Attitudes to Gaelic and to Scottish Autonomy
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Introduction
Does language matter in the debate about Scotland’s constitutional future? The status of a national language has been a source of controversy in many movements for the autonomy of small nations, for example in Ireland and Wales. Yet Scotland seems to be an exception. Although the country has three indigenous languages – English, Gaelic and Scots – and many languages which have arrived more recently, the relationships among them have never been prominently linked to how Scotland is governed. Gaelic has received broad support from across the political spectrum, and the absence of perceived links between Gaelic and more divisive political issues has helped to achieve the broad consensus.

Gaelic and Scotland
A previous Soillse Research Briefing (O’Hanlon et al., 2013) described evidence from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey of 2012 that Gaelic has come to be viewed as belonging to the whole of Scotland. Bòrd na Gàidhlig – the national body responsible for the promotion of Gaelic – described Gaelic in the first national plan for Gaelic as ‘a unique part of Scotland’s national heritage’ (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2007). The politics of Gaelic has been quite closely tied to a rhetoric of reviving national identity, which has itself been linked to the debate about how Scotland should be governed. Views about Gaelic, therefore, might be expected to be relevant to the constitutional debate.

Evidence
The evidence used here is also drawn from the 2012 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. The Survey is run annually by ScotCen Social Research, with the aim of collecting objective data about public attitudes on

Beachdan mun Ghàidhlig agus mu Fhèin-riaghlaidh na h-Alba
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Ro-ràdh
A bheil cànan a’ dèanamh diofar anns an deasbad mu ãrn ri teachd reachadh na h-Alba? Tha inbhe cànain nàiseanta air a bhith connspaideach ann am mòran iomairtean airson fèin-riaghlaidh dhùthchannan beaga m.e. Èireann is a’ Chuirimigh. A dh’ aindeoin sin tha coltas ann nach eil seo a’ tachairt ann an Alba. Ged a tha tri cànanan dùthchasach san dùthaich - a’ Bheurla, a’ Ghàidhlig agus Albais – agus iomadh cânan a tha air nochadh o chionn ghoirid, chan eil na dàimhean a tha eatarra a-riamh air a bhith air an ceangal gu soilleir ri mar a tha Alba air a riaghladh. Tha a’ Ghàidhlig air taic mhòr mhòr fhaghinn air feedh an raon poilitigeach, agus seach nach eil ceanglaichean sam bith air fhaicinn eadar a’ Ghàidhlig agus cuisean poilitigeach a tha nas connspaidech, tha sin air a bhith na chuideachadh airson an aonta fharsaing sin a choileanadh.

A’ Ghàidhlig agus Alba
Tha Ullachadh Sgrùdaidh Soillse roimhe seo (O’Hanlon et al., 2013) air cunntas a thoirt a thoir air fhianais bho Sgrùadadh Bheachdan Sòisealta na h-Alba ann an 2012 gun robhas a-nis a’ faicinn a’ Ghàidhlig mar a bhith a’ buntainn ri Alba air fad. Thug Bòrd na Gàidhlig – a’ bhuidheann nàiseanta air a bheil air dleasteanas a’ Ghàidhlig a bhrosnachadh – cunntas air a’ Ghàidhlig anns a’ chiaid phlana nàiseanta airson na Ghàidhlig mar ‘phàirt gun samhail de dhualchas nàiseanta na h-Alba’ (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2007). Tha poilitigs na Ghàidhlig air a bhith air a cheangal gu dlùth ri reatoraice de ath-bheothachadh dearbh-aithne nàiseanta, agus tha sin air a cheangal ris an deasbad mun dòigh anns am bu choir Alba a bhith air a riaghladh. Mar sin, dh’ fhaodadh gum bheit an dùil gum bi beachdan mun Ghàidhlig buntainneach ris an deasbad reachdail.

Fhianais
Tha an fhianais a thathas a’ cleachdadh an-seo cuideachd air a tharrainn bhon Sgrùdadh Bheachdan Sòisealta na h-Alba an 2012. Tha an Sgrùdadh ga chuir air adhart gach bliadhna le Sgrùdadh Sòisealta
issues relevant to Scotland. In 2012, 1,229 randomly selected people aged 18+ were interviewed. The sample was representative of Scotland in terms of region and socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood. The data were also weighted to make results match the population by sex and age.

**Constitutional options**

The survey asked for people’s preferences among the main constitutional options facing Scotland. These are, with the percentages choosing each:

- full powers or independence (35%): the Scottish Parliament should make all decisions;
- maximal devolution (32%): the Scottish Parliament should have power over everything except defence and foreign affairs;
- devolution as at present (24%): the UK Parliament makes decisions about taxes, welfare benefits, defence, and foreign affairs; the Scottish Parliament decides the rest;
- abolition (6%): the UK Parliament should make all decisions for Scotland.

**Gaelic and Scottish autonomy**

This briefing explores whether views about Gaelic play any part in people’s choices among these constitutional options. The index of attitudes to Gaelic that we use here is respondents' hopes for the future number of speakers of the language, which relates to a central aspect of policy – increasing the number of speakers (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2010). Figure 1 shows that 42% of the sample would like there to be more Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time than now, 39% wanted the same number as now, and 10% wanted fewer.

ScotCen, ag amas air dàta beachdail a thional mu bheachdan a’ phobail air cùisean a tha a’ buntainn ri Alba. Ann an 2012, chaidh agallamhan a dhèanamh le 1,229 neach aig aos 18+ a chaidh a thaghadh gu tuairmeasach. Bha an tagadh riachdachail de Alba a thaobh roinn agus feartan söis-eaconamach den nàbachd. Chaidh an dàta cuideachd a chothromachadh gus am biodh na co-dhùnaidhean nam maids air an t-sluagh a rér gnè is aois.

**Roghainnean Bun-reachd**

Dh’ fhaighnich an sgrùdadh dè a b’ fheàrr le daoine de na priomh roghainnean reachdail a bha fa chomhair Alba. Is iad sin, leis na ceudadan a’ tagadh gach fear:

- làn-chumhachdan no neo-eisimeileachd (35%): bu chóir Pàrlamaid na h-Alba a bhith a’ dèanamh a h-uile co-dhùnaidh;
- fèin-riaghlaidh aig an ire as àirde (32%): bu chóir smachd a bhith aig Pàrlamaid na h-Alba air a h-uile ni ach dion agus cùisean céin;
- fèin-riaghlaidh mar a tha e an-dràsta (24%): bidh Pàrlamaid na RA a’ déanamh cho-dhùnaidhean mu dheidhinn cisean, tabhartsan sochaireach, dion, agus cùisean céin; bidh Pàrlamaid na h-Alba a’ dèanamh cho-dhùnaidhean mun chòrr;
- cuir às dheth (6%): bu chóir Pàrlamaid na RA a bhith a’ dèanamh a h-uile co-dhùnaidh airson Alba.

**A’ Ghàidhlig agus fèin-riaghlaidh na h-Alba**

Tha an ullachadh seo a’ rannsachadh am bu chóir do bheachdan mun Ghàidhlig a bhith nam pàirt sam bith de thaghaidhean dhaoine a thaobh na roghainnnean reachdail sin.

Is e an clár de bheachdan mun Ghàidhlig a tha sinn a’ cleachdadh an seo, dochasan luchd-fhreagairt airson àireamh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig san àm ri teachd, aig a bheil ceangal ri cuiss bhunaitheach poileasaidh – a’ toirt fàs air àireamh luchd-labhairt (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2010). Tha Figear 1 a’ sealltainn gum bu mhath le 42% den t-sampil gum biodh barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an ceann 50 bliadhna na th’ ann an-dràsta, gu robh 39% ag iarraidh an aon àireamh sa th’ ann an-dràsta, agus gu robh 10% ag iarraidh gum biodh nas lugha ann.
Figure 2 shows the proportion of people supporting the various constitutional options according to their views of Gaelic. For convenience here, the three categories presented in Figure 1 are amalgamated into two – (i) people who want there to be more Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time and (ii) those who wish there to be the same number or fewer.

Figure 1: Preference for number of Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time

Figure 2: Support for various constitutional options, by preference for future number of Gaelic speakers

**Constitutional option, and subset of data**

- Prefer more people to speak Gaelic than now
- B’fhearr gum biodh barrachd dhaoine a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig na tha an-dràsta
- Prefer same number of, or fewer, people to speak Gaelic than now
- B’fhearr gum biodh an aon àireamh, no nas lugha de dhaoine a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig na tha an-dràsta
• The first pair of bars – independence or not – shows that support for independence is greater among those who want there to be more Gaelic speakers (44%) than among those who do not (26%).

• The second pair refer to the choice between independence and maximal devolution, confined to those respondents who favoured either of these two. Although the gap is smaller than in the first pair, it is still large: independence is preferred to maximal devolution by 58% of people who want more Gaelic speakers, but by 45% of those who do not.

• The third pair of bars relates to the choice between maximal devolution and the Scottish Parliament’s having fewer powers than that (the existing powers or abolition), confined to those respondents who favoured either of these two options. There is a similar pattern: 56% of those who want there to be more Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time favour Scotland’s having greater constitutional powers, compared with 42% of those who wish there to be the same number or fewer Gaelic speakers.

How confident can we be of these findings?

However, the relationship between attitudes to Gaelic and greater Scottish constitutional autonomy in Figure 2 may be misleading. Perhaps attitudes to Gaelic are standing in for other factors which affect views about the constitution. For example, Figure 3 shows the relationship between national identity and wanting more Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time. Among people who feel ‘Scottish not British’, 51% would like there to be more Gaelic speakers; in contrast, the proportion is 21% among the small group who feel ‘British not Scottish’.

• Tha a’ chiad paidhir bhannan – neo-eisimeileachd no às aonais – a sealltainn gu bheil taic airson neo-eisimeileachd nas àirde am measg an fheadhainn a tha airson gum bi barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann (44%) na tha am measg an fheadhainn nach eil (26%).

• Tha an dàrna paidhir a’ buntainn ris an roghainn eadar neo-eisimeileachd agus fèin-riaghlaidh aig an ire as àirde, air a chuingealachadh ris an luchd-fhreaigairt a bha airson aon chuid den dà roghainn sin. Ged a tha a’ bheàrn nas lugha na tha sa chiad phaidhir, tha e fhathast àrd: is fheàrr le 58% de dhaoine a tha ag iarraidh barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig neo-eisimeileachd an àite fèin-riaghlaidh aig an ire as àirde, ach le 45% den fheadhainn nach eil.

• Tha an treas paidhir bhannan a’ buntainn ris an roghainn eadar fèin-riaghlaidh agus nas lugha na sin de chumhachdan a bhith aig Pàrlamaid na h-Alba (cumhachdan gnàthaichte no cuir às dhith) air a chuingealachadh ris an luchd-fhreaigairt a bha airson aon chuid den dà roghainn sin. Tha cumadh co-chosmhail ann: 56% den fheadhainn a tha ag iarraidh gum bi barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an ceann 50 bliadhna airson gum bi barrachd chumhachdan reachdail aig Alba, ann an coimeas ri 42% den fheadhainn a tha a’ miannachadh gum bi an aon àireamh no nas lugha de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann.

Dè cho misneachail ‘s as urrainn dhuinn a bhith mu na co-dhùnaidhean sin?

Ach, dh’ fhaodadh gu bheil mi-chinnt ann a thaobh an ceangal a tha ann eadar beachdach mun Ghàidhlig agus barrachd fèin-riaghlaidh reachdail Albannach ann am Figear 2. Is dòcha gu bheil beachdach mun Ghàidhlig a’ tighinn an àite feartan eile a bheir buaidh air beachdach mun bhunreachd. Mar eisimpleir, tha Figear 3 a’ sealltainn an ceangal a tha eadar fèin-aithe naiseanta agus a bhith ag iarraidh barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig an ceann 50 bliadhna. Am measg dhaoine a th a’ faireachd dinn ‘Albannach chan ann Breatannach’, bu mhath le 51% gum biodh barrachd luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann; air an làimh eile, is e 21% den chuid seo a tha am measg na buidhne beag a th a’ faireachd dinnn ‘Breatannach chan ann Albannach’.
People who feel more Scottish are also more likely to want maximal devolution or independence than those who feel more British (Curtice and Ormston, 2013). So it could be that the association of the Gaelic measure with attitudes to the Scottish Parliament is merely reflecting the association of both of these with national identity.

The way to get round this problem statistically is to ‘control for’ those factors that are known to be associated with views about Scotland’s constitutional future. These factors are as summarised in Figure 4 (Curtice and Ormston, 2013). People’s views about Scottish autonomy are associated with their expectations of the consequences of autonomy, and with other factors such as sex (where men are more in favour of independence and women more in favour of maximal devolution).

**Figure 4: Statistical controls in regression analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected effect of independence or maximal devolution on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scottish economy, taxes, standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish voice in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of national pride in Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether Scotland or England benefits most from the Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Preference for more Gaelic speakers than now in 50 years’ time, by national identity**

![Chart showing preference for more Gaelic speakers by national identity]

Tha daoine a tha a’ faireachdainn nas Albannaich cuideachd nas dualtaiche a bhith ag iarraidh féin-riaghlaidh aig an ire as àirde no neo-eisimeileachd na an fheadhainn a tha a’ faireachdainn nas Breatannaich (Curtice agus Ormston, 2013). Mar sin, dh’ fhaodadh gu bheil an ceangal eadar tomhas na Gàidhlig agus beachdan mu Phàrlamaid na h-Alba dreon a’ nochdadh an dàimh a tha eadar an dà chuid sin agus féin-àithne nàiseanta.

Ise an dòigh gus faighinn timcheall air an duilghedhas sin gu h-àireamhail ‘suim a ghabhail’ de na feartan sin far a bheileas ag aithneachadh gu bheil dàimh aca rì am rì teac’dh reachdail na h-Alba. Tha na feartan sin mar a tha iad air an giorrachadh ann am Figear 4 (Curtice agus Ormston, 2013). Tha beachdan dhaoine a thaobh féin-riaghlaidh na h-Alba ann an dàimh ris na thathas a’ dìileachadh bho thoraidean féin-riaghlaidh, agus ri feartan eile leithid gnè (far a bheil fir nas motha air an tarrachd gu neo-eisimeileachd agus boireannaich nas bàghail dhà féin-riaghlaidh aig an ire as àirde).
Regression modelling enables us to explore whether any of the variables identified above (in Figure 4) influence the relationship between views of Gaelic and of Scotland’s constitutional future presented in Figure 2. Figure 5 shows that they do.

Figure 5 shows the difference in support for a particular constitutional option when the two Gaelic groups (more Gaelic speakers as opposed to the same or fewer Gaelic speakers) are the same in respect of all the control variables – for example, with the same expectations of the effects of independence, with the same pattern of national identity, and with the same proportion of each sex. If we consider for example the first pair of bars, relating to support for independence, we see that 30% of people who want there to be more Gaelic speakers in 50 years’ time support independence, compared to 20% of people who would prefer there to be the same number or fewer Gaelic-speakers.

When we compare these results to those presented in Figure 2, we see that the control variables explain just over two fifths of the original gap of 18 percentage points in Figure 1, but there is still a sizeable difference of 10 percentage points in support for independence between those who want there to be more Gaelic and those who do not.

Figure 5: Support for various constitutional options, by preference for future number of Gaelic speakers (adjusted for the controls listed in Figure 4)

Figear 5: Taic airson grunn roghainnean reachdail, a réir miann a thaobh àireamh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig san àm ri teachd (air atharrachadh airson na smachdan liostaichte ann am Figear 4)
The same is true of the other two constitutional choices (although in details not shown here it was found that the statistical significance (the strength of the evidence) for these latter two was weaker: the p-values were respectively <0.001, 0.15 and 0.09, where a value less than 0.05 is conventionally judged to be statistically significant).

We can get some sense of how important views about Gaelic are to views about independence by comparing their impact to the impact of other relevant variables, such as sex. Figure 6 shows that attitudes to Gaelic are as important as sex: the difference in views of independence between men and women to Gaelic are as important as sex: the difference in associations with support for greater Scottish autonomy. With support for the extension of Gaelic is associated to Gaelic difference is potentially of analogous political importance.

Even after allowing for other strong predictors of support for various kinds of political self-government, support for the extension of Gaelic is associated with support for greater Scottish autonomy. With a survey which measures views only at one time point we cannot conclude that language attitudes actually cause constitutional attitudes. Influence in the opposite direction is always possible: support for stronger autonomy might influence attitudes to

**Figure 6: Adjusted support for Scottish parliament to have full powers, by preference for future of Gaelic and by sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjusted percentage</th>
<th>Scottish Gaelic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Conclusion**

Eadhon le bhith a’ gabhail suim dha ro-innsean làidir eile de thaic airson diofar shéorsan féin-riaghlaidh poilítigeach, thathas a’ faicinn an dàimh eadar taic airson barrachd leudachaidh air a’ Ghàidhlig agus an taic airson barrachd féin-riaghlaidh airson Alba. Le grùdadh a tha a’ tomhas bheachdan direach aig aon ire tim chan urrainn dhuinn co-dhùnadh gu bheil seallaidhean cànain dha-rìribh ag adhbhrachadh sheallaidhean reachdail. Tha e an-còmhnaidh...
Gaelic rather than other way round. Nevertheless, we can at least say that Gaelic and support for autonomy are connected with each other. In that sense, language does indeed matter in the public debate about Scottish self-government.

Acknowledgements

Information about the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey is at http://whatscotlandthinks.org/ssa. More details of the research and of the results are available in Paterson et al. (2014), or from the authors at Lindsay. Paterson@ed.ac.uk or Fiona.O’Hanlon@ed.ac.uk The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant number Es/J003352/1), Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and the Scottish Government. The views expressed here are those of the authors alone, and are not necessarily shared by the funders.

References


San t-suidheachadh sin, tha cànann a’ dèanamh diofar a thaobh an deasbaidh phoiblach mu fhèin-riaghlaidh na h-Alba.

Buidheachas

Gheibhhear fiosrachadh mu Sgrùdadh Bheachdan Sòisealta na h-Alba aig http://whatscotlandthinks.org/ssa. Gheibhair barrachd fiosrachaidh mun sgrùdadh agus na toraidhean a thàinig às ann am Paterson et al. (2014), no bhò na h-ùghdarran aig Lindsay.Paterson@ed.ac.uk no Fiona.O’Hanlon@ed.ac.uk Chaith an sgrùdadh a mhaoineachadh le Comhairle Sgrùdadh Eaconomaics is Sòisealta (àireamh tabhartais Es/J003352/1), Bòrd na Gàidhlig, agus Riaghaltas na h-Alba. Buinidh na beachdan a chaidh a thòirt seachad an seo ris na h-ùghdaran a-mhàn, agus is dòcha nach iad idir beachdan an luchd-maoineachaidh.

Iomraidhean


