CHAPTER 1

UNIONIST WALES: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WELSH DEVOLVED REGION VIA CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Wales is an autonomous region of the United Kingdom (UK), which is a quasi-federal union-state. The Welsh Devolved Region is secured through a conventionally-entrenched protection mechanism. It is authorised to exercise various executive, legislative and judicial self-governing powers. These powers are utilised by the National Assembly for Wales (*Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru*) and the Welsh Government (*Llywodraeth Cymru*). The Devolved Region is not granted any *formal* treaty-related powers. Nevertheless, it can represent itself at the international political level under the flag and authority of the UK. It is worth noting that Wales cannot become a separate member of an international political organisation to which the UK has already adhered, nor can it obtain membership of such organisations to which the UK has not adhered yet.

Contemporary Welsh politics has been dominated by the unionist political parties seeking to preserve the Devolved Region's constitutional ties with the UK. Five assembly elections have been held since the construction of the Devolved Region. The winner of the elections was the unionist Welsh Labour Party (*Llafur Cymru*). The pro-independence Party of Wales (*Plaid Cymru*) came in first in none of the electoral races. Accordingly, the 60-member National Assembly has constantly been dominated by the unionist parties – the Welsh Labour Party, the Welsh Conservative Party (*Ceidwadwyr Cymreig*) and the Welsh Liberal Democrats (*Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru*). The secessionist *Plaid* has managed to win at most 17 assembly seats so far.

In parallel to the clear unionist domination in Parliament, no separatist cabinet has ruled Wales so far. Seven Welsh Executives have been formed since the foundation of the Devolved Region in total. None of these executives has governed the Region with a political agenda aimed at Welsh independence. As a

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Contemporary Welsh politics has been dominated by the unionist political parties, which are inclined to preserve the Devolved Region's constitutional ties with the UK. The unionists have always gained a majority position in the Welsh Parliament and Government. None of the seven Welsh Executives has ruled Wales with a political programme aimed at Welsh independence. Similarly, none of the four Welsh First Ministers has sought to construct an independent Welsh state.

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