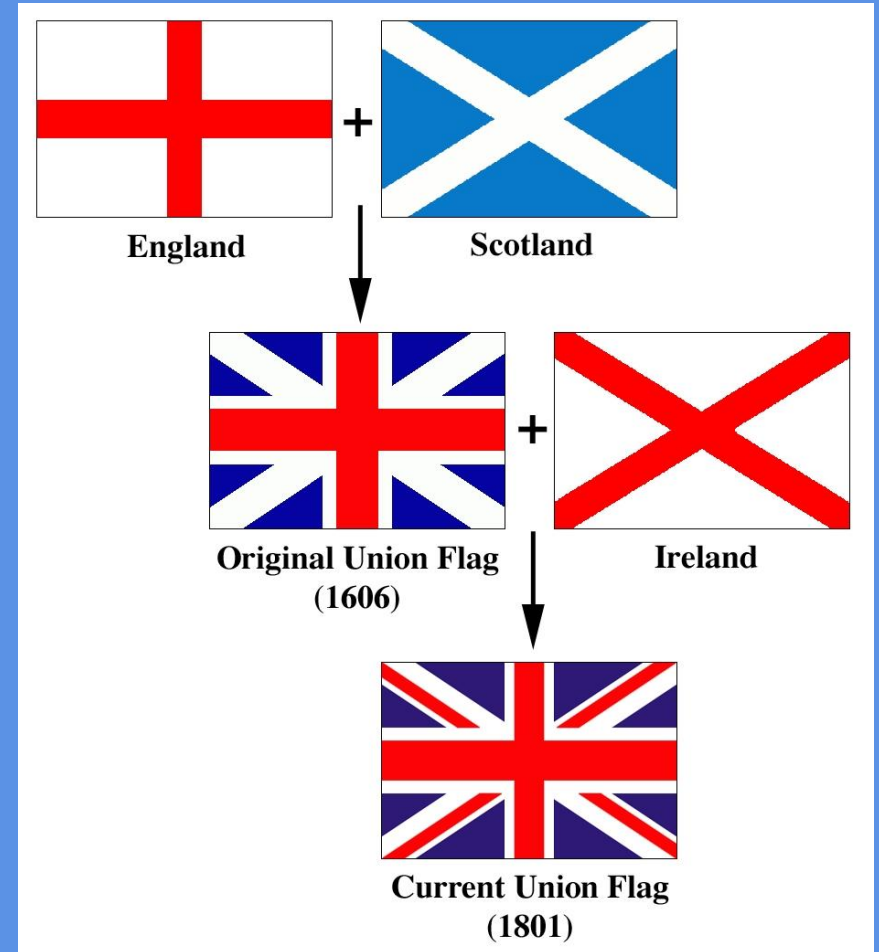




Issues in Modern Britain

A United Kingdom

- United Kingdom comprised of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland
 - Also contains 15 dependencies
 - United Kingdom owned 1/4th of world at zenith
- Multi-lingual State
 - Major languages are Scottish, English, Welsh, Cornish, and Irish



British Multiculturalism

- Britain maintains ties with many of its former colonies and is home to many descendants (and recent immigrants) from former imperial holdings
- Make up about 8% of the British population
 - Indian (23%)
 - Pakistani (16%)
 - Afro-Caribbean (13%)
 - Black African (11%)



England

- Largest region of Great Britain
- Makes up 2/3 of the land mass
 - Contains about 80% of UK's Population
- English have dominated the other nationalities historically, and still hold a disproportionate share of political power



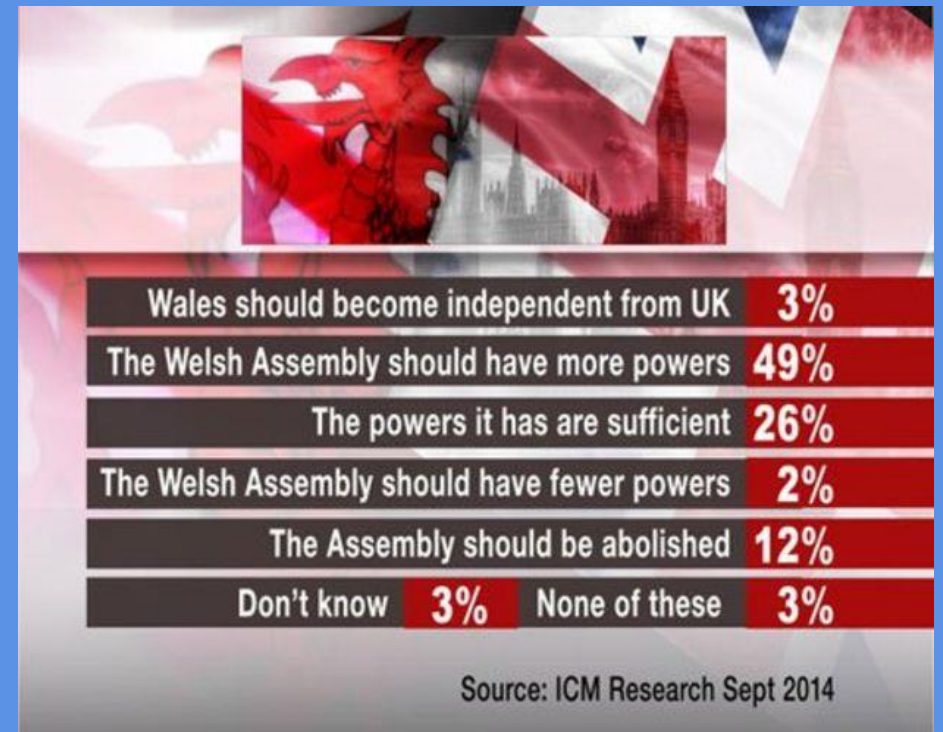
Scotland

- History of resistance to English rule
- Strong sense of national identity
- Have their own flag
- Recently granted their own parliament and regional assembly in 1999
- **Scottish National Party** – political party of the region of Scotland



Wales

- Became subject to the King of England in 16th century
- Plaid Cymru – Welsh national political party
- Strong sense of national pride reflected in their flag and in their own language
 - Signage in Welsh and English
- Granted their own assembly in 1998



Northern Ireland

- Long history of conflict between England and Ireland, particularly over religion
- Home rule was granted largely because of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) which used guerrilla tactics against British forces to secure independence
- Sinn Fein – political party of the IRA
- In 1949 the bulk of Ireland officially became independent
- Northern Ireland remains under British control
- Their continues to be a great deal of conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland



Devolution

- British government is a unitary system (centralized control)
- Starting in the 1970s the Scots and Welsh made an aggressive push for certain political autonomy in their regions
- Devolution – the turning over of some political power and autonomy to regional governments
- The Labour Party had supported the idea of devolution since the 1970s
- Margaret Thatcher's administration blocked the idea during the period in which they controlled government
- Under Tony Blair's New Labour Party the idea of devolution was revisited
- In 1999, referendums in Scotland and Wales successfully passed, and each established their own regional assemblies: powers of taxation, education, and economic planning
- In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement established a parliament for Northern Ireland as well, but it was shut down by London in 2003 when violence broke out once again in the region of Northern Ireland.

Education & Political Elite Recruitment

- “Public schools” originally were intended to train boys for “public life” in the military, civil service, or politics
- Majority of Britain’s political elites go to public boarding schools
- Currently only about 65% of British 17-year olds are still in school, the lowest number of any industrialized society
- Oxbridge (Oxford-Cambridge) – the most important portal to membership in the elite classes and political recruitment is through these two prestigious universities