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The Political Myth of Margaret Thatcher in Scotland

Abstract: The article describes and explains the phenomenon of the political myth of Margaret Thatcher – her anti-Scottish attitude and policies and its impact on the process of decomposition of the United Kingdom. The author indicates that the view of Margaret Thatcher's dominance in Scotland is simplified, stripped of complexity, ignoring significant information conflicting with the thesis, but that also plays an important role in current politics, legitimizing secessionist demands and strengthening the identity of the Scottish community. In the contemporary Scottish debate with its unequivocal defence policy of Thatcher is outside of the discourse, proving its sanctity status. Thatcher could see this special Scottish dimension within the United Kingdom, but treated it rather as a delay in the reforms needed in the country. There are many counterarguments to the validity of the Thatcher myth. Firstly, many negative processes that took place in the 80s were not initiated by Thatcher, only accelerated. Secondly, the Tory decline in popularity in the north began before the leadership of Thatcher and has lasted long after her dismissal. The Conservative Party was permanently seen in Scotland as openly English. Thirdly, there is a lot of accuracy in the opinion that the real division is not between Scotland and England, only between southern England and the rest of the country. Widespread opinion that Thatcher was hostile to Scotland is to a large extent untruthful. She has never retreated radically from any of the Scottish privileges, such as the Barnett formula or the Scottish Development Agency.

Keywords: *political myth; United Kingdom; Scotland; Margaret Thatcher; Thatcherism; devolution; independence*

Introduction

The objective of this article is to verify the often repeated hypothesis about Margaret Thatcher and her anti-Scottish attitude and policies and its impact on the process of decomposition of the United Kingdom. The explanation would be put into the framework of a notion of the political myth. With the phenomenon of that range there is often a tendency for oversimplification or teleologisation, especially that the evaluation is rooted in a current political dispute. It is a frequent situation that the politicians describe their predecessors from rivalling political parties in a negative way, but what is puzzling is the extent and durability of the effects of this process – how long the former leader can be a distinctive symbol, arousing negative emotions and effectively helping in mobilizing support around a party or the fundamental postulates of the program. During the independence referendum campaign in Scotland, almost a quarter of a century after Thatcher's dismissal, the view that "if Scotland votes for independence, it'll be Margaret Thatcher's fault" (Tharoor, 2014) was widely popular.

Political myth is defined in different ways. One underlines its negative hallmarks as an extreme manifestation of emotions, understood as the opposite of rationality and in that way contradiction of reality. However, this article is based on the assumption that the relationship is much more complicated – political myths are acknowledged for their hybridity, as an "unevenly balanced mixture of veracity and distortions, of facts and fiction" (Bouchard, 2013, p.285). Schnőpflin adds that "myth is about perceptions rather than historically validated truths (so far as these exist at all)" (1997, p. 19). The feature of political myth is also an inherent dualism depending on the background – some myths function in a specific social and historical context, others take the form of universal features or configurations. Myth acquires a kind of sanctity that enables it to be imposed on individuals and prevent any type of attack. It is also possible because they acquire an agency and live on their own. Accordingly, myths are not necessarily destructive – they often enable and promote social change, generating energy impacting the life of society for a long time (Bouchard, 2013, p. xiii, 3). A successful myth is the one that has the ability to serve its various functions, mainly creating a sense of belonging, generating consensus on the use of political power – in other words, providing answers for questions: why are we together and what we would do when we choose to govern ourselves (Della Sala, 2010, p.6–7).

In the context of the community (as a nation) some omissions, transformation and reorganization or reconstruction of specific memories are very common – it may be called the subtle art of remaking and reinterpreting the past (Hassan, 2014, p.97). It

seems necessary for a sense of unity and national solidarity to create an image of the past that people can identify with (Konieczna, 2015, p. 69). As stated by Halbwachs, our ways of remembering the past are socially framed, produced in communication with others, becoming the core of social cohesion (Hesse, 2014, p.16). Through the images-emblems filling collective memory the boundaries of belonging to the community are set (Prokop, 1993, p.5). Zerubavel (1996, p.294) points at "the fact that so many different individuals happen to have the same >>free<< associations about their nation's past", which proves that they are personalized manifestations of a single common, collective memory, enabling the existence of an intergenerational memory. Some even use a notion of "historical memory" defined as the one we are reminded of, distinct from that which we remember, ordering the world of past experience (Whelan, 2016, p.5).

As founded by Bottici (2007, p. 13) "myths provide names through which the unknown first becomes masterable, but they also provide narratives, which, by inserting events into a plot, can produce and reproduce significance". The power of the myth lies in its ability to "tell the simple stories" (Della Sala, 2010, p. 4) that flattens the complexity, the nuance, the performative contradictions of human history (Bell, 2003, p. 75), therefore becoming the condition of the evolution of a society and its polity. The most important conditions for the longevity of the myth are its polysemy, hybridity, plasticity and especially the sense of an external threat (Bouchard, 2013, p.278).

According to the evaluation criteria myths are divided into positive (white), negative (black) and neutral. The method of creations determines partition on spontaneous myths, arising independently of the intentions of actors and commissioned myths (Sielski, 2015, p. 16–17). Their frequent attributes (Bouchard, 2013, p.286) are: piggybacking (using old, well-established myths), adaptability (capacity to live on through a process of constant redefinition and renegotiation), spill-over effect (capacity to connect with other myths). The letter is intertwined with important distinction between master and derivative myths – master myths need to be retranslated into a new derivative myth as different challenges arise and change its context.

The mythologisation process usually involves three steps: initial framing, diffusion, institutionalization (or ritualization) (Bouchard, 2013, p.286). The process is started by a structuring event or episode leaving a deep emotion in the collective consciousness that is translated into an ethos (values, principles, ideals, beliefs, worldviews, aspirations, attitudes). That allows constructing the narrative, with its rituals and leads to sacralisation. After the proper discursive strategies are adopted, the myths become instruments for social actors to realize their agenda (Bouchard, 2013, p.7).

Thatcher's Politics and Policies in Scotland

In 1975 Thatcher inherited a party, which in its election manifesto promised Scots a devolution reform. Her first visit to Scotland as the new leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 was met with mass interest and enthusiastic response, but that never happened again during her next visits. Shortly after her election as the Leader, Thatcher declared in Glasgow that "an Assembly must be a top priority to ensure that more decisions affecting Scotland are taken in Scotland by Scotsmen" (Bale, 2012, p. 238). In reality, as an instinctive unionist and British nationalist, she was strongly hostile to such constitutional changes. Under the influence of the Scottish advisors (Betty Harvie Anderson and Teddy Taylor) explaining that devolution is a slippery slope to the independence of Scotland, she decided to change this party's policy, albeit very carefully and in stages. She also believed that this change will help with the political rivalry with the Labour Party that was "hopelessly divided over devolution" (Bale, 2012, p. 238), which was true till the late 1980s, when Labour Party gradually shifted and took part in the Constitutional Convention. Commitment to devolution become unequivocal for Labour under the leadership of John Smith in the 1990s (McCormick, 2013, p. 103). In the period between 1975–1979 the slow departure from the postulate of devolution could be seen in Thatcher's public statements – first stronger emphasize on the unity of the Union, later criticism of devolution as creating another layer of bureaucracy. When the House of Commons was working on the Scotland Bill in the late 1970s, Thatcher was clearly opposed, pointing to the deficiencies in this particular vision of devolution, but at the same time did not present any particular alternative. This decision resulted in a small rebellion inside the Conservative Party – her most important Scottish politicians (the Shadow Secretary of State Alick Buchanan-Smith and Malcolm Rifkind) were part of a group of five Tory MPs voting with the Labour Government for the Scotland Bill (that defined the conditions of devolution) and twenty seven more abstained (Bale, 2012, p. 238), that led to dismissals in her Shadow Cabinet. During the devolution referendum in 1979 campaign she encouraged to vote "no, but", i.e. with the proviso that is not the concept of devolution that is wrong, but this particular version of devolution. With her inspiration, Lord Home, very popular in Scotland, gave a speech (later recognized as one of the key moments of the campaign), in which he stated that "the vote against is not disloyalty towards devolution" because "the new Conservative government will propose a better designed devolution" (Torrance, 2009, p.30). Thatcher personally never mentioned any new law during the campaign, saying rather vaguely that the rejection of the referendum "will open the way for all parties to a common search for a sustainable alternative," and promised "real devolution", that meant taking away

the powers of public authorities and returning the freedom and independence of the citizens. She considered the final result of the referendum[1] as a great victory and proof that the Scots in reality did not want devolution. John Mason a Member of the Scottish Parliament representing Scottish National Party (SNP)- later admitted that he voted against devolution, sincerely believing that this will lead to a better project being created (Torrance, 2014, p.133). After being Prime Minister for eleven years Thatcher was a clear and vocal opponent of any type of devolution for Scotland.

One of the slogans of Thatcherism was nationalism, which manifested itself, among others, in a struggle with the European Union and the Brussels-federalists to preserve sovereignty. At the same time she did not see the same noble motives in the Scottish independence or devolution aspirations. She had always been very critical of the Scottish National Party. In an interview in 1975 she spitefully called them Snap, Crackle and Pop (Torrance, 2009, p.7). Allegations of lack of concern for Scotland were most often repelled by the British Prime Minister by the counteraccusation – that the Scots simply were not able to see how she was concerned about Scotland. In Thatcher's vision, Scots had to save the troubles on their own; the state's role was only to give them a chance, understood as the freedom to succeed. Thatcher complained that throughout the country, particularly in Scotland, the culture of dependency was established. Thatcher was aware of her defeat in Scotland – part of her memoirs dedicated to Scotland were titled "Thatcherism rebuffed". Thatcher could see this special Scottish dimension within the United Kingdom, but treated it rather as a delay in the reforms needed in the country. After years, Thatcher declared that her policy towards Scotland was based on two beliefs: 1. Ardent attachment to the Union. 2. Determination in the implementation of policies necessary for the development of the United Kingdom at the same time throughout the country. Unfortunately, her version of unionism increasingly became "the cartoonish unionism depicted by its opponents" (Raffe, 2010, p. 1078). Frequently she appealed, both publicly and privately, to myths about the historical Scottish diligence, discipline, entrepreneurship and innovation. Referring to Scotland, Thatcher repeatedly mentioned Adam Smith, whom she valued not only as an outstanding economist, but also a moral philosopher. Her Chancellor Nigel Lawson often publicly mentioned the achievements of David Hume. The intellectual background of Thatcher was dominated by graduates or lecturers of St Andrews University in Scotland (such as Ralph Harris – the first head of the Institute

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[1] The referendum was held on the 1st of March, 1979.52% of the valid votes were in support of devolution, but as an effect of the Cunningham's amendment this result meant the failure of devolution. With a turnout of 63.6%,only 32.9% of eligible voters supported devolution, and the amendment required support of at least 40% of all eligible voters.

of Economic Affairs, Eamonn Butler and Madson Pirie – the founders of the Adam Smith Institute) (Stewart, 2004, p.8).

Her first Secretary of State for Scotland George Younger was known as the one that stopped, to a certain extent, Thatcher's economic policies at the English border. Thatcher saw the whole Scottish Office (headed by Secretary of State for Scotland) as an added layer of bureaucracy, standing in the way of reforms which were paying, in her opinion, such dividends in England (Tomaney, 2000, p. 681). At the same time Thatcher resisted attempts to make secret cuts to the Scottish budget because of "real political dangers". Also, Barnett formula, classified by many as favourable for Scotland (Mitchell, 2014, p.202–203), that allows them to calculate the amount of funds allocated for the Scottish expenditures from the budget of the United Kingdom, remained intact.

Regardless of the above, the heart of Scotland's industrial sector – shipbuilding, coalmining and steelworks suffered badly during the 1980s. That led to industrial dereliction and a rise in unemployment. There were new jobs, mostly in electronics firms that came to Scotland in the late 1980s.

The greatest effects for her unpopularity had the so-called "Poll Tax", formally defined by the government as the "Community Charge." Its popular interpretations are also an invaluable source of knowledge and explanations on the functioning of the Thatcher myth. It was a new form of local tax, based on the idea that all residents should pay the same amount, regardless of income or the value of their property. What was disastrous for the image of the Prime Minister in Scotland, is the fact that the tax was implemented in Scotland in 1989, one year earlier than in other parts of the United Kingdom. This caused a great argument for opponents of Thatcher that she treats Scots worse, that they were in this case experimental "guinea pigs". The information that these were Scottish Tories that had asked for accelerated implementation did not manage to reach public opinion. Without replacing the previous tax, as a result of delayed revaluation of the value of the property, there would be huge tax increases, especially for the traditional electorate of the Scottish Conservative Party (Deacon & Golding, 1994, p.28–30). The introduction of the tax led to mass protests and payment refusals – approx. 700 000 warrants were issued to the Scottish taxpayers who did not comply with their obligations. With her characteristic stubbornness and despite the negative feedback, Thatcher did not withdrawn from the project, and the protests also adopted a large scale in England. To this day it is believed that the case of the poll tax, in addition to intraparty division in European affairs, was the main cause of the fall of Thatcher. Information about Thatcher's departure was met with an enthusiastic response, in many Scottish cities there were celebrations in the streets, cars equipped with a speaker with messages that aroused applause from passers-by.

Thatcherism as a Political Myth in Scotland

The policies of Margaret Thatcher were interpreted retrospectively and stories were constructed which gave greater coherence than was intended at the time (Gamble, 2015, p.6). Cairney (2013) points that Thatcherism from a Scottish perspective may be defined as a: personality, British Nationalism, two nations electoral strategy, a new right ideology, economic reform, centralization, assimilation, poll tax and a challenge to social democratic consensus. But it would be a serious mistake to treat Thatcher, Thatcherism and the Conservative Party as identical (Mitchell & Bennie, 1995, p.102). In the Thatcher's myth in Scotland the two most important components are: anti-Scottishness of her policies and the undemocratic nature of her election. It created a wide belief that the constitutional system is not acceptable, because it cannot defend Scots from anti-Scottish policies and assure their democratic influence on the government. William McIlvanney in his famous speech entitled "Stands Scotland Where It Did?" expressed the assessment of Thatcher shared by many Scots, "if we allow her to continue, she will remove from the word Scottish any meaning other than geographical" (Hassan, 2012, p. 80). Much attention is paid to the intensification of civic activity during the 1980s, although, as rightly pointed out by Richard Finlay (2005, p. 367), construction of the "Civic Scotland" was a polite way to express hatred of Thatcher.

She was depicted as distant figure seeking to impose an alien ideology, and hatred felt at Thatcherism became interpreted in a nationalist framework and dimension that separated out Scotland (Torrance, 2009, p.59). As Gerry Hassan (2014, p.99) puts it: "version of Thatcherism and the 1980s has become part of the official story of Scotland", although she was much more popular in Scotland than public opinion remembers (Massie, 2013). It is hard to explain in this context why after Thatcher's dismissal Tories have never had good results in Scotland as during her reign. The Scottish "official history" of Thatcherism supported a belief in the distinctiveness of Scots, whose society is based on values other than those accepted by the English. Many Scots understand and portray the world by articulating and emphasizing what can be called the narrative of difference (Hassan, 2014, p.104). These myths have been validated by the active participation of influential intellectuals – writers and scientists, such as McIlvanney, Neil Ascherson and Tom Nairn (Hassan, 2014, p.108, 226) and became the basis for the revival of the national dimension in politics. In intellectual circles, as well as all the press, Thatcher was usually presented in a negative way. Magnus Linklater, editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Scotsman" in the 80's, acknowledges that many articles critical of Thatcher were written by the formula: we are opposed because they offend our great Scottish tradition, although he admits that from today's perspective, this plea was rather a manifestation of conformism

(Torrance, 2009, p. 103). Thatcher was fully aware of this situation, stating in her memoirs that: "in practice the left, not the right, had held on to the levers of power. It had its arguments voiced by both Catholic and Protestant churches and parroted in the media—hardly any Scottish newspapers supported us and the electronic media were largely hostile" (Thatcher, 1993, p. 527).

We may arrive at the interpretation that victimhood is strongly embedded into Scottish history and identity (Hesse, 2014, p. 161). Here, Thatcherism was treated just as the latest in a series of incidents of systematic abuse and lack of proper treatment from the English, part of the continuous story of theft, lost rights and forced emigration – a new Highlands Clearances (Foley & Ramand, 2014, p. 80). In this view, Scotland was to a greater degree colonized than a colonizing country, and the country's magnificent past was debilitated by "under development" and "internal colonialism" (Devine, 2011, p.326). The Scots' view of themselves has been painted by writers like Sir Walter Scott and J. M. Barrie and poets like Robert Burns – victimhood, suffering at the hands of the English, stubborn commitment to independence and the "sad Diaspora, of lost causes and thwarted dreams" (Oliver, 2009, p. 275). These beliefs are powerfully embedded, with themes of exile, oppression and dispossession strongly absorbed within them. Scottish identity needed to safeguard itself many times and Scots held their uniqueness in spite of the actions to break them (Hesse, 2011, p. 158).

The Neo-liberal vision of economic policies of Thatcher had a hostile reception in Scotland. Leaving a large sector of Scottish heavy industry unprotected from the forces of the free market had the result of numerous bankruptcies, massive unemployment and social problems associated with these in some parts of Scotland, especially Greater Glasgow, but also the Borders with a large textile industry. In the 1980s there was regular information on subsequent closings of factories, topped with a fall of the most famous Ravens Craig steelworks in 1992 (attentive readers will notice that this happened after the resignation of Thatcher – in fact she had twice spared the Ravens Craig steelworks from closure). A large part of the crisis was also an effect of Thatcher's restrictive monetary policy in the early years of her government. Ravens Craig, shipyards and mines became the most prominent Scottish "sites of memory" (Perchard, 2013, p.80). Still, we must remember that the myth of Scotland as an egalitarian society was solidified only after the country had moved to the political left in the 1970s (Devine, 2011, p.344). In fact, as the Scottish Social Attitudes survey has shown, the differences between attitudes of Scottish and English political opinion to policy issues are modest at best.

Similarly, the politics of Thatcher were based on a strong centralism and reduction of the influence of regional and local institutions, especially local government, enjoying traditionally a strong position in Scotland. In the vision of Thatcherism they were

regarded as left-wing bastions of Labour Party that conduct irresponsible financial policies and their independence cannot be tolerated. With time, Thatcher also had less acceptance of existing Scottish autonomy in the selected policy areas – a most frequently example mentioned here is the work of the Secretary of State for Scotland Michael Forsyth, who tried to "assimilate" education, an area which for over three centuries was regarded as evidence of Scottish otherness, accepted by the authorities in London. British authority had been previously limited to the "high politics" of diplomacy, empire and taxation, leaving everyday management of 'low politics' in the hands of local leaders – this division was severely undermined during the 80s (Keating, 2010, p. 43). The manner in which the Scottish Secretaries presented themselves was also important in this case – they used to describe themselves as defending Scotland against Thatcher.

To a large extent, her personality and political style contributed to the negative perception of her policies. As Rifkind put it "She was a woman. She was an English woman. And she was a bossy English woman. The combination was impossible to overcome" (Jackson, 2011, p.266). Her shrill voice, tone and accent, all exuded a very English sense of status, the moral and social superiority creating an image of an imperious and confrontational politician. All these perceptions were conveyed through popular phrases: famous "Iron Lady", but also "Attila the Hen" and "The Great She Elephant" (Aitken, 2013, p.114–115). The image was not far away from a reality. She scorned consensus and saw the world in stark oppositional terms, dividing everyone into friends and enemies (Gamble, 2014, p.4). Arnold Kemp, editor-in-chief of The Herald, described the style of Thatcher as being based on the belief that she knows everything best, trying to impose policies, rather than to convince Scotland of their advantages (Torrance, 2009, p. 105). Archibald Brown (2015, p.5, 235) explained her self-description as a "conviction politician" by pointing that her main conviction was the belief that she was always right – her overbearing style of leadership lost her the support even of the closest allies like Lawson and Sir Geoffrey Howe.

A support for devolution at that time may had been interpreted as a vote to change institutions in order to stay the same (Mitchell, 2005, p. 26–27), in the context of the idea that devolution in 1979 could have prevented the worst excesses of the Thatcherite policies that were so unpopular in Scotland (Cairney, 2012, p. 175). Similarly, during the independence referendum campaign, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond argued that only an independent Scotland could defend what remains of the post-war Keynesian settlement (McCormick, 2013, p. 103).

The Miners' strike was also an important turning point in 1984–1985, as the majority of Scots identified more with the miners and desolated communities than the raw power of administration. The introduction of the Criminal Justice (Scotland)

Bill led to the impression that Thatcher had adopted not only a strict economic policy, but also draconian punitive measures, even at the expense of individual rights and freedoms. Especially in the second term, the process of alienation of selected sectors of the Scottish middle class was noticeable – scientists, teachers, health care system employees, who worked mainly in the public sector.

When asked in 1989 whether Thatcher as a Prime Minister has the best interests of Scotland at heart only 10% of Scots agreed, and 84% disagreed. Similarly, as much as 77% of Scots agreed with the sentence that Thatcher treats the Scots as second class citizens with only 17% disagreeing. Support for constitutional change was strongly correlated with negative attitudes towards Thatcherism, in the sense of its free market ideology and British nationalism, and that created a perception that the Conservatives had a two-nation strategy: treating Scotland contemptuously as their parliamentary majority is based on winning votes in England (Mitchell & Bennie, 1995, p.99, 101). Opinion Research Centre (ORC) survey at the time found that The Scottish Conservative Party was thought to be out-of-touch, a bastion of "foreign" (English) privilege, Westminster-oriented, associated with recalcitrant landowners" (Bale, 2012, p.125)

The word Tory during Thatcher's reign had acquired an offensive meaning in Scotland. During the referendum campaign in 2014 the Labour Party was denigrated by supporters of independence as the "Red Tory", because the party was in alliance with the Conservative Party as union defenders. It can be taken as revenge for describing the SNP as "tartan Tories" in the late 70's and 80's. In late 80's and 90's aversion to the Tories was so strong that tactical voting was common, with only one purpose – not to let the candidates of the Conservative Party win. Scotland was to become a "zone free from the Tories." And so it happened in 1997.

Table 1. Results of the Conservative Party in UK General Elections (1955–2015).

Year	Share of votes in Scotland	Share of votes in UK
1955	50.1%	49.7%
1959	47.3%	49.4%
1964	40.6%	43.4%
1966	37.7%	41.9%
1970	38.0%	46.4%
1974 (II)	32.9%	37.9%
1974 (X)	24.7%	35.8%
1979	31.4%	43.9%

Year	Share of votes in Scotland	Share of votes in UK
1983	28.4%	42.4%
1987	24.0%	42.2%
1992	25.8%	41.9%
1997	17.5%	30.7%
2001	15.6%	31.7%
2005	15.8%	32.4%
2010	16.7%	36.1%
2015	14.9%	36.9%

Source: Author's calculations

The myth of Thatcher in Scotland had not been losing any resonance. During one of the two main debates in the independence referendum campaign in 2014 Salmond started opening statement with the sentence: "In 1979 we did not get the parliament we voted for. And instead have gone 18 years with a Tory government, Margaret Thatcher and the Poll Tax to boot". The current First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had publicly described her motivations to undertake political activity at the age of 16 as follows: "Thatcher was the motivation for my entire political career. I hated everything she stood for. This was the genesis of my nationalism. I hated the fact that she was able to do what she was doing and yet nobody I knew in my entire life had voted for her" (Torrance, 2015, p.30). She adds: "what played on me then is that we had a right-wing, uncaring Tory Government that we didn't vote for doing significant damage to the fabric of our society. That just seemed wrong to me" (Torrance, 2015, p.22). When the Scottish Conservative Party accepted the recommendations of Strathclyde's committee about the vision of further devolution in 2014, the Conservative MP for the Scottish Parliament Jackson Carlaw praised them because they were allowed to "exorcise the spirit of Margaret Thatcher" (Torrance, 2014, p.24). The Current leader of Scottish Tories – Ruth Davidson also does not try to defend the inheritance of Thatcher's government, preferring to withdraw it from discussion and downplaying its importance by reminding that she was six months old when Thatcher came to power and Thatcher has the same relevance to contemporary Scottish Conservatism as Gladstone or Disraeli. It should be remembered that now Scottish political life is dominated by a generation socialized in Thatcherism (40–50 years), but it can already be seen, that the myth is passed down from generation to generation and is easily reproduced in the generation of 30–40 year olds. Lorraine Davidson even admitted that nowadays young Scots may even miss that kind of "motivational sort of hate figure" (Hassan, 2014, p.99).

Conclusions

Thatcher was one of a minority of party leaders and prime ministers within democracies, who radically redefined the terms of the political debate, also in Scotland (Brown, 2014, p. 22). It may be said without many doubts that the Scottish distinctiveness has existed for centuries, but the question arises – why only recently strong national aspirations have been triggered after decades of being muted. Such demands require legitimacy and strengthening by a political myth. The myth of Thatcher fulfilled these functions. The ambition of this article has not been to prepare a global assessment of Thatcher politics and policies towards Scotland, but rather to indicate that the view dominant in Scotland is simplified, and also plays an important role in current politics, legitimizing secessionist demands and strengthening the identity of the Scottish community. In the contemporary Scottish debate unequivocal defence policy of Thatcher is outside of the discourse, proving its sanctity status. Criticizing Thatcher's legacy is almost an everyday ritual in Scottish political life.

Thatcher was aware of her defeat – part of her memoirs dedicated to Scotland was entitled "Thatcherism rebuffed" (Thatcher, 1993, p.618). She could see this special Scottish dimension within the United Kingdom, but treated it rather as a delay in the reforms needed in the country. Scotland never warmed to Thatcher, as she was more in tune with the Scotland of the 1950s than the Scotland of the 1980s (Massie, 2013). There are many counterarguments to the assumptions of the Thatcher myth. Firstly, many negative processes that took place in the 80s were not initiated by Thatcher, only accelerated. Secondly, Tory decline in popularity in the north, as Table 1 shows, began before the leadership of Thatcher and has lasted long after her dismissal. Most accounts of the decline of the Scottish Tories usually begin in the mid-1960s (Finlay, 2012, p.37). The Conservative Party was permanently seen in Scotland as openly English. Thirdly, there is a lot of accuracy in the opinion that the real division is not between Scotland and England, only between southern England and the rest of the country (Rifkind, 2009). During Thatcher's years the political dominance of London was reinforced by its central economic role (Tomaney, 2000, p. 677).

Widespread opinion that Thatcher was hostile to Scotland is to a large extent untruthful. This constructed dominant version of the 1980s includes a sense of collective amnesia and instrumental interpretations of the past (Hassan, 2014, p.98). As the leader of the party in the majoritarian electoral system she had to evaluate the situation in terms of political gains and losses. With time, she has begun to share the opinion that the special expenditure for Scotland with the worsening of the election results is a wasted investment. It cannot be said that her actions were planned as

anti-Scottish: she has never retreated radically from any of the main Scottish privileges in The United Kingdom's budget – "Barnett formula", extensive funding for Scottish Development Agency or even protection of selected plants.

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