth Lapidot, in "Autonomy, Flexible solutions to Ethnic Conflicts" places these inherent and socially constructed groups into a political context by saying that ethnic and minority groups are distinct from the larger society, such as historical groups like the Native Americans in the United States, or the Kurds in southeastern Turkey (Lapidot 1997: 16). This argues that regardless of socially constructed or primordial traits, the group sees themselves as distinct from the larger part of society and has different needs, which means they are unique and need special considerations. Lapidot's understanding of ethnicity suggests that a group regardless of their genetic, social, or historical claim to each other or to a place might need a form of self-

determination for their group and land. In some places around the world, these groups are inhibited from gaining self-determination, autonomy, and in some cases basic human rights, which can drive them to conflict.

The literature surrounding the origins of ethnic conflicts is extensive and attributes them to everything from specific historical circumstances, modernisation, globalisation, poverty, fear, poor institutions, weak leaders, and inequality (Newman 1991: 451-478, Lake and Rothchild 1996: 41-75, Habyarimana, et al. 2008: 138-141, Bara 2014: 696-710). While ethnic conflicts can be between different groups within a state, some countries have five or ten different ethnicities within one state, this paper is examining a one ethnic minority against the state. This topic has been extensively examined, however, this piece is more interested in how to create peace rather than how to create war. Can territorial decentralisation support ethnic conflict resolution?

### *Ethnic Conflict*

In recent history, some modern governments and states are created, separated, and designed with institutions to represent minority groups especially in cases of ethnic conflict. Conflict does not have to signify violence, although it can lead to violence. Ethnic conflict, or ethnic tensions, can simply be a case of a minority, or majority, groups feeling discriminated against, out of place, or segregated from the rest of society. In some cases, conflict can become violent, it can be as mass movement, or a section of people who are violent because their grievances are not being met. Separatism, consociationalism, and decentralisation are all territorial practices used to solve ethnic conflicts.

Separatism, or secession, from the larger country is something that certain ethnic groups desire and work toward as their mission for greater freedom and self-determination. Catalonia, in Spain, and Scotland, in the United Kingdom held independence referendums in 2014 as a means to take control of their economic prosperity and give themselves greater control over their land, government, and people. The former Yugoslavia fragmented due to ethnic violence because of

manipulations of charismatic leaders and ethnic intolerance (Blagojevic 2009: 18). Separatism, while it can be useful in intractable conflicts, is also a weak solution. It does not address the conflict, or promote greater understanding between the ethnic groups, it simply allows each group to separate perpetuate the mistrust (Tullberg and Tullberg 1997: 238).

Another method for solving ethnic conflicts is via consociationalism. Consociationalism is a type of power sharing to ensure that all groups represented in a society are included in government and not barred from the political process (Dixon 2011:310-312). Northern Ireland uses a consociational approach to mitigate conflict and appease violent Catholic and Protestant factions (Tullberg and Tullberg 1997: 239-240, Dixon 2011: 314-315, Wolff: 2011: 33). Consociationalism, like separatism, heavily acknowledges the divisions in societies. It doesn't allow for trust between groups because there is a constant belief that without equal representation of each ethnic group in government, that one group would discriminate against the other. The last solution this section will discuss is territorial semi-autonomy.

Territorial decentralisation is another method for solving ethnic conflicts and, like the other approaches, it has both strengths and weaknesses. It is an agreement most often brokered between an ethnic group and the state. Decentralisation is lauded as a flexible, democratic, institutional approach that can increase self-determination and peaceful, legal means by which ethnic groups can express their grievances (Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 1-3, Lapidoth 1996: 10, Sisk 1996: xvi). However, the implementation of territorial semi-autonomy is neither right for every conflict, nor does it work in all situations. Territorial semi-autonomy for ethnic groups can increase discrimination of minorities in that area, it can create separatism through strong leaders and regionalist parties (Wolff 2011: 29, Cederman, et al. 2015: 356). What are the most effective mechanisms for decentralisation as a means for ethnic conflict resolution? What are those that cause it to fail?

#### *Aspects for Successful Territorial Decentralisation*

The significance of territorial semi-autonomy and self-determination for ethnic groups has been explored and advocated by governments, scholars and supranational organisations since the end of World War I. Lapidoth examined the history of acknowledging minority groups, and believed it began after World War I with the creation of the League of Nations (Lapidoth 1996: 11). This was one of the first instances in the international political space that the phrase, self-rule and self-determination, or the right of ethnic groups to govern themselves, was deemed important (Lapidoth 1996: 11, 19). Giving self-rule, or creating semi-autonomous regions was, and is still, seen as method for protecting the human rights of minority groups. It helps guarantee that there are central mechanisms for ensuring the perseverance of minority groups (Steiner 2014: 1542, Lapidoth 1996: 12, Brancati 2006: 653). Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, many supranational groups expressed interest in protecting minority rights including: the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations, and the International Court of Justice (Lapidoth 1996: 13-15, 19). These groups, and others, organised conferences, conventions, and subcommittees to draft documents that created legal guidance for granting autonomy to minority ethnic groups.

### *Territorial Decentralisation*

What is territorial decentralisation? Territorial decentralisation, or semi-autonomy, is a type of governmental decentralisation, by which the central government gives certain groups in a political system the ability and right to legislate over certain subjects within a defined geographical areas (Cornell 2002: 245, Lapidoth 1996: 33, Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 3). This type of autonomy can encompass many different types of legislative, financial, and administrative power over subjects that the centralised government previously controlled (Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 2-3, Wolff 2011: 29, Gaynor 2014: 203-204). There is evidence that this type of decentralisation increases the legitimacy of the state, improves services to the regions, and some argue that it can reduce tension and conflict between ethnic groups (Cornell 2002: 252-256, Brancati 2006: 681).

However, there is other literature which argues that territorial decentralisation increases interethnic conflict by increasing sectarian factions, isolating minorities in the autonomous region, and inhibiting national services in that area (Cornell 2002: 252-256, Gaynor 2014: 204). Despite these criticisms, there is no perfect model for decentralisation though scholars agree that there are some qualities that make decentralisation more or less likely to succeed. To produce successful decentralised arrangements, a range of factors must come together, the most important of these factors are: history, institutions, and leadership (Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 4, 10, 20-21, Cornell 2002: 252-255, Lapidoth 1996: 182, 200, Steiner 2014: 1541, 1543, Cederman et al. 2015: 355-356).

History imbues the present through collective memories, legislation, and violence. Violent histories can create violence presents. Historical violence can inhibit the success of conflict mediation, including in territorial semi-autonomous arrangements. Lars-Erik Cederman, et al., authors of *Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Conflict: Too Little, Too Late?*, empirically examined how past violence can disallow for successful autonomy arrangements (Cederman, et al. 2015: 354-355). Their study found that if decentralisation is pursued in a case of ethnic conflict before the outbreak of violence, there is a high likelihood of the arrangements preventing violence. If decentralisation is pursued post-violence, there is a less likely chance of it succeeding. Cederman, et al., argued that the addition of significant power sharing between local, regional, and central levels could, even in a large-scale violent conflict, reduce the chances of further violence (Cederman et al. 2015: 360-363). This study's separation of violent and non-violent conflict is significant in understanding when a decentralised arrangement will succeed. Highlighting inclusivity is also important because it highlights how, even in extremely violent circumstances, peace can be realised. Unfortunately, their study fails to specify whether any level of violence could create recurrence.

Institutions for power sharing must be delicately crafted based on the history of a conflict. The exact institutions in a system vary greatly, however scholars agree that there must be inclusivity

of the regional needs in the central power arrangement (Cederman et al. 2015: 350-355, Lapidoth 1996: 182). Lapidoth, agreed with Cederman et al., by highlighting the importance of inclusive electoral arrangements for both the regional and central governments (Lapidoth 1996: 182, Cederman et al. 2015: 350-353). She wrote that incorporating elected regional officials into the central government and creating a democratic, semi-autonomous legislature in the region are essential in creating sustainable and peaceful arrangements with the ethnic group (Lapidoth 1996: 182). These are understandably important aspects. When creating new governmental arrangements, minorities need to be represented and participatory in the new government. Which powers the regional legislature has, should be up to each individual case, however, there should also be methods through which to solve disputes between the region and central government if jurisdictional issues arise (Lapidoth 1996: 182-183). While Lapidoth's suggestions have merit, she assumes that decentralisation processes have inherently liberal and accountable actors. This is not always the case, but by building in checks and balances for power sharing, there is a greater possibility for the new arrangements to be upheld.

Siegle and O'Mahony (2006), in their paper *Assessing the Merits of Decentralisation as a Conflict Mitigation Strategy* addressed the necessity of checks and balances for power sharing. These checks and balances work most effectively between regional and central entities, within reason (Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 32, Lapidoth 1996: 182). At the same time, the new institutions need breathing room, time to flourish and grow, without excessive intervention by the central state. Building on historical institutions can help that process. In the case of Wales, regional institutions first emerged in the early twentieth century. Devolution bolstered these institutions in 1997 and made them more democratic, giving them greater opportunities to evolve on their own (Siegle and O'Mahony 2006: 50). How the institutions mature is just as much about their ability to flourish as it is about the leaders who help shape them. Leadership plays a significant role in the success and failure of institutions. They are the caretakers of the checks and balances, ensuring that

the democratic process is fulfilled. Some types of leaders are more successful at safeguarding the semi-autonomous region than others.

Ethnic parties and leaders can be essential in creating decentralisation, they can also be the major instigators of conflict and separatism post autonomy (Brancati 2006: 656). Dawn Brancati's article *Decentralisation: Fuelling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?*, explored the effect of ethnic parties on conflict post-decentralisation. She argued that regional or ethnically based parties promote separatism over national identity (Brancati 2006: 658). Ethnic parties, can more easily control the territorial governing bodies if they are supported by the minority group in question, however, Brancati indicates that they may pass laws that discriminate against minorities in the region (Brancati 2006: 659-660). She concludes that while decentralisation is a useful method for reducing ethnic conflict that ethnic parties can undermine this effort (Brancati 2006: 681). While Brancati's analysis is useful in understanding ethnic group leadership, it begs the question: if ethnic parties do not drive the decentralisation process, who does? Not many centralised governments willingly give up power and it can be difficult to get groups together to cooperate and compromise, especially when there is violent conflict involved (Cornell 2002: 246). In Wales, the nationalist party, Plaid Cymru created support for devolution but needed help from one of the major state-wide parties, Labour, to put devolution in the record books (Stead 1985: 100, Morgan and Mungham 2000: 36-37). The Kurds in Turkey already have a national party advocating for their rights, the HDP. They also have a nationalist group the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), the terrorist organisation that seeks home rule for the Kurds from Turkey, but not necessarily independence from the Turkish State (Casier et al. 2011: 14). The regional leadership in Wales did help push for greater territorial decentralisation and it is possible that the Kurdish leadership, stemming from the HDP or the PKK, could also create territorial decentralisation.

*Kurdish Turkey and Wales*



The factors highlighted by the literature: history, leadership, and institutions are important to determine when territorial semi-autonomy can help mediate ethnic conflict. The next section will apply these ideas to the case of Wales and the southeast of Turkey where the majority of the Kurdish people live. The sections will examine whether the history of each area is violent or peaceful and how the institutions that exist currently could promote successful or unsuccessful transitions to territorial autonomy.

### **Wales and the Welsh**

The Celtic fringe of the United Kingdom encompasses Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. It represents a distinct area of Britain with its own historic cultures and languages (Pitcock 1999: 1). The fringe is a representation of both the thinning of population from England to the outer reaches of the island, but also the cultural, linguistic, and economic boundaries between England and the fringe. The English have done their best to homogenise the Island and the countries historical narrative. The term 'British,' is a blanket term for all UK citizens suggests that the whole island has the same background and narrative. This label ignores the distinguishing features and history of the Celts, against the Anglo-Saxon, and Norman roots of the English. Wales lies in this fringe and while its territorial, cultural, and linguistic differences are acknowledged, its ethnic distinctiveness is often not. Wales has been a part of England for the better part of a millennium. Despite the colonial hegemony that has dominated much of Welsh existence and development since its annexation to England, Wales maintains its territorial integrity separate from England. From the mid 19th to mid 20th century, there was a distinct cultural tension from within Wales toward England, which resulted in conflict, violent and otherwise, between the Welsh and the English. While some would reduce the significance of the conflict, as it was neither highly organised nor widespread across all of Wales, the successive sections will argue that the conflict was ethnically and territorially based and that decentralisation of power reduced and eventually dispelled most of these conflicts in Wales.

This section will ask a series of questions about the Welsh conflict and devolution arrangement attempting to answer the larger question: How has Welsh devolution successfully mitigated conflict? It will answer this in four sections. The first section asks: Is Welsh an ethnicity? Then an exploration of ethnic conflict in Wales: Has there been ethnic conflict in Wales? Finally, what are the mechanisms of Welsh devolution that have successfully mitigated conflict?

### *Welsh Ethnicity*

As a territorially segregated region, with significant linguistic, historical, and religious differences, the Welsh ethnicity is as much embedded in the land as it is in a shared culture. Wales is “biologically self-perpetuating” as suggested by Enloe both because of separation from England but also due to the Celtic ancestry (Enloe 1972: 17). While there are many English migrants who immigrate into Wales, especially into the border regions, much of west and north Wales remain more isolated (Butt 1975: 43). Throughout history the Welsh have both reinforced their identity through language and religion, and been persecuted and prosecuted for it, highlighting their distinctiveness bidirectionally. While it is an instrumentalist, social label, individuals can choose to be Welsh, it is also a more primordial, ethnic distinction because the Celts lived in the UK long before the Romans and Anglo Saxons arrived on the island. Despite any attempts by the English to assimilate all groups under a British, English speaking, label and exploit Welsh resources without giving proper political representation to the nation, Wales has persevered (Butt 1975: 42).

Although the eastern Welsh border runs along England, much of central Wales is mountainous, giving it a geographical separation and some protection against assimilation influences. The Welsh language, which is largely spoken in the most remote areas of the nation, permeates the most intimate and important aspects of social life such as the home, the chapels, and the schools. In 1563, Elisabeth I, the last Tudor monarch paid to translate the Bible into Welsh, which has allowed for an unbroken line of Welsh speakers throughout history, in churches. This act contradicted previous legislation forcing all religious worship to be conducted through the medium

of English (Butt 1975: 1, BBC 2015). Religion and language are vital aspects of Welsh social identity; they are traits that can be acquired, suggesting they are instrumentalist. These traits, language and religion, are parts of identity that can be learned by outsiders and incorporated into daily life. Instrumentalist ethnicity, while not based biologically, is equally important because it encapsulates shared experiences and mutual interest in sharing cultural myths and history.

While instrumentalist identities can help unify, leaders can use myths and stories to bind groups together, tie them to land, and assert dominance over them, not all engineered identities can overcome biological, ethnic distinctions. British identity encompasses these problems. Murray G. H. Pittock dislikes the term 'British' because it assumes that English culture and history is unified with Celtic history (Pittock 1999: 2). He identifies the persistence of the Celtic symbols, stereotyped and otherwise, including lettering on pubs, Celtic knots and designs in jewellery, and the Eisteddfod, which reject the basic 'British' label (Pittock 1999: 3). This distinction is important because it references a time, pre-England, where the Welsh were able to live without the imposition of other cultures. The most long lasting and perhaps most significant piece of Celtic history is the Welsh language. While Welsh speaking has decreased over time, its Gaelic origins and connections with Scots and Irish isolate it completely from the English. For the Welsh, language has been a source of tension and conflict because it has been banned, at various points. It even separates the Welsh people because of the mountainous terrain North and South Welsh speakers do not always understand each other. It has also created economic, educational, and social disadvantages for Welsh individuals because the government and the medium of communication had been exclusively English.

To add to the cultural and historical differences, England has also perceived Wales to be different, evidenced by its laws and actions toward it. In 1870, Westminster passed an education act, which more or less outlawed Welsh Language in schools. This was perhaps an attempt to assimilate Wales into England, it also could have been due to the threat of increasingly popular Welsh press, publications through the medium of Welsh had circulation of about 120,000 in 1861

(Butt 1975: 5). This press, while seemingly harmless was a vent for the Welsh to express their grievances and was perhaps seen as an outlet for subversion of English interests. The act stigmatised the Welsh language and vastly decreased the number of Welsh speakers. Non-conformist churches became even more important in Wales for the preservation of identity. Elisabeth I's translation act helped preserve Welsh. As a further imposition on Welsh daily life and land, for much of the nineteenth century English landlords and companies controlled much of the profitable land instituting extra taxes and tithes on the Welsh farmers further cementing the discrimination. Understandably, this discrimination led to unrest and incidences of ethnically motivated violence, fighting for self-determination and home rule for Wales.

### *Ethnic Conflict in Wales*

As previously mentioned, conflict can take many forms. Conflict can resonate from the subjugated or from the hegemon sometimes it's barely noticeable, only existing in tensions between one group and another. It can also result in all out violence. With so many wars and terrorist groups around the world motivated by ethnic discrimination, Wales is not the most obvious choice as an example of ethnic conflict because Wales and England have lived relatively in peace for almost the entire time they have been one country. Despite this, conflict is a significant aspect of the narrative between the two nations. Throughout history, the Westminster Government consistently exploited Wales, Welsh labour, and Welsh resources. Beginning in the medieval period, and continuing up until the twentieth century, much of the land in Wales was owned and controlled by the English, only rented to Welsh farmers. This created a significant fracture between the Welsh and the land. The English landlords were far removed from the Welsh experience, unable to speak the language, with a different religion, and often lived far from Wales itself. This in itself was enough to create resentment. A people whose livelihood was in the land, so far removed from the land itself, however the addition of extra taxes, on Welsh roads and tithes to the Church of England, proved more than the Welsh were willing to take (Richter 1984: 50-53). Violence broke out both in the

early and late 1800s against English laws. Despite having Welsh Members of Parliament in Westminster, there was no clear method for Welsh citizens to have their grievances addressed legally and peacefully, which spawned tensions and violence (Butt 1975: 1). This section will explore conflict and violence in three major instances pre-devolution: the Turnpike riots of the 1850s, the Tithe Wars of 1886-1891, and the bombings English infrastructure projects in the mid-twentieth century specifically in the Tryweryn Valley and the implications from it.

In the early nineteenth century, to fund road maintenance, Westminster gave road jurisdiction over to Turnpike Trusts. The Trust operators were capitalists looking to gain as much money from the roads as possible. By 1843, 10,000 miles of roads between Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire, and Pembrokeshire had tollbooths, which for a rural, farming country like Wales was a serious imposition on local life (Wales Online 2013). Welsh citizens who had tractors and livestock across large stretches of land were unable to pay the increasingly prohibitive tolls. With so much of their livelihood being given away in toll money, the farmers took their futures into their own hands by destroying the tollgates. Crowds between 300-400 participated in the riots. As the violence mounted, troops were stationed at the tollbooths until finally legislation was passed in 1844 to get rid of the tolls (Wales Online 2013, Johnson 2015). These protests are significant because they demonstrate a lack of interest, or an inability, to use peaceful outlets, to achieve their ends. The farmers did not petition their MPs for support, they did not seek local councils or political leaders, they resorted to violence. In this instance we also see violence being used successfully to a political end, Westminster abolished the Turnpike Trusts shortly after the commencement of the riots. Overall, this is an example of two things: the importance of land for the Welsh lifestyle and livelihood and the ability to use violence to achieve political change.

Around the same time as the Turnpike Trusts were instituted, England implemented mandatory tithes to the Church of England based on the prices of farm crops across the country. Welsh farms were not as prosperous as farms in England and thus the payments were unfairly weighted against them. Furthermore, the Church of England was not the major church in Wales,

which meant the Welsh were paying taxes for a service they were not using. However, no major protests emerged until the 1880s after an agricultural depression further decreased yields in north Wales.

In the 1880s, Welsh farmers became unable to pay these tithes and in opposition they organised in an Anti-Tithe League, which was responsible for many instances of dissent and ultimately violence (BBC 2014, Jones 1997: 56-57). The protests and violence over the tithes became a major disturbance across North Wales, which they attracted considerable crowds (Jones 1997: 74). Although no one was killed, eventually, Westminster passed the Tithe Recovery Act. Welsh Liberal MPs (a precursor to the Labour Party) pursued this act after the riots became such a large stress on the police and armed forces in the area (Richter 60-68). The act changed the payment of the tithes from Welsh farmers, to landowners, who were often English. Soon after this, the Church of England was dis-established in Wales, eliminating the tithes altogether (Jones 1997: 74). Welsh farmers' actions showed how they felt exploited and unable to peacefully create change despite that, ultimately, Welsh MPs helped create change for the Welsh situation.

The last instance of conflict this section will discuss is violence surrounding and resulting from the incident at Tryweryn Valley. Although for the Tithe Wars, the Welsh MPs were ultimately able to create change, what happened in the Tryweryn Valley is a potent example of English neglect despite peaceful political action. In 1955, the Liverpool Corporation announced its plans to build a reservoir in the Tryweryn Valley, which would flood the towns within it. Welsh political mobilisation came out in full force to fight this announcement: Plaid Cymru, local councils, and Welsh MPs. The former Plaid Cymru General Secretary wrote in his memoir that that more local councils came together to protest to the water company than ever in history. Their message stated that the Tryweryn reservoir project was unjust and directly discriminatory of Welsh resources and territory (Thomas 2013: 1-4). Wyn Thomas wrote in his book, *Hands off Wales: Nationhood and Militancy*, that in the end it was clear that, "Tryweryn, if not Wales itself, [w]as little more than an extended feature of wider England (Thomas 2013: 5)." Despite the widespread opposition by Welsh

leaders the Liverpool Corporation built the reservoir. This injustice spawned new types of violent actors: the Free Wales Army and Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (MAC), which were two terrorist organisations, with missions to bomb and disrupt Tryweryn and similar English infrastructure projects in Wales. This violence never became a national movement, nor was it exceptionally widespread however, it shows the extreme extent of conflict between certain groups in Wales against England. It also shows extreme levels of dissatisfaction, and conflict, with English rule and the lack of consideration from the Government.

The major thread that brings these grievances together is the bid to control land and livelihood. This section highlights violence because it is a clear example of Welsh dissent and ethnic conflict. Violence was not the only form of dissent and conflict in Welsh history. With English owners renting land to Welsh farmers, with a ban on the Welsh language, and a general lack of strong political representation for Welsh interests, the Welsh felt exploited and ignored and the tension throughout this period is tangible.

#### *Evaluating the Mechanisms of Decentralisation for Conflict Resolution in Wales*

This paper has thus far argued that in the face of ethnic conflict, practices of decentralisation can act as mediating agent but only when history, institutions, and leadership come together to create an inclusive and representative sub state government. The previous section has explored the history of ethnic conflict in Wales during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The violence in Wales was isolated, not widespread, although the discrimination affected many Welsh people across the nation resulting in tensions and other forms of conflict. In the twenty-first century, violence from groups such as the Free Wales Army or MAC have all but disappeared. The next two sections will investigate the cases of leadership and institutional development in Wales: Did Wales have significant leadership that allowed for the creation of the devolution settlement? What aspects of the institutional development in Wales promoted conflict mediation?

### *Leadership in Wales*

By the twentieth century, there were many groups who were either appointed, formed, or elected to represent Wales. The Secretary of State for Wales, who was appointed, not elected, political parties like Cymru Fydd and Plaid Cymru, and the biggest party in Wales in the twentieth century, Labour. This section will explore each of these three groups of leadership for Wales and how they may have helped or hindered the promotion of devolution for Wales.

In 1951, Westminster created the Minister of Welsh Affairs and by 1959, the position of Secretary of State for Wales was created (Welsh Assembly Government 2015). The Labour Party committed itself to creating a Welsh Office, which the Secretary of State for Wales would head (Welsh Assembly Government 2015). While this type of representation seems an appropriate step toward greater representation for Wales, unfortunately this was, and remains, an appointed position, which means it is not democratic representation and does not necessarily support the interests of Wales. In the mid-1900s, Westminster reorganised the Welsh representation, replacing the Minister of State for Welsh Affairs with a Welsh Office and a Secretary of State for Wales. James Griffiths became the first Secretary of State for Wales and he was strongly in favour of a Welsh Council and greater Welsh representation in Westminster (Bogdanor 1999: 163). The Secretary of State for Wales was a pale imitation of decentralisation and Welsh leadership, because whenever the government swapped from Labour to Conservative and vice versa, the Secretary of State would change. Welsh voters almost always voted majority Labour, therefore a Conservative Secretary of State for Wales could never fully represent Welsh interests. Despite this pale imitation of representation, internal political leaders and parties committed themselves to Welsh equality and rights.

One group, the Party for Wales, Plaid Cymru, is the only all Wales political party. Its precursor came as a political movement under a different name, Cymru Fydd, Wales of the Future, which was founded in 1880s during the height of conflict in Wales (Morgan 1971: 165). This group was one of the first to suggest home rule for Wales, or suggest that Wales should have the right to



determine its own political future, with its own government, and elected officials. Home rule was important for these political leaders in Wales because it meant developing Welsh institutions that fit with the unique language, culture, and religion (Bogdanor 1999: 146-147). Unfortunately this movement failed in the 1890s, another violent period in Wales (Bogdanor 1999: 220). While the violence in the nineteenth century, coincided with the Cymru Fydd movement, there was no cohesion between the groups, which is perhaps why all three movements failed to push home rule and decentralisation in the early part of the twentieth century. However, despite the end of Cymru Fydd as a political movement, the bid for home rule for Wales would not be so easily put aside.

Plaid Cymru, or the Party for Wales, formed in 1925. The formation of Plaid Cymru showed the lack of political will of the Welsh home rule supporters to push the major parties into supporting devolution, decentralisation (Bogdanor 1999:153). Plaid Cymru has been recognised throughout the twentieth century as a political party for the promotion of language preservation and Welsh speakers, however, due to the falling numbers of Welsh speakers throughout the twentieth century, language could not remain the most important political interest of Plaid Cymru (Bogdanor 1999: 153). Their emphasis on language has been billed as the major weakness of the party in gaining support across Wales. The highest concentration of Welsh speakers is in the North and West, not the Southeast, which is where the majority of the people live. Plaid Cymru perhaps more greatly represents the Welsh-speaking portion of the nation, although more recently they have attempted to deviate from that reputation. They want to be more inclusive and support all those individuals who make Wales their home. Some authors, such as Brancati, suggest that regionalist parties exacerbate violence but in Wales we do not find that Plaid Cymru exacerbated violence (Brancati 2006: 681). In fact they acted as peaceful leaders to advocate for Welsh interests in spite of conflict and violence in other areas of the country. It is perhaps surprising that they did not provoke greater conflict because their platform for home rule is similar to the earlier mentioned violent groups. A potential reason for this is because they were, and remain, a lesser party in Wales. Since the early twentieth century, Wales has voted Labour.

The Labour Party, in modern times, has always been the major political leadership in Wales. As Vernon Bogdanor puts it, “The recent history of devolution in Wales is very largely the history of an internal Labour Party debate.” As early as the 1960s, Welsh Labour began pursuing a decentralised government for Wales in Westminster (Rawlings 2003: 25, Bogdanor 1999: 162). Initially the idea formed out of a desire for governmental reform. In Wales, there were local governments, quango bodies, which were appointed entities that oversaw different legislative areas in Wales, elected MPs, as well as the appointed Secretary of State for Wales. It is not hard to understand why conflict over political neglect was rampant throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with such a wide assortment of people representing the Welsh but not elected by them. Despite Plaid Cymru’s promotion of home rule for Wales, it was Labour who had the power to make this happen. Although Labour perhaps gained the idea from Plaid Cymru, Welsh Labour saw decentralisation as an alternative to separatism, which was not exactly feasible for a nation that lacked institutions, elected officials, and political will for independence (Bogdanor 1999: 164).

Throughout the twentieth century Westminster allowed institutions and governing bodies to be created in Wales. However, it was not without opposition even from within the Labour ranks. Labour’s leadership supported decentralisation, but from within the Labour Party, there was a schism between some Welsh Labour members who supported devolution and the rest of the party who were against it (Stead 1985: 100). The anti-devolution sentiment from the English MPs is yet another example of English disregard for the Welsh experience. Ultimately this schism affected the defeat of a referendum on a parliament for Wales in 1979. The schism was repaired, which helped the promotion of a second referendum in 1997, when devolution passed.

### *Institutions*

The success of the devolution referendum was hard fought. The agreed upon parliamentary arrangement is complicated and imperfect but it contains institutions that are democratic, inclusive, and flexible, which the literature suggests is how to mediate ethnic conflict between minorities in

the state. The devolutionary arrangement in Wales reflect the decades of decentralisation that came before it, encompassing all the offices Westminster had decentralised to Wales in the decades before 1997, plus a few more. Along with the increased powers, the officials who would be in charge of these subjects were democratically elected both via first past the post and through proportional representation. The new parliament opened up a brand new level of inclusiveness than previously given to Wales. The inclusiveness first and foremost was the acknowledgement of Wales as a regional power, rather than a less populated area of England. Before devolution, all the power was centred at local levels and in Westminster, devolution created more power at a regional, national, level for Wales. The true success of the arrangement was that it was subject to change. Since 1997, devolution has been modified on three separate instances.

By the time the devolution referendum was passed in 1997, the various decentralised offices and officials for Wales already possessed many powers over important cultural, religious, and linguistic matters. As early as 1881, the Sunday Closing (Wales) Act became the first piece of legislation that affected Wales and not England (Bogdanor 1999: 146). The education system was the first institution to be decentralised in 1893 with a Secretary for Education (Wales) in 1907 (Bogdanor 1999:149). The decentralisation continued along these lines until the establishment of a Wales Office in 1964 (Evans 2006: 3). Despite this apparent success at gaining Welsh laws for Welsh people, these offices had appointed officials. Ultimately, the devolved settlement encompassed these offices but added democratic rules and accountability to the people in charge of the subjects (Rawlings 2003: 63).

The electoral system created for Wales is a mix of first past the post and proportional representation. Discussions about the electoral system of Wales was a conflict between an emulation of the Westminster system or creating a system with greater party representation (Rawlings 2003: 44-45). They ultimately chose to do both, electing 40 members through parliamentary constituencies and 20 members elected by additional member system from five electoral areas (Rawlings 2003: 45). Adding the Welsh Government to the United Kingdom created

an inclusivity of Welsh interests at a national and regional level. The Welsh MPs could advocate for Wales in Westminster, but the Welsh Government would deal with matters that only affect Wales, and Welsh interests. Devolution relieves Westminster of grievances that affects a small portion of its populace. Furthermore, it affirmed that Wales is in charge of its land and people, which is exactly what the previously violent groups and nationalist party wanted.

Finally, the process is flexible. The nature of the UK constitution, which is unwritten, promotes flexibility and change. While the United States Constitution is fixed with only a few changes occurring throughout its history, the UK's constitutional values can change with changing times, which is inherently flexible. Creating a perfect arrangement in the first instance was unlikely. The Welsh system, which has nothing binding it into stagnation, like a constitution, or set arrangements, creates an ideal atmosphere for modification. It allows the arrangements to be revisited, re-tailored, and renegotiated by national leaders. This creates an ideal atmosphere for expression of grievances and compromise to stem outbreaks of more violence.

The Welsh settlement did not grant as much independence as the Scottish and Northern Irish settlements. Wales is only allowed free reign over a certain set of subjects whereas the other two nations are allowed to legislate on all subjects except those specifically excluded by Westminster. This is because Wales had no institutions of its own until Westminster started rebuilding them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scotland and Northern Ireland maintained some of their original institutions when they were annexed into the UK. The gradual approach benefits Wales, and could benefit other nations that have been deeply subjugated because it allows institutions to flourish over time, and power to gradually devolve to the regional entity.

### *Conclusion*

The Welsh case illuminates one nation's path to decentralisation. Despite historical violence, and limited leadership, in about 150 years, devolution passed. While the arrangement is not perfect, it was never designed to be so. Since 1997, two major changes to the settlement, one in

2006, 2011 have given Wales greater autonomy, but none of these have pushed the nation closer to independence. How does the Welsh case fit into or defy the literature? Has devolution created a more peaceful settlement in Wales?

Historically we see limited violence in Wales but it was not the major type of ethnic conflict that took place. Much of the conflict was large-scale discontent over the inability to control one's land and the deliberate discrimination of Welsh citizens by English laws. Institutions allowing for fairly large degrees of autonomy and inclusivity create a democratic governing body that all Welsh citizens participate in. The changing nature of the arrangement allows the settlement to shift as times change and it allows institutions to grow and flourish on their own and with the help of regional leaders.

Welsh Labour remain some of the most significant regional leaders in Wales, but Plaid Cymru remains one of the strongest advocates for the new devolution settlements. However, Welsh Labour leadership is unarguably the historical driving force behind devolution's success in 1997.

Finally, has ethnic conflict between Wales and England ceased? Overall, any dissent that led into violence appears to have ceased. Tensions and conflict between the Welsh and the English, although less salient than they once were, is not entirely eliminated. This is because the devolution arrangement will never appease all groups. However, the Welsh settlement largely follows the literature's suggestion that inclusivity and stronger leadership can overcome a history of ethnic conflict and violence.

What aspects of the Welsh arrangement make it successful for conflict resolution? Historically, although Westminster's policies disadvantaged the Welsh, Westminster also helped gradually rebuild institutional capacity in Wales as a response to violence. The political leaders in Wales did not give in to violence and frustration and attempted compromises and political settlements with the leading parties and powers. There were clear distinctions between the violent groups and the political leaders. The institutions and compromises from the first devolution settlement exemplify inclusivity, adaptability, and do not overburden the new nation's government

apparatus. While it is possible that another combination of factors could produce a decentralised state, the Welsh case illuminates one path to autonomy.

Wales might never be ready for independence, that is not what this section nor this paper is arguing. However, greater autonomy for the people of Wales has allowed for the language, religion, and way of life to be maintained and protected. It also allows Westminster to be unburdened with legislation, religion, and culture that only affect a small portion of people in the country. It has allowed for a reduction in conflict and tensions between the two nations, giving Wales the chance to exist as its own entity, rather than a sub-section of England. By these counts, devolution has been a successful experiment into substate governance for conflict resolution.

Next the paper will turn to the Kurdish region of Turkey. The Kurdish region does not currently have a decentralised government, but ethnic conflict, violent and otherwise, is a significant issue in the region. The section will explore the history of violence, leadership, and institutions in the state and the region to ask: Can the mechanisms from the Welsh case guide a solution to ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey?

### **The Kurds of Turkey**

The Kurds in the Middle East make up one of the largest ethnic groups in the region. The Kurdish people are the largest nation without a state in the world. Their population is around 40 million and they live largely in the intersections between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In Turkey, they comprise about twenty percent of the Turkish population, making them one of the largest non-Turkish ethnic groups in the country (Abbas and Yigit 2014: 2, Müller and Linzey 2007: 18). The area where they live is rich in oil, water, and arable land, placing them in a strategically important position both for Turkey and the Middle East (Douwes 2000: 17). The Kurds, like the Celts, are ethnically and historically distinct from other groups in the Middle East. The first mention of the Kurds was sometime around the seventh century AD when the Arabs conquered a mountainous people, called the Kurds (Gunter 1990: 5). They speak Indo-European, Indo-Iranian dialects, which

are distinct from Arabic, the language of much of the Middle East giving them a further separating quality from the countries in which they inhabit (Gunter 1990: 5). Kurdish inhabited land is mountainous, which has created distinct separations in culture across the Kurdish people in language, culture, and lifestyle. Above all else, however, land and the ability to control the land is as important to Kurdish survival as it is for the Welsh and any other nation or state around the world. Due to time and research constraints, this paper will only be examining the Turkish Kurds and their potential for a sub autonomous state. Some readers might question why this author has not chosen the Iraqi Kurds, who have already achieved a sub-state. This is because Iraqi Kurdistan was formed with the support of the United States, which deviates from this research understanding ethnic conflict (Jimenez and Kabachnik 2012: 32).

The Ottomans annexed the Kurdish region in the sixteenth century and then split it between the Ottoman and Persian Empires (Jimenez and Kabachnik 2012: 32). Under the Ottomans, the Kurds enjoyed significant autonomy. The Ottoman rule of law favoured the Sunni Muslims, which meant the Kurds, who are also largely Sunni Muslim, were subjects just like everyone else. Under the Ottoman rule, the Kurds were largely able to live as they chose, which is as a tribalist society. Kurdish tribalism emphasises bonds of kinship within one's own tribe. These bonds can isolate one tribe from another, but also means that each tribe's allotted land, is important, for culture and livelihood. In the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds lived their lives as they chose. The mountainous, rich land they inhabited provided wheat and resources to the Ottoman armies, but this allowed them to contribute to the economy and have prosperous livelihoods. From this narrative, the Kurdish people seem content and, although without a state, largely independent and incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. What changed? Why are the Kurds in Turkey in an ethnic conflict with the state? Can the mechanisms from the Welsh case influence a solution to ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey? This section will be exploring these questions.

### *Kurds Under the Ottomans*

Despite the Kurds living in relative peace under the Ottoman Empire, the beginning of Kurdish nationalism originated some time before its fall (Olson 1991: 1). During Ottoman rule, the Kurds lived relatively autonomously, even in conjunction with the Ottomans. In the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), the Kurds fought alongside the Ottoman cavalry against the Russians and Armenians. As the Kurdish region was on the border of eastern Turkey, they were strategically positioned to fight against the Russians, giving Kurdish tribal leaders an unprecedented opportunity for power and prestige. One specific leader, Sheik Ubaydallah, often considered the father of Kurdish nationalism, supported the creation of an independent Kurdistan. The Russo-Turkish War allowed Sheik Ubaydallah to gain power from the Ottomans and further his interests for his people. The Ottomans disliked the Armenians and Russians for their Christianity and Sheik Ubaydallah agreed with this sentiment allowing him to rise in military ranks. However, he had an ulterior motive for his dislike, he worried that the Armenians would gain an independent state before the Kurds and was willing to fight to keep it from happening (Olson 1991: 5-7, Hawez 2011). The Treaty of Berlin heightened these fears in 1878. It negotiated peace between the Ottomans and the Russians and gave the Armenians a real possibility of establishing a state. With his fears being justified, two years later in 1880, Sheik Ubaydallah led a revolt in Istanbul to fight for home rule for the Kurds. While his rebellion was squashed, and led to his exile and death, three years later, its effect has persisted in history. Some historians and Turkish scholars deem this to be the first instance of Kurdish nationalism (Reynolds 2011: 419, Olson 1991: 1-5). Ubaydallah's fears and motivations ultimately cost him some support from the Ottoman regime. Despite their acceptance of the Kurds, a deliberate rejection of Ottoman rule did not create a positive atmosphere for his cause.

After the war, the Kurdish region maintained their own cavalry, called the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments (*Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları*), whose role was to protect the border regions from the Russians and Armenians. Ottoman commanders headed these regiments but the Kurds were allowed to reach officer positions, and were highly regarded and respected. While these regiments were largely attempts by the Ottomans to gain tribal loyalty from the Kurds, by placing



them in powerful positions (Klein 2011: 2-4, 42). Leaders such as Sheik Ubaydallah, before his death, hoped that the Hamidiye would help unify the Kurdish people, both because this cavalry was nearly all Sunni Kurds, but also because they had a largely singular role, patrol the border regions (Klein 2011: 20-21). Sheik Ubaydallah wanted the Hamidiye forces to be the beginnings of a Kurdish, Muslim, rule of law in the southeast of Anatolia. Unfortunately the Hamidiye would not be able to unify all the Kurds because only Sunni Kurds were allowed in the army, leaving some of the population fragmented and isolated (Olson 1991: 11, Klein 2011: 50-51). This is an important issue in the life of the Kurds in Turkey. Their position in a mountainous area, combined with the tribal lifestyles inhibited their ability to unify. We see this in the Welsh case as well; the Welsh were divided by language and geography disallowing mass unification.

As an important instigator of Kurdish nationalism Sheik Ubaydallah gave the Kurdish people a precedent for fighting for their rights. Ottoman rule, for the majority of Turkish Kurds, meant living life largely uninhibited, but after World War I, the Ottoman Empire fell and what replaced it, the modern state of Turkey, was not as accepting of Kurdish values.

### *Kurds in Turkey*

After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was overthrown and disbanded and the new state of Turkey emerged in its place. By 1922, it had a new ruler as well, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk, who continues to be revered in Turkey, had vision and very strong principles regarding the new state of Turkey. He believed in secularism and created secular education and government bodies, he changed the alphabet to Latin script from Arabic script, which he thought would modernise the country, sought greater ties with Europe to bring Turkey into the twentieth century, and he even modified Turkish history to promote “Turks” as the supreme and historical inhabitants of Anatolia (Foss 2014: 826-827, Müller and Linzey 2007: 19). These values were in complete opposition to Kurdish values. The Kurds, who are deeply religious, practiced Sharia law in their communities, furthermore, the new history of Anatolia, ostracised and excluded their history. The nation’s new

narrative placed the Kurds as second-class citizens. The new Turkey had no place for the Kurds and they were quick to feel this slight.

A new constitution in 1924, almost completely banned the use of Kurdish language, education in Kurdish was deemed illegal, and an education tax was placed on schools in Kurdish areas only (Müller and Linzey 2007: 21). At this time, we see another Kurdish Sheikh leader emerge, Sheikh Said. In 1925, the Kurds, led by Sheik Said, tired of being denied their cultural rights, revolted against unfair treatment. This rebellion was the beginning of Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth century. It was a rebellion for Kurdish land where Kurds could be culturally, religiously, linguistically themselves. One important aspect of this rebellion is that it did not result in Kurdish unification, despite its importance as a catalyst for other revolts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century (Olson 1991).

The Kurds rebelled a total of 17 times between 1924-1938, and their situation in Turkey throughout the twentieth century deteriorated. Turkey was more interested in maintaining their new national narrative than understanding the Kurdish interests. Democratic elections began in 1946 but this did not seem to change the overall perspective on the Kurdish population. In fact, the second half of the twentieth century was one of the bloodiest and most distressing for the Kurds. The Turkish Government relocated and broke up non-Turkish areas, passed legislation stating the majority of individuals in any group must speak Turkish, and killed many Kurdish individuals who tried to protest this (Müller and Linzey 2007: 23-24).

### *Kurdish Conflict in Modern Times*

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Kurdish violence has not dissipated. In fact, today, the violence is more organised largely radiating from the Kurdistan Workers Party, (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK). This group was founded by Abdullah Öcalan in 1974 and has become an internationally recognised terrorist group (Müller and Linzey 2007: 25). Öcalan gathered Kurds from lower classes to be a part of his cell, people who knew what it meant to be repressed,

and rallied them toward his cause (Gunter 1990: 57-59). His ideology and interests strongly resemble the Welsh model of devolution. He believes the Kurds should have greater local, regional, and democratic representation that is subordinate to the larger Turkish State. However, despite any ideology, he maintains that violence is still necessary to achieve his aims (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012: 5-7). Öcalan's disinterest in establishing an independent Kurdistan shows his understanding of the burden of an independent state. This means that his message is not a message of separatism, it is a message of human rights and semi-autonomy.

One big mistake that many researchers make is the misconception that the PKK represents the majority of Kurdish interests and that they have influenced the Kurdish leadership in government (Gunter 2014, Gisselbrecht 2014, Rabar 2014). It is possible that some politicians are sympathetic with the PKK's cause, but evidence to support their larger involvement is limited. While at the beginning, the PKK largely attempted to unify the Kurdish people by targeting the elite, who were often pawns of the government and had influence in the Kurdish region. By the late 1980s they began targeting Turkish forces, which more often put those they were representing in danger rather than unifying or protecting them (Abbas and Yigit 2014: 3). Any town that the PKK would take over placed the civilians as targets of the government and if the Turkish government and military were protecting a town, the PKK targeted the areas, which also put civilians at risk (Abbas and Yigit 2014: 3-4).

There is a clear-cut case for ethnic violence between the Kurds and the Turks. The Turkish Government asserts that there is no ethnic conflict, simply a socioeconomic problem in the Kurdish area (Cornell 2001: 31-32). This is true but Kurdish socioeconomic problems are due to Turkey's inability to acknowledge the Kurdish experience. Many Kurds still only speak Kurdish, but are unable to be educated in their language. Kurds who do not speak Turkish are unable to find work or establish businesses. Furthermore, violence between Turkish forces and the PKK, and outright violence from the Turkish government prevents safety and prosperity in the Kurdish region. The United States and NATO have declared the PKK is a terrorist organisation. However the European

Union and the United Nations also call for an acknowledgement of the greater Kurdish people's rights, exactly what the PKK is fighting for (Alliance for Kurdish Rights 2015). The PKK act as leaders for a certain sector of Kurds, but the violence that accompanies their message alienates other Kurds because it makes them targets for violence from the government. The PKK is sensational; much of the violence surrounding the Kurds in the twenty-first century is as a result of Öcalan's hardliner attitude. Unfortunately this leaves many other Kurdish leaders, who are more likely to help create a compromise, out of the national and international spotlight. The next section will explore other leaders for the Kurdish cause and assess their effectiveness in advocating for the Kurds.

#### *Leadership for the Kurds*

As previously mentioned, Turkey's first Democratic election took place in 1946, and since then many parties have come and gone from the political arena. While this could be a sign of a thriving democracy, in fact many of the parties either fail to achieve Turkey's ten percent threshold or are disbanded by the government for subversive messages and activity. The ten percent threshold and Turkey's penchant for disbanding parties that are perceived to be subversive are major criticisms of the Turkish democracy, and ultimately with its constitution. While most constitutions are quite static, changing occasionally when the system warrants, Turkey has had four different constitutions since its inception in the early twentieth century. The current constitution was ratified in 1982 and has gone through 16 changes since (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015, Örüçü 2011: 11). The current form passed in 2010 and reflects increasing pressures by the international community, specifically the EU, to liberalise relations with minorities, especially the Kurds (Örüçü 2011: 11). While the constitution itself is based on Atatürk's initial principles for Turkey, the amendments reflect coups, changing governments, and a changing international atmosphere surrounding Turkey. Recently, the amendments have even looked favourably on the Kurds perhaps owing to their current parliamentary successes and the EU mandates.

The next section will examine the history of the Turkish constitution and Turkey's identity problems. Then examine the history Kurdish political parties, and finally look at how the constitutional changes reflect an important thaw for the Kurdish parties and people in future. This section asks: How does the constitution shape Kurdish leadership? Then it will look at the history of Kurdish leadership: How effective is Kurdish leadership at advocating for Kurdish rights?

### *The Turkish Constitution*

For a country to have so many constitutions, and change them so frequently, it suggests an identity crisis with how the country sees itself and how it wants to be seen by others. Turkey's current constitution was written in 1982, after a military coup overthrew the current government, in the name of protecting democracy in Turkey. This constitution, is labelled as semi-authoritarian because of the military's involvement in its creation and because it was written during a time of martial law (Arato 2010: 476). The authoritarian nature is most shown in the definitions of Turkish citizen and the definition terrorism.

A major driving force in shaping Turkey rests in a value passed down from Atatürk and continues today: unity of the state. Atatürk's Turkey had recently lost much of its territory, and therefore one of his major interests was in creating a unified Turkish State and identity. In his vision, Turkey would have a populace that is both ethnically, linguistically, and historically Turkish. This definition left little room for minority groups, especially the Kurds, who have their own history and language. The 1982 constitution embodied these ideals by prohibiting other, non-Turkish ethnicities and languages from being acknowledged (Altunisik and Tür 2005: 44). A law such as this created difficulties for the Kurds in a few ways: first, it immediately disenfranchises any Kurd who does not speak Turkish, of which there are many, second, it suggests that even simple displays of non-Turkish language and culture could result in incarceration and even death for the Kurds or other minority groups.

In 1991, the government passed an anti-terrorism law, which reinforced and strengthened the laws against separatism and propaganda that could be perceived to support anything but a unified Turkish State (Arat 2007: 29). This broad understanding of a terrorist action, disallowed for newspapers, pamphlets, or books to be published in Kurdish, and suggested that the mere mention of a Kurdish identity was illegal. This is the foundation of much of the violence and laws against the Kurds.

Rules and legislations such as these against the Kurds disallowed, once again, for a unified force. Without the ability to become educated in their own language, many Kurds became forgotten by the system. With the rise of the PKK, government backlash forced many Kurds to leave their homes and travel to other, more Turkish locations in Anatolia. However, it did not eliminate all Kurdish leaders.

#### *Kurdish Political Parties*

Since the opening of elections in the middle of the twentieth century, Kurdish elite have been on the forefront of Turkish politics. Similar to Plaid Cymru in Wales, the Kurdish parties, which have been known by many names throughout the half century of open elections, have advocated for equality for the Kurds and in more extreme cases, home rule for the Kurds. They face similar structural issues as Plaid Cymru as well because of how divided the nation is due to land, linguistic, and cultural differences. Overall their message, like Plaid Cymru, places an importance on the ability to control land, culture, and livelihood, which a decentralised state could provide. The Kurdish parties, however, face greater political challenges. The nature of the definition of terrorism in Turkey hurts the national credibility of the parties. The last obstacle of these parties is the electoral rules to gain seats in parliament. In the Turkish Parliament, a party must gain ten percent of the vote, which is one of the highest vote percent thresholds of a democratic parliament in the world.

Many parties in Turkey's history of democratic elections have been shut down. This is a problem that especially affects Kurdish parties and it is largely due to the narrow definition of terrorism. The government shut down the Freedom and Democracy party (Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi, ÖZDEP) in 1993 for intent to divide the unity of the Turkish nation into Turks and Kurds (Arat 2007: 48). In 1994 another party was shut down, the Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi, DEP) for promoting minority languages and in 1997 the Labour Party (Emek Partisi, EP) was shut down for similar reasons. In spite of constant shutdowns, the Kurdish elite manages to persevere and reappear on the political stage with similar messages each time. The most recent iteration of this party, and perhaps the most successful is the HDP. Formed in 2013, this party supports the Kurds but also supports democracy as a means for greater social and political rights for all people (Celep 2012: 166). This party has helped facilitate a cease-fire with the PKK in 2013, and helped create an unprecedented thaw of relations between the leading Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), the Kurdish people, and the Kurdish extremists (Z. 2013, *The Economist* 2013).

The HDP represents a few key aspects of Kurdish leadership. It unifies the Kurds in ways other Kurdish leadership has failed to do. The coalition has created broader Kurdish support for one party despite linguistic, religious, and tribal differences. Its emergence and success have also helped dissolve some of the animosity between the AKP and the Kurdish people. This type of coalition is unprecedented in Kurdish history and has proved successful in the most recent election in 2014, where they nearly doubled their vote share, proving that peace, democracy, and inclusivity have a place in Turkish politics (Gisselbrecht 2014: 7). This coalition allowed Kurdish political elite to overcome hundreds of years of geographical separation. It also gave them a significant amount of seats to bargain with as well. Unfortunately, despite this milestone, the PKK and Öcalan's influence loom over the party and the coalition. The amount of influence the PKK has over Kurdish politics in parliament is not officially known, however, the pro-Kurdish parties do not denounce or separate themselves from the PKK suggesting some sympathy with Öcalan.

The Kurdish leadership in parliament, does not seem to be falling into an extremist trap as Brancati suggests. Due to the Kurdish people's long time subjugation, they seem to be promoting the most peaceful solution to human rights problems in Turkey (Brancati 2006). Their success in parliament and ability to engage with the ruling AKP party puts a positive light on Turkey's future ability to peacefully engage with Kurdish representatives. The changes in Turkey's engagement with the Kurds since the late twentieth, when Kurdish was illegal, and early twenty-first century when the AKP had a peaceful meeting with Öcalan and not outright banning the Kurdish party, shows that a thaw in perspective is taking place. This might even be setting the stage for decentralisation.

#### *Thaw of Relations and the Potential for Kurdish Decentralisation*

The Kurdish situation poses real challenges for decentralisation, however, it also already has some of the key elements that make it a good candidate for a potential substate. Since the start of the twenty-first century, the Turkish government has changed some of its policies regarding the Kurds, including allowing the use of the Kurdish language and allowing pro-Kurdish parties to exist relatively unmolested. In 2009, the President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, leader of the AKP, spoke a few words in Kurdish on television (Zendanlioglu 2012: 115-117). This is a significant step in a long fought battle for semi-autonomy and recognition, especially considering Kurdish was once an illegal word and language.

Potential reasons for the change in relations with the Kurds include: the European Union and an increasing interest by the AKP to position Turkey closer to Europe. In the twenty-first century, Turkey has been increasingly interested in joining the European Union, however its blatant disrespect for the Kurds created extensive criticism from the EU and disallowed for its entrance. The AKP, as the Justice and Development Party, is interested in greater economic prosperity and joining the EU, or gaining closer ties with Europe and the West could help create that. This is



perhaps why many of the increases in rights and considerations to the Kurds have coincided with this period.

Ultimately, although the case is quite different than the Welsh case, key elements stand out. The history of violence, the Kurdish population is a much larger percent of Turkey than the Welsh are of England, so it is understandable that the ethnic conflict in Turkey would be greater. However, we do not see the PKK as representatives for the larger Kurdish ideas and aims. In the Welsh case we saw concessions to demands for home rule stemmed violence. While we have not seen similar concessions in Turkey, what we do see is a more relaxed relationship between the Kurds and the government beginning in the twenty-first century. The success of the BDP and the HDP in the 2009 and 2014 elections indicate support for a non-violent voice for Kurdish views and interests. This type of leadership is likely what is needed if a Kurdish substate is to be pursued. In Wales, only when a national party emerged in support of devolution did it become a major aspect of the political arena. Finally, the institutions, the changing nature of Turkey's constitution allows, like in the context of the UK, for additional rights to be afforded to the Kurds without serious bureaucratic or political holdups. A difficulty would be in shaping new institutions that are inclusive because Turkey is a highly centralised state.

## **Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion**

### *Discussion*

What can be learned from Welsh devolution as a means to solve ethnic conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey? Although the Welsh case has merits, without more space and research and situational implementation, it is not possible to determine whether ethnic conflict in Turkey could be resolved. This piece may be most useful as a base for further research on a model for decentralisation as a means to conflict resolution. Although Europe and the United States have pursued democracy promotion since the end of World War II, not every state wants, needs, or is a good candidate for democratisation. The final section will provide a discussion to this research,

examine limitations with the piece, and finally conclude with a discussion on further applications for this research.

Wales has achieved what many ethnic groups around the world wish for, the ability to legally create a future for its nation, separate from that of the larger state. Although some nations want more, like Catalonia and Scotland, Wales has taken a historic first step in self-governance after having been treated as a part of England centuries. The history of ethnic conflict, tensions, and violence, toward England are a significant aspect of the nation's collective memory and current situation. Today, Wales might have more Welsh speakers and the Welsh economy might potentially be more fruitful if England had not subjugated the nation for nearly eight hundred years. Despite this history, Welsh language education and cultural preservation are stronger than they have been in many hundreds of years thanks to devolution. Welsh decentralisation has been carefully crafted to overcome centuries of poor representation and treatment. It allows them to build upon older institutions, without stressing them, and attempts to create a more prosperous nation, without serious molestation from Westminster.

In Turkey, the Kurds have only recently been heavily subjugated, despite never having a state of their own. Under the Ottomans, a substate may have ultimately formed because the Ottomans largely let the Kurds maintain their culture, land, and lifestyle. Today the history of violence between the Kurds and the Turkish government is much more a part of the collective narrative between the two nations, despite that only a small percentage of Kurds are violent instigators. Furthermore, the southeast border of Turkey borders many countries, which have historically attempted to claim parts of Anatolia, such as in the Russo-Turkish War making the southeastern region more important for national security than Wales is for England. However, in Turkey, there has been a change in the relationship with the Kurds in the first decade of the twentieth century, and this could indicate a larger scale change between the Kurds and the Turkish government. The HDP began negotiating meetings between PKK and the AKP, which in the 1980s and 1990s, would never have been possible.

Leadership concerning a potential Kurdish substate holds promise. In Wales, Cymru Fydd and Plaid Cymru were unsuccessful at gaining support from the majority of their potential Welsh constituents, however their message for home rule resonated with the Labour party who helped make devolution possible. In Turkey, the BDP and HDP have won many seats in the previous two elections. They advocate for equality and recognition of all groups, especially the Kurds. They seek and advocate for inclusivity of Kurdish interests in national politics and have helped organise cease-fires and potential compromises between the PKK and the national government. This is a positive step toward an eventual settlement, however an eventual settlement may involve a dilution of the government's power over the Kurdish region, which it may never agree to. The leading party, the AKP, is still hostile toward non-Turkish identities and with the ten percent threshold for even gaining a seat in parliament; the political environment is perhaps deliberately exclusive. This suggests that unless decentralisation were a part of the platform of the ruling party, the AKP, that any group who suggested a Kurdish substate could be jailed.

The literature suggests that only via inclusive central and regional and local institutions can ethnic violence be overcome (Cederman et al. 2015: 360-363). The type of institution building in the case of Wales has not yet been mirrored in Turkey and may never be. We begin to see institutions in Wales one hundred years before devolution is passed. Throughout those hundred years, more and more institutions were created in Wales, exemplifying a gradual, ever changing process. Turkey has begun to thaw relations with the Kurds, allowing them to speak Kurdish and have private lessons in Kurdish, but no decentralised institutions have yet been created. These laws could become precursors to eventual institutions but that is not currently the case. The devolutionary arrangements in the UK have been crafted with inclusivity at the forefront. The arrangements have appeased both the government and home rule entities and there are no longer riots, terrorism or violence since the beginning of devolution. In Turkey, the democratic values do not always hold true, as many political parties that suggest alternative views from the leading party are disbanded. However, the Turkish government has taken the first steps toward compromise and

inclusivity by meeting with the PKK, any type of decentralised arrangement would likely have to include the PKK in some way and by opening up discussions with Öcalan. The first steps toward decentralisation have been taken.

Hypothesising over potential futures can never be precise. Welsh style devolution may never be realised for the Kurdish people, and perhaps may not even be the best model for a potential Kurdish sub-state to pursue. However, recommendations for a potential Kurdish sub-state, based on the Welsh model, include: gradual institution building, inclusion of all ethnic leaders, deliberately inclusive and flexible institutions and electoral rules. These three aspects are the strengths of the Welsh case and they are supported by the literature as well.

Examining a substate that has minimised ethnic conflict between a nation and the state, then identifying the mechanisms and institutions that promote that success so that they could be utilised in other cases is a significant contribution to the decentralisation for conflict resolution literature. We can learn from Wales about substates for conflict resolution because tensions and violence between Wales and England have decreased since the creation of devolution. We may not be able to know, however, how the Welsh case could affect another ethnic conflict without direct application of their institutions. Examining a non-federal, asymmetric, substate whose case has not been extensively researched and which does not have extensive independence and does not want to be separate from the state is a different type of case than other scholarship has examined. These aspects make the Welsh case unique and show a shade of decentralisation between zero and independence. This piece also contributes to the literature about a potential Kurdish sub-state in Turkey. It promotes Kurdish strength and the ability to solve ethnic conflict and promote self-determination of the Kurdish people, because the majority of the literature laments over the Turkish government's poor treatment of the Kurds. Finally, examining a successful substate as a model is something the literature has not attempted to do. Perhaps this is because is exceptionally difficult and likely not the case that one substate could be created to emulate another. A deep analysis of

mechanisms for conflict resolution could be helpful both for governments and other scholars in the future.

### *Limitations*

Some major limitations have shaped this research. An inability to speak either Turkish, Kurdish, or Welsh limited the historical and contemporary primary sources, which could otherwise have been included in this paper. Limitations of space, time, and scope also affected this research. Finally, problems with democracy promotion and speculation limit the ability of this research to be applied.

The inability to include primary sources about historical events, speeches by current leaders, and legal documents, which show current governmental arrangements and potential future governmental arrangements have prevented a deeper, more comprehensive analysis. These sources could illuminate more directly how groups in Turkey felt about decentralisation, everyone from the leading party to individual Kurdish people. These documents would also have been helpful in examining the history of ethnic conflict in Wales and how significant and widespread it was. Being able to visit Turkey and speak with some of the Kurdish and Turkish leadership in interviews would also have added important depth to this research.

With the ability to widen this research, perhaps in a PhD or book, it could be more comprehensive. It could look at other ethnic conflicts throughout the world and expand the application of the Welsh case to see if another nation would more viable. However, the research is theoretical and speculative, and other nations may not find it to be the best arrangement for their ethnic conflict.

Finally, this author acknowledges that while democracy can work in some situations, it is not right for all situations. Despite global democratisation, which the West has pursued, democracy may not be right for every state. The attempt to impose one type of governance on another nation may be minimally viable. However, this does not negate the importance of this research because

there are many instances of ethnic conflict around the world and there are states and nations that may gain from this model.

### *Conclusion*

This research provides a new scope on research about conflict resolution through territorial decentralisation. Conflict resolution is a delicate process that requires many years of work and compromise to create. The potential significance for this research is twofold: one it widens the scope of a previously existing subject creating recommendations from a successful case for other cases, which have not yet achieved decentralisation. It also provides a case study that could be used by politicians and policy makers in creating a peaceful settlement between conflicting groups. The emphasis on history, institutions, and leadership are exceptionally broad categories, which suggests these mechanisms can be interpreted in many different ways to create a decentralised settlement. Finally, this research opens the field for more potential research of this sort. This piece, while theoretical wants to inform real action for conflict resolution and it is possible that it could be used to do just that.

Although politicians and political actors do not always utilise the work of researchers and scientists in their policies and decisions, this piece, which empowers the Kurdish leadership in Ankara could provide a significant argument for their cause. Although it is not necessarily true that the leading party would agree with, implement, or utilise this research, the potential and possibility remains. Using the mechanisms posited by the literature makes it easier to understand and examine why the Welsh case is successful and then, how to make another potential case successful as well.

Learning from the Welsh case could significantly help other nations around the world achieve peaceful settlements. Understanding the historical importance in creating a settlement, the institutional inclusivity, and importance of strong, national leadership in resolving ethnic conflicts via decentralisation could help create resolution for ethnic conflicts around the world.

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# Decentralisation as a means to Conflict Resolution: the cases of Wales and the Kurdish Region of Turkey

## GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

62/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

### Instructor

Second marker: This is an intriguing approach to the topic of ethnic minority politics - and the potential role of constitutional change in bringing about peaceful coexistence without sacrificing distinctiveness. The piece is well written and reaches towards some intriguing ideas. However, the cases are a bit too different to really make the insights effective, and there is a tendency to imagine 'Wales' as a homogeneous ethnic state which it isn't, really. Good work though! Ambitious and thought-provoking. Agree 62.

First marker: This is a very interesting research that compares the idea of 'decentralisation' for the minority case-studies of Welsh in the UK and the Kurds in Turkey. The main question as what implications can be drawn from Welsh devolution to solve the ethnic conflict in Turkey is particularly relevant to the contemporary debates with reference to conflict resolution and territorial sub-state level of analysis in international relations.

The dissertation is well structured and its writing style as well general presentation are of the quality that is to be expected at the postgraduate level. Questions are posed at least two sub-areas of IR, and references are made to more than just a handful of key central authors/texts, which are identified. However, the dissertation suffers from three main weaknesses:

First, the research question is interesting but the comparison between the two case studies are not as effective as assumed. As the candidate, highlights 'the Welsh case' is not one of the most obvious examples of 'ethnic conflict' with political violence as opposed to the PKK Kurdish terrorism in Turkey. Furthermore, in terms of legal, political and constitutional reasons there are more differences than similarities between the two countries too.

Second, the literature used in the dissertation regarding 'ethnicity', 'devolution' in Wales and the

Kurdish issue in Turkey is outdated. It is very disappointing given the fact that all these issues have been part of most recent debates in national, regional and international politics.

Third, unfortunately the dissertation is more descriptive than analytical. Most interesting part of the research in the last section on 'Discussion, Limitation and Conclusion' where the key findings of comparison summarised is the most interesting part of this research but it is too late; and more importantly, the conclusion is too general and too short.

Overall, a rather unique and interesting comparison but fails to apply effectively.

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PAGE 1

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PAGE 2

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PAGE 3

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PAGE 4

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PAGE 5

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PAGE 6

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PAGE 7

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PAGE 8

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PAGE 9

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PAGE 10

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PAGE 11

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PAGE 12

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PAGE 13

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PAGE 14

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PAGE 15

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PAGE 16

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PAGE 17

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PAGE 18

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PAGE 19

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PAGE 20

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PAGE 21

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PAGE 22

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PAGE 23

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PAGE 24

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PAGE 25

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PAGE 26

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PAGE 27

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PAGE 28

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PAGE 29

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PAGE 30

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PAGE 31

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PAGE 32

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PAGE 33

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PAGE 34

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PAGE 35

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PAGE 36

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PAGE 37

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PAGE 38

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PAGE 39

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PAGE 40

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PAGE 41

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PAGE 42

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PAGE 43

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PAGE 44

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PAGE 45

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PAGE 46

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PAGE 47

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PAGE 48

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PAGE 49

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PAGE 50

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RUBRIC: INTERPOL MARKING CRITERIA

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**SOURCES**

Feedback

(evidence of research, empirical accuracy)

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**FEEDBACK**

**ANALYSIS**

(independence of thought, balance of analysis and description, degree of critical reflection)

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**FEEDBACK**

**ARGUMENT**

(overall structure, logical flow of ideas, conceptual clarity, theoretical and/or historical awareness)

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**FEEDBACK**

**RELEVANCE**

(degree of focus on question/task, effectiveness in using evidence/literature)

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**FEEDBACK**

**WRITING STYLE**

(clarity of expression, quality of use of language)

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**FEEDBACK**

**PRESENTATION**

(proximity to required word count, formatting and readability, consistency and accuracy in references and bibliography)

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**FEEDBACK**