The Scottish National Party (SNP) : A Party of Government in the early 21st Century

Le Scottish National Party (SNP) : un parti de gouvernement au début du XXIe siècle

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The SNP appeared in 1934 out of a merger between the Scottish Party, created in 1932, and the National Party of Scotland (NPS) set up in 1928 by the Scottish National Movement (SNM), the Scots National League (SNL), the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) and the Glasgow University Scottish Nationalist Association (GUSNA). Its founders aimed at gaining self-government for Scotland through elections as the pressure they had exerted on other parties – especially the Liberals and Labour – had failed. Three-quarters of a century later, not only was it governing Scotland, it was also planning its full independence. A peripheral movement had turned into one of the key players in the UK political landscape.

Such a remarkable advance may be put down to its organization, its policies and its leaders. Until the 1960s, the SNP had no sound, nationwide structure. It lacked clear-cut policies and fought few elections. Then strong by-election performances encouraged some activists to set up a proper party organization with consistent policies. This led to a surge in votes though not in seats because of the electoral system. The SNP was further boosted by the establishment of a Scottish Parliament (Holyrood) in 1999. After speaking disparagingly of devolution for most of its lifetime, it became the main opposition party from 1999 to 2007. It was then able to form its first Government which lasted for the full four-year term in spite of its minority status. Alex Salmond, the First Minister since 2007, has undoubtedly been instrumental in the success of the party over the past twenty years.

This paper will attempt to account for the SNP’s progress from a minor, single-issue party of protest to a party of Government with a fully-fledged range of policies. After analysing
the improvement in its campaigning strategies, we will deal with its building-up of an efficient organization before turning to its adoption of increasingly attractive policies. The overall majority secured in May 2011 and its consequences will be evoked in a postscript.

Winning elections, an overriding objective

4 The SNP was conceived as a party to fight elections unlike some of the organizations which contributed to its foundation. As it aimed at Scottish rather than sectional, class-based interests, its vote came within the province of traditional theories but also required newer ones.

Devising electoral strategies, from Westminster to Holyrood

5 The SNP has been willing to take part in all elections though it first concentrated on those which seemed to be rewarding, i.e. General Elections to the House of Commons.

6 Until the late 1990s the SNP claimed that winning a majority of Scottish MPs would give it a mandate to negotiate independence with the British Government on behalf of the Scottish people. However achieving a noticeable breakthrough required time, organization and money. At first it could not afford to field candidates in every constituency until 1974 (table 2). Not only did it barely have about twenty candidates in the 1960s but it forfeited most deposits as it was unable to target seats. Its successes thus came at by-elections in Labour strongholds (table 3). Robert McIntyre, its first MP, was elected in 1945 after breaking the war truce between the main parties. But he only kept his seat for a few weeks until the following General Election. The first real conquest was achieved by Winnie Ewing in 1967. Even though she was defeated at the 1970 General Election, Donald Stewart won another seat, thus enabling the Nationalists to have their first MP elected in such a contest. In 1973, Margo McDonald gained a seat from Labour in a by-election. The breakthrough came in the October 1974 General Election when the SNP polled 30% of the vote. They only won 14% of the seats – mostly at the expense of the Conservatives – because of the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system which disadvantages minor parties especially those which get shares of the votes that are substantial but fairly equal across the country. Most of the SNP’s votes are thus wasted as they are not turned into seats. In subsequent General Elections, its share of the vote dropped before levelling out to about 20% from the 1990s. But it has only obtained 5 or 6 seats, or less than 10% of the total number of Scottish seats in the House of Commons.¹

7 At the outset the SNP found it hard to get accustomed to Westminster shaped by English traditions.² The first two MPs were particularly keen to evince their specificities. But overall they used this platform to promote and defend a Scottish voice. Furthermore the SNP was able to exert a significant influence as a pressure group. Labour felt threatened and had to envisage a constitutional response short of independence. In 1968, the Government led by Harold Wilson thus set up a Commission on the Constitution chaired by Lord Crowther and then by Lord Kilbrandon so that a reform would be considered. In 1974, when he formed his second Government, H. Wilson could no longer postpone the
decision. He used some of the recommendations of the Kilbrandon Commission, published in 1973, to draft a Devolution Bill. It was passed but never enacted as it failed to meet the 40% threshold of the electorate in the referendum held in March 1979 at the request of Labour MPs averse to devolution. Likewise from 1989 to 1995, Scottish Labour, then in opposition, devised a blueprint within a wider Constitutional convention with the Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems) and civil society representatives. In 1997, as soon as he came to power, Tony Blair issued a White paper based on this scheme and held a referendum on it in September. Like in 1979 – albeit in different circumstances – the SNP joined the “yes” campaign while the Conservatives remained staunch opponents. The plan was then overwhelmingly approved by three-quarters of Scottish voters.

Since 1999, the SNP has concentrated on the Scottish Parliament. It first contended that it would have a mandate based on its majority at Holyrood. As this commitment was likely to deter some potential voters, from the early 2000s the SNP promised that after winning a majority of seats it would hold a referendum on the opening of negotiations. However, Labour had designed an electoral system – the additional member system (AMS) – which made it very difficult for a single party – their nationalist opponent – to achieve an overall majority. Indeed 73 MSPs are returned under FPTP while 56 others are elected from regional lists under PR. Labour suffered from this hurdle after the 1999 and the 2003 elections. Its leaders then decided to form coalitions with the Liberal Democrats. The SNP took full advantage of a more proportional representation as it had 28% of the votes and 27% of seats in 1999 (table 4). In 2003 it lost 8 MSPs as it was undermined by the breakthrough of minor parties for the number of Green and Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) MSPs surged from 2 to 13. Then in 2007 the SNP benefited from their collapse and came first, though with only one more seat than Labour. As no other party was prepared to support it given its ultimate goal, it was forced to govern on its own. Despite this setback it still acted as a pressure group, prompting its rivals to work out constitutional responses. Consequently in August 2007 when the SNP launched a National Conversation to convince the electorate that independence was the right solution, Scottish Labour issued a joint call with the two other British parties – including the Scottish Conservatives which had no antecedent – to call for a Commission on devolution at Holyrood. In February 2008 as the SNP initiated the second stage of its conversation, Gordon Brown endorsed the plan and appointed the Calman Commission which published a report in June 2009. Both Labour and the Conservatives were committed to enforcing it. David Cameron’s Coalition Government issued a Bill in November 2010. Both parties also realized that Scotland had to remain high on the British Government’s agenda and they recreated a full-time Secretary of State, Jim Murphy from late 2009, and since May 2010 Michael Moore, a LibDem, who has been piloting the Bill.

The SNP only has a few strongholds. They are mainly located in the North-east – Moray, Banff, Angus – and to a lesser extent in the centre – Perth. The party is less popular in other rural areas in the South – except Galloway – and in the Highlands & Islands where it gained and retained seats – including its first General Election victory in 1970 (Western Isles) – thanks to personal votes for the incumbents. In urban areas its performance is strong in Dundee and Clackmannanshire. The 2007 Holyrood election enabled the SNP to widen its outlook as for the first time it secured 21 constituency seats, 9 from Labour, 4 from the Conservatives. However this must be qualified as this list contained few heartlands of its rivals – Central Fife being an exception as it even had a communist tradition – and 4 seats formerly held by the SNP including Glasgow Govan. Glasgow and
its region are indeed the main battlegrounds as making decisive inroads in the area would threaten Labour and reinforce the Nationalists' claim to have a national appeal. The SNP's successes there have generally been short-lived, most of them being achieved at by-elections—the latest one being Glasgow East won in a Westminster by-election in July 2008 and lost at the 2010 General Election. Yet the SNP vote is far from complex than what was originally thought.

**Explaining the SNP vote, from protest and chance to rational behaviour**

10 The SNP’s results have been accounted for by theories putting emphasis on its structure and on its image.

11 On the one hand, organizational factors were certainly relevant in the 1960s. Although the SNP was better organized from the 1990s its votes did not rise accordingly. A contagious effect, whereby the party should gain votes in areas of previous strength, was hardly relevant when the SNP proved unable to target seats and could not provide satisfactory explanation for its limited gains afterwards.

12 Both in the 2003 and 2007 elections to the Scottish Parliament, the SNP’s campaigns were widely regarded as the most professional ones. Yet they only led to victory in 2007. In 2003, like other parties, the SNP still relied on traditional campaigning, such as meetings, leaflet distribution, fund-raising and doorstep visits especially to undecided voters. The Nationalists also turned to “post-modern” techniques. As almost all constituency associations reportedly used a computer – to a larger extent than Constituency Labour Parties – though the proportion making full use of its potential – for example a computerized electoral register – was lower. Both parties benefited from telephone canvassing by their national call centres. The SNP’s direct mailing was more focused on their core voters than that of their rivals. In 2007, thanks to an unprecedented budget, the Nationalists could afford extensive use of a more traditional technique: the purchase of press adverts. They thus published an impressive list of supportive businessmen, like Labour in the aftermath of devolution and the Conservatives in the 1980s. As the election approached, adverts focused on pensioners, students and families. In addition they increasingly resorted to post-modern techniques to target voters. For instance, a website TV launched by Sean Connery broadcast 3 hours per day. The party had developed software data on each household thanks to a computerized database called Activate built up since 2005. Not only did it contain voters’ voting records like those of their rivals but it also fitted them into profiles of consumer types. The SNP was thus able to contact over 1 million individuals on the phone with follow-up mail-shots.

13 As for targeting individual constituencies, it began in the 2000s. Until then the party had retained a national objective which proved too ambitious. Then seats gained at Holyrood became a target at Westminster elections and vice-versa thanks to efficient organization. The 2007 breakthrough at Holyrood had been prepared by the SNP’s success in the 2005 General Election when it came second in 46 % of Labour seats compared to 7.5 % in 2001. Dundee East was thus won at the 2003 Holyrood election then at the 2005 Westminster election. The Western Isles were captured at the 2007 Holyrood election and at the 2010 UK General Election. In 2007, a contagion effect appeared as the Nationalists gained most constituency seats between the north-east coast and Perth: Gordon, Inverness, Argyll & Bute, Cunninghame North and Stirling. They also secured the second Dundee
constituency. The SNP had a seat in the main cities: Aberdeen North (won in 2003), Edinburgh East, Glasgow Govan. But since losing Galloway at the 2001 UK election, it held no seat south of the Central belt. Furthermore, the party was able to lean on its activists in key battles even in constituencies where its branches were scarce such as Gordon for the 2007 Holyrood election (a Lib Dem seat personally targeted by Alex Salmond) and Glasgow East in the 2008 Westminster by-election. However this victory triggered a reaction from Labour activists who lost their complacency and retained two other constituencies in the following by-elections held in Glenrothes – a seat close to Gordon Brown’s – in November 2008 and Glasgow North-East in November 2009. The SNP merely gained 20% of the vote. Failure to update the Activate database was blamed for this underachievement.

Efficient electioneering is due to individuals’ commitment and to money. Overall the gap between the election expenses of the SNP and Labour has tended to narrow. At national – i.e. Scottish – level in the 2007 Holyrood election, for the first time the SNP outspent its rivals with a surge in its budget from £400,000 in 2003 to £1.4m. It spent 90% of the authorized ceiling while Labour could hardly afford £1.1m. At local level, over the past two decades at Westminster and Holyrood elections, the Nationalists have disbursed on average 40% of the total allowed in each constituency with a gentle upward trend. Labour which used to lay out 70% no longer exceeds 55%. The Conservatives have also reduced their spending which has become similar to the Nationalists’ in recent elections. Only the LibDems are far more economical as they spend one-third of the ceiling. However the SNP may target a few seats but it has no overall consistent strategy. There is no correlation between its constituency spending at two successive elections. The correlation coefficients between its constituency spending and its results at the previous elections have been around 0.5 in the 2000s like those of Labour (but far below the 0.8 of the two other parties). The correlations with other parties’ results have vanished – except for a small, negative one with the LibDems –, which means that the SNP spend substantial amounts of money in many constituencies at random unlike Labour. As for the consequences of such election expenditure on their results, the correlation coefficients tended to prove a positive effect (0.4) similar to the achievements of the Labour Party but markedly lower than for the two other parties. The correlation coefficients between its constituency votes at an election and its votes at the previous election (for the same parliament) are very high (over 0.92), but there is little consistent link with the vote for other parties at the same election. One may only find a negative correlation with the LibDems whereas other parties’ votes are correlated.

On the other hand, as for the image of the SNP, its vote was initially accounted for by negative theories. Protest voting by individuals without previous party loyalties probably helped explain the SNP’s by-election gains, at the expense of the party in power. However, it cannot clarify recent UK General Election results. SNP voters do identify with their party albeit to a lesser extent than Labour’s voters. At Scottish elections, the SNP did benefit from some protest vote. After losing part of it to the Greens and the SSP in 2003 it recovered it in 2007. But its 2007 victory was mainly due to the support of former Labour voters while a growing proportion of SNP voters were willing to identify with the party. Another negative vindication was Scotland’s relative deprivation. SNP voters are usually pessimistic about Scotland’s economic situation within the UK but Labour voters are not cheerful either. SNP surges have occurred when Scotland’s economic circumstances were not so bad and in a country which was not fully subordinate.
Positive reasons then seemed more helpful. Issue-voting is the tendency to choose a party according to its policies. Since the 1990s and the 2000s, independence has been favoured by a minority of the electorate (about 35%) and a majority of them do vote SNP. However a substantial proportion (up to 50%) opt for other parties. Conversely, about 40% of SNP voters do not support independence. Moreover the electorate as a whole do not consider constitutional issues as a priority. Yet the SNP won the 2007 election by attracting a majority of those who were committed to independence as well as those who strongly wanted additional powers to be granted to the Scottish Parliament. Other academics reckoned that SNP voters might be influenced by post-materialist values like minorities’ rights or the environment. There is no clear evidence since SNP voters have become increasingly close to Labour voters on traditional, bread-and-butter issues. In 2007 the outcome did not result from these position issues. Indeed few topics aroused voters’ discontent and genuine disagreement between both main parties apart from the abolition of the unpopular council tax pledged by the SNP.

Socio-economic characteristics do not provide convincing explanation either. At individual level, the party’s support is not specific. It is slightly higher among the young and lower among women, which is linked to attitudes to independence. The party used to attract the middle classes without class loyalties because of their upward mobility or their neighbourhood (new towns) whereas it deterred Catholics who feared independence. It has worked hard to overcome these biases. Its vote is now roughly equivalent whatever the social class or the religious group. It can legitimately be regarded as a catch-all party, drawing on all sections of Scottish society to a wider extent than Labour. At constituency level correlations between SNP votes and socio-economic data from the censuses remain low, with a persistent negative link with the middle class and with council tenants in 2007, a positive link with the skilled workers recently extended to the whole working class and with people employed in agriculture. Although this does not mean that the individuals who belong to these groups vote Nationalist, the party’s highest votes are in rural areas which are not the most affluent.

Since 1999, a distinction has been drawn between elections to the House of Commons and to Holyrood to account for the gap in SNP backing – between 4 and 16 percentage points. Far from making it disappear altogether as some Labour MPs expected – especially George Robertson, the Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland in 1995 –, devolution has offered new opportunities to the nationalist party by putting emphasis on Scottish answers to Scottish questions. Even though both parties are now considered as close, voters are more likely to vote SNP at Scottish elections than at General Elections as they have Scottish issues and Scottish interests in mind. The SNP is supposed to be keener on defending them and it can reasonably expect to win a majority at Holyrood. Until the 1990s, almost all SNP voters felt Scottish to some extent but Scottish identifiers’ favourite party was Labour whose policies were praised. In 2007, the SNP won theHolyrood poll as it enticed a majority of Scottish identifiers and because it supposedly concentrated on Scottish people to a larger extent than New Labour. It had built up a national appeal, above Labour’s class appeal. As there were fewer policy differences between both parties, voters tended to focus on valence issues. After carrying out a general assessment of parties’ past performances and abilities to deliver in the future, they reckoned that the SNP was better able to enforce its pledges and promote Scotland. In addition, Alex Salmond was the most popular leader as well as the best-known figure, being far ahead of his Labour rivals in Scotland (Jack McConnell, the First Minister, and
then Wendy Alexander and Iain Gray, the leaders of the party in opposition), not to mention Britain’s Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.\textsuperscript{19} However at UK General Elections, the Scots still trust Scottish Labour to voice their demands within the larger Parliamentary Labour Party. In 2010, the SNP was the incumbent party at Holyrood. It had been emboldened by the Glasgow East conquest as well as an outstanding performance in the June 2009 European elections – 29.1% against Labour’s 20.8%. However it failed to entice voters to return a greater number of “local champions” – i.e. SNP MPs – to protect Scotland from the spending cuts advocated by both main parties especially the Conservatives.\textsuperscript{32} In spite of these temporary setbacks the SNP can now rely on a proper structure.

Building up of a formidable party machine

The SNP has built an efficient organization able to attract members and funding. It has rationalized power within its own ranks and wooed the media.

Attracting members

In the 2000s, the SNP had between 10,000 and 16,000 members with peaks ahead of elections.\textsuperscript{33} The overall number was not very far from the fluctuating figures reported by the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservatives. Only the Scottish Liberal Democrats declared lower membership.\textsuperscript{34} SNP members are predominantly male, middle-aged (the median age being 58), well-educated, middle-class\textsuperscript{35} (professionals being markedly over-represented) although they are reluctant to identify with a class, and without religious affiliation. Most of them feel Scottish and not British. Two-thirds endorse their party’s policy of independence within the EU but this is not necessarily their primary goal in terms of strategy. One-third of them describe themselves as very or fairly active, which is a higher proportion than that of other parties’ members.

As the SNP was created as a party rather than a pressure group, dual membership was restricted in 1935 and forbidden in 1948. Membership used to remain below 2,000. It reached a peak of 100,000 in the late 1960s/early 1970s which resulted from two sources.\textsuperscript{36} On the one hand, branches were founded throughout the country. Indeed even though Robert McIntyre, the first SNP MP in 1945, aimed at having one branch per constituency, there were only 20 branches until the early 1960s. They soared to 484 in 1968 thanks to the appointment of a full-time organizer, Ian McDonald, the candidate in a 1962 by-election. In addition, from 1965 constituency associations were set up to supervise and coordinate them. On the other hand, the SNP attracted the members of the Covenant association established by John MacCormick, the first national secretary of the party who left it in 1942. This organization collapsed after its founder died in 1961. The SNP was particularly appealing to young people. Then membership slumped to 28,000 in 1979 and 12,000 ten years later. In the 2000s the trend was upwards again as the SNP made electoral gains.

As for its leaders and its candidates in the 1970s and 1980s, professionals in Scottish institutions – i.e. fields which had remained distinctively Scottish since the 1707 Treaty of Union between England and Scotland such as education or the law – as well as small businessmen prevailed, which fuelled an interest in Scottish matters.\textsuperscript{37} As for its MSPs

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elected in 1999, the majority reported no class identification although those who did
preferred the middle class.\textsuperscript{38} Most of them had no religious affiliation. They all claimed a
Scottish identity. As for jobs, the SNP parliamentary groups since 1999 have comprised
more businessmen and fewer workers than their Labour counterparts. Only one third of
them had been local councillors as many others had stood unsuccessfully given Labour’s
domination until 2007.

Women who seemed fearful of the party as voters have always held senior positions
within it after winning high-profile elections – Winnie Ewing, Margo McDonald, Roseanna
Cunningham. Although the SNP ruled out positive discrimination in their favour when it
came to selecting candidates for Holyrood, its regional lists were gender-balanced so that
43\% of the party’s MSPs were women in 1999. By 2007 this proportion had plummeted to
25\% as fewer women held top positions on lists while the party uncharacteristically
obtained almost half of its MSPs in constituencies in which fewer efforts were made to
promote female candidates. Nevertheless, women accounted for 5 of the 15 Cabinet
members, with Nicola Sturgeon as deputy First Minister. The party’s influential figures, in
turn, are likely to attract funds.

Collecting funds

In 2007, the SNP boasted an unprecedented electoral chest of £1.4m. This amount was
undoubtedly boosted by the opinion polls since the party gained momentum. Yet it was
mainly due to hard work both from the national leadership and from the grassroots as
the SNP did not benefit from institutional support like its rivals. The party’s long search
for establishment figures\textsuperscript{39} had thus born fruit. Sean Connery, a friend of Alex Salmond’s
since the 1980s, gave £30,000. Others major donators were Tom Farmer (Kwik-Fit) with
£100,000 and Brian Souter (Stagecoach) with £625,000. These endorsements were not
exempt from controversies. As Sean Connery lived in the Bahamas, his backing was
questioned from the early 2000s when new legislation prohibited foreign donations.\textsuperscript{40}
Brian Souter ran a bus company and the SNP’s commitment to reregulate this area,
passed at the 2006 Conference, did not appear in its 2007 Manifesto. His conservative
stance over morals could have proved even more embarrassing but the party did not
disavow its own, progressive attitude.\textsuperscript{41}

Meanwhile at local level, branches were traditionally involved in social activities such as
jumble sales, dances and societies. They took part in national appeals for example on
Saint Andrew’s Day or in pools such as Alba Pools in the 1960s. They shared some of the
profits with their headquarters. Fund-raising surged when A. Salmond became the leader
of the party in 1990. He launched Challenge of the Nineties to incite members to pledge
monthly donations by standing orders. He also organized events and dinners aimed at
businesses. In 1998, he was instrumental in the foundation of Business for Scotland in
order to recruit influential backers. The group was run by Jim Mather, a former
businessman, who was the party’s national treasurer until he became an MSP in 2003 and
the Minister for Enterprise in 2007. There were also offices abroad especially in the USA
and in Canada. John Swinney, who was an MSP from 1999 and led the party from 2000 to
2004, further improved the party’s organization after the 2003 elections to the Scottish
Parliament. Membership renewals were centralized as many branches, which used to
purchase cards from HQ and sold them to members, were reportedly not reliable. Then
A. Salmond, the leader from 2004 onwards, encouraged regular donations based on
individuals’ financial abilities, as well as interest-free loans. He also managed to find substantial support during election campaigns, even for UK elections, be it to meet the required £200,000 in 2005 or to finance the £50,000 interim court proceedings in 2010 when he unsuccessfully challenged the BBC’s decision to exclude him from the debates between the main British party leaders broadcast UK-wide. In addition, A. Salmond, J. Swinney and J. Mather held regular meetings with small groups of businessmen in order to persuade them that they would be the proper defenders of Scottish interests – through lower taxes, fewer regulations and a better use of Scotland’s assets.

The SNP has taken great pains to fight elections to the Scottish Parliament as it was likely to win them. The 1999 campaign was so costly that it had to sell its headquarters and it relocated to cheaper premises. In turn the party has benefited from its Holyrood representation. Its 35 MSPs were granted office and staff allowances even though they did complain since most of them were elected on regional lists, with lower office allowances than their constituency counterparts. These arrangements resulted from Labour’s willingness to reduce the means available for its rivals, which proved that money was crucial. The party’s leader was also the recipient of an additional allowance. Furthermore the SNP received “Short money” to carry out opposition duties, amounting to £5,000 per MSP, and almost £6,000 by early 2007. Consequently between 2001 and 2005, 60% of the SNP’s revenues came from public money including two-thirds from the Scottish Parliament – although its MSPs had been reduced to 27 from 2003. From 2007 the Nationalists lost this support granted to non-Executive parties but their Cabinet members had higher salaries than ordinary MSPs. They could also take advantage of being the incumbent party. Besides their structure was no longer a liability.

Rationalizing power within the party

A. Salmond has succeeded in establishing himself as the dominant and most popular figure of the nationalist party. He can act as a proper leader backed by a secure organization. The SNP used to count on a few people who were overloaded. From 1963, following the report drafted by Gordon Wilson, the national secretary, new positions were created. There would be a deputy leader with administrative functions and vice-chairmen with their own committees. They would be elected at annual Conferences dominated by delegates from branches. Yet many decisions are made by the quarterly National Council. The SNP is managed by the NEC which gathers office-bearers on a monthly basis. Its size was reduced in 2004 to make it more consistent. Policies are discussed by a National Assembly set up in 1968 in order to publish recommendations for the Conference or the Council. This policy-making structure was developed by William Wolfe. As he had had to campaign in the 1962 West Lothian by-election with a policy statement drafted in 1946 by Robert McIntyre, the former MP turned convener, he issued a programme entitled the SNP and You which set guidelines. W. Wolfe was also concerned with PR and attempted to train candidates. Yet for a long time the party had little communication experience except for George Reid, MP from 1974 and 1979. Decisive steps were undertaken under A. Salmond who appointed individuals he trusted as chief executives, M. Russell, who used to earn a living in the film industry and then Peter Murrell who had worked in his constituency office in the early days. In the 2000s, as the party’s activities widened, J. Swinney created a business convener to oversee operational matters, thus enabling him to focus on leadership issues.
A. Salmond and J. Swinney have also put an end to divisions within the party. As for the selection of candidates, the process for the 2007 Holyrood election was unusually smooth thanks to specific endeavour to streamline it. Candidates were nominated at branch level from an NEC-approved list. Yet local branches used to resent what they regarded as central control. Occasionally tensions attracted media attention, especially in 1978 when the local branch failed to support Isobel Lindsay in the Berwick and East Lothian by-election. In the run-up to the 2003 election to the Scottish Parliament, branch delegates had to rank candidates for the regional lists. They voiced personal grudges and growing discontent against HQ’s search for efficiency, thus downgrading outgoing MSPs who were close to the leadership. Andrew Wilson and Mike Russell lost their seats as a result. Conversely Margo McDonald resigned and stood as an independent. In 2004 J. Swinney strengthened central coordination at the expenses of local branches. Members’ individual votes (one-member-one-vote or OMOV) would then be used to elect the leader, his deputy and to choose candidates. In 2006/2007, branch members selected again the MSPs defeated at the previous poll with top positions on lists. M. Russell as well as Gil Paterson were thus returned to the Holyrood benches.

As for elected politicians, when the parliamentary group expanded from 1974 on, some tensions between office-bearers and MPs emerged as the latter requested autonomy from the former who had often failed to win a seat, like Margo McDonald, the deputy leader. These tensions then died out as the SNP had fewer MPs and a leader who, unlike his predecessors, was unchallenged. A. Salmond led the party’s MPs until 2010 and its MSPs until 2001, and from 2007 with the enhanced status of First Minister. As for J. Swinney who was the leader between 2000 and 2004, he was also a former MP and he behaved as a team-player. In early 2003, two-thirds of NEC members were MSPs or even MPs and a further one-eighth were trying to enter Holyrood. When A. Salmond was re-elected as leader in 2004, N. Sturgeon was his deputy as she was an MSP. Indeed the party acknowledged that Scotland’s political life was based on the Scottish Parliament. In 2002, two MSPs – Dorothy Grace-Elder and Margo MacDonald – who disagreed with their party at Holyrood preferred leaving it and sat as independents.

Since 1999, there has been a new kind of conflicts between the two types of MSPs. List MSPs returned from regional lists under PR tended to be regarded as second-class politicians compared to their constituency colleagues elected under FPTP. Labour MSPs thus seized every opportunity to make it more difficult for SNP list MSPs to interfere in constituency matters and in local quangos. In turn Nationalist MSPs tried to forge links with constituencies and often promoted themselves as the local MSPs. The matters were brought before the Parliament’s Standards Committee. As tensions reached a climax, G. Reid, the SNP deputy Presiding Officer, convened a working group which advocated honesty and mutual respect, two principles integrated into the Code of Conduct in 2000. However suspicion has lingered on, fuelled on the one hand by Labour MPs particularly angry at this new competition over the most popular, domestic issues. They have repeatedly tried to abolish list MSPs while Labour at Holyrood intended to reduce their staff allowances in 2008. On the other hand Nationalist list MSPs have eagerly attempted to develop constituency strongholds. A few weeks before the 2011 Holyrood election, the Presiding Officer ruled that two of them, including Alex Neil, a Minister, had falsely depicted themselves as constituency MSPs in their election leaflets.

In the 2000s, A. Salmond was far more appreciated than other Scottish leaders and was on a par with Britain’s successive Prime Ministers. He was so keen to capitalize on his image...
that on the 2007 ballot papers for the Holyrood poll he called his lists “Alex Salmond for First Minister” so that his name came first at the top. As there was only one ballot paper for the two votes, some individuals legitimately thought that they were ticking a box for a constituency MSP, which contributed to the overall confusion and to the 4% of spoilt votes.53 His exceptional popularity was not dented though. Nor did he suffer from his fondness for slogans which seemed to match his interest in gambling. Some of them did backfire such as “Free by 93” in the 1992 UK General Election or the target of 20 seats in the 2010 UK General Election – without lasting adverse effect. Overall thanks to him the SNP has gained substantial coverage in the Scottish and British media.

Wooing the media

In the 2007 Holyrood campaign, when a coalition dominated by the SNP was advocated by the main quality papers – The Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday and The Sunday Herald, The Herald being more cautious – this was an outstanding achievement. The SNP had never been endorsed by the Scottish press.52 There had only been one exception in the past, with the Scottish edition of The Sun during the 1992 UK General Election campaign. However, Murdoch’s tabloid aimed at gaining market shares at the expense of the staunchly Labour Daily Record. In the run-up to the 2005 UK General Election, a weekly, pro-independence paper, Scottish Standards, was launched. Yet it went bankrupt shortly before polling day. Given their alleged disadvantage, Nationalist politicians have often had tense relations with journalists. In the 1999 Holyrood election, they put an end to their press conferences as they were dissatisfied with the papers’ accounts. This lack of support could be regarded as astonishing as the very existence of the SNP made Scotland’s political life much more interesting, with a national rather than a provincial outlook. Yet for decades, journalists tended to fear the radical reform demanded by the SNP. Things began to change when the Scottish Parliament was set up. Political journalists reported the activities of Nationalist MSPs on a daily basis. In the months leading to the 2007 election, the papers could hardly lambast the party most likely to win in the poll all the more so as any referendum on independence was postponed until the end of the four-year term. The honeymoon lasted well over a year. In response, even though the Scottish Parliament has no influence over papers’ contents and no power over the companies which own them – competition laws being reserved to Westminster – in 2009, SNP MSPs repeatedly lodged motions to articulate their concerns about the mergers of papers within the Herald and the Mirror groups. They denounced redundancies as well as the risks for editorial independence.53

As for the broadcasting media, which are run by British institutions, A. Salmond’s legal bid in the 2010 UK General Election campaign enabled him to highlight the unfair attitudes of national broadcasters especially the state-owned BBC funded by all British taxpayers. This was an old Nationalist narrative on two grounds. On the one hand, the SNP had previously challenged the allocation of Party Election Broadcasts (PEBs) and programmes featuring senior British politicians during Scottish elections. Judges had ruled that John Major’s interview should not be broadcast in 1995 whereas in 2000, opposition parties obtained additional time to compensate for Tony Blair’s interview.54 In 2010 though, as the judge pointed out, regional debates were also planned and A. Salmond grudgingly took part in the last one. On the other hand, the SNP had relentlessly complained about the lack of Scottish TV news except for minor opt-outs. Creating a
“Scottish Six” would have proved offensive to many senior Scottish Labour MPs who feared that they would be marginalized. When A. Salmond became First Minister he convened an independent commission on broadcasting which recommended a new Scottish digital public service TV network. However in spite of his grievances, A. Salmond does get more UK media coverage than the leaders of other minor parties because he is popular and shrewd. He has also been able to establish closer relations with individual journalists. David Kerr, a BBC political commentator, resigned to stand as an SNP candidate in the Glasgow North-East by-election. After his defeat he was appointed as special adviser to the First Minister. The media are essential to convey the policies that Scotland’s national party developed on a wide range of topics.

**Working out a consistent set of policies**

35 The SNP is committed to a gradual road to independence (through devolution) and to social democracy. However these issues divided the party for a long time, which reflected its origins from a merger between parties and movements advocating independence (SNL) and home rule (SHRA, Scottish Party), from the left (SHRA, SNL) and from the right (Scottish Party). Besides even though the SNP clearly focuses on Scotland, it has overcome the temptation to indulge in protectionist economic policies and conflicts with those who are not Scottish.

**The shift from fundamentalism to gradualism**

36 As for institutions, the gradualist tendency now prevails in the party headed by A. Salmond. Yet the fundamentalist wing has long been dominant. The SNP’s aim remained vague, based on self-government within the Commonwealth. Scotland would not have dominion status as it would share with England the duties of the “mother-countries”. The SNP backed Britain’s war efforts although it condemned the failure to uphold the League of Nations. Then in 1942, when J. McCormick and his supporters broke with the party and opted for multiparty cooperation and devolution, the SNP turned to an uncompromising, pro-independence line. In policy documents published in the mid-1940s and late 1960s, the SNP argued that after gaining a majority of Scottish seats at Westminster, it would summon a Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution – hopefully after holding talks with the UK Government – before organizing a referendum. The Monarch would remain the Head of State. Europe proved controversial. In post-war years, the SNP had approved of plans for greater unity but it then depicted the EEC as a club of rich, capitalist countries. In 1973, when Britain entered it, the Nationalists objected to the terms agreed by the UK Government.

37 After 1974, there was a shift in response to the Devolution Bills introduced by the Labour Governments. The SNP Conference stood behind this policy – which involved dropping earlier demands for the devolution of oil and fishing – before becoming increasingly critical about the limited powers that would be granted to the Scottish Assembly. In 1977, it thus reverted to “independence and nothing less”. Nevertheless the following year it advocated a “yes” vote in the forthcoming referendum. Its branches were deeply engaged in the campaign. As a result when the Callaghan government announced that it would not enforce the Scotland Act, the SNP felt betrayed and the National Council gave its full support for MPs to bring it down. Fundamentalists were elected to key positions,
including that of leader. However G. Wilson promoted gradualism.\textsuperscript{57} First in 1984, the party backed cross-party cooperation to devise a blueprint for any constitutional change. Yet it decided against joining the Constitutional Convention formed in early 1989 as it was dominated by Labour’s members and aims. The SNP was no longer prepared to compromise after winning a Labour stronghold in Glasgow in November 1988, under the pressure of its MP Jim Sillars, a former Labour MP. In addition its Conference had just endorsed a policy of independence in Europe whereby an independent Scotland would be a member of the EEC so that it would not be isolated. This was another major move since the party had called for a “no” vote in the 1975 referendum on the terms renegotiated by the Wilson Government. The advantages of Europe had been pointed out by Winnie Ewing, an elected MEP from 1979 who had been able to secure structural funds for her region, the Highlands and Islands. Jim Sillars had argued from a more theoretical perspective that further autonomy for Scotland implied integration into the EEC where growing numbers of regulations were being made.\textsuperscript{58} The new European single market made it even more attractive. An independent Scotland would be properly represented – a seat in the Council of Ministers, 14 MEPs – and would then be able to conduct its own diplomacy over key areas such as fisheries. There were legal and political controversies over whether membership would be granted by right but the SNP contended that the handling of the application would go unhindered.\textsuperscript{59}

38 A. Salmond, who would have liked his party to participate in the Constitutional Convention, pursued his line when he became the SNP’s leader. After the 1992 General Election, he had a multi-option referendum – including devolution – sanctioned by his party. In 1995, the SNP endorsed a second route to independence. Instead of aiming at a majority of Scottish seats at Westminster, it would attempt to gain a majority of members in the Scottish Parliament that the Labour Party had pledged to create. After campaigning on its own independence policy in the 1997 General Election, the SNP sided with T. Blair’s devolution settlement in the September referendum. Its members took an active part in the cross-party Scotland Forward campaign with Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Then, when the Scottish Parliament was set up in 1999, all SNP MSPs were committed to independence.\textsuperscript{60} A few of them exhibited some aversion when they took up their seats, having affirmation rather than oats to the Crown. Nevertheless the SNP relished its new status as the official opposition party and took full advantage of the power-sharing arrangements, holding one-third of seats on each committee and one-quarter of convenerships. G. Reid was elected as deputy Presiding Officer.

39 Then as A. Salmond realized both that independence could only be achieved through the Scottish Parliament and that the SNP was more likely to become the largest party than to gain an overall majority of seats, he tried to overcome the fears of the electorate. In 2000, the National Council resolved that an SNP Government would first organize a referendum on independence, as a basis for talks with the British Government. As a result voting SNP no longer meant endorsing independence. A. Salmond was thus inspired by T. Blair’s 1997 strategy. Besides Nationalist MSPs used every opportunity to hold the Scottish Executive to account. In the first Parliament each of them asked between 500 and 700 questions against 200 for the other opposition MSPs.\textsuperscript{61} There were occasional displays of discontent in 2002 when 10 MSPs did not attend the Queen’s visit or in 2003 during the opening session – by then there had been an inflow of SSP MSPs who were openly republicans like some Nationalist MSPs such as Roseanna Cunningham. In the second Parliament, their
status was further enhanced. They remained the second largest party and G. Reid was promoted to the position of Presiding Officer.

During the 2007 Holyrood campaign, as victory was within the SNP’s reach, A. Salmond pledged that he would publish a White Paper on the referendum which would not be held before the end of the four-year term. His Government did produce several papers including the latest in 2010 which seriously envisaged a question on further devolution, thus opening up a third option based on the Calman report’s proposals or even on additional powers should Parliament decide so.\(^{62}\) By that time, A. Salmond himself had secured full ministerial responsibility over constitutional matters. Yet he failed to sway other parties notably the Liberal Democrats who had commissioned their own working group on federalism,\(^{63}\) and the White Paper never turned into a proper bill authorizing a referendum. His opponents were bitterly critical of his costly, pointless National Conversation. The First Minister then claimed that the Scots were denied a vote on their future and he hoped to gain renewed legitimacy after the 2011 election to the Scottish Parliament to pursue his agenda. However far from undermining devolution, A. Salmond strengthened the status of Scottish institutions. One of his first moves was to style the Scottish Executive a Government composed of Cabinet Secretaries. The UK Government confirmed this new name after turning it down when Henry McLeish, a Labour First Minister, had used it in 2000. In addition A. Salmond had established firm leadership over his party which prevented internal tensions. Even though about one-quarter of the MSPs elected in 2007 were fundamentalists, they espoused his strategy. Some of them even entered the government like R. Cunningham or A. Neil who respectively held the Environment and Housing portfolios. The most vocal opponent remained Jim Sillars who no longer held elected office. He blamed A. Salmond for forgetting the party’s core aim.

Besides, from 2007, A. Salmond the only MSP who retained a Westminster seat was keen to put emphasis on Holyrood’s probity when the expenses scandal broke out. Neither he nor his colleagues were unscathed as they had also claimed expenses while the House of Commons was in recess or for personal appliances but their wrongdoing remained moderate compared with other MPs.\(^{64}\) Angus McNeil, an SNP MP, had previously disclosed the “cash for peerages” scandal. They argued that Holyrood regulations were stricter all the more so as former Presiding Officer G. Reid was credited with achieving reforms of MSPs’ allowances long before MPs contemplated following suit, especially regarding the Edinburgh accommodation allowances for MSPs who did not live near the capital city.\(^{65}\) However the Nationalist MSPs had abused of these regulations through the supposedly non-partisan Standards Committee. Their three members including the convener voted for the suspension of Wendy Alexander, the Labour leader, and she resigned in early July 2008.\(^{66}\) Likewise in early 2010 the opposition revealed that Holyrood lunches with A. Salmond and N. Sturgeon were auctioned to raise money for the party which certainly betrayed the spirit of the regulations and it was then explicitly prohibited.\(^{67}\) In the Scottish Parliament, SNP MSPs have endorsed social-democracy.

**Espousing social-democracy**

As for socio-economic policies, the party’s social democratic credentials are fairly recent. In early years the fundamentalist wing did not consider them as a priority and remained vague as it intended to have a national rather than a class appeal. Independence was a means to improve social justice and guarantee a decent standard of living, reform
economic power through land redistribution and the end of industrial monopolies. The party wanted both to decentralize and to limit state interference. The emphasis was on small-scale institutions and on communities, not on nationalisation.\footnote{44}

By the 1970s, a shift was underway. As the SNP made substantial inroads into the left-wing electorate and returned MPs, it had to distance itself from single-issue parties. Its leader William Wolfe was willing to move leftwards unlike his predecessors. The October 1974 Manifesto was a stinging attack on companies’ profits and management and called for the appointment of directors by employees. It aimed at tackling poverty and inequalities. Yet in Parliament, the 11 MPs who had been elected in rural seats formerly held by the Conservatives often opposed the guidelines set by office-bearers who had failed in Labour-held seats such as Margo McDonald. MPs thus cast more than 50% of their votes with the Conservatives so the term “tartan tories” was coined to label them. They rejected shipbuilding nationalisation as they resented centralized power in London. Yet they supported Labour on some of its other core policies, such as education. After the 1979 defeat, both in the referendum and in the General Election (the party had two MPs left) a new 79 Group emerged. It was openly left-wing and backed the trade unions notably during the coal miners’ strike.\footnote{45} It resorted to direct action such as sit-ins in manufacturing companies due to close down or on the proposed site of the Assembly. Jim Sillars was a key figure in this call for civil disobedience. Even though the 79 Group members were expelled in 1982 by the fundamentalist leadership – former leaders Jimmy Halliday and Robert McIntyre, as well as Winnie Ewing MEP, who aimed at returning to a non-ideological, pro-independence platform –, they had had the opportunity to bring ideological issues to the fore.

There were decisive changes in SNP policies from the mid-1980s. Former 79 Group members were reinstated and became leading figures. A. Salmond was thus appointed as vice-chairman for publicity from 1985 before being promoted to the deputy leadership in 1987. The party was increasingly willing to respond to Margaret Thatcher’s free-market policies by reviving state provision. The Nationalists, encouraged by Jim Sillars, an MP from 1988 and a senior executive, often tried to outdo Labour MPs, nicknamed the “feeble fifty”. This was easier as a minor party with little concern about the consequences of enforcement. Kenneth McAskill advocated a campaign of non-payment of the poll tax, which triggered legal proceedings for some individuals. Likewise A. Salmond, then a young MP, disrupted parliamentary work during the debates over the 1988 budget. In 1990, the new leader promised increased state intervention to save ailing companies. The 1992 Manifesto was committed to nationalising steel to prevent the closure of the Ravenscraig integrated complex. Besides inequalities would be addressed through public spending and progressive taxation.\footnote{70}

At Holyrood from 1999 to 2007, the main opposition party appeared as a genuinely left-wing one. They exerted pressure on Labour who had to cope with its UK party while responding to Scotland’s social democratic traditions. They were also very harsh with the LibDems who shared some of their ideas and had to comply with government discipline. They would not vote with the Conservatives still regarded as their ultimate opponents, even when they could find common cause. The SNP supported legislation which attempted to restore free public services such as personal care for the elderly or the abolition of tuition fees – it abstained on the graduate endowment which was deemed insufficient.\footnote{71} It heartily voted in favour of land reform which was in keeping with its old policy favouring community buy-outs with public funds without having recourse to
expropriation. It succeeded in setting the agenda on key pieces of legislation thanks to motions or members’ bills for example on PR to local elections or the ban on smoking. It unremittingly criticized the PFI used by the Labour-dominated Executive to fund public buildings and it wanted to re-establish the public provision of public services through not-for-profit trusts. MSPs returned in 1999 almost unanimously backed these policies.

However in the second Parliament the Nationalists faced fiercer competition from the left with Green and SSP MSPs. Even though they did find agreement on PFI as well as issues such as free school meals, the SNP came across a new dilemma as it had to act as a potential party of Government. In 2004, it could not disregard the repressive consensus at Holyrood. It thus voted with Labour and the two other main parties when ASBOs were extended to young people while the two minor parties denounced a sell-out of Scottish traditions. Likewise as trade unions such as RMT sought to keep Labour at arm’s length from 2003, the SNP was no longer their obvious choice.

The Nationalist MSPs staunchly defended their North-East strongholds. This led them to repeated calls for the abolition of the tolls on the Skye bridge built under PFI (this was achieved in 2005). They were also at odds with EU policies which imposed undue restrictions on fishermen. The SNP thus increasingly distanced itself from the EU, though it did not return to its former scepticism. In the 2004 election to the European Parliament, it advocated a “no” vote in the referendum then planned on the constitutional treaty since fisheries would still be dealt with at EU level.

Meanwhile at Westminster the six Nationalist MPs led by A. Salmond focused on Scottish interests and tended to ignore “English” legislation. Yet they cast two contentious votes in 2003/2004 against the introduction of top-up tuition fees and foundation hospitals in England. They argued that their country would suffer from lower public funding as a result since the Barnett formula granted Scotland a fixed proportion of every increase of UK spending for England in devolved fields. They found common ground with their Welsh counterparts Plaid Cymru MPs. Scotland’s Nationalist MPs also capitalized on their opposition to the war in Iraq unlike A. Salmond who had remained isolated in 1999 after displaying hostility to NATO bombing over Serbia. They claimed that they were particularly assiduous as they devoted their work to Scotland. However in 2004, although they undoubtedly outnumbered their Scottish rivals when it came to taking part in Westminster Hall debates or in asking questions, they had a very low attendance record as far as votes were concerned.

From 2007 A. Salmond, MSP and First Minister, set out to enforce his Manifesto, a “social-democratic contract” with the people. Being in power forced the SNP to compromise with some of its former commitments while still preserving Scotland’s distinctiveness. A. Salmond continued the restoration of public services which would be free and public. As he was leading a minority Government he had to make sure that he had full backing from his own group – he integrated all wings in his Cabinet, including former members of the 79 Group like Roseanna Cunningham and Kenneth McAskill (justice). Some policies did not require legislation. The SNP Government prompted local authorities to build council houses and to launch pilot schemes for free school meals. Local authorities had more leeway to apportion their spending as “ring-fencing” was removed. The Nationalist Government abolished the car parking fees at public hospitals and interfered to avert the closures of some A&E hospitals (Monklands, Ayr). Two pilot health boards would have some members directly elected by the population in order to give individuals a say over local health policies.
The Nationalists had to win over at least one of their opponents to be able to pass their bills. They secured unanimity over the repeal of the road tolls on the Forth and Tay bridges and the uprate of payments to meet the soaring costs of FPC. They were successful on the outright abolition of the graduate endowment – with Lib Dem support –, the phasing out of prescription charges – with Labour backing. Opposing parties worried about the costs. On civil liberties and crime, their policies – extending the retention of DNA with stronger safeguards than in England, as well as promoting prevention especially with young people and alternatives to short-term prison sentences – were endorsed by the LibDems whereas the two other parties were more prone to repression. Other pledges could not be enforced and the SNP blamed its opponents, local authorities or the legal hurdles, whereas other parties referred to “broken promises”. Proposals to set a minimum price for alcohol and ban its sale to young people under the age of 21 were voted down. Likewise the SNP’s plans to jettison the Edinburgh tram project were thwarted. Writing off student debt or reducing class sizes to 18 pupils in Primary 1, 2 and 3 did not seem affordable. The not-for-profit trusts (rebranded Scottish Futures Trust or SFT) had no legal basis as the Scottish Parliament could not borrow money or issue bonds. They could not deliver major investments such as a new Forth road bridge. The SNP Government did finance the Southern general hospital with taxpayers’ money, but the existing PFI contracts were maintained. This aroused criticisms from trade unions, all the more so as it seemed to endorse free-market economics.

An increasing free-market approach to economic and financial matters

In spite of the necessity to fund these costly policies, the SNP surprisingly came out in favour of tax cuts. In keeping with prior commitments, the Nationalists had yet advocated a tax increase in their 1999 campaign for the first election to the Scottish Parliament. To that aim, they could use the limited tax-raising power of the Scottish Parliament to raise income tax by 1% to improve public services (the “penny for Scotland”). But, as this generated an outcry and was unpopular with its new intake of MSPs, the SNP promised that it would ignore this power like other parties. From 2003 the party even reversed its policy by advocating cuts in the other taxes supervised by the Scottish Parliament and charged by local authorities: the council tax on individuals which should be replaced with a local income tax (LIT) and the business rates so that companies investing in Scotland would benefit from a lower rate than in England. J. Swinney, the Secretary for Finance between 2007 and 2011, was willing to implement these pledges. The LIT proved unacceptable as the SNP wanted it to be set centrally (while the LibDems favoured a local tax). The business community feared an additional burden on unincorporated businesses. The LIT was thus ditched in February 2009. Yet the council tax freeze and the decrease in the business rates especially on small companies were passed every year in the budget thanks to Conservative MSPs after being scrutinized by the finance committee led by Andrew Welsh, an SNP MSP. As a result the Nationalist Government was able to enact the most important piece of legislation of any parliamentary session with the support of the most unionist party. The party thus overruled the previous prohibition on any alliance with their arch enemy. A. Salmond secured the remaining votes required through granting timely concessions – when Labour dared rejecting the second budget he even threatened to resign which would have triggered an election that no-one wanted.
Labour responded with the old “tartan tories” line, putting forward its own unstained social democratic credentials. This enabled it to retain the Glenrothes Westminster seat at the 2009 by-election. Labour also argued that the SNP was contemptuous with the West of Scotland as it had axed the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) project on financial grounds. It thus kept the Glasgow North-East Westminster seat in the November 2009 by-election.

In an independent Scotland, the SNP would like to pursue its tax-cutting agenda with a corporation tax as low as the Irish one (12.5%) so as to give rise to a competitive advantage, the UK rate being twice as high. The SNP argues that this would boost economic growth, thus generating revenues to fund generous social policies. The Scottish budget would also benefit from proceeds from North Sea oil. When hydrocarbons were first discovered in the late 1960s, the SNP immediately seized the opportunity. W. Wolfe, its leader, and G. Wilson, the national secretary, contended that an independent Scottish state would share the profits with private companies and make a sustainable use of them through a sovereign fund for future generations like Norway. They published their own budgets to confirm that Scotland could afford self-reliance. They even countered the dependency argument as they made plain that Scotland was subsidising England. Indeed not only did the British budget receive “Scottish” oil revenues but it granted disproportionate funds to infrastructures located in London and in the south-east of England – the tube, the transport network, defence and in the late 2000s the forthcoming Olympic Games. A. Salmond in particular, as a former economist, was eager to substantiate his stance with figures. He thus appointed Andrew Wilson to deal with this field. From 2004 he strengthened his economic team with J. Swinney and J. Mather. However these data had a drawback since they relied on potential receipts: oil, the price of which ebbed and flowed, as well as hypothetical saving in administration and on some areas like nuclear power stations. As A. Salmond realized that he provided his opponents with easy ammunition, he abandoned figures in the 2007 Holyrood campaign. Besides in the 2000s, as oil prospects looked grimmer, the SNP increasingly turned to renewables by setting bold targets based on its assets: wave, solar and wind power. The Climate Change Act passed in 2009 enabled the SNP to claim that Scotland was ahead of England. It also aimed at satisfying the two Green MSPs who often brought them decisive votes.

Yet from September 2008, the SNP’s assumptions were challenged by the financial crisis. Scotland’s two largest banks – Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and Bank of Scotland which was part of HBOS – were saved because the British Government purchased substantial stakes in them. Likewise the Dunfermline Building Society was relieved of its toxic assets and taken over with Government support. A. Salmond did contend that Scotland was subjected to a conspiracy from the “London Government” although it could have funded such bailouts but this was not realistic. A. Neil, an MSP, searched for a “Scottish” solution to no avail. In addition, even though A. Salmond then denounced G. Brown’s “hands-off approach” and the speculators, he had also been previously fascinated by them and by the profits they made. Before entering the House of Commons he had worked for the RBS. As soon as he became First Minister he had appointed a Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) headed by George Mathewson, the former chairman of the RBS who owned one of the infamous, offshore hedge funds. Proving his party’s economic credibility was increasingly difficult after 2008. The states which had been hailed as models such as Ireland or Iceland were on the brink of collapse. J. Murphy repeatedly mocked the “arc of insolvency” although A. Salmond still praised them for their ability to
devise their own, quick responses. Joining the euro area no longer appeared as a solution either as even before the crisis broke out, the SNP had argued that Scotland would only relinquish the pound if it ever were profitable to its economy. He nonetheless insisted on letting the Scots make their own decisions regardless of what happened south of the border. Yet he would not ignite conflicts with England nor with minorities in Scotland.

An open-minded national party

A. Salmond’s other main concern has been to foster the idea of an independent Scotland based on tolerance for all individuals irrespective of their nationalities.

On the one hand, the Scottish state would not be prejudiced against any individual living on its soil. Having a Scottish forefather would not be required to gain Scottish citizenship as laid down in the Scottish Constitution drafted by Neil McCormick, John’s son. In the mid-1990s, the SNP also offered to grant leave to remain to the residents who would reject Scottish nationality. This meant that the SNP would not discriminate against Scotland’s first minority, the English who settled north of the border. In the 1990s, it expelled Settler Watch and Scottish Watch, the movements which advocated Anglophobia. An independent Scotland would retain close economic and social links with its neighbour. The old “It’s Scotland’s oil” battle cry was no longer to be heard. It had given way to cooperation. In the 2007 Holyrood election campaign, A. Salmond insisted on the social union which would be preserved in an independent Scotland. Matters of common interest between England and Scotland would be dealt with by a body inspired by the British-Irish council. He added that although the SNP was against nuclear weapons it would not threaten Britain’s defence policies. Meanwhile at Holyrood the SNP has English MSPs such as Christine Grahame and M. Russell who also entered the Government. When tuition fees were abolished for Scottish students in 2001, the SNP displayed concern for their English fellows attending Scottish Universities. In 2005 when Holyrood passed an act to increase fees for English students in Scotland (to deter them), the SNP voted against it after unsuccessfully tabling an amendment which prohibited discrimination.

The SNP’s multicultural Scotland also aimed at religious minorities especially the oldest one, Catholics, who tended to favour Labour. The party under A. Salmond has carefully avoided the disparaging remarks articulated under his predecessors. It has addressed powerful symbols of their former struggles by vindicating Catholic schools or calling for the repeal of the infamous 1701 Act of Settlement – a reserved matter. In the 2007 Holyrood campaign, the Catholic Church in Scotland came close to backing independence. A. Salmond also targeted Asians with the formation of a “New Scots” group in the 1990s, and increasingly Muslims especially after the outbreak of the Iraq war. He wanted Scotland to be welcoming with immigrants on economic and on ethical grounds. After the 2007 election, he could boast that the SNP had the first Pakistani MSP, Bashir Ahmad. However he soon had to deal with the discovery of bombs at Glasgow airport. He made sure that Muslims were not stigmatised and held talks with all members of their community including those who stood by the Islamic law. Besides when it sat on the opposition benches, the SNP had been part of the all-party consensus which strove to make the day-to-day lives of asylum-seekers easier and urged the UK Government to put an end to the retention of their children. When it came to power, it went a little further.
Not only did it pursue talks with its British counterpart but it also removed some financial and legal hurdles preventing access to nursery and higher education.\textsuperscript{57}

This open Scotland would not overlook its culture either. Although A. Salmond and his fellow leaders had little interest in tartans and bagpipes, they knew that these popular symbols would vindicate independence for some members of their party. Through culture they intended to boost the economy. As Holyrood had included Saint Andrew’s Day on the list of public holidays in 2005, A. Salmond tried to make the best use of it. Scottish Government workers were encouraged to take it up. He even initially planned to hold his independence referendum on Saint Andrew’s Day 2010. The date was then picked by David Cameron’s Government to publish its own Scotland Bill. A. Salmond also took advantage of the 250\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns to incite foreigners with Scottish ascent to visit the country in 2009 (Homecoming programme). He also bolstered Scottish pride through sports as he welcomed the decision to hold the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow though this resulted from work carried out by his Labour predecessor Jack McConnell.

On the other hand before devolution it had often been foreseen that a Scottish Government – especially one led by the SNP – would have endless fights with its British counterpart, thus fuelling the call for independence.\textsuperscript{58} A. Salmond cautiously eluded such quarrels. When bombs were located in Glasgow, he refrained from blaming T. Blair’s Iraq policy. When D. Cameron came to power, he immediately revived the Joint Ministerial Committees to arbitrate potential disputes as soon as they arose. His main complaint was over the consequences for Scotland of Britain’s austerity measures enacted by the “Conservative-led Coalition”. Indeed the greatest proportion of Scottish spending being funded by the British budget, the Scottish Government would struggle to preserve its distinctive policies. It thus renewed a Celtic axis with its Welsh and Northern Irish counterparts so that they could join forces over matters of common interest.

As for Scottish issues the Nationalist Government was particularly outspoken over free care for the elderly – which has unanimous support at Holyrood – as it demanded the restoration by the British Government of the attendance allowance, a benefit no longer granted to Scottish OAPs after 2002. But this was to no avail thus forcing the Nationalist Government to provide compensation like its predecessors. Likewise when the SNP Government contemplated a repeal of the council tax, the British Government responded that it would abolish the council tax benefit accordingly. J. Swinney then dropped his plans for a LIT. A. Salmond also advocated the devolution to Holyrood of the additional areas recommended by the Calman report and accepted by all parties in Scotland – the administration of elections to the Scottish Parliament, drink-driving, speed limits, airguns – through subordinate legislation but he was only backed by the LibDems.\textsuperscript{59} He made do with the concessions granted by the UK Governments. The Scotland Bill unveiled in late 2010 provided that the Scottish Government would be consulted over the appointment of Scotland’s representative to the BBC Trust.\textsuperscript{96} It also devolved two minor taxes (the stamp duty land tax and the landfill tax), cut the three rates of income tax in Scotland by 10 % (to compel MSPs to make use of a “tartan tax”) and granted a limited power to borrow. Conversely a few devolved areas (insolvency, the regulation of health professions) were likely to be returned to Westminster. Besides D. Cameron allowed Scottish Government members to represent the UK at EU Councils of Ministers dealing with fisheries. He devised restrictive immigration policies, and Scottish Universities and employers would have to cope with them. This was far from the Scottish Government's
demands for further powers over fiscal and borrowing policies, immigration, European policies or broadcasting. As for the Trident submarines based on the river Clyde, both the SNP and Scotland’s public opinion opposed the renewal of the programme on ethical and financial grounds but the topic was beyond their control. Conversely the Nationalist Government refused to be bound by decisions made by the British Government in fields which impinged on devolved matters. It withheld planning permission for new nuclear power stations on Scottish territory contrary to the recommendation of its CEA. Yet it extended the lifespan of the Hunterston station since it was incapable of meeting the ambitious renewables target in the short term, the technology being still in its infancy. It also ruled out the inclusion of Abdelbaset Mohmed Ali Al-Megrahi (the Libyan prisoner held accountable for the Lockerbie bombing) in the prisoner transfer agreement between T. Blair and M. Gaddafi in 2007. Yet two years later K. MacAskill, Scotland’s Justice Secretary, announced his extradition to Libya on compassionate grounds as he was supposedly terminally ill. This aroused widespread criticism especially from the United States. However A. Salmond succeeded in his marketing campaign by drawing attention to Scotland’s peculiar legal system. On other occasions, his attempts turned into miscarriages. He wrote to the signatories of the non-proliferation treaty including Iran. In December 2009, he attended the Copenhagen summit on climate change to promote a Scottish voice but, unlike the British Government’s representatives, he was only allowed to take part in fringe meetings. Overall A. Salmond was considered as a First Minister in a regional legislature, and not a potential Prime Minister. That is why he was not invited to debate with the three main party leaders during the 2010 UK General Election campaign.

Conclusion

The SNP’s 2007 victory resulted from efficient organisation and attractive policies gradually built up over the previous decades. In addition the party managed to seize power and to keep it for a full term amidst a major financial and economic crisis. It has established itself as a respectable party of government worth voting for and working with. This success is due in no small part to A. Salmond, with his self-confidence bordering on arrogance. As an outstanding performer and tactician, he has used every opportunity to promote his party at the expense of his opponents. Indeed A. Salmond admits that he is a fan of H. Wilson, praising his ability to improvise. He has no real rival on the Scottish political stage. However many of the policies enforced under his Government are populist, based on removing charges and fees, in an attempt to restore the post-war Welfare State, although A. Salmond wants to break up with the UK. He thus boasts that he is a social democrat in keeping with Scottish values. Yet he has also devised a tax-cutting agenda which is inspired by free-market economics. In September 2008 he publicly stated that although the Scots resented M. Thatcher’s social policies, they did not mind her economic policies. Given the resulting outcry, he then contradicted himself on BBC Radio Scotland. He could enforce his programme because it was funded by the British budget. Yet this raises questions as to the management of an independent Scotland, with high spending and low receipts in the short term. Nevertheless A. Salmond can reasonably claim that he has a national appeal, to a larger extent than his opponents, which is a prerequisite for a party committed to bringing into existence a new state. Thanks to local elections held under STV in 2007 the SNP also increased two-fold its
council seats and has been able to form coalitions especially with the LibDems and Independents thus gaining a foothold in local affairs as well.

Post-script

On May 5th 2011, in the fourth elections to the Scottish Parliament, the SNP achieved a historic victory. Not only did it return 69 MSPs, but it also won 53 constituency seats both at the expense of the Liberal Democrats and Labour. It put an end to the latter’s 50-year domination over Scottish politics. This reflected an unprecedented success throughout Scotland. The SNP polled an average of 45.4 % of the vote and its share exceeded 40 % in 55 seats (75 % of the total). This was a genuine national conquest which extended to seats which used to be regarded as strongholds of its rivals, be they urban seats in Glasgow and the West of Scotland or rural seats in the Highlands. In addition, according to opinion polls this resulted from a complete turnaround in voting intentions in April, during the election campaign, whereas until then Labour had been markedly ahead.

This success was due to careful planning under the supervision of Peter Murrell from 2007. The Nationalists had updated their Activate database on a regular basis. Thanks to a smartphone application, canvassers could enter information in real time. They convened focus groups. After the 2010 UK election they quickly realized that they would have to appeal to disaffected Lib Dem voters through fine targeting and a renewed effort in the last few days. What they hadn’t expected was that they would also attract Labour voters – according to YouGov as many as 800,000 switched to them in the final week. Their Manifesto, uncharacteristically launched one week after their rivals’, was reportedly partly rewritten in order to adapt to the climate of the campaign.

As for their message they still put forward policies that had made them popular and abandoned those which were more controversial. Indeed they pledged another council tax freeze twice as long as that of other parties when it was alleged that A. Salmond had attempted to prohibit the publication of the cost of LIT through the courts. They increased the number of apprenticeships that they would create as this was one of Labour’s core policies. They had the most ambitious green targets – 100 % of electricity needs from renewables by 2020. Funding plans remained ill-defined, based on savings and an effective use of the SFT. Conversely Labour was blamed for performing U-turns to adopt the same policies as those of the Nationalists – especially on local taxation or tuition fees – even though they were better funded. Both parties were committed to protecting Scotland’s public services from the British Coalition’s spending cuts. However Scottish Labour fought a campaign against the Conservatives who were hardly likely to win the election while the SNP clearly focused on Scotland, on making it proud and promoting Scottish interests. When Labour realized their error, a fortnight before polling day, they turned against the SNP but it was too late. They retained a negative tone, putting emphasis on the risks of independence which did not seem to be an issue in the short term since A. Salmond maintained that he would only hold a referendum in the second half of the Parliament.

The campaign was also highly focused on individuals. A. Salmond remained far more popular than his rivals, especially I. Gray. He led a presidential campaign with his name appearing on ballot papers – as there were two separate papers, this was no longer likely to confuse voters. He was invited throughout the UK to represent a Scottish voice in the

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debate on AV – the referendum being held on the same day as the Scottish election. He even attended the Royal wedding on April 29th. Furthermore he was used to putting forward his ministers, in order to praise their achievements. In 2011 this turned into a real marketing strategy as his Manifesto contained memories of MPs who had won by-elections, famous party campaigns (oil, the poll tax) as well as glossy photographs of marriages (P. Murrell and N. Sturgeon), newly-born babies (such as J. Swinney’s) and deaths (B. Ahmad MSP, N. McCormick MEP and W. Wolfe) since 2007.

A. Salmond managed to generate a bandwagon effect. The press was enthusiastic – the Sunday press and many dailies advocated an SNP vote. The Scottish edition of the Sun in particular joined the consensus in order to disadvantage Labour. The SNP’s leader also attracted famous people and businessmen including previous backers of the Conservatives (Peter de Vink) and Labour (Jim Spowart). Shortly before polling day he published a list of 200 names in favour of his job creation plans so that Labour’s claim that he was obsessed with independence sounded irrelevant. Once again he could rely on substantial financial support especially from B. Souter who had promised that he would match every small donation. The Nationalists thus overspent all their rivals at every level for the first time. At Scottish level, their spending remained above the 1-million threshold whereas Labour’s collapsed to £820,000. At constituency level, they disbursed an average of 56 % of the authorized maxima while Labour candidates could only lay out 53 %. Their lowest budget was 16 % in only one constituency (against 19 % of seats fought by Labour) and it exceeded 75 % in 27 % of constituencies (31 % for Labour).

As for the consequences of this election, the Parliament’s representativeness of Scottish society has increased to some extent as the new MSPs have more diversified backgrounds and include two ethnic minorities and one disabled individual. Gender equality has stalled with a total of 34 % of female MSPs and only 27 % for the Nationalists – though many victories were unexpected. Yet a victory on such a scale is a challenge for power-sharing in the unicameral Scottish Parliament. A. Salmond has promised that he would cooperate with his opponents, and he appointed a new Minister for Parliamentary consensus. However the new Parliament has elected a Nationalist Presiding Officer. Pressures are all the more likely as most MSPs are inexperienced politicians be they from SNP or Labour benches.

A. Salmond focused on the Scotland Bill then being scrutinized at Westminster in order to secure additional powers for the Scottish Parliament, especially on fiscal matters. Buoyed by his new legitimacy, he widened the demands voiced during the campaign to other areas. M. Moore ruled out any transfer of Crown estates revenues or the corporation tax. Likewise, devolving powers over broadcasting, EU representation or additional taxes was not on the agenda. Yet the Scottish Secretary partly met a demand which was consensual at Holyrood beyond SNP ranks. He accepted that borrowing powers for capital spending could be used before the rest of the bill came into force in 2015 though he did not lift the strings attached. The concessions which proved decisive for the SNP Government were the provisions of the deal with its London counterpart in March 2012. No devolved matter would be re-reserved which confirmed the SNP’s view of devolution as a one-way process. Moreover the reduction in the block grant would be indexed on the UK tax base every year and monitored by the Scottish Government and Parliament, which would enable Scotland to gain more financial autonomy. Nationalist MSPs thus voted the legislative consent motion at Holyrood and their fellow MPs passed the Scotland Act in April 2012.
Yet the SNP has succeeded in making the Scotland Act 2012 appear outdated before coming into force as Scotland’s entire political life is focused on the referendum on independence. Indeed the Nationalists who are in a majority at Holyrood will retain full mastery of the process. After months of public wrangle, both governments eventually signed an agreement in Edinburgh on October 15th 2012. As the constitution is a reserved matter, the British Government would draft an order based on Section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998 empowering A. Salmond to hold his referendum by late 2014 so that it would be beyond legal challenge. The Order was duly passed by both Houses of Parliament in January 2013.

M. Moore thus relinquished a rapid referendum in order to secure a “no” vote and settle the issue whereas the Nationalists were able to stick to the period they had singled out, i.e. the autumn of 2014 to take advantage of the Commonwealth Games and the 700th anniversary of the Bannockburn victory over the English, which might foster patriotic feelings. They would have time to convince those electors – accounting for one quarter of the electorate – who still did not know how to vote. Moreover A. Salmond would seize every opportunity to denounce loudly any undue influence from “London” over Scottish institutions, such as the May 2011 decision of the Supreme Court to overturn a supposedly final ruling from the (Scottish) High Court of the Justiciary, in order to comply with the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Besides, the First Minister would castigate the effects of the harsh austerity policies led in London while he had his own “Plan Mac B” to pump-prime the economy.

The Edinburgh agreement provided that the referendum would be regulated by legislation voted at Holyrood. In March 2013, the Scottish Government thus published two Bills. The first one, which deals with the franchise, was passed on June 27th 2013. Electors would be those who were entitled to vote at elections to the Scottish Parliament. The blanket ban on the vote of prisoners in force throughout the UK was not repealed. N. Sturgeon contended that the ECHR forbade such a ban for elections though not for referenda. In fact she would not get drawn into a highly disputed issue. Under the Edinburgh agreement, the Nationalists were allowed to lower the voting age to 16. They put forward that the future of young people was at stake. It was also mischievously said that the latter were supposedly more enthusiastic about independence. The Act created a separate electoral register for them. Access to the full data collected in the registration forms would be restricted.

The second Bill was passed on November 14th 2013. It set a date for the referendum, i.e. September 18th 2014. It also laid down the question that voters would have to answer. The Edinburgh agreement provided for one referendum based on a single question about independence. A Salmond had seemed to contemplate a second question on extended powers for the Scottish Parliament, going further than the Scotland Act 2012 to embrace full fiscal autonomy. As the latter was more popular than independence, the Scottish Government would have been a winner whatever the outcome. Its UK counterpart asserted that it had no legitimacy to reform devolution and its opinion eventually prevailed. However the question would be drafted at Holyrood. In January 2012, A. Salmond had unveiled a new wording (“Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?”) that was subjected to tests carried out by the Electoral Commission which concluded that it was intelligible. However, the words “do you agree” seemed to be biased, and were replaced in the Bill with “should” which is less leading (“Should Scotland be an independent country?”).
This Act also aimed at administering the campaign. Under the Edinburgh agreement, the conduct of the poll and the announcement of the results would be handled by the Electoral Management Board, a Scottish commission. As for the remainder of the voting process, the First Minister was expected to consult the Electoral Commission but he would not be bound by its advice. The Act put an end to the contention over spending. The Nationalists would have liked to cap it at low levels to prevent any waste of money on campaign expenditure. They also feared that they could easily be outspent by the three British parties even though they could rely on about 20,000 members known as particularly active – whereas Scottish Labour only had 13,300 members entitled to vote at their 2011 leadership election –, on their invaluable Activate software and on an initial war chest of £1 million thanks to two donations. The Electoral Commission successfully argued that electors who were about to make a decision likely to have a substantial impact on their day-to-day lives should be properly informed. As a result, the Act provides that total expenditure may not exceed £1.5m for each umbrella campaign, i.e. Yes Scotland (which includes the SNP, the Greens, the SSP) and Better Together (the unitary campaign launched by the three British parties). In addition, each political party represented at Holyrood will be subjected to a ceiling based on the votes cast at the 2011 Election (amounting to £1.3m for the SNP) while other permitted participants will be entitled to £150,000. Yet these regulations will only be enforceable during the official, sixteen-week campaign. In April 2013, Yes Scotland already announced donations worth £1.7 million whereas its opponent had collected £2 million. There were controversies over foreign donators who were not subjected to any prohibition during this period.

Yes Scotland, the umbrella campaign dominated by the SNP, intends to remain positive. Independence is described as normal for a nation in order to reach its potential, build a better society and take its place in the international community. Its leaders are still keen on quoting the words uttered by W. Ewing after her 1967 victory: “Stop the world. Scotland wants to get on.” They have set up sub-groups of individuals – such as women, gays, New Scots – who are expected to win over their fellows. In early 2014, although most pollsters showed that women and, surprisingly, the youngest people remained reluctant, N. Sturgeon argued that her campaign was gaining momentum according to the SNP’s internal polling, based on scales. The polls seemed to confirm her assertions as between 2013 and the first quarter of 2014, there had been a three-point average increase – from 39% to 42%—in the proportion of voters intending to vote “yes” after excluding the undecided. She compared this trend to that recorded shortly before the 2011 Election.

By contrast, the Nationalists have been disparaging about the negative stance of their rivals who put emphasis on the adverse consequences of independence – in particular uncertainty, lower living standards and job losses – through analyses drafted by British government departments and inquiries conducted by Westminster committees on several topics. They have also been denouncing a Tory-led alliance, hoping that discord will appear as the 2015 Westminster General Election looms. Yet in 2013 the British Government and Alistair Darling, Better Together’s Labour leader, cautiously refrained from quarrel.

In November 2013, the Nationalists overcame some of their own divisions to publish detailed plans for independence. Even though A. Salmond has always behaved as a leader – with formal authority from 2004 thanks to J. Swinney’s reforms – instead of searching for compromise like his predecessors, SNP members were far from being united on the party’s flagship policies. As opposition parties would try to take advantage of any
weakness, SNP members, as well as their allies in the Yes Scotland campaign, played down their diverging views. In late 2012, N. Sturgeon had astutely hinted that the referendum was only about securing independence the terms of which would then be negotiated with the British Government by a team including Scotland’s opposition parties and representatives of civil society. She reckoned that talks could be completed within 18 months, by March 24th 2016, so that the May 2016 Election would be held in the new State.

As for devolved matters, in late 2012 Scottish Labour set out to challenge, along with the Scottish Conservatives, the SNP’s unwavering commitment to the universal provision of public services, which is regarded as an attempt to bribe voters in the forthcoming referendum, the latest example being the pledge on free child-care provision made in late 2013. The SNP is even committed to drafting a written constitution which will “strengthen individual rights”, especially to public services. Meanwhile the Scottish Government has displayed its willingness to defend the Welfare State, by compensating for the cut in the housing benefits of social tenants with a spare room (the UK Government’s “bedroom tax”). Nevertheless the affordability of these policies is coming to the fore as the Scottish Government has repeatedly refused to use its new tax-raising powers to increase taxes.

As for reserved matters, the Scottish Government has created working groups to devise credible policies. Under pressure from Unionists, the party’s leaders promptly dropped any commitment that was likely to arouse controversies. The most dramatic U-turn was on defence as in October 2012 the SNP Conference narrowly voted Angus Robertson’s motion which relinquished the party’s ancient opposition to NATO. An independent Scotland would join it while retaining its ability to determine whether its forces should get involved on a case-by-case basis. A. Salmond further pledged that the ban on nuclear weapons would be enshrined in a written constitution. However many members felt betrayed and 2 MSPs resigned as a result. The Greens were also critical. Furthermore the SNP Government eventually admitted that removing the nuclear missiles, warheads and submarines from Scotland would not be an easy task. It would require highly-skilled expertise and could only be achieved at a prohibitive cost. It was estimated that it might take up to twenty years. Yet the First Minister would not be drawn on the potential difficulties for the British Government.

Besides, enthusiasm for the EU has faded with the deepening crisis in the euro zone. Alex Salmond has been forced to concede that there would be some negotiations over membership although he had no solid legal advice on this issue. However he claims that Scotland, which had belonged to the EU for forty years, would be exempt from the protracted process imposed on new applicants. Membership itself could be taken for granted as the 28 member-states would not deprive the Scottish people of their EU citizenship. The terms would also have to be discussed but the Nationalists reckon that they could maintain the rebate, the opt-out on the Schengen agreement and the opt-in on the single currency that were secured by British Governments in the 1990s. In January 2013, the First Minister took advantage of D. Cameron’s promise to hold a referendum on Britain’s withdrawal from the EU, as he stated that the only means for the Scots to avoid such an outcome was to vote for independence. Nonetheless lawyers consulted by the British Government contended that only “the rest of the UK” would be the continuator State under international law. Consequently the new Scottish State would have to review all existing treaties including those governing membership of international organizations.
As for the economy, A. Salmond remains confident about the revenues of an independent Scotland in spite of the collapse in oil and gas tax receipts in 2012-2013 and the cut in corporation tax by the UK Government which would curtail the impact of the reduction he has been offering. He claims that an independent Scotland would keep the pound under a currency union negotiated with the British Government. It would gain influence over the Bank of England’s decisions thanks to its financial clout based on its oil reserves and on the size of its banks. As a result the new State would benefit from sound institutions – including a lender of last resort – while leading its own economic and fiscal policies. Yet this claim is disputed. On the one hand, the British Government and Labour have ruled out any currency union for fear of having to bail out an unstable State. The Nationalists have hinted that if the currency was not regarded as a common UK asset, then an independent Scotland would not acknowledge its share of Britain’s rocketing debt all the more so as it could not be held accountable for the British Government’s light-touch regulations. On the other hand, the Greens and some SNP members such as Jim Sillars think that Scotland should create its own currency as a symbol of its recovered sovereignty. Alex Salmond’s Government is not prepared to support such a move which might deter many people from voting “yes”. Likewise, it pledges that Scotland would join the existing Common Travel Area between the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, so that the free movement of people would not be hindered. Yet the British Government has repeatedly responded that this would imply converging policies, thus preventing the SNP from encouraging immigration on ethical and economic grounds.

These tactics which put emphasis on continuity tend to cast doubt on the scope of an independence which would entail limited changes. The SNP’s watered-down plans would probably result in a confederation provided they gained approval from the rest of the UK.

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ROBERTSON Angus, interview with author, July 27th 2012, Vaucluse (France).


**APPENDIXES**

Table 1: SNP leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Leader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Alexander MacEwen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Andrew Dewar Gibb</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>William Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Scottish seats</td>
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Table 2: SNP results in UK General Elections
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<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberals/LibDems</th>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>20.2</td>
<td>6</td>
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Table 3: SNP gains in by-elections (House of Commons)
Table 4: SNP results in elections to the Scottish Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Constituency votes</th>
<th>Constituency MSPs (out of 73)</th>
<th>List votes</th>
<th>List MSPs (out of 56)</th>
<th>Total MSPs (out of 129)</th>
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<td>45.4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>16</td>
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NOTES

1. 5% to 7% until 2001, and 10% from 2005 because of a reduction in the number of Scottish MPs from 72 to 59.


6. The allocation of regional seats aims at ensuring that the overall number of seats is proportionate to the votes cast for each party. The total number of regional votes is thus divided by the number of constituency seats gained by each party plus one. The party with the highest regional figure gets the first regional seat. Then the regional figure is recalculated before the following regional seats are awarded (sections 27 and 28, Scotland Act 1998).


14. Although the Holyrood and Westminster constituencies ceased being coterminous in 2005, they still have common territories.


29. Parties have similar goals on valence issues—as opposed to position issues. Voters thus choose the party deemed the most likely to achieve these goals. David Butler & Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain, London: Macmillan, 1974, 2nd edition, 292.


34. Each party has its own method when it comes to assessing membership.


39. Hugh Fraser had been a major donator in the 1970s.

40. In the 2003 Holyrood election he thus claimed that he was back on the UK electoral roll and he disclosed his UK taxes.

41. In 2000, he had funded a referendum to get popular disapproval of the repeal of Section 28 which was being discussed by the Scottish Parliament. The repeal was nonetheless voted by most SNP MSPs. In the second Parliament, Nationalist politicians were cautious with same-sex adoptions when Catholic agencies claimed that they would not handle such applications. It could thus be argued that they did not want to deter Catholic voters either.


46. For example Cathy Craigie against Andrew Wilson, Standards Committee, 4th Report, 369, 13 July 2001, 4.


48. The Scottish Parliament was created by Westminster and may only be reformed by MPs.


52. There is a monthly magazine, *Scots Independent*, founded in 1926 by the SNL, which promotes independence and tends to support the SNP through parochial articles. Yet it has no official status within the party.


75. SNP, *Vote for Scotland*, Edinburgh, 2004, chap. 3.


100. He has not suffered from the clash although both the Nationalists and Labour had disapproved of it. Scottish Parliament, *Official Report*, 19 November 2010, col. 30649 (Jim Mather).


102. Many Labour constituency MSPs were defeated as they were prohibited from standing on regional lists – a self-inflicted constraint. The SNP lost 3 regional MSPs given the large-scale election of constituency MSPs. Two of their most experienced MSPs resigned (J. Mather and A. Welsh) although two other previous MPs gained a Holyrood seat (J. Mason and Annabelle Ewing).

103. A. Robertson compared this policy to Labour’s clause 4. Interview with the author, July 27th 2012, Vaucluse (France). The inflamed debates before and during the conference confirmed that activists retained influence.

104. This prospect would remove the need to duplicate institutions. Some of the arguments had been set out by Kenneth McAskill in *Building a Nation: Post-Devolution Nationalism in Scotland*, Edinburgh : Luath, 2004, 29.

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**ABSTRACTS**

Even though the SNP was set up in 1934, it only had its first electoral successes from the 1960s. It was then able to act as a pressure group on the political agenda with a clear emphasis on institutions. It achieved a breakthrough as a party in the Scottish Parliament under the leadership of Alex Salmond, first becoming the main opposition party, then the ruling party, eventually winning an overall majority in May 2011. This victory resulted from the gradual building-up of a proper political party able to carry out efficient electioneering with a sound organization and a consistent ideology. This paper attempts to analyse these changes throughout the years and the adaptations they have required in order to respond to the needs of the Scottish polity which has been focused on devolution and social-democracy. As a result the SNP can now legitimately claim that it has a national appeal.

Le SNP, qui vit le jour en 1934, a dû attendre la fin des années soixante pour engranger ses premiers succès électoraux. Dès lors, il a agi comme un groupe de pression, parvenant à placer les institutions au cœur des débats politiques. Mais c’est au sein du Parlement écossais qu’il a réalisé une véritable percée, sous l’égide d’Alex Salmond, d’abord comme principal parti d’opposition puis comme parti de gouvernement, avant d’obtenir une majorité absolue en mai 2011. Cette victoire était le fruit de la construction progressive d’une véritable parti politique qui, doté d’une organisation stable et d’une idéologie cohérente, était capable de mener des
campagnes électorales efficaces. Cet article se propose d’analyser ces évolutions, ainsi que leurs adaptations à la culture politique écossaise axée sur la dévolution du pouvoir et la social-démocratie. Grâce à ce travail, le SNP peut raisonnablement revendiquer le titre de parti national.

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**Chronological index:** 20th and 21st centuries

**Mots-clés:** Écosse, Scottish National Party, dévolution, indépendance, Salmond Alex

**Keywords:** independence, Scottish National Party (SNP)

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