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From the Tartan Tories to Scotland's Social Democrats: The Remaking of the Scottish National  
Party

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Political Science

by

Natalie Mauchline  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, and Political Science, 2016

May 2018  
University of Arkansas

This thesis approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

The United Kingdom is entering a period of great uncertainty, with the future of Scotland's membership still in question. Following personal work experience in the Scottish Parliament, it became apparent to me that the Scottish National Party currently finds itself in a unique position. By utilizing constituency maps, this study will trace the evolution of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and explore how its changing nature allowed it to grow from a minute populist group seeking independence to a social justice party hoping to appeal to a more diverse group of voters by increasing credibility at the local level and then into a fully-fledged third party capable of entering into coalition with the political establishment at Westminster and holding a membership referendum. Focus will be placed on the changing political landscape of the United Kingdom and the SNP's role within that scope. The paper will conclude with predictions of the possibilities for the SNP's role in Scotland, within the UK and the European Union.

The development of the SNP was aided and impacted by a number of variables. Firstly, devolution from Westminster following the creation of a Scottish parliament, Holyrood, in the 1990s gave the SNP a second arena in which to demonstrate their governing ability. Secondly, the role of certain personalities must be noted, with important figures having an impact in both Westminster and Holyrood. The most well-known of these figures is Alex Salmond, the first SNP First Minister, who was able to guide the SNP from obscurity to a governing party, capable of holding referendums. In addition, Nicola Sturgeon, the current First Minister and Salmond's deputy First Minister, has been vital to continuing the party's momentum in the wake of Brexit. Down in Westminster, other personalities will also be important, such as Margaret Thatcher, David Cameron and Theresa May. Thirdly, the British media's coverage of the SNP had a dramatic impact on the viability of the party to the electorate.

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## **Introduction**

The political landscape of the United Kingdom has been steady and unchanging for almost 100 years. But recently, the traditional Labour or Conservative choice for British voters has begun to disintegrate in the wake of a credible third-party alternative – The Scottish National Party (SNP). The SNP have been able to evolve and consolidate their influence within Scotland and to effect change far beyond what is traditionally expected of a third-party. The SNP emerged as a political force in the late 1960s as a populist party with the sole goal being independence for Scotland. Although this proved popular with a small percent of Scottish voters, most voters were looking to vote for a political party with more than one issue in its platform. In order to broaden their base, the SNP worked to expand their platform to appeal to soft Labour and Conservative voters. By doing this, the SNP was able to avoid the fate that often awaits a populist party. Typically, in other states, populist parties lose their support when their mandates are either achieved or taken up by other parties, leading to their disintegration. The SNP managed to avoid this by adding various social justice issues to their platform. This phase of the SNP was characterized by the leadership of Alex Salmond, who led the SNP during this crucial time for the party. The transition from being populist to social democrats is an exceptionally rare occurrence. As I will highlight during the literature review, populist parties tend not to transition to the next stage of development but rather fall apart. I argue that the SNP is the only populist party in British political history that has been able to cement their position and become a viable third party.

Prior to the arrival of Alex Salmond, a prominent pro-independence Scottish politician, the party had struggled to function with the power split between Westminster and the party National Executive Committee (Hassan, Ed, 2009). As is common with most political parties, it can prove difficult to maintain a strong central authority with so many actors with various

interests. Under Salmond, the party transformed from a disorganized catastrophe to a campaign and election force to be reckoned with. The SNP further improved its performance in elections with the creation of a voter ID and communication strategy.

The SNP owes its strong performance to the leadership of Alex Salmond. With the chaotic period of the 1980s behind them, the SNP were able to seize the opportunity and begin to challenge the dominance of the Conservatives and Labour. As the party became more credible, their policy platform began to resonate further and reach greater volumes of voters. The power of the SNP was demonstrated by the successful devolution referendum in 1997. It seems that many scholars have been waiting for the SNP to finally fail and begin its collapse (Lynch, 2013). However, the SNP has been able to continue its upward motion as a result of the foundation laid by Alex Salmond in the 80s and 90s. The SNP has been able to maintain its command over the Scottish parliament and even managed to extend their power at Westminster.

It is evident that the widespread influence of the SNP has been significantly under-researched in Scotland or it has been studied through the lens of nationalism and not through the lens of British politics. It is too simplistic to continue to characterize the SNP as a fringe, one-issue party anymore as they were seen in the 1960s. The SNP has gone through three stages – the populist stage, the social justice stage and the third-party stage. This study aims to trace this remarkable rise and attempt to discover how the SNP has been able to change the face of British politics. The three stages of populism, social justice and third-party will form the framework for the study. There are both internal and external events that will be discussed along the way such as party leadership, general elections and referenda.

This research highlights that the support for the Scottish National Party comes and goes during certain contextual events. However, the Scottish National Party's impact is not simply

measured by the number of seats in parliament. Instead, the SNP has been far more fundamental in bringing the issues that the Scottish people want discussed to Westminster and no longer allowing the political establishment of the UK to ignore the needs of Scotland (Lynch, 2002). Furthermore, they have forced the policy issue of independence for Scotland onto the UK's political agenda and seems to be a permanent fixture on the face of British politics.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review**

It is essential to begin by tracing the development of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and finding the catalyst that allowed them to begin their rise. The party was established in 1934 and was a combination of two separate parties – the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party (Hassan, Ed, 2009). It is unprecedented for a fringe party such as the Scottish National Party to rise up to become a player in Scottish politics, far more unprecedented that it would become a player at Westminster (Mitchell et al, 2012). The unification of the two independence-oriented parties to form the SNP were able to rally their support and reach “the kind of electoral market share that is unheard of in British politics” (Mitchell, Johns, 2016).

Hassan asserts that modern Scottish politics can be split into three stages – 1967-79, 1979-97 and then 97-present. These stages closely coincide with the model that has been constructed for this study. The beginning of the first stage and where this study will begin is marked by the SNP’s first major win in the Hamilton by-election in 1967. This acted as the catalyst for the SNP to begin making more serious attempts at stealing seats from the UK political establishment – Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives (Macwhirter, 2014). In the next phase of development from 1979-97, the SNP were able to further develop and solidify their perception as being the resistant party to the status quo. These were the years of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, which were the years in which the difference in values of Scotland and the rest of the UK became further divided and evident. In the final stage, the SNP were able to channel the frustrations of their new voter base and play their first major role in Scottish politics. The growing support of the SNP payed off with the creation of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 and then the SNP were eventually finally able to enter government as a minority administration in 2007. Following the creation of the Scottish parliament, the SNP were



able to take on Westminster elections and continue to erode the status-quo.

Furthermore, there are three pre-requisites for the SNP to do well at the polls (Mitchell, Johns, 2016). Firstly, they need an event that highlights the relevance of the “Scottish question”. For example, it must be an event that indicates the divergence between Scottish politics and Westminster, as well as indicating a need for self-government. A perfect example of this kind of event that has led to the re-emergence of the Scottish question is Brexit. The vote to leave the EU in June 2016 is a classic example that exposes the divergence between Scottish politics and the rest of the UK. Secondly, there must be a perception that the election outcome is in the balance between the two major parties – Labour and Conservatives – and that the SNP are the only ones offering an alternative. Thirdly, the SNP must be viewed as a viable and electable force in Scotland. If there is a possibility of a hung parliament, when neither party gain enough seats to command a majority that can govern, the SNP are able to provide voters with a replacement choice. One of the main successful tactics used by the SNP is that they are able to perceive Westminster as the enemy and this in turn, leads to a unification among the Scottish electorate.

The ability to unite a group against an oppressor or an elite is a common strategy utilized by populist parties. In recent years, there has been much debate on what populist parties actually are and how to define them. One particularly powerful definition is utilized in ‘The Populist Persuasion’, which defines populism as “a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilize the former against the latter.” (Kazin, 1998). The arrival of populist parties often highlights the beginning of a political crisis and function as catalysts for political change. The SNP emerged as a populist party with the issue of independence at the center but also with the belief that Scotland was not being represented fairly at Westminster.

Populist parties develop well by being able to unite a group against a common enemy or oppressor which in this case was the UK government elites. Many of the populist parties that dominate the headlines today are viewed negatively on account that they have attempted to unite a group against a group such as refugees or the poor. An example of this is the National Front in France under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, who sought to unite the French electorate against refugees and those of the Islamic faith. Another recent example of a populist party in British politics has been the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The party was characterized as a far-right conservative party with one of its key platform positions being to decrease immigration to the UK. In addition, they were incredibly skeptical of the European Union. This policy platform attracted typically Conservative party voters to switch to UKIP. Arguably, following the EU referendum in 2016, they accomplished their mandate of removing the UK from the EU (Goodwin, Milazzo, 2015). For this reason, the voters that had felt represented by UKIP went back to the Conservative party.

In the case of the SNP, they instead developed an inclusive and left-wing base which allowed it to garner support from those that weren't as passionate about independence. The group they have rallied against are in fact Westminster. By developing a left-wing agenda, the SNP were able to go beyond just being a populist party and avoid the fate of UKIP. This is the beginning of the social justice stage under the leadership of Alex Salmond which in turn led to the increasing credibility of the SNP's platform and performance. Salmond identified three main issues to rally around – “support a real Scottish resistance...an enlarged public sector... and armed neutrality” (Mitchell, Johns, 2016). Furthermore, Salmond asserted his support for civil disobedience and strikes on a mass scale if it proved necessary. These three main issues attracted an ever-larger voter base, especially among young students. By mobilizing the younger

generation, the SNP ensured that they were reaching a large demographic that would continue the party for years to come.

This development allowed the SNP to become an opposition party and then the governing party in the Scottish parliament, enabling them to call for their long sought-after independence referendum in 2014. What is also truly remarkable about the SNP is despite the fact that the 2014 independence referendum was unsuccessful, the party did not immediately collapse. They had consolidated their influence and gone beyond the sole issue of independence. Although the issue remains its banner issue, the SNP continues to thrive in the Scottish parliament and even has reached new heights at Westminster. Even though many Scots are opposed to independence, the SNP have created the image that only they can fight for Scotland while Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservatives are just Westminster clones that will go along with the status-quo.

The aim of this study is not to trace the roots of the nationalism back to the beginning of Scotland's union with England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, the study will begin with a brief overview of where the case for Scottish Nationalism came from in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it manifested itself into a political issue. There are three major factors that have led to the disintegration of the Scots sense of "Britishness" which have slowly begun to diminish which coincides with the rise of the Scottish National Party. Firstly, Scotland used to have a great amount of wealth on account of a strong industrial trade, which has since dried up in the aftermath of WWII. Secondly, Scotland had also enjoyed benefits from the British empire, such as employment and trade, which slowly dwindled as the empire slid away. Thirdly, the religious differences between Scotland and England became more and more pronounced, and this translated into politics. For instance, Protestantism became the religion of the Conservative party whereas the Catholics became more associated with the Labour party. The SNP were often

known as the “Tartan Tories” on account of their Protestant roots by the Catholic-leaning Labour party (Colley, 2005). These three variables (profit, peripheries and Protestantism) further isolated Scotland from the rest of the UK, thus giving fuel to the SNP.

What is truly unprecedented about the SNP is the way in which they took an issue that formed the heart of their platform and were able to convert and persuade the electorate who had previously had little to no appetite for Scottish independence. The SNP can be described as both “an insurgency and also an established party of government.” (Macwhirter, 2014). The remaking of the SNP is a complex chain of events, but it is essential to have an understanding of them if one hopes to understand Scottish politics as a whole.

An important variable that will be addressed throughout the study is the role of the media in the way in which the SNP is perceived across the UK. The British media are an essential actor that have the power to sway the British public against or in support of a cause. This variable becomes particularly important in the lead up to the 2014 independence referendum with the various media sources taking opposing sides. Iain Macwhirter’s ‘Disunited Kingdom: How Westminster Won a Referendum but Lost Scotland’ analyzes the role of the British press and the way in which the anti-independence side were able to use the press to diminish the credibility of the pro-independence side. For instance, the UK press and the Conservative party often refer to the “SNP menace” (Macwhirter, 2014) which arguably backfire and only contributed further to the unification of the Scottish electorate behind the SNP.

Some attribute the rise of the SNP to the process of devolution. This is far too simplistic of an assessment. Although devolution played a role for the SNP being able to create a smaller, more local arena in which to perform, there were many other variables at work. The process of devolution is the passing down of certain policy powers from Westminster to the Scottish

Parliament (commonly referred to as Holyrood). I argue that although devolution contributed to the SNP's gain in popularity, the SNP's impressive internal development cannot be ignored. The devolved Scottish parliament acted as a new political arena for the SNP to adapt to and perform well in order to increase their credibility. Westminster sending powers back to Scotland and the Scottish parliament gave the SNP the ability to prove themselves as a legitimate governing force to be reckoned with. Arguably, devolution made the case for independence stronger because it became clear that the Scottish people could govern themselves on devolved issues like education and health. This led many Scots to question if Scotland needs Westminster at all.

It is important to note that the SNP's rise also seems to coincide with an era of decline for both of Scotland's dominant political parties- Labour and the Conservatives. It is no coincidence that during the literature review, books titled 'The Strange Death of Labour Scotland' and 'An Important Matter of Principle: The Decline of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party' were found. As these two major parties struggle to reinvent themselves and continue to appeal to their traditional voter base, this provides the SNP with an opportunity to pick up these unsure voters. On the other hand, there are no shortage of books and articles attempting to find the variables that the SNP can attribute their success to. There are both internal and external factors. For instance, devolution and Brexit are external factors. The leadership of Alex Salmond and the development of the SNP's political machinery are internal factors.

Whilst analyzing the literature, it is apparent that there are already some scholars predicting and waiting for the collapse of the Scottish National Party. It is my view that this assertion is premature. There were times throughout the party's development when it seemed likely that the SNP would fade into oblivion. Examples of this include when the party had a pitiful financial structure and organization or in 1979 following the failed devolution

referendum. Naturally, following the failed 2014 independence referendum, it was believed that the loss would damage the party (Lynch, 2013). Arguably, the SNP is entering its prime time for continuing to build their social justice platform and continue working towards their central issue – independence. Although it was expected that the failed independence referendum of 2014 would be the turning point, it seems that this has not been the case. Although the SNP seem invincible, there is one fatal flaw that has been pointed out by John Robbs and James Mitchell. This flaw will prevent the SNP fully replacing Labour as the true opposition to the Conservatives. The Scottish National Party is a sub-state party running in a state-wide election. This will always damage their governing credentials. Although the status-quo of Labour vs. Conservatives is slowly eroding, this order is still strong enough to prevent the SNP breaking through. In the lead up to general elections, most voters in the UK are more concerned with who is governing at Westminster, and not be how much autonomy Scotland can gain. It is pointed out that a period of constitutional calm is what could truly damage the SNP (Mitchell, Johns, 2016). If this was to occur, the SNP would be unlikely to be able to fulfill their constitutional ambition of independence and this in turn could allow the tide to turn.

After working in the Scottish parliament for a time, I observed another possible weakness of the SNP. Their constitutional goal of independence has the power to unite its followers, but it also has the ability to unite opposition groups. During the 2017 general election, it became apparent to me that there is no issue quite like independence that highlights the fervent opposition some Scots hold for independence. This opposition is especially fervent with the possibility of a 2<sup>nd</sup> independence referendum that remains a key part of the SNP's platform. It's common to hear Scots express their appreciation for the social justice side of the SNP's platform but they just wish they would abandon the desire for independence. Obviously, the dismissal of

independence is unthinkable. This issue was the very reason the party formed in the first place. This begs the question – how can the SNP continue to expand their base with such a controversial issue at its core?

The party has been handed a great gift with the decision to pursue Brexit. This event has given the SNP one of the conditions pointed out by John Robbs and James Mitchell – an event that highlights the need to re-evaluate the “Scottish Question” and a way to highlight the disconnect between Scottish and Westminster politics. What makes the development of the SNP truly remarkable is the velocity at which they have risen to power. However, could the SNP let this rise get away from them and fail to reign in their diverse support and channel their electoral power for the better of Scotland?

## **Chapter 2: The Roots of the Party**

### *The Early Days of the SNP*

The party was created in 1934 around the core issue of independence. As noted in the literature review, the Scottish National Party was a combination of the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Although both parties shared an affinity for Scottish nationalism, it proved incredibly difficult for these two parties combine into one. Reasons for this include divisions over ideological objectives as well as disagreements on the most pragmatic strategies. As these cracks in the SNP’s policy platform worsened, so too did their electoral performance. The group struggled to find funds that they could then use to participate in the general election.

The 1940s was a period of idleness on account of World War II and only increased the frustrations of the party. The party began to split into those that wanted to attempt a cross-party approach and the other side that remained insistent that they should remain an independence

political party (Hassan, Ed. 2009). Once the war was over, the country began to return to normalcy and business as usual could commence. The more radical side of the SNP once again fragmented into the ‘Scottish National Convention’, who eventually disintegrated as a result of failing to translate their electoral support to actual political power.

It has been pointed out that generally, being a single-issue party is commonly a disadvantage (Hassan, Ed, 2009). If a single-issue party hopes to ever win political power, it will only happen if the single-issue they stand for is of enormous importance to the electorate at that time. Unfortunately, in the early days of the SNP, the issue of independence was of little consequence to the average Scot voting in an election. It is for this reason that the performance of the party progressed at a dismal pace. With the British political establishment paying them no attention, the SNP seemed destined to eventually disintegrate as its sub-groups of supporters broke away and would then be of no impact to the United Kingdom.

In the 1950s and 1960s, following the unstable period and breaking away of the more radical faction, the SNP were able to begin to establish the core of their identity (Hassan, Ed, 2009). This was a period of development for the SNP as they struggled to do well in general elections. The SNP was able to learn from the mistakes of the National Convention who had demonstrated that with just the desire for independence was not enough of a political policy to hold the attention of the electorate. In addition to this development, the 1950s highlighted that a cross-party approach wasn’t going to be enough to achieve independence. Labour and the Conservatives were either too pro-union or too preoccupied with their own policy platform to take self-governing in Scotland seriously. As a result, it became evident that the only way for progress to be made on the issue was by continuing to develop a political party dedicated to the pursuit of independence. If they were to make any progress, it was apparent that the SNP would



have to make the case to the Scottish people that independence was in their best interest as well as appeal to them with other issues on their platform.

It is practical to now think back to the three requirements for the SNP to do well at the polls that were set forth by Mitchell and Johns. For the SNP to be considered an alternative to the two main parties, there must be an event or situation that raises the “Scottish question” and there must be a perception that election is just between Labour and the Conservatives. (Mitchell, Johns, 2016). With this criteria in mind, the 1960s were a critical period for the SNP. The poor performance of the Scottish economy despite growing government intervention only increased the divide between Scottish politics and British politics (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Wages and standards of living were poor despite numerous economic policies attempting to reverse the trend. In addition to this, the SNP had the advantage of being a party from Scotland that wanted to represent the people of Scotland. Whereas, the Scottish Labour and Scottish Conservative Party were seen as being too heavily reliant on their Westminster bases. The SNP were able to build a reputation for themselves at the local level and appear as more representative of the Scottish electorates opinions. Arguably, it is this grassroots local effort that has allowed the SNP to develop and stand out from the other mainstream parties.

It is at this stage that we would categorize the SNP as a populist party. Their sole issue of interest was independence and it was at this stage that it became clear a single issue would not be sufficient if the SNP hoped to make any electoral gains to achieve independence. By populist party, I mean a political party that uses “a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilize the former against the latter.” (Kazin, 1998). Furthermore, I classify the SNP at this stage as a leftwing populist party. In this case, the party aims to

champion the people against the elite or establishment (Judis, 2016). Arguably, the Scottish National Party emerged because of the strong desire to gain independence from the establishment at Westminster. This was a policy goal that had been ignored by the UK political establishment and therefore, there was a vacuum for the SNP to seize the issue.

However, the SNP was more than a populist party at this stage of development. The party's ethos was established in the early stages of its development. The two central elements of this ethos are decentralization and participation (Mitchell et al, 2012). Whilst they were mainly seen as a self-determination dominated party, they also utilized a more democratically organized strategy to remain in tune with their electorate and could thus be more responsive to local issues. Firstly, the SNP proclaimed themselves a self-government seeking party, not a party seeking independence. This ensured a prolonging of the mandate to have a Scottish National Party. Secondly, because the SNP weren't taken seriously and seen as an extra-Parliamentary party (Mitchell et al, 2012), meaning it was much more active in local government and didn't really pay much attention to Westminster activities. This changed later down the line when the SNP began to pick up more seats in general elections.

Regarding the basic organization of the party, the SNP stayed away from the typical organizational structure in UK political parties. Usually, the party has a formal leader who is often seen as the face of the party and have the most control. In the case of the SNP, they stayed away from using this and instead, had a party chairman until 2004 (Mitchell et al, 2012). In addition, the party chairman was not one of the Members of Parliament; instead, they worked outside Westminster. This system continued to work but as the number of MPs grew, the SNP were forced to come up with more senior-level positions to better organize the party. A valuable observation to take away from this period is the high level of importance that the SNP had for

their party members and further, their electorate. After all, the party members were the ones working as activists at the local level, looking to expand their membership and support. The party relied on their membership for logistical and financial support (Levy, 1990). I argue that this relationship between the party and their supporters is what has allowed the SNP to build further on their support and grow.

Furthermore, it is evident from this that the SNP established their strengths early on in their development. However, because of their reliance on working at the local level and focusing on activism, they often struggled to find a stable financial situation. The SNP didn't have a Westminster base the way the other UK parties did. This meant that the SNP had to rely on their members for support in their early days. The SNP have managed to keep this outsider tone to this day but it comes from the early days of the party.

The point at which the Scottish National Party became politically relevant was in the 1967 by-election in Hamilton, in Lanarkshire, which acted as the first big turning point for the Scottish National Party. Many Scottish politics scholars seem to refer to this victory as the birth of Scottish politics (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Until this period, the Scottish National Party had been perceived as a fragmented group of outsiders and were completely ignored by both Labour and the Conservatives. I argue that the twenty-year period prior to 1967 was a period of adjustment in which the SNP were able to craft the beginning of an ideology and party platform, rather than focusing solely on winning seats. Underestimating the SNP proved to be an error of judgment for the political establishment. Prior to the by-election in Hamilton, the SNP contested 23 seats and won 5% of the vote (Hassan, Ed, 2009).

Winnie Ewing, the Scottish National Party candidate, was able to win the Hamilton seat with a 46% share of the vote and with a 38% swing from Labour (Mitchell and Johns, 2012).

This was the breakthrough that the party had been waiting for. With one foot finally in the door at Westminster, Ewing was able to pave the way for the Scottish National Party to begin consolidating its position and expanding its network across Scotland. This Labour-SNP competition dynamic that emerged in the election was also important because it set the tone for the relationship the two parties would build in the years following. The issue of independence tended to appeal to the left-leaning industrial worker that was an obvious Labour voter until the SNP arrived. In this regard, the SNP turned out to be the Labour party's worst nightmare as they began to snatch their voter base.

### *The beginning of an SNP Ideology*

At this point, it is prudent to expand on the elements of the Scottish National Party's early ideology. As previously mentioned, their central pillar was self-government. Initially, this vague term often caused rifts between members of the party. Some thought that self-government meant independence whilst others felt it just meant a stronger form of home rule from the United Kingdom (Mitchell et al, 2012). The call for independence became the rallying call in the years to follow. As well as self-government, devolution was a core part of the ideology that caused some discourse. Some members of the party believed that devolution could work to Scotland's advantage and be a stepping stone towards self-government. On the other hand, members suggested that this would become a road block and would prevent Scotland from ever fully severing ties with the UK.

It is evident that at this point, the SNP was not like any other party in British politics for a few reasons. Firstly, as I have pointed out, the party was organized in a way that gave the most power and influence on the party members. This in turn prevented the formation of a hierarchical organization, with the party leader being the sole face of the party. Secondly, the party embraced

the perception that they were a party on the outside and not a part of the political establishment. This liberated the SNP and meant that it was not judged by the same standards other parties and were often underestimated.

As outlined previously, the SNP in the populist stage were ingenious because they were able to channel their frustration towards the government at Westminster. This seemed to permanently entrench the idea that the Scottish National Party was a party of protest. Populist parties tend to establish a group or entity as their perceived enemy and then build their support around that. A classic example of this is the SNP with Westminster. However, a more contemporary example is the UK Independence Party or UKIP, who established themselves as a far-right, anti-immigration party (Judis, 2016). UKIP based their entire electoral fortunes on the hope that the voters would share their anti-immigrant fervor. However, for the SNP, by having Westminster as the enemy, this then allowed the party to add leftist agenda policy and build its credibility as an alternate to Labour and not become irrelevant like UKIP. The demographics of the party also became significant because of the high percentage of young people becoming involved with the party. The SNP supporters weren't the only group coming from a young demographic. During the 1960s, the average age of SNP national-office bearers and national office candidates was 37.5 (Schwarz, 1970). At this stage of development, the most important policy issue was independence but that was just the beginning of their party platform.

### *The SNP on the Rise*

The Hamilton-by-election was a wakeup call for the UK political establishment as it became apparent that despite the fact the SNP had a one-issue platform, they could become a force to be reckoned with. When looking at the % vote gained by the SNP between 1960 and 1970, the party were able to increase from 1% of the vote to 11% (Levy, 1990).

Despite the fact that Winnie Ewing lost the seat in the following general election, it is important to note that from this point on, the SNP were a continuous presence at Westminster. There were concerns that the party's performance in the by-election could simply be ephemeral and just a form of protest in the constituency (Bennie et al, 1997). In the 1970 election, the party lost Winnie Ewing as an MP but were able to gain a seat in the Western Isles, which was the first seat they had managed to win in a general election (Mitchell et al, 2012). In the 1970 general election, the SNP were able to find enough candidates to contest 65 out of 71 seats in Scotland and jumped to 11% of the vote (Mitchell et al, 2012). Although initially skeptical of Westminster, the SNP began to grow into their new arena and expand their presence further.

The rise of the SNP was not a smooth journey – there were of course electoral knockbacks. The single victory in Hamilton did not mean that the SNP were suddenly a mainstream party in the UK establishment (Hassan, Ed, 2009) but it was the beginning of the SNP being noticed and recognized by Westminster parties. The Conservative government responded with a new plan for devolution. The Conservatives wanted to ensure that they could stay in power for as long as possible. Therefore, they decided to support what came to be known as the 'Declaration of Perth', which signaled the Conservatives support for devolution (Cavanagh, 2001). The logic behind this decision was that it seemed with the SNP being able to grow, they could be able to take votes away from Labour, further cementing the Conservatives power. This was the beginning of the road to devolution and the eventual creation of a Scottish parliament.

The Labour party responded differently to the rise of the SNP. The heart of their issue with the SNP came from their strong desire to implement further social-welfare and leftist policy UK-wide. In response to the growing support for the SNP, Labour set up their own policy to

address the growing desire for home rule. During Harold Wilson's time as Prime Minister, he set up what came to be known as the Kilbrandon Commission (Cavanagh, 2001). This initiative was an attempt for Labour to appear to be acting on the calls for independence by examining the structure of the United Kingdom's government. The commission investigated for four years and examined various models that could better divide the powers across the regions of the UK. These models included different forms of federalism and the possible division of the member states. The commission eventually decided on a similar conclusion to that of the Conservatives' 'Declaration of Perth'. They decided that devolving certain powers to Scotland would be the best action (Cavanagh, 2001).

I argue that the UK political establishment were responsible for allowing the SNP to continue to expand because both the Conservatives and Labour separately came up with the solution of devolution. Although this seemed like the best strategy to appease the SNP and their supporters, the move to create a policy of devolution seemed to be the turning point that would eventually push the SNP from an unimportant, fringe party to being much more influential.

A factor that must be considered and remains relevant to the current day is the role of media with regard to the SNP's journey. It was argued by political opponents that the SNP were often given more media attention than their electoral support warranted (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The main reason for this was the fact that the SNP were such a lively party, they were "colorful, enlivened the political scene and was often in step with a mood for change" (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The SNP were almost always out campaigning and as previously mentioned, their message relied on the participation and passion of party members. It is for this reason that the Westminster establishment often felt threatened by the SNP. The SNP were a new and likeable force in politics; compared with the traditional Tory vs. Labour order, the SNP were always more likely

to capture the media's attention. The coverage of the SNP by the media is something I will continue to address as the SNP develops into the next stages. In the social justice stage of development, I will readdress whether the SNP's constant media attention was a blessing or a curse.

The SNP began to slowly but steadily add more policy positions from the Labour platform in the years following 1967 and this led to large numbers of voters reconsidering their allegiance to Labour. This trend would only be further exacerbated during the long era of Margaret Thatcher as Labour fell into disarray and could no longer act as an effective opposition. This ends the stage of populism and the SNP slowly slides into the category of a social democratic party in the mid-1970s. Despite Westminster deciding to take them more seriously, the SNP's journey to increase their vote share was slow and it took many years.

### **Chapter 3: The Start of the Party Evolution**

#### *The Beginning of a New Policy Platform*

There was no immediate need for the SNP to upgrade their policy platform during the 1940s and 50s. However, with the victory of Winnie Ewing and continuing growth of the party, it was time for the party to formally lay out their goals. This new policy platform took the form of a formal party manifesto, a common party strategy in UK politics. Although the goal of self-determination remained vital to their cause, they also became committed to obtain it within democratic means, meaning within the United Nations and the Commonwealth (Wilson, 2009). The party also asserted its cooperation to international cooperation and world peace. Furthermore, the SNP grew internationalist and pro-EU, because of the need for economic cooperation.

The SNP blamed most of the challenges facing Scotland on the British government and



the accompanying events that they had caused. For instance, looking back as far as the 1950s, the decline of Scotland's heavy industry was a huge issue for Scotland that the SNP blamed Westminster for (Wilson, 2009). Scotland were also dragged into two world wars that had steadily began to highlight the difference in Scotland's political leanings versus the rest of the United Kingdom. As a result of this perception, the SNP were always keen to keep power decentralized, even at the local level. Furthermore, as soon as the concept of devolution came into the conversation, the SNP were quick to list the policy areas they believed should be given back to Scotland. These included the control of land planning, development of coal and water energy, control of agriculture, forestry and fishing policy. The party went further and demanded the return to Scottish majority ownership of industry, rights for workers and a policy to favor local business (Wilson, 2009). In addition, health policy and education policy were to be devolved back to Scotland.

During the 1960s and early 70s, various policy issues were further various policy issues were further discussed, such as the issue of banning nuclear weapons, which the party decided to support. Winnie Ewing's victory was the beginning of the SNP having a constant presence at Westminster, which meant a more solid platform was required. During the National Council Meeting in 1970, two major objectives were updated and re-established. Firstly, they asserted their commitment to creating a national movement to restore independence via the creation an independent parliament and government in a sovereign, independent Scotland. Secondly, following the achievement of this goal, the SNP would continue to participate in Scottish political life and act as an effective choice for the Scottish people looking for a political party that would work to serve their policy needs. The second objective is particularly important because it highlights the fact that the SNP were planning the longevity of their party very early in

their development. Unlike other populist parties that were mentioned in the earlier chapters, the SNP were planning to remain a political force, even after their core, mandated goal was achieved (Kazin, 1998).

Alarm bells began to ring for the Labour party. The SNP were cementing themselves as a leftward-oriented party, which put them directly in competition with Labour. This was particularly worrying for the Scottish Labour Party, as the SNP had a distinct advantage over them. Because Scottish Labour was just a faction of the National Labour Party, they were viewed as a part of the Westminster establishment. The SNP were only competing in Scotland and therefore, came across as much more in touch with the Scottish electorate. Furthermore, the class-party connection was beginning to disintegrate. Prior to the 1950s, Scottish industrial workers and those in the lower classes were almost certain to vote Labour. With the arrival of the SNP, traditional Scottish Labour voters were faced with an alternate choice – a party that was beginning to develop a left-ward agenda and a party that had much more of an interest at pandering to Scottish voter's concerns (Hassan, Ed, 2009).

In response, the Labour party began to nickname the SNP the “Tartan Tories” and the Conservatives referred to the SNP as the “Tartan Socialists” (Mitchell & Johns, 2014). These were both attempts to remind their traditional voter base that the SNP were not to be trusted as all they cared about was getting independence. The SNP needed a more solid policy platform to quiet the criticism that the SNP were just a group of people that want Scotland to break away from the UK; they needed to prove that they were more than this.

#### *The Arrival of Alex Salmond*

Born in Linlithgow, Alex Salmond became an active member of the Scottish National Party during his time at the University of St. Andrews. He identified as a far-left socialist and

stressed the need for the SNP to continue its development towards the left. To achieve this goal, Salmond was one of the founding members of what came to be known as the '79 group', which was founded in 1979 in an attempt to persuade the Scottish National Party that it should take a left-wing position (Lynch, 2013).

The 79 group were instrumental in moving the SNP from the populist stage of development to the social democrat stage. It was this internal party divide on whether the SNP wanted to be more than just a party on independence. Alex Salmond and the rest of the 79 Group wanted the SNP to move left and be able to challenge the Labour party's monopoly on the left (Hassan, Ed, 2009). It was this policy shift that seemed to finally eradicate the old criticism that the SNP were simply "Tartan Tories". The 79 Group were evicted from the party for the disquiet they caused because their strategy to move the party to the left was to highlight the leadership were incredibly right wing (Hassan, Ed, 2009).

#### *Devolution: Part 1*

The party began to promote the possibility of a Scottish parliament. This culminated in the 1979 devolution referendum. Both the Conservatives and the Labour party had laid out strategies earlier regarding the process of devolution. On the one hand, devolution was the answer to the SNP's prayers. This was a formal mechanism that could be utilized to bring further power to Scotland and it was finally on the political agenda. On the other hand, it contributed to the internal strife as party members began to disagree on the use of devolution as a means of gradual independence. To a pragmatic member of the party, the possibility of devolution could allow the SNP to become a more legitimate party that could govern and then build further support for independence.

In 1976, the SNP had met at their annual party conference in Motherwell to discuss

devolution (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The party decided to support devolution as a stepping stone towards the goal of full independence. It was argued that this was a fatal mistake that would cost them down the line by accepting anything less than independence. The SNP worked alongside the Labour government in 1976 on account of the Labour Party no longer having a majority number of seats in the House of Commons. The Labour government promised that they would instigate legislation to start the process of devolving powers to Scotland in exchange for SNP support. The legislation was introduced and then put to a vote on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1979. The results were 48% against and 51% in favor with only 64% turnout which was not enough for the referendum to pass. As a result of the 'Cunningham Amendment', without 40% of the electorate voting in favor of devolution, further devolution could not take place (Mitchell, 2011).

#### *A Bump in the Road*

The SNP were able to build on their support in the 1970 and 1974 election, which was a comfort to them, as it showed the parties support was not simply a form of protest from the establishment (Bennie et al, 1997). Going into the 1979 election, the SNP had 30.4% of the vote and eleven of Scotland's seventy-one Members of Parliament. Unfortunately, following the 1979 election, only two remained and their support decreased to just 17.3%. This was the speed bump that the other political parties in the UK had been waiting for. With Alex Salmond's 79 Group evicted from the party, it seemed evident that the SNP needed to re-evaluate their policy position or risk slowly having their support eroded away.

As well as the ideological divide between left and right wingers, the way of achieving independence remained a core part of the internal party debate. This led to the split between the gradualists and the fundamentalists. This was a matter of whether the party needed to campaign for immediate independence and nothing less or if a different approach should be undertaken.

Other members of the party wanted to use the possible beginning of devolution to slowly increase the appetite for independence within the country. The party decided that it would be advantageous to use devolution as a strategy for the party to gain support.

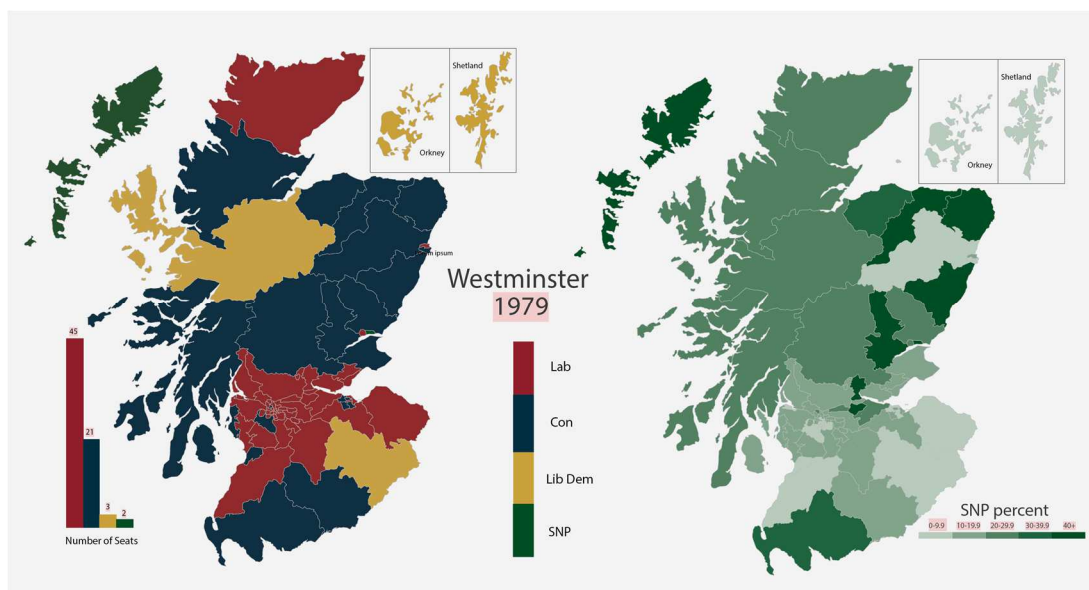
The SNP were using the same tactics they had utilized in the 1960s, with a heavy reliance on volunteers rather than on a full-time staff. There was still no formal leader, just a chairman, which meant coming up with a cohesive message very difficult (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The party also had financial worries to contend with. Establishing a central mechanism for raising money for the party was difficult (Lynch, 2013). In the lead up to the bump in the road in 1979, the party membership had increased substantially but this rapid growth was not sustainable. The growth in membership didn't lead to an increase in financial backing and this led to several branches of the party verging on collapse by 1979.

An important commodity that Scotland possess became particularly important during this period – oil. The SNP were able to use the commodity of oil as an electoral strategy. The SNP utilized this newfound asset to their advantage by coming up with the slogan 'It's Scotland's oil' (Mitchell et al, 2012). The SNP insisted that the oil was being stolen by Westminster and being used to control Scotland. Scotland's oil has remained relevant since its discovery and continues to be a matter of controversy within Scotland today, especially in 2014.

Following the 1974 election, the SNP had eleven MPs, which provided the party with a fresh challenge. Nine of the eleven MPs were newcomers to Westminster and some were even new to the SNP (Lynch, 2013). However, the SNP's newfound electoral triumph was short lived. The 1974 cohort of eleven SNP Members of Parliament, which had come to be known as the football team, being reduced to two. Although the poor party organization and internal party fighting were a part of this, there was more to the story. The SNP were part of one of the most

dramatic nights in British politics in March of 1979. The football team were instrumental in the defeat of the Labour Minority government, as their votes were used to form a vote of no confidence against them.

The SNP made the decision to join the no confidence vote for several reasons. Firstly, the Labour government under James Callaghan had been able to create his minority government by working with the SNP and Plaid Cymru in Wales in exchange for offering devolution referendums. As mentioned, the results in Scotland were incredibly close. The SNP felt robbed of their chance to have a devolved legislature in Scotland. By bringing down Labour, the SNP were instrumental in the arrival of the Thatcher government. In addition, this gave the Labour Party a stick to beat the SNP with for years, as this was seen as an irresponsible policy decision. It is important to mention that scholars have affirmed that whether the Labour government had been brought down by the vote of confidence or not, it was almost assured that the Labour government were destined to lose the upcoming 1979 election anyway, so it is erroneous to say that SNP were single-handedly responsible for the new Tory government. However, this move did irreparable damage for the SNP and their relationship with Labour voters. 1979 was the low point for the SNP – they lost both the devolution referendum and their MP numbers decreased from eleven to two (Figure 3.1).



*Figure 3.1 General Election 1979: Scotland*

### *The Changing Policy Platform and Sociology of Scotland*

With the victory of Winnie Ewing, the other political parties had taken notice of the Scottish National Party but the attention did not last. As the party gradually built up its base, the continued internal strife prevented the party from fully developing and entering the mainstream. Arguably, the party would remain outside the mainstream until the eventual creation of the Scottish Parliament (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Prior to the formal devolution of a few powers, the SNP were not seen as a potential governing party but rather a fringe, protest party. Their credibility had been damaged by bringing down the Labour government and this further cemented them outside of the political establishment. The support for the SNP was spread wide across the country, but the support was not strong enough to make a strong impression at Westminster yet. The party had positioned itself as fundamentally anti-tory because of their role in the anti-Conservative Labour government. The SNP were isolated from both the right and the left.

Although I argue that the SNP is in many ways completely unique, they are in other ways very similar to the way other British political parties function. For instance, there are of course

internal disagreements that lead to the eruption of tension among party members. In the case of the SNP, it seems obvious that the biggest division between members is referring to the core goal of the party – how to attain independence. There were the gradualists and fundamentalists but also within the party, there were various political opinions. Some were right-wingers like the Conservatives but with the desire for independence. On the other hand, there were left-wingers like Alex Salmond that wanted to drag the party to the left and build on the agenda that had been crafted in the 60s. In addition, there were those within the SNP that didn't want to be politically affiliated at all, as this would alienate their desperately needed voter base.

As mentioned in the prior chapter, the SNP didn't have the formal leader office initially as other UK parties did. During this second level of development, the SNP began to be more organized more centrally and with a more formal policy platform. Once Alex Salmond was allowed back into the party, the SNP finally had the charismatic leader they needed to craft a cohesive message and begin to take on the Westminster elections with a serious strategy. The 1970s were instrumental in the SNP's development of their ideology but not for their party strategy.

The changes occurring in Scotland were not just political. The traditional party-religion relationship was beginning to disintegrate (Johns & Mitchell, 2016). It was this new sociological trend that transformed the Scottish political context. Scottish politics had closely resembled politics across the rest of the UK. It had previously just been Labour vs. the Conservatives with one's political affiliation being closely tied to one's social class. In addition, the tie between party and religion began to slowly disintegrate. The SNP were instrumental in this new social change in Scotland. The SNP highlighted that Scotland had a very different set of political priorities that were not being addressed at Westminster.



### *On the Rise Again*

The 1983 election was a wakeup call for both the Scottish National Party and the Labour Party. Both parties realized that they needed to pay more attention to the electorate and the policies they wanted (Bennie et al, 1997), not just the traditional policies of the party. The SNP's party platform evolved with regard to the European Economic Community (EC) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The SNP gradually began to support these organizations, especially the EC. In addition to their transitioning policy platform, the shadow of the 79 Group dominated the party agenda. The expulsion of the group was changed to just a suspension and the members of the group were eventually allowed back into the party (Mitchell et al, 2012).

In the 1983 election, the SNP were able to hold the two Westminster seats that they had been left with following the 1979 decline (Mitchell et al, 2012). Unfortunately, the party support was still dwindling. The internal, public fighting within the party continued to prevent the party from focusing their attention on Westminster. The 1987 election was not much better. The SNP lost the two seats they had managed to defend in 1983 but they were able to gain three more in other areas. This general election performance highlighted a key weakness and strength for the SNP. The party enjoyed widespread support across Scotland, but the support was not dense enough in areas to translate this support into seats at Westminster. The support was too thinly spread to make a mark on British politics, but this would slowly change as the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to a close.

During the 1980s, the SNP's party manifestos became steadily larger as the left of center agenda became more cemented within the party. Gordon Wilson, party chairman at the time, attempted to move the party further to the center in an attempt to increase credibility toward the electorate. This began with an attempt to begin to remedy the division within the party regarding

devolution. In 1984, the SNP held its party conference and finally adopted a more pragmatic approach to devolution and finally launched a formal campaign for a formal Scottish assembly (Lynch, 2013). The SNP began to focus on the electorate, as did Labour, but the true catalyst that brought the SNP back to relevance, was the incoming Conservative government.

### *The Arrival of Margaret Thatcher*

If you talk to a Scot who is well-versed in the history of Scottish politics, they might tell you that Margaret Thatcher was the single largest factor that contributed to an increase in independence fervor. It was her treatment of the Scots that enabled the SNP to move from a fringe party to a party of protest on behalf of the Scottish voters. The SNP had been instrumental in the arrival of Thatcher following the collapse of the Labour minority government. Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979 and would lead the Conservatives through three general elections. She came to power during a time of great economic uncertainty across Britain, with widespread unemployment and the forthcoming national industrial collapse (Bennie, Brand & Mitchell, 1997).

What made Thatcher so controversial in Scotland was her apparent disregard for the social consequences of her policies that were an attempt to remedy the industrial problems in Britain (Torrance, 2009). To the Scottish public, Thatcher became the great oppressor, with her brutal handling of the miners' strike in 1984 and 1985. In addition, Thatcher took the United Kingdom into the Falklands War which at first, boosted her support across Scotland. However, this seemed to play right into the hands of the SNP who were against the conflict against Argentina. Most controversial of all, the infamous poll tax which was a new system of taxation introduced in Scotland before the rest of the UK. This new taxation system was seen as a means of using Scotland as an experiment, highlighting Westminster's disdain for the Scottish people.

The poll tax replaced the old system which collected taxes at differing rates depending on the rental value of their property. By getting rid of the scale, Thatcher's new taxation policy placed a considerable burden on Scottish families (Torrance, 2009). Despite an outcry in protestation from the Scottish people, the poll tax continued. In short, the Thatcher government indicated that Scotland needed an alternative to Westminster.

In the Thatcher era, it became clear that the SNP had made the right call to decide to be a left of center party. The Conservative government was incredibly unpopular in Scotland and began to fuel the belief that Westminster had no business trying to govern Scotland (Bennie et al, 1997). There were those that insisted the Conservatives had no mandate to govern in Scotland (Lynch, 2013). The true challenge for the SNP was the need to repair the relationship between themselves and Labour voters as many held them responsible for ending the Labour government. I argue that Thatcher was the spark that the SNP needed to reignite its strategy against the UK political establishment. In the 60s and 70s, the SNP had seemed to accept that the stage for them was at Westminster. However, this changed following Thatcher's eleven years as Prime Minister.

By 1987, Thatcher's treatment of Scotland had re-opened the constitutional question of whether Scotland could stand to be governed by an out of touch Westminster. This re-fueled the debate on whether Scotland needed its own parliament. Furthermore, the SNP had established a more practical approach to devolution, so the stage was set for a 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum on the subject. Meanwhile, the SNP had become a legitimate party speaking out for the Scottish electorate's interests. The Labour vs. Conservative system was beginning to break down following the eleven years of Conservative dominance and the Labour party appeared to be an incompetent mess of a political party, with Britain's industrial backbone beginning to break.

In the general election of 1987, the SNP joined forces with the Labour party in an attempt to put an end to the Tory government. This sparked a new trend within the Scottish electorate as they began engaging in tactical voting as a means of bringing down the party in power (Pittock, 2015). The combined power of the SNP and Labour did major damage to the Conservatives, as they lost more than half of their seats in Scotland. Furthermore, Scottish voters supplied Labour with about a quarter of their seats, highlighting that for the Labour party to do well, they relied on Scottish votes. Further down the line, the eventual rise of the SNP's credibility would dramatically damage the Labour party's ability to form a Westminster government. But for now, the SNP had aided the Labour party in taking back some credibility from the Tories, thus beginning the direct competition between Labour and the SNP.

#### **Chapter 4: The Promising Decade**

##### *Alex Salmond's Return*

Following his removal from the SNP as a result of his membership of the 79 Group, Alex Salmond returned to the party. After being allowed back into the SNP, he had taken on the role of Vice-Convener for Publicity and then in 1987, he stood for election and became a Member of Parliament at Westminster. Furthermore, he was able to ride back into favor on the back of Scotland's disdain for the Thatcher government, especially their hate for the poll tax (Mitchell et al, 2012). The 1990s became known as "the Salmond decade" (Lynch, 2013). Salmond was the figure that the SNP had been lacking since its creation. He became the ever-present face of the Scottish National Party, even the independence movement. His "personality, media performance and work ethic" was able to "propel the SNP to new prominence" (Lynch, 2013). After the party's identity crisis in the 1980s, Salmond brought much needed energy to the party that would slowly develop the party's social justice platform and push it into its third and

final stage of development – a governing, mainstream political party.

After 1979, Gordon Wilson, the party chairman, called for the creation of a Commission of Inquiry into the party organization. The findings were published in 1985 and highlighted the poor management of the party. For instance, the party had continued to rely on party membership as its financial base. Furthermore, the party had “become too bureaucratic, too introspective and too conservative” (Hassan and Warhurst, Eds, 2000). To remedy this, the party slowly began to re-organize and become more centralized which culminated in the creation of the office of party leader. This re-organization was paramount to the SNP’s continued development. The 1970s and 1980s were dominated with internal party fighting and internal factions, such as the 79 group. Now, the party was beginning to realize that in order for the party to regain and grow its support, the party would need to get its act together and unify.

In 1990, Salmond stood in the election for the SNP’s new party leader. The leadership election came as a result of Gordon Wilson, the party’s chairman and leader since 1979, decided to step down. The contest was between Alex Salmond and Margaret Ewing (daughter in law to Winnie Ewing). Although Salmond was not the favorite to win the leadership contest, he was able to secure victory on account of his large amounts of policy ideas and strategies. He further built on his gradualist approach he had held since the 1970s and decided to pursue devolution as a step toward independence. Eventually, the gradualist approach was able to win out and become the dominant mindset for the SNP. However, Gordon Wilson had been able to begin to heal the division between gradualists and fundamentalists and this was continued upon the arrival of Alex Salmond. His first big move as leader was to once again, endorse the campaign for Scottish devolution.

### *Devolution, Again.*

The Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, George Robertson, said in the 1990s that he believed “devolution would kill Nationalism stone dead” (Hassan, Ed, 1997). However, it soon became apparent that devolution would have the opposite effect. Rather than destroying the SNP’s key issue, it seemed to fuel the desire for Scotland to have further autonomy. I argue that the 1979 devolution referendum came too soon for the SNP to adopt a standard, collective approach to the policy issue. However, by 1997, the party had spent twenty years internally debating the practicality of devolution and were ready to take a concrete stance.

There were very high stakes for the 1997 devolution referendum. The 1979 failure could not happen again. Despite this defeat in 1979, the policy of devolution did not vanish, though it was ignored during the Conservative Thatcher and Major governments. Interestingly, in both 1979 and 1997, it was a Labour government with a majority. A factor that had further fueled Scotland’s distain for Thatcherism was her insistence that devolution not be put into place. On the other hand, the Labour party seemed much more open to the idea of allowing devolution in Scotland and Wales to take place. After Margaret Thatcher was ousted as prime minister, she was succeeded by John Major, who led the Conservatives to yet another victory in Westminster. This prompted the Labour party to re-visit the issue of devolution in an attempt to attract further support from the Scots (and in addition, steal support from the SNP). John Smith, the Labour leader from 1992 to 1994, promised to deliver another devolution referendum. Prior to the devolution referendum, John Smith passed away, which left it to his successor to carry through on the promise.

The next Labour leader was Tony Blair, though it had been a close contest between him and Gordon Brown, another high level Labour party member, who was Scottish. During Smith’s

time as Labour leader, he had steered the party in the same way as previous traditional, left-wing Labour politicians had for decades. Both Blair and Brown were modernists who wanted instead to move the party to the center. Both men were left to decide what their position on Scotland would be. In an attempt to steal support from Brown, Blair promised to carry forward the devolution referendum and this carried him to a victory and the Labour party were finally able to return to power after four general election losses.

The creation of a second devolution referendum was one of the first post-election promises fulfilled by Labour when they came to power in May 1997. The Scottish electorate were asked to answer yes or no to two statements: 1. I agree there should be a Scottish Parliament. 2. I agree that a Scottish Parliament should have tax-verifying powers. The turnout was much stronger for this devolution referendum with 60.43% turnout (Dewdney, 1997). The response to the first question of whether or not there should be a Scottish parliament was met with a positive response, with 74.29% of voters answering yes. Regarding the second question, 63.48% of the electorate asserted that they believed parliament should have taxation powers. These results were enough to begin a policy of devolution. The 1998 Scotland Act was passed by the UK parliament, thus creating a formal Scottish parliament and the parliament convened for the first time in May 1999.

Devolution was arguably essential for the SNP. If the 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum had been a failure, the SNP would have risked a quick death at the hands of the Scottish voters, as they reverted back to either Labour or the Tories. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, it was evident that although the SNP were gaining popularity, there were unable to transform this support into tangible parliamentary seats. This was the result of the First Past the Post system acting as a road block. The SNP support remained thinly spread across Scotland and therefore, they had little chance of

ever having significant representation at Westminster. With the creation of the new, distinctly Scottish venue, the SNP were one step closer to their goal of full independence. In addition, as previously discussed, the party had the serious issue of party infighting on various policy issues, predominantly the policy of devolution.

### *The Creation of the Scottish Parliament*

The creation of Holyrood gave the SNP a whole other venue to gain support from the Scottish electorate and prove itself as a credible, governing party. It has been asserted that contemporary Scottish politics began with the first Scottish parliamentary election in 1999 (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The SNP continued to develop their agenda; in the 1980s, the party asserted their commitment to gain independence but stay within Europe and the economic union. By becoming a left-leaning, pro-EU party, the SNP were beginning to market themselves to the Scottish people. The Thatcher government had therefore added fuel to the SNP, as the poll-tax and Tory policies continued to highlight the different political leanings in Scotland vs. the rest of the UK. The Labour party under Tony Blair decided to move towards the center, thus leaving the vacuum open for left-leaning voters to turn to the SNP for representation.

The internal fighting between the fundamentalists and gradualists seemed to have diminished enough to allow the SNP to become an electable force once again. Salmond had instilled a pragmatic, gradualist attitude towards independence. Although it must be noted that independence never left the SNP's party platform. Instead, Salmond wanted to take full advantage of Holyrood as a means of showcasing the need that Scotland had for more autonomy from Westminster. To do this, the party made the decision that all SNP MPs would participate in the first round of the Scottish parliament elections. This was an advantage because it meant that the SNP had some experienced parliamentarians competing (Hassan, 2009). On the other hand, it



meant that the SNP MPs were being forced to split their time between Westminster and Scotland.

*What now for Scottish politics?*

Up until this period, Scottish politics had been dominated by the Labour for the most part. However, with the slow progress made by Alex Salmond, there was now a party that could credibly challenge Labour's dominance (Hassan and Warhurst, Ed, 2000). Salmond began the process of professionalization within the party. There was much debate on how Scottish politics would evolve because of the creation of a Scottish legislature. There seemed to be three main possibilities. Firstly, Labour could continue to dominate in Holyrood as they had in Westminster but with a slightly more competitive atmosphere with the SNP. Secondly, Labour and the SNP could enter into a two-party system with the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives present but with a diminished voice. Thirdly, a more pluralistic system could set in, with no two parties being able to dominate the parliament; there would also be smaller forces entering the arena, such as the Scottish Green Party or the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP). The third possibility seemed to most closely reflect the way parliamentary politics worked in continental Europe, with four mainstream parties and other parties on the outskirts.

Although initially Labour did dominate, the balance shifted slowly in favor of the Scottish National Party. The 80s proved to be an incredibly important basis on which the SNP were able to adopt more policy positions and arguably, hit rock bottom so that they could rebuild. The 1980s had transformed from just a populist, independence party to a social democratic protest party in response to Thatcherism. To complete the transformation, the SNP had to become "a party with a defined set of core beliefs beyond independence" (Hassan and Warhurst, Eds, 2000). The creation of this new venue for Scotland finally seemed to put the SNP and the Labour party squarely against one another, a rivalry that had slowly been building for several

decades.

The other British political parties, specifically the Scottish branches of the Conservatives and the Labour party, were attempting to adapt their policy positions in order to succeed in the Holyrood parliament. The SNP had the advantage because they were founded in Scotland and had built a name for themselves at the grassroots level since the 1970s. The other parties had to face the challenge of just being more of the same policies from their Westminster counterparts. The elections in the Scottish parliament ran in between the elections at Westminster, meaning that the campaigns for Holyrood had a very Scottish atmosphere around them (Hassan, Ed, 2009). However, the SNP had to attempt to break the generations-old political alliances that had been connected to social standing or even religion. The SNP approached the challenge with great energy as always.

#### *Westminster vs. Holyrood*

The first Holyrood election was vital for the SNP. Salmond led the party on his social justice platform, with the main policy of 'A Penny for Scotland'. This program was the first of the SNP's continuing diversion from the Westminster status-quo. In the rest of the United Kingdom, the Labour government had proposed a 1p tax cut. However, the SNP created this policy and said that instead of allowing Scots to have this tax cut, they would maintain the current rate and use the money raised to improve Scotland's public services. The party was also met with the challenge of dealing with a hostile reception from Britain's media. For instance, the SNP's party manifesto was ripped apart and criticized far more than the other parties. The party was not yet part of the establishment and was therefore, met with for more criticism than was warranted. In spite of this, the election ended up being the best result the SNP had ever managed to muster, especially with regards to seat numbers (Hassan, Ed, 2009). The party managed to get

35 MSPs elected and had finally become an electoral force. The Labour party won the election with 56 seats and entered into a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Although it was not an all-out victory for the SNP, it was a necessary step towards credibility.

Up until now, it may seem that the creation of the Scottish parliament was only advantageous for the SNP. However, it also threatened to make the party irrelevant. As previously mentioned, the SNP decided to have its MPS run in the first round of Scottish parliament elections. Although this ensured experienced SNP politicians would be present at Holyrood, it also threatened to diminish the need for them at Westminster. The SNP's opponents began to argue that now there was an actual Scottish parliament, the SNP were no longer a legitimate party in Westminster and that a vote for them was a waste (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Even in the 1970s, the SNP had developed enough of a presence to bring down the Labour government in 1979. The party now risked losing this perceived power. To remedy the situation, Alex Salmond decided to step down from being the SNP's leader in Holyrood and decided to continue just as an MP in Westminster. By continuing as an MP, the SNP would have a popular and well-known face leading them in Westminster which would hopefully diminish the belief that they were becoming irrelevant.

Alex Salmond's charisma and personality were beneficial when it came to building a name for himself at Westminster. He became the SNP's spokesman on Foreign Affairs, highlighting the fact the SNP could see beyond Scottish affairs. Some members of the SNP suggested that the SNP should take a step back from Westminster and focus their attention on Holyrood since they had campaigned so hard for a devolved administration (Hassan, Ed, 2009). However, the SNP never really withdrew from Westminster. Rather, they began to build a role for themselves as a small bloc that worked to protect Scottish interests as well as hold the

government to account on issues they deemed necessary. An example of this was when an SNP MP from the Western Isles drew attention to the common practice of cash for peerages (Hassan, Ed, 2009). By acting as a pressure group, the SNP's small group of Westminster MPs with Alex Salmond leading them, the SNP showed the electorate that they had real governing potential.

The role of media became a vital aspect of the professionalization of the SNP. In order to afford media coverage in the TV age, the party applied a professional approach to fundraising. Alex Salmond supervised the creation of an internal party newsletter beginning in 1990 and was a way for the party to directly ask party members for monthly donations (Lynch, 2002). The money from these donations were then used to invest in new technology, mailers and marketing. New communication and support staff were hired who they handled party TV broadcasts, call centers as well as candidate-training (Lynch, 2013). Alex Salmond went even further by creating the 'Convenor's Club', meaning a way in which they could raise money from donors who wished to attend special events or dinners with Salmond. These efforts gave the party more funds to utilize in the Westminster elections of the 90s.

The SNP now had the party organization strategy that they had lacked in the 60s and 70s. The party was beginning to build on the financial difficulties that had preyed on the party since the beginning. In addition, the party was beginning to resemble the typical British political party, with a formal leader acting as the face of the party but with a party machine operating under the leader. The party now had a formal policy platform that they could use as their base. Alex Salmond was able to prove that there was more to the party than independence. For instance, during his time as Foreign Affairs spokesman for the party, Alex Salmond came out strongly against the UK being complicit in the 1999 NATO bombing in Serbia. Salmond pointed out that the bombing had not be approved by the United Nations Security Council and was therefore, a

huge mistake. Once again, Salmond's media presence was working to the advantage of the SNP as more voters took notice of the party at Westminster.

Nationalism was becoming a tangible political force in Scottish politics. The SNP had seized their second chance at a devolved administration and had won. They had a new, high-profile leader who had guided them away from the chaos of the 80s and molded them into an electable force, with two legislative arenas to work in. Despite fears that the SNP would retreat back to Scotland where they belonged, Alex Salmond had maintained the SNP's relevance by becoming a pressure group that held the UK political parties to account. The new millennium looked bright for the SNP as they turned their attention to dominating in Holyrood and making an even bigger name for themselves at Westminster.

### **Chapter 5: Entering Government**

Following the stepping down of Alex Salmond as leader, there was a vacuum at the top of the SNP's party leadership. This gap was filled by John Swinney in September 2000 at the party's annual conference (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Following the 1999 seat increase in the Scottish parliament, the party was still ill at ease with its new role in the two political venues of Westminster and Holyrood. John Swinney was faced with the challenge of helping push the party through this period of turmoil. From 1999 to 2003, there appeared to be a resurgence in the age-old gradualist vs. fundamentalist approaches which Swinney had to deal with. In addition, Swinney and Salmond had very different personality styles. Swinney had less bombastic charisma but had a quiet confidence that could be just as effective. Unfortunately, SNP MSPs nearly constantly called on Salmond to return from Westminster to take back the Holyrood leadership position. This once again highlights that challenge that devolution posed for the party as they struggled to split their time evenly.

Swinney had to deal with the SNP's "teething problems" as it struggled to act as the opposition party to Labour. For instance, he brought in the policy of 'one member, one vote' when it comes to electing new party leadership. In addition, he centralized the membership list so that the party's professional staff could improve fundraising and communication (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Swinney's four-year leadership was riddled with internal fights between members, but the organizational development of the party was necessary. He had to deal with the aftermath of Salmond and attempted to keep the momentum going whilst mitigating party conflict. The party also began to immerse itself in parliamentary business despite the tumultuous Swinney period. MSP's sponsored and wrote bills on public service improvements such as banning hunting with dogs and banning smoking in public places (Hassan, Ed, 2009). However, the party still struggled with feeling directionless and in flux.

The SNP had to get back to its core mission and begin furthering the case for independence once again. Alex Salmond, who worked for both the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Scottish Office as an economist, was particularly insistent on building an economic argument for independence (Lynch, 2013). To do this, Salmond began looking at what an independent Scotland would actually look like in terms of taxation, public spending and government programs. It was imperative that the SNP begin challenging the other UK parties that were insisting the costs of independence far outweighed the advantages. In order to do this, the SNP began publishing reports on budgeting and the way in which an independent Scotland could function. Other political parties attempted to undermine the SNP's efforts by insisting that Scotland was dependent on the UK. The Conservative party were especially insistent that there was no economic case for independence on account of the fact that Scotland received more public expenditure than the country brought in in taxes (Lynch, 2013). Therefore, the

Conservatives argued that Scotland was better off in the status-quo on account of their strong economic position already.

This left the SNP in a challenging position as they had to persuade the Scottish people to believe in independence as well as agree with the practical implications of leaving the UK. The Conservatives insisted that if Scotland wanted to maintain the current amount of public spending they were enjoying prior to independence, then Scotland would have to raise taxes to meet it (Lynch, 2013). The SNP under Salmond were faced with the difficult task of attempting to publish reports and statistics on the Scottish economy that were isolated from the rest of the UK. It proved to be incredibly difficult to remove Scottish economic numbers from the rest of the United Kingdoms. The economic argument linked back to the campaign launched in the 1970s and 80s following the discovery of oil in the North Sea. The economic argument became tied to oil very quickly as Scotland's claim to the oil gave the SNP the means in which Scotland could have an independent economy.

Furthermore, the issue of independence was not just a case of economics. It was a political and cultural debate that had yet to gain steam. The economic argument, although important, was not the issue to be focused on by the SNP. The economic argument was incredibly hypothetical; after all, no one could be certain about what would truly happen after independence. The 1990s and early 2000s was a period characterized as a modernization period. As mentioned previously, the party fundraising abilities were steadily improving (Lynch, 2013). In 1994, the party appointed its own economist to produce economic reports on independence.

The party continued to modernize and become more mainstream by developing the way in which it treated the electorate. As mentioned in the earlier discussion of populist parties, it is typical of nationalist parties to create a divide between its own citizens and those of other

nationalities (Judis, 2016). The SNP never created such a division. Rather, they embraced the multinational and multiethnic dimensions of Scotland. This was paramount for the SNP to transition from a party trying to represent a select group and instead, to represent a wide amount of the electorate. By distancing themselves from the way in which other populist political parties operated, the SNP was able to avoid being written off as just a protest party. Instead of pitting itself against immigrants, the SNP began constructing a dialogue that put itself up against Westminster as their main opponent.

This is not to say that there weren't challenges for the SNP. Although the party embraced Scotland's multi-cultural identity, not all of their supporters were on board with this. For instance, the SNP were often held responsible for any anti-English sentiment that arose in Scotland (Lynch, 2013). In 1992, an anti-English groups emerged, known as the 'Settler Watch', who wanted to prevent English citizens moving into Scotland. This of course did damage to the reputation of the Scottish National Party as this was exactly what the party had been trying to avoid by casting a wide net around Scotland's other cultural groups. Some of the members of these anti-English groups were in fact SNP members. In response to this, the party expelled those that were involved in these groups. However, the damage was done, and this damaged the credibility of the party, just as the party was attempting to become more credible by building the case for independence. It is evident that the SNP had to overcome considerable obstacles to become more than a fringe group that wasn't taken seriously.

In addition to dealing with the issue of legitimacy, the SNP were faced with the challenge of going beyond independence and entering the mainstream. Following the creation of Holyrood, the party was faced with attempting to become the governing party, which meant they would have to defeat Labour. The party also had to balance its attention with Westminster. In 1999, the



party had to attack the dominance of Labour head on. The ability of the SNP to achieve their goals had been given a boost following the 1997 referendum. However, stealing support from Labour proved to be a challenge. After all, it had been a Labour government that had enabled devolution to finally take place. The party seized the opportunity and attacked Labour with full force, finally bringing Labour's attention to the fact that they could no longer ignore the actions of the SNP if they were to continue being a threat to the Conservatives. In an attempt to kill the momentum that the SNP was gaining, the Labour party began a campaign to draw the electorate's attention to the dark side of independence.

The new Labour strategy slogan, "divorce is an expensive business" was created as a means of reminding left-leaning voters that Labour was the safest option (Lynch, 2013). To combat this, the SNP tried to move away from independence as their sole base but they were faced with many challenges. Firstly, and most importantly, the 1999 Scottish election was difficult for the SNP as they had to limit their message to devolved issues. These issues included education, the environment, health, agriculture, fisheries and local governments (Lynch, 2013). This left the other large-scale issues for the party at Westminster to address. The SNP was beginning to take on the strategy that other mainstream parties were using. This gave rise to the second big challenge for the SNP: devolution vs. independence. It proved difficult for the party to harmonize their message. The devolved party was attempting to improve Scotland's domestic services, but also persuade voters that independence was the best course of action. This led to them coming up against the Labour party's campaign of independence being expensive.

As well as the challenge of Labour, the SNP also faced the emergence of other political parties that attempted to take away their support. The most important of these other parties was the Scottish Socialist Party (known as the SSP). Arguably, they were at their most influential in

2003 as they began running candidates in constituencies against SNP candidates. What made them particularly threatening to the SNP was the geographic areas in which they were concentrated, such as in Glasgow (Lynch, 2013). The SNP had to deal with both smaller protest parties as well as the establishment, making progress difficult.

It took almost a decade for the party to be able to push past the roadblock that the Labour party had put up in an attempt to prevent the SNP from becoming the governing party. It was at this point that the social-democrat agenda that Salmond had built came into play, as well as John Swinney's organizational platform. The party was about to go beyond the "separatist agenda" that their opponents claimed was their only goal (Lynch, 20013. Devolution had given the SNP their much-needed local venue to garner support but now they needed to transfer their electoral support into enough seats to become the governing party. The party would get their chance in 2007.

#### *Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon: A Partnership*

Following the stepping down of John Swinney in 2004, the SNP was once again in need of a leader. Party members were faced with a choice of either Nicola Sturgeon or Roseanna Cunningham. Just as there had been during the Swinney leadership, there were continued calls for Alex Salmond to return from Westminster. Nicola Sturgeon had been Salmond's pick but eventually facing increased pressure at the prospect of Cunningham winning the leadership, Salmond decided to run for the leadership. Salmond and Sturgeon met, with Sturgeon agreeing to step aside and serve as Deputy Leader. Salmond won easily with 76% of the vote (Hassan, Ed, 2009). However, Salmond still remained an MP at Westminster since he had given up his role at Holyrood in 1999. This led to a new dynamic with Sturgeon acting as the face of the party in Edinburgh and Holyrood matters and Salmond to finish out his time at Westminster. Nicola

Sturgeon immediately showed tenacity and strength in First Ministers Questions as she was able to hold the Labour party to account (Hassan, Ed, 2009).

Alex Salmond took on the role as leader with a very specific goal in mind – he intended to be the next First Minister of Scotland in the 2007 Scottish elections. Together, Sturgeon and Salmond worked alongside the new, much better organized, party staff to target voters to spread their message. With the Salmons-Sturgeon partnership, Labour party dominance at Holyrood was finally challenged. There were two contributing reasons for the SNP's Holyrood breakthrough. Firstly, the Labour party had been in control of Westminster for a decade and Holyrood since 1999 alongside a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The Scottish electorate were ready for change and the SNP truly embodied this on account of them never being a governing party before. The Labour party approached the 2007 election with too much complacency and were unprepared for the challenge that the SNP mounted. Secondly, Labour in Westminster were struggling to defend the policy decisions they had made regarding Iraq, thus damaging the credibility in Holyrood as well. Thirdly, Swinney, Salmond and Sturgeon had all in their own ways improved the standing of the party, whether it was within the party, with the media or within Holyrood (Hassan & Barrow, Eds, 2017).

It is important to mention that the very design of the Scottish electoral system was stacked against any party achieving a stand-alone majority. Following the creation of Holyrood, there had been an agreement that it was better to avoid a system that would lead to a majority government. To avoid this possibility, the parliament began to use a semi-proportional system (Lynch, 2013), known as the additional member system. The aim of this system is to encourage the need for coalitions, rather than allowing just one political party to dominate. Instead, a coalition or minority government was preferred in order to build consensus (Pike, 2015). In

practice, this electoral system is comprised of the constituency vote and the regional vote, with each vote leading to the selection of half of the MSPs. The constituency vote selects the candidate that will represent one of the seventy-three constituencies, utilizing a First Past the Post system. This form of voting is centered predominantly on the candidate as well as the political party. The regional vote relies more on party affiliation as the voter chooses the political party they wish to represent them and then the seats are assigned proportionally (Scottish Parliament).

The SNP were able to secure 47 seats in Holyrood, one more than Labour. The party tried and failed to enter into coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Talks quickly broke down; instead, Salmond gained the approval of the Scottish Greens, thus adding two MSPs to his cause. The SNP formed a minority government which proved tricky with regard to passing legislation, but it functioned well-enough. With Alex Salmond as First Minister of Scotland, he was now in a position to continue rolling out his gradualist policies, specifically in regard to devolution. The SNP-run government were not idle; they began to overhaul many different areas of government, especially in the areas of transport, education and health. For instance, the party got rid of tolls on the Forth and Tay Bridges, prevented several Accident and Emergency units from closing, froze the council tax, got rid of university tuition fees and put an end to prescription fees (Hassan, Ed, 2009).

Although the party turned their attention to governing, the issue of independence was never far from Salmond's mind. Right after the 2007 election, he unveiled an Independence White Paper, with plans to hold a referendum on independence in 2010. It is important to note that this referendum didn't necessarily mean independence or nothing. Instead, Salmond contended that there could be enhanced devolution or more self-government or even just the

status-quo. This was a pragmatic choice so that it didn't completely isolate themselves from the rest of the electorate that weren't totally sold on independence. Once again, devolution seems to be the best tool that could have ever been given to the SNP as the party continued to shine as a governing party at Holyrood and as a pressure group in Westminster. The next logical step was for the party to hold the referendum of a generation so that the party could finally achieve their most fundamental goal – an independent Scotland.

## **Chapter 6: The Referendum of a Generation**

### *Hitting the Ground Running*

Unveiling the independence white paper early on in the SNP's government highlighted Salmond's unabashed commitment to holding a democratic vote on independence. As previously mentioned, the Scottish electoral system had been created with the goal of preventing a single political party from dominating and instead, coalitions could and would be utilized. The Labour party had relied on the belief that the SNP would be unable to enter into a coalition with one of the other parties at Holyrood on account of their stigmatizing commitment to ending the status quo and creating an independent Scotland. However, in 2007, the SNP had performed marginally better than Labour and had expected the Liberal Democrats to fall in line and create a coalition with them (Lynch, 2013). Unfortunately for the SNP, the Liberal Democrats were unwilling to enter into a coalition with the SNP unless they dropped their commitment for independence. This was of course completely off the table for Salmond and forced the SNP into creating a minority government, putting independence on the back burner.

Although the SNP's victory in 2007 was narrow, it was significant as well as a turning point. It highlighted that support for Labour was finally beginning to dip. This came as a result of several factors. Firstly, as mentioned previously, the old order of religion and party affiliation

was continuing to breakdown. Secondly, the Labour party was also struggling to maintain their dominance as a result of the Iraq war, with the former wide-spread support for Tony Blair beginning to dry up (Lynch, 2013). Furthermore, I argue that the Labour party ran a poor campaign in comparison to that of the SNP; Alex Salmond's charisma continued to inspire support and as always, the fact that the SNP only campaigned in Scotland unlike the Labour party continued to act as an advantage for the SNP.

It was essential that the SNP prove themselves to be capable and more than just a single-issue party. To do this, the party set ambitious targets with regard to economic growth, the reduction of poverty and the inequality across Scottish society (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Arguably, the most important of these goals because of its impact on whether independence could be practical or not. By focusing on social justice issues as well as Scotland's economic growth allowed the SNP to begin to further challenge the Labour party. The SNP was beginning to steal issues from Labour and make tangible improvements, highlighting the false premise that they were incapable of advocating for anything other than independence.

Despite the slender margin of the SNP's government, Salmond began working to channel the SNP's growing support among the electorate and seize the moment. Although there were fears that the SNP minority government may struggle to survive, there were also benefits to their method. For instance, there were no arduous coalition negotiations that prevented them getting to business and enacting policy change. Furthermore, by being in government, the Scottish National Party were in a position they had never been in before. I argue that the party had clearly chosen the most advantageous path by sticking to a gradualist approach to independence. If the party had adopted a fundamentalist approach, they would have inevitably isolated themselves from the rest of the electorate and never have managed to compete with Labour. After beginning their

minority government, Salmond was able to create positive policy change to increase support for independence within the public. In addition, by having control of Holyrood, the SNP were in a position to hold a referendum or some such democratic mechanism with a higher degree of credibility. The next logical step for the SNP was to build on their support s that they could transition from just being a minority government to holding a majority so that a binding choice could be made.

In the lead up to the 2011 election, the SNP government published a draft referendum bill as a means of building more support from other parties in Holyrood, specifically the Liberal Democrats. The aim was to make the prospect of a coalition with the SNP more attractive (Lynch, 2013). The bill offered two options. Firstly, there was the option of devo-max, meaning further issues would be devolved from Westminster to Holyrood. Secondly, there was the option of holding an independence referendum (Lynch, 2013). Although nothing seemed to come of the bill, it did indicate that the SNP were willing to compromise if it meant they would be able to end their time as a minority government.

The Scottish National Party also had to continue to maintain their presence in Westminster. This became increasingly difficult as the SNP was now a governing party that had to focus much of their attention on Holyrood. Moreover, the party had lost their charismatic leader in the form of Alex Salmond as he had decided to resume his role as First Minister. This had left a vacuum that desperately needed to be filled if the SNP wanted to continue with its role of challenging the Westminster-based UK political establishment. This was exactly what the advocates of devolution at Westminster had been hoping – that the SNP would fade into obscurity in Westminster and retreat north to Holyrood. This didn't end up being the case. However, there was a dip in SNP performance for several reasons. Firstly, and predominately,

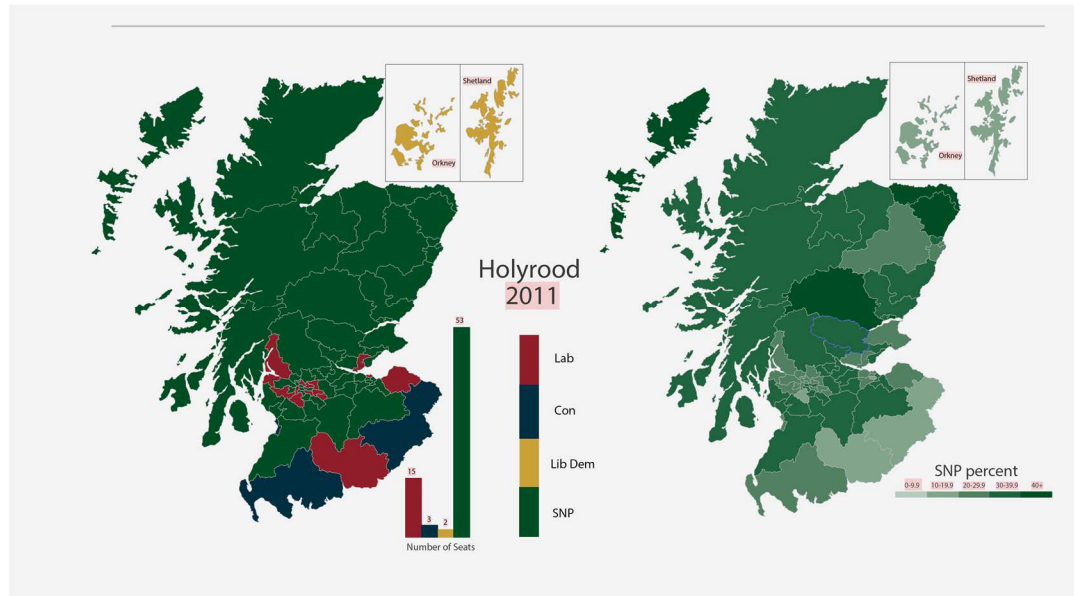
there was the split in SNP attention as a result of devolution. Secondly, the Liberal Democrats had risen to prominence as the third party of choice for many in the UK electorate (Lynch, 2013) which damaged the SNP's chances. Thirdly, the SNP continued to struggle to find their role in Westminster as they were consistently faced with the disadvantage of only competing in 59 of the 650 MP seats, which constantly kept them from making real progress in Westminster.

Salmond skillfully managed to keep the SNP relevant by suggesting an alternative to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition that was taking shape. Instead, he proposed what came to be known as the "progressive coalition" which would be comprised of the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party (Lynch, 2013). This was the first time that since the SNP had brought down the Labour government in 1979 that the SNP were viewed in this powerful light. It also signified a possible unification of the three pro-devolution parties against the Conservatives. Moreover, this truly signified that the SNP were on the cusp of becoming a viable third party, even in Westminster, as they could hold the key to forming a coalition and bringing down governments. Of course, looking back to 2010, the progressive coalition never came into existence. Instead, the Liberal Democrats united with the Conservative party which gave the Tories the majority they needed.

The belief that the additional member system, the electoral system utilized at Holyrood, would prevent a single party from being able to dominate Holyrood was proved false in 2011. Salmond's progressive and social justice-oriented government policy paid off and contributed to the SNP winning a staggering 69 of the 129 available MSP seats, giving them the margin needed to form a majority government (Fig 6.1). The SNP skillfully ran a campaign that appealed to the voters by referring to its competent record during their first term in government. Furthermore, the SNP chipped a large amount of support away from Labour as well as the Liberal Democrats



(Lynch, 2013). The majority result meant that the SNP were no longer at the mercy of the other parties in Holyrood in the hope that they would support their policies. Rather, they had been handed a mandate from the Scottish people as they entered their third stage of development, the legitimate governing party stage.



*Figure 6.1 Scottish Parliamentary results 2011*

The 2011 results were the most damaging for Scottish Labour. They were seen as the establishment party in Scotland and in addition, were the party that had allowed devolution to begin in the first place (Pike, 2015). The Labour party suffered their worst defeat since 1931. Furthermore, this turn of events had not been predicted. The complete disintegration of Labour in Scotland finally began to turn heads in Westminster, especially to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. The SNP were now finally in a position to put a referendum on the table and Westminster were now realizing that it was likely to happen, not just a pipe dream.

### *Salmond's Big Chance*

The Scottish National Party had proved to the Scottish electorate that they were a

competent governing party that could go beyond independence. Now was the time for Alex Salmond to ride the tide of strong support and seize the chance to negotiate a referendum. Simply having a majority in Holyrood wasn't enough. Devolution and the creation of a Scottish parliament had been granted by Westminster and therefore, holding a referendum would have to be approved by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. Following a series of negotiations, the Edinburgh Agreement of 2012 was agreed, which set about the preconditions and requirements for a referendum on independence to take place. It dictated that the referendum would be legislated by the Scottish parliament and in turn, deliver a decisive expression of the views of the Scottish people and a result that everyone will respect (Edinburgh Agreement, 2012). It was agreed that the referendum would take place toward the end of 2014.

David Cameron had been forced into a difficult position following the 2011 Holyrood election as the SNP finally had the support needed to form a majority government. Different strategies were considered. For instance, Cameron discussed with his cabinet the possibility of declaring that any referendum would be illegal, a similar strategy utilized by the Spanish government regarding Catalonia in 2017. This was ruled out immediately as it would play further into the SNP's hands and in turn, make secession inevitable (Pike, 2015). The consensus was that the UK government had to work proactively with the Scottish government and not give the SNP a "blank check" to determine the terms of the referendum. Instead, Cameron went along with the Edinburgh Agreement with the hope that the momentum for independence would evaporate before September 2014. In the months following the signing of the Edinburgh Agreement, the details for the referendum were worked out. The Scottish people would be asked the question 'Should Scotland be an independent country?' (Pike, 2015). In addition, it was agreed that sixteen and seventeen-year olds would be allowed to vote in the referendum. To ensure equity, a

spending limit for both campaigns was agreed at £1.5 million.

The 30-month referendum campaign, which was the longest in Scotland's political history (Macwhirter, 2014) began in 2012 and it heated up immediately. The two campaigns were formed early in 2012, with the pro-independence 'Yes Scotland' and the pro-union 'Better Together' each comprising the various political parties. 'Yes Scotland' was made up of the SNP, the Scottish Socialists and the Scottish Greens', but effectively led by Alex Salmond; 'Better Together' was made up of the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, effectively the political establishment. The pro-union side was led by Alistair Darling, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer during the 2008 financial crisis for the Labour government. It is also important to note that Darling was a senior MP based in Scotland and therefore had strong unionist ties. The 'Yes Scotland' side made sure that there was a strong sense of ownership as the referendum unfolded. This wasn't just an ordinary general election with manifesto promises being discussed; this was a once in a generation decision to alter the course of both Scotland and the entire United Kingdom.

Both campaigns had their own set of challenges to address. For the 'Yes Scotland' side, their biggest challenge was to dismantle the negative perceptions that much of the Scottish electorate held regarding independence. They attempted to remedy this by creating a dynamic campaign which involved including an array of issues and groups. The SNP were also faced with the specific policy issues that needed to be addressed and planned for in the case of a 'yes' vote. For instance, the electorate demanded to know what the Scottish government would do about currency, a border between Scotland and the rest of the UK and the issue of European Union Membership. These contentious issues threatened to divide the campaign as the senior SNP figures attempted to provide a united response. As well as that, the SNP had to reassure voters

that they had contingencies and solid strategies for addressing these policy challenges if independence was achieved.

The SNP-led Scottish government published ‘Scotland’s Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland’ in November 2013. It cost £1.2 million to print and distribute the document (Pike, 2015) with the goal being to get rid of the unknowns of Scottish independence. Although the white paper outlined the policy goals of an independent Scotland over 670 pages, it poorly laid out the financial costs. This flaw was a blessing for the ‘Better Together’ campaign as they immediately attacked the lack of detail in the white paper. Although the white paper lacked the financial detail, it provided extensive background on the policy issues that were the priority for the SNP. For instance, the white paper insisted that Scotland’s taxes would no longer have to pay for the UK’s nuclear weapons program, known as Trident, and would send all nuclear weapons across the border. Perhaps most important of all was the timeline that was set out in the event of a ‘Yes’ vote. On September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Scottish people were expected to vote ‘yes’ and this would lead to the commencement of negotiations between the Scottish government and the UK, EU and other international partners, with the goal of Scotland leaving the UK by March 2016 (Scottish Government, 2013). Furthermore, the first election would be held May 6<sup>th</sup> 2016. Unfortunately, these plans were not taken seriously on account of the lack of financial backing for their assertions. This mistake by the SNP and the ‘Yes Scotland’ campaign fundamentally damaged their credibility and gave fuel to their opponents.

For the ‘Better Together’ side, they were stuck trying to compete with the energetic and dynamic campaign that the SNP had created. They were stuck with the less enticing and persuasive message of simply defending the status-quo. The real turning point during the campaign came in the form of the currency union. Salmond and the rest of the Scottish

government continued to insist that an independent Scotland would be able to continue using the British pound. However, the 'Better Together' campaign insisted that this would not be the case. It became a stare down between the two campaigns as both sides attempted to discredit the other and come across as the most honest.

The economic argument was the biggest part of the 'Better Together' campaign. Despite the protestations of the 'Yes Scotland' campaign, the unionist side insisted that there could be no negotiations on this point. This decision effectively revealed that the union of states that comprise the United Kingdom was disintegrating. This meant that the relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK was no longer a partnership of equals (Macwhirter, 2014), rather they were trying to bully the Scottish people into remaining in the UK out of fear. Rather than allowing Scotland to leave the UK through a democratic decision, Westminster would rather see the Scottish economy riddled with uncertainty on account of their refusal to continue a currency union.

I argue that the way the UK establishment handled the referendum was incredibly poor and further isolated the SNP and increased the perception that the pro-independence campaign was unfairly treated, both by the established parties and the media, although the British newspapers were overwhelmingly pro-unionist. Throughout the campaign, there was a constant flow of negative press attacking the pro-independence side, calling them "nationalist thugs" (Macwhirter, 2014). A further problem with the way the media handled the independence referendum was their decision to allocate coverage based on the old party affiliations. Rather than giving equal coverage to the SNP and other Holyrood-based parties such as the Scottish Greens, the BBC and other networks focused on the Westminster parties, specifically Labour and the Conservatives (Macwhirter, 2014). As a result, the Scottish electorate were constantly

bombarded with headlines warning of the risks of independence but never of the benefits. The entire pro-union campaign came to be known as ‘Project Fear’ because of the constant accusations of scare-mongering from the ‘Yes Scotland’ side (Pike, 2015). The ‘Better Together’ campaign were consistently accused of this because almost all of their messages were negative in nature.

The SNP utilized the strategies they had learned over the course of their rise from a single-issue party to a credible third party. They mobilized their impressive electoral force as well as the Scottish civil service in an attempt to compete with the pro-unionist messages that were coming from the ‘Better Together’ side. For instance, the SNP targeted old Labour strongholds; Labour had considered these safe voters due to voter apathy and disengagement because of the demographics of the area, such as elderly or poorer voters (Macwhirter, 2014). In addition, both campaigns took part in televised debates in the final few months of the campaign. In August, Alistair Darling and Alex Salmond took part in two debates, which were viewed by an average of 765,000 people throughout the two-hour long broadcast (BBC, 2014). In the lead up to the first debate, it was expected that Salmond would easily defeat Darling; however, it soon became clear that this was a premature assertion. Darling skillfully pointed out that without a back-up plan for the currency union, Salmond and the rest of the ‘Yes Scotland’ campaign were in a staggeringly poor position. Salmond struggled to get past this point and in the end, a poll showed that 56% of viewers believed that Darling had beaten Salmond (Pike, 2015). During the second one, which took place two weeks later, Salmond’s performance was much improved as he discussed the various policies that were being imposed on Scotland by Westminster, such as childcare and welfare reforms and insisting that an independent Scotland could impose better policies. Arguably, the actual policies were Salmond’s strong point whereas the economic

backbone was not, which had led to his poor performance in the first debate. However, the second one was a much stronger showing for Salmond, with 71% to 29% insisting that Salmond had won (Pike, 2015). Darling's first debate performance was a coup for the 'Better Together' side, as the economic repercussions of independence struck the electorate.

However, between the August TV debates and the September vote, the support for 'Better Together' crashed. With six weeks to go, there had been a twenty-two-point lead for the 'Better Together' campaign but this evaporated as the referendum got closer (Pike, 2015). There are many speculations as to why the tables turned for the 'Better Together' campaign. I argue that the Scottish people grew tired of the 'Better Together' campaign consistently trying to simplify a dynamic and complicated campaign into one single issue – the pound. The SNP government had begun the debate on independence since 2011 when it won a majority. In addition, they had run a dynamic and passionate campaign whilst reaching out to every possible demographic. Both 'Better Together' and the British media had tried to treat the referendum just like any other general election when this simply wasn't the case. With the economic argument no longer holding weight, the 'Better Together' campaign had no more cards to play. They hadn't come up with any alternative policies to rest their case on, nor had they ran a campaign based on the merits of the union, only the possible failings that would happen in the event of a 'yes' vote. This left the UK political establishment in shock as 'Yes Scotland' support began to build, with only weeks to turn the tide.

As the tide seemed to turn in favor of a yes vote, Westminster panicked. David Cameron and the rest of the UK government had never expected it to get to this point. The solution came in the form of "the vow". This was Westminster's last-ditch attempt at swaying the Scottish voters and ensuring that they voted no to independence. Two days before the Scots went to the

polls, the leaders of the UK political establishment, David Cameron, Ed Miliband of Labour and Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrats, signed a pledge which appeared on the Daily Record's front page, a popular newspaper in Scotland, to deliver further devolution to the Scottish parliament. The letter specifically mentioned the Scottish parliament having more say on healthcare spending. The letter concluded with the assertion that "a no vote will deliver faster, safer and better change than separation" (Daily Record, 2014). Ironically, devolution was the mechanism that had allowed the SNP to gain a second political venue which allowed them to thrive but then, devolution was used as a means to stop full independence from being achieved. Salmond responded to this vow of increased devolution skeptically. He pointed out that this promise was a desperate attempt by the government to derail the 'Yes Scotland' campaign and added that they may not keep the promises. For instance, Nick Clegg had previously promised to scrap tuition fees before entering into a coalition with the Conservatives which then led him to abandon this promise, thus drastically damaging the Liberal Democrats credibility (Hassan, Ed, 2009). Despite Salmond's protestations, the vow was a powerful tactic to court the undecided voters in the final days before the polls opened.

In the end, the 'Better Together' side emerged victorious with 55.3% of the vote, compared to the 44.7% in favor of independence (UK Government, 2014). There was an incredibly high turnout of 84.6%, which was the highest turnout of any UK election since the introduction of universal suffrage. The referendum was a democratic success story despite the failure of the SNP to deliver the desired result. The campaign was all-consuming across a wide range of demographics and groups. The Scottish voters waited to see whether the devolution promises that had been mentioned in 'the vow' would be delivered.

### *The Aftermath of 'No'*



The impact of the referendum was substantial. Although it put the very survival of the Scottish National Party in jeopardy, the impact went beyond that. First, it sparked a new trend across the UK, with a new wave of demand for decentralization and the re-balancing of power. This movement spread across a variety of regions, not just in Scotland, such as counties or cities, expressing a desire for greater autonomy rather than being exclusively represented at Westminster. Second, the referendum captivated the entire country and made politics accessible to Scots that had never been interested in the political process. Third, it irrevocably changed the relationship between Scotland and Westminster. The UK government realized that they needed to rebuild the relationship in the years following the referendum, by carrying out devo-max that had been promised.

The world waited with bated breath to see what Alex Salmond would do. He had dedicated his entire political career to the independence movement and had failed to reach his ultimate goal. Both the pro-union and pro-independence sides had agreed that this would be a once in a generation decision with no second chances. Following the referendum defeat, Alex Salmond held a press conference at Bute House, the official residence of the First Minister, and announced he would resign, insisting that “the campaign continues, and the dream shall never die”. Salmond had been the face of the SNP since the 1990s and had been the leader during the SNP’s first time in government in 2007 and fundamentally altered the dynamics of Scottish politics (Macwhirter, 2014). By adopting a firm gradualist line, Salmond had managed to unify the party unlike ever before and come within inches of independence.

It seemed evitable that the referendum result would be the end for the SNP. Their entire journey from a small single-issue party to the governing party of Scotland had led to this moment – the referendum. They had grown their electoral support that had been sporadically distributed

and managed to transfer this support into MP seats. However, at the final hurdle, they failed to attain independence. However, surprisingly to some, this has not meant the end for the SNP. Quite the opposite. Following Salmond's departure, Nicola Sturgeon stood for the leadership, with no one attempting to challenge her. The partnership she had struck up with Alex Salmond meant that she was already a well-known face within the party and was therefore well placed to continue the campaign for independence. Importantly, Sturgeon never explicitly promised that there could be no second referendum the way Salmond did. Rather, she has insisted that it is up to the people of Scotland to decide, not for a politician (Macwhirter, 2014).

In the months following the failed referendum, the SNP's membership skyrocketed with just 25,000 members in December 2013 increasing to 115,000 by December 2015 despite the referendum failure (House of Commons, 2017) which gave the SNP the third largest party membership of all the Westminster parties, replacing the Liberal Democrats. The SNP was in a great position to continue their objective of independence with a strong presence in Holyrood and their support was beginning to grow. This increase in membership numbers signified that the appetite for independence remained throughout Scotland and that the SNP was far from becoming irrelevant in British politics.

Under Sturgeon's leadership, the SNP achieved the unthinkable by finally making an impact in Westminster. In the 2015 General Election, of the 59 Scottish Westminster seats, the SNP won 56; an increase of 50 seats since 2010. This was the complete elimination of the Labour Party in Scotland at Westminster that had long been in the making. Since the arrival of the SNP on the electoral scene, it was consistently a rivalry between Labour and the SNP for the votes of left-leaning, middle-class voters as religion effectively disappeared as a factor. This result was a signal that the voters were completely rejecting Labour in Scotland because of the

way they behaved during the 2014 referendum. In the months following the referendum, no progress was made regarding ‘the vow’ that had been promised. Scottish voters felt betrayed. In exchange for voting to remain in the union, they had been promised further autonomy and instead, they found themselves marginalized and ignored as Westminster went back to the status quo and prepared for the 2015 election. This mistake would give further fuel to the SNP and in turn, Scotland’s place in the union would be once again be put to the test following David Cameron’s decision to hold a referendum on EU membership.

### **Chapter 7: Brexit’s Impact on Scotland**

There is indisputably a special link between the 2014 Scottish independence (often referred to as “indy”) referendum and the 2016 EU membership referendum for Scots. In the lead up to the indy referendum, the ‘Better Together’ campaign frequently insisted that the only way to secure a continued Scottish membership in the European Union was by voting to remain a part of the UK. However, in 2016, the tables turned and Scottish voters were faced with a referendum that threatened their continued membership of the EU. The SNP mobilized in defense of EU membership as the rest of the UK establishment struggled to unify on whether they were going to be pro-Europe or pro-Brexit. Both the Conservatives and Labour experienced internal party splits that hindered their ability to present a united message on the EU. Nicola Sturgeon asserted early on that the Scottish National Party were committed to protecting Scotland’s place in Europe.

#### *Why call a referendum?*

David Cameron made the decision to promise a referendum in the lead up to the 2015 general election. This came as a result of the growing dissention within the Conservative party with regard to the UK’s place in Europe. In addition, the United Kingdom Independence Party, UKIP, became a strong presence among right-leaning voters on account of its anti-immigration

and anti-UK integration platform (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015). Anti-EU sentiment was growing among typical Tory voters, especially following the 2008 economic crisis which had pushed the integrated bloc of states to breaking point. Cameron, who was fervently in favor of a continued membership of the EU, believed that a referendum was the best mechanism to put the issue to rest. After all, the use of a referendum had worked well for him with regard to the issue of Scottish independence. This would be a way in which Cameron could appease the anti-Europe faction within the Conservatives and then allow him to continue as PM with a more unified party behind him. David Cameron promised that the UK government would negotiate a new settlement with Brussels and ask the UK voters to either accept this new relationship with the EU or they would withdraw entirely from the European Union. Following the Conservative party managing to win back their majority in Westminster, the decision to hold the referendum was confirmed. It would take place on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and just like in 2014, this would be the most monumental decision faced by voters in a generation.

The Conservative party managed to rid themselves of the Liberal Democrats as they no longer needed them as part of a coalition to form a majority government. While the Conservatives did moderately well in England and Wales, they held only one seat in Scotland (Pike, 2015). Scotland was completely under the control of the Scottish National Party. This further fueled the growing disconnect between the Scottish voters and the rest of the UK's electorate. The Scots were further developing a taste for devolution and enjoying their separate identity, away from Westminster. The SNP continued to make social justice issues a priority, focusing further improving Scotland's public services and opening Scotland to refugees from the Middle East (Brooks, 2016).

*The Campaigns Begin*

Just like the 2014 independence referendum, the two campaigns began to form - 'Britain Stronger in Europe', which came to be referred to as 'Vote Remain', and 'Vote Leave' (Holbot, 2016). High level government officials began to pick sides. David Cameron made it clear that he believed the obvious choice was to remain in the EU with a new settlement from Brussels. Theresa May, the Home Secretary, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Phillip Hammond, the Foreign Secretary, agreed that remaining was the best option. However, other high-ranking Tories disagreed, which included Boris Johnson, the former Mayor of London, Michael Gove, Justice Secretary, and Chris Grayling, the Leader of the Commons. The Labour party were more unified with regard to backing remain; however, the Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was accused of sabotaging Labour's campaign to keep the UK in the EU (Asthana, 2016); opponents accused Corbyn of providing Labour with no direction or leadership. Both the SNP and the Liberal Democrats had total party unity on the subject of EU membership, with all MPs campaigning to remain.

Once again, the British media had a part to play. The UK's political establishment was being torn apart internally. The media were split regarding whether they were pro or anti Brexit, unlike during the Scottish Indy referendum. The media would frequently raise a possible policy issue as a result of Brexit or remaining within the EU, and the campaigns would respond. For instance, how would the UK fare on the outside of the single-market? What would a 'Vote Leave' victory mean for Northern Ireland that borders the Republic of Ireland? There were talks of the need for a border if the UK was no longer a part of the European Union which contributed to fresh fervor for a reunified Ireland. What would happen to the thousands of European citizens that lived and worked across the UK? Moreover, what about the British citizens scattered across the European Union? Would they have to return home? 'Vote Remain' hoped that these

unknowns would scare the electorate to vote overwhelmingly to remain. Unfortunately, the waves of euroscepticism that had swept across the UK since the 1980s were coming to boiling point. On top of that, the refugee crisis that had led to the increase in immigrants coming to the UK further aided 'Vote Leave's message.

At this point, the referendum was getting out of control with possible policy issues and beyond what David Cameron could have predicted. He returned from Brussels following extensive negotiations with several concessions from the EU including the power to limit EU migrants' in-work benefits and a treaty change which allowed the UK to be exempt from the 'ever closer union' policy which had alarmed anti-integration supporters at Westminster (Holbot, 2015). Unfortunately for David Cameron, the narrative for the campaign had already been established as immigration vs. economics debate. The 'Vote Leave' side insisted that the UK was being overrun with immigrants, thus making life harder for Britain's middle and lower class, known as the "left-behind voters" (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). On the other hand, 'Britain Stronger in Europe' attempted to reduce the referendum to a purely economic choice, much like 'Better Together' did regarding the currency union for Scotland in 2014. The two campaigns built their own distinctive narrative on the two major policy issues and therefore, no constructive debate occurred between the two sides.

The SNP attempted to stay out of the fray by running their own separate campaign from the parties at Westminster, known as 'Scotland Stronger In Europe'. A key strength that the SNP already had was the ability to build a positive campaign among an already politically active electorate. Rather than relying on a 'Better Together' tactic of drawing attention to the risks of the unknown, the SNP drew voters' attention to what the EU does for Scots. For example, "hundreds of thousands of jobs in Scotland are linked to trade with the rest of Europe (Scotland

Stronger In Europe, 2016)”. They also used their commitment for devolution from Westminster to distance themselves from the chaotic campaigns in the rest of the UK. The Scottish campaign also pointed out that the EU guaranteed protections to Scottish citizens such as “worker’s rights ... paid holiday leave, equal pay and anti-discrimination” laws (Scotland Stronger In Europe, 2016). I argue that the SNP has an outstanding ability to run campaigns with positive messages at the core. In the indy referendum, they were able to run a cultural campaign to enable Scots to take control of their own destiny. In 2016, they were able to do the same by building the message that Scotland is a vibrant part of Europe and the world. In the case of Westminster campaigns, for both 2014 and 2016, they ran boring campaigns based on fear rather than advantages. Despite the dynamic campaign, the SNP watched in shock as the rest of the UK became more and more supportive of leaving the economic union that the Scottish economy relied on.

### *The Result*

The end result of the 2016 referendum shocked the world. David Cameron’s gamble did not pay off. The right-wing, pro-UKIP wing of the Conservative party had managed to convince a bulk of the UK electorate that the opportunity of independence from the EU was too good to miss. The economic, ‘project fear’ tactics that had been successful in Scotland failed to convince the UK electorate as a whole. Although there were certain geographic areas that were more pro-EU than others, such as Scotland, London and Northern Ireland, the result ended with 48.11% voting to remain and 51.89% voting to leave (Hassan and Gunson, Eds, 2017). The SNP’s enlarged membership demanded to know how the Scottish government would respond. In the immediate aftermath of the vote, Nicola Sturgeon announced that another independence referendum was now “highly likely” (Hassan & Gunson, 2017).

Much like Alex Salmond, David Cameron was faced with the dilemma of what he should do next following the referendum defeat. Like Salmond, Cameron decided to resign, leaving the Conservative party in chaos. On the morning following the referendum, Cameron emerged from Downing Street, proclaiming that he didn't "think it would be right for him to try to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination" (BBC, 2016) on account of his fervent belief that the UK should have voted to remain in the EU. Cameron's resignation ignited a power struggle within the Conservative party that would determine the direction in which the government would take Brexit. The leadership race concluded with Theresa May emerging victorious but in a difficult position (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). After campaigning for 'Vote Remain', she was faced with having to carry out the wishes of the 'Vote Leave' side of risk a revolt from inside her party. On the other hand, as Home Secretary she had insisted that for the sake of security in the UK, it was in our best interest to remain in the EU. This placed her in a difficult position. Meanwhile, the Labour party was in the same chaotic position as the Tories. Jeremy Corbyn's half-hearted campaigning for remain had left his cabinet and backbenchers doubting his ability as leader (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). There was calls for his resignation. Westminster had descended into mayhem.

In the middle of all of this was Scotland. There were now two conflicting mandates at work. On one hand, there was the 55% of Scots that had voted to remain in the United Kingdom and the 45% that had voted to leave. On the other hand, there were the 62% of Scots that had voted to remain in the European Union and just 38% that wanted to leave (Hassan & Gunson, Eds, 2017). This further split an electorate that was already hyper-active with regard to politics. It is of course especially difficult for Scotland as the continued membership of the EU was such a big part of the 2014 indy referendum. The SNP crafted a political message throughout its



development of inclusiveness, especially with regard to the European Union. Furthermore, the SNP were given a new lease of life with the UK's decision to leave the EU because it was a perfect example of Scotland's democratic wishes being overturned by Westminster (Hassan and Gunson, Eds, 2017).

In the weeks and months following the 2016 referendum vote, the UK electorate waited to see whether the Conservative government would actually follow through on starting proceedings to leave the EU. The divided regions and demographic factors across the UK made any progress difficult for the Conservative government. May's government attempted to get its act together and form a solid strategy. Corbyn survived calls for his resignation and began to mount a feeble opposition to the Tories. The SNP's strong presence in Westminster following their landslide victory in 2015 came back into play. The 56 SNP MPs were led by Angus Robertson, who had taken over for Alex Salmond following his decision to return to Holyrood and serve as First Minister in 2007. In a way, Robertson took up the role of leader of the opposition in an attempt to fill the role that Labour was leaving vacant. This in turn led to the SNP being covered more in the media and continuing to erode the misperception that the SNP were finished following the failed referendum in 2014.

Negotiations between the British government and the European Union began in March 2017, giving the UK government two years to complete the process. Nicola Sturgeon has been exploring a wide variety of possible options for Scotland but is in a difficult position because negotiations are taking place between Westminster and Brussels, further marginalizing the wishes of the Scottish people. A number of possibilities have been discussed. Firstly, there were talks of the Brexit vote requiring the approval of the UK jurisdictions, meaning Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in addition to Westminster. There were also those that wanted the British

electorate to have a final say on the deal that would emerge following negotiations, but these were dismissed as out of hand (Hassan and Gunson, 2017). Secondly, Westminster could devolve the power to Holyrood that would allow them to remain in the EU whilst the rest of the UK would leave. However, this too relied on the ability of Holyrood to negotiate with the EU, which was not possible as Holyrood was being represented by Westminster. Thirdly and most popular of all, the Scottish parliament could be devolved the power to allow Scotland to remain a member of the single market but not a full member of the EU (Hassan and Gunson, 2016). Much is unclear currently as negotiations continue and it is not yet known what kind of a deal the UK government will emerge with. What appears to be developing is a tug of war between Holyrood and Westminster for legislative autonomy on Brexit.

Brussels has been placed in a difficult position as a result of the contentious climate between Spain and Catalonia since 2017. Spain is currently trying to deal with a separatist movement that threatens the territorial integrity of the country (Moreno et al, 1998). Tensions have risen over the past several decades and are close to breaking point. The Catalan government has expressed interest in independence from Spain but also a desire to remain in the European Union. Following a non-binding referendum, Spain has insisted that Brussels cannot negotiate with the sub-national group. Therefore, the same approach must be used with regard to Scotland as they are a sub-national group seeking separate negotiations. The EU must have a standard strategy for dealing with separatist groups, but this threatens Scotland's chances at a settlement of remaining in the EU whilst also remaining a part of the UK. This could reignite the independence debate; the SNP could reenergize their indy campaign as it becomes a debate of whether the UK or EU membership is best for Scotland.

### *The 2017 General Election*

Theresa May made the decision to call for a general election ahead of the 2020 scheduled election in an attempt to increase her mandate so that the government could deliver a Brexit with strong support from her party. Between March and April of 2017, negotiation progress was slow. May decided that the election would bring new energy to the negotiations. Moreover, she pointed out that it would be better to hold one early before the Brexit negotiations truly got started or the country would risk dividing their attention between the completion of negotiations and a general election in 2020 (BBC, 2017). Calling an election also seemed logical as Labour continued their internal squabbling over Corbyn's leadership. It was expected that the Conservatives would be able to pick up more seats to cement their position and the country could focus on achieving the best possible deal from Brussels. May handled the election badly, taking a back seat and thus allowing other candidates, particularly Corbyn to shine. Rather than showing the electorate that the Brexit negotiations were in safe hands, May came off as incompetent and withdrawn. Assuming that victory was assured turned out to be a dreadfully naïve assumption. What actually occurred was a complete rejection of May's approach to Brexit and left the country in even more chaos.

Theresa May had miscalculated. Instead of uniting the country, she had lost the majority that David Cameron had managed to achieve in 2015 and had forced the Tories back into coalition territory. In order to have a sufficient number of seats to hold a majority, Theresa May teamed up with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland. The Liberal Democrats, the former coalition party, made it clear as soon as the election was called in April that they would not enter into a coalition with the Tories (Liberal Democrats, 2017). Since the 2011 coalition with the Tories, the Liberal Democrats had been fighting to regain their

diminished credibility. Without the option of the Liberal Democrats, May was forced to join with the controversial DUP – a move that was met with a barrage of criticism from the SNP. The DUP only agreed to enter into an agreement with the Conservatives if they were provided with more funding, which eventually led to a £500m deal (UK Government, 2017). In exchange for the funds, the DUP would support the Tories on all motions of confidence, the budget and bills. Sturgeon argued that this was unethical of the Conservative party to enter into this deal because it was allowing Northern Ireland to have more funds than either Wales or Scotland, the two other devolved administrations. The move by May to form this deal made the Conservatives appear to be clinging onto power and seem even more out of touch with the average UK voter.

The Labour party performed much better than expected but still incredibly poorly in Scotland. In the aftermath of Brexit, Corbyn had been forced to fight for his position as leader of the party. He was under a great deal of pressure to ensure Labour would perform well in the election or he would inevitably face yet another leadership challenge and this would likely be his last. Although Labour wasn't predicted to do well in the election, Corbyn surprised the country by gaining thirty seats which directly led to the Tories being unable to form a majority government (BBC, 2017). In 2015, the Labour party had been left with just one seat left in Scotland; after 2017, they had managed to add six more, signifying a small resurgence in Labour support. This highlighted the fact that Labour had relied heavily on the Scottish electorate in the past in order to be an electable force in Westminster. With the SNP as the alternative, the Labour party was struggling to maintain its reputation as one of the two establishment parties in Scotland. Instead, it was becoming an SNP vs. Tory fight with Labour watching from the sidelines.

With regard to the SNP, the party found its position weakened as the number of MPs

diminished from 56 to 35. Almost immediately after the results were finalized, the SNP was proclaimed by the media to have lost the election and were on the way out. I argue that one must be careful about how to evaluate the impact of this decrease in MPs for the SNP. In the 2010 general election, the SNP won 6 seats in Westminster. In 2015, they won 56. This was an unprecedented and historic event. As mentioned previously, this was a direct response by Scottish voters expressing their frustration with the way the Westminster establishment continued to marginalize Scotland. In 2017, the outrage had diminished slightly and many of those who had voted SNP as a protest vote reverted back to their old party leanings of Tory or Labour. To say that the 2017 general election was a loss for the SNP is premature. Rather, one only has to look at the trajectory of the SNP votes that for the party to go from 6 seats in 2010 to 35 in 2017 is still a huge number. In addition, historically, the SNP have done much better in Holyrood elections when compared to Westminster (Hassan & Barrow, 2017). Although the number of seats decreased, this does not signify the end is nigh for the SNP.

There is some speculation that this decrease in SNP MPs shows the support for independence wavering. Rather, this decrease comes as a response to the evolution of Scottish politics. Much like Northern Ireland, the political context in Scotland is developing around the single constitutional issue of devolution and independence. The Tories have cemented themselves as the party of the union, whilst the Scottish National Party is the party for independence. This seems to leave Labour out of the picture in Scotland. The SNP is the party of the left. For Scottish voters, it is now a question of whether you value social justice but are willing to vote for independence or do you value the survival of the union more than the actual policy platform. The Liberal Democrats, who attempt to stay in the middle, can no longer function in Scotland. The question of independence has gone from a fringe-issue to a central

policy decision. Without a decisive referendum in Scotland, it seems unlikely that this dilemma will go away. Rather, it will continue and become all the more controversial and consuming.

Theresa May's decision to hold an early election did more harm than good. The Conservative majority was destroyed, and a costly coalition deal had to be struck. The SNP were brought back down to earth from their 2015 landslide. Theresa May should have focused her attention on delivering Brexit negotiations that would provide the British people with a strong deal that they could get behind. This would have then meant that the Conservatives could have fought a 2020 general election with a proud record to defend. Instead, May took a gamble that resulted in the loss of her majority, the loss of £500m to the DUP to keep her position as PM and gave Labour even more seats to prevent the passing of her legislation. For now, May must focus on achieving the best possible deal for Britain. However, the question of what a good deal would look like is still up for debate. The fractured Conservative party are divided on what parts of the EU they should seek to remain a part of. Should they stay in the single market? Should they keep the freedom of movement policy? Will a border between the UK and EU need to be constructed? Once these answers come to light, it will become clearer as to what will happen to the union and Scotland's place within it.

## **Chapter 8: Four Possible Futures for Scotland and the Union**

The SNP-led government risks Scotland being dragged out of the European Union despite the large support held by Scots for the institution. The party grew and developed on the contingency that Scotland could eventually be independent from the UK. However, the context is now more complex. Devolution has further convoluted matters; the Scottish parliament was created by Westminster, meaning that the UK government is attempting to continue acting like a unitary state negotiating with Brussels. However, the autonomy that devolution has given

Scotland means that there will be near constant legal challenges from the devolved legislatures, especially from Scotland. It is clear now that devolution took place with no real safeguards in place in the event of a large-scale constitutional question (Hassan & Gunson, Eds, 2017). For Nicola Sturgeon, remaining inside the European Union is paramount to Scotland's future economic success. But how can this happen? Will there be a second independence referendum for the Scots to rid themselves of the UK for good and therefore remain in the EU? Will Scotland stay within the UK and realize life on the outside of the EU is challenging? Will the UK thrive outside the EU and will Scotland remain with them? I argue that there are four strong possibilities, all within the complex context of Brexit, each with varying levels of likeliness.

*Possibility 1: A 2<sup>nd</sup> Referendum and a Yes Vote*

The first possibility is that the SNP are able to manage to call a 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum, a feat that seems difficult at the moment. The first referendum in 2014 was only possible because David Cameron and his government allowed the power to hold it to be sent to Holyrood from Westminster temporarily. Moreover, both the pro-independence side and pro-union side contended that it would be a once in a generation referendum. However, Nicola Sturgeon had originally wanted to have a referendum on independence before the end of the two-year Brexit negotiations, meaning before March 2019. This goal was crushed fairly early as Theresa May insisted that "now is not the time" (Hassan and Barrow, 2017). This rhetoric could mean that this leaves the door open to a second vote but only after the Brexit negotiations are complete. Unfortunately, this premise complicates matters for the SNP. If the Scottish government is forced to wait till after negotiations conclude, the SNP will have to hold a referendum during a period of even more uncertainty regarding the EU. There is no guarantee that Scotland could be immediately allowed back into the EU. Rather, Scotland could be forced into lengthy

negotiations with Brussels whilst also negotiating its way out of the United Kingdom. Since the Brexit vote, Sturgeon and the SNP have insisted that the circumstances have changed. The UK that Scottish voters decided to remain a part of no longer exists. It is now up to the SNP to craft a campaign that reassures undecided voters that membership of the EU is more important than continued membership with the UK. As is evident from the 2014 referendum, the SNP struggled to attract unsure voters because they focused their campaign heavily on the policy goals of an independent Scotland but not the financial or economic strategies that would be needed. However, the SNP have already proven themselves capable of running positive campaigns that can capture the attention of the electorate. It is not impossible that the SNP could learn from their mistakes and finally achieve their ultimate goal.

But what would happen to the SNP as a governing party if they achieve independence? I argue that the party has positioned itself as Scotland's social democratic party, replacing Labour along the way. For this reason, it is very possible that the SNP could continue on as the governing party of Scotland. However, it is difficult to predict what would happen to the pro-independence voter's political allegiances after independence is achieved. They could very well return to their former parties, meaning either Labour or the Conservatives. On the other hand, they could make the decision to stay with the SNP since they would have rid themselves of the Westminster establishment, thus making it easier for the SNP to pursue their policy goals.

As an independent country, the Scottish government would be able to deal directly with Brussels. Nicola Sturgeon would be in a position to travel to Brussels and meet with negotiators without having to compete with what Westminster wants. There is of course the problem of Brussels being under such pressure from Spain with regard to Catalonia. Brussels would be in a difficult position as the Spanish government insists that Brussels should not deal with separatist



movements. I argue however that because the Scottish government would have held a referendum with the approval of Westminster, it would be hard for Brussels to completely ignore the will of Scotland to join the EU.

*Possibility 2: A 2<sup>nd</sup> Referendum and a No Vote*

The second possibility is that the SNP are able to hold a second referendum on independence but that yet again, the electorate asserted that they didn't want to leave the UK. This could occur as a result of Theresa May managing to get a strong trade deal between the UK and Brussels. If this occurred, Scottish voters may make the decision to remain in the UK despite the fact that the UK would no longer be a part of the European Union. However, voters may think this is preferable compared to the long period of great uncertainty that would be assured if they decided to become independent from the UK and then had to rely on the Scottish government managing to get Scotland back into the EU.

This second possibility would be disastrous for the SNP. I predict that if a second referendum took place and the answer from the Scottish people was still no, the SNP could verge on collapse. The die-hard independence supporters would feel betrayed that the SNP had been given a second chance and squandered it. They would then leave and return to either Labour or the Conservatives and at the next Holyrood election, the SNP MSP seats would evaporate, leaving them unable to form a government. Although the national movement for independence would not disappear, a second no vote would kill the actual possibility of independence for at least a generation. It would fade into the background if the SNP were no longer in government and perhaps, the status-quo of Tories vs. Labour would return.

*Possibility 3: No 2<sup>nd</sup> Referendum and Further Devolution*

The third possibility would likely ensure that the SNP would be in government for years

to come and furthermore, the goal of independence would remain a politicized issue at the forefront of the political agenda. At the end of the Brexit negotiations, Theresa May could come back with a deal from the EU and insist that now was still not the time for the SNP to hold another referendum. As a concession, Westminster could grant some of the powers that they had taken back from Brussels and devolve them to Holyrood. These devolved powers could include powers over Scottish fishing, food safety, immigration or taxes (Hassan & Gunson, Eds, 2017). The goal of this would be to quell demands from the SNP that they had waited to see what the terms of the Brexit deal would be and now they would like the right to democratically decide if they'd like to continue UK membership. If this was to happen, the UK government has the potential to save the union. This could be done by going down a path of further federalization in an attempt to enter into a fresh type of union with the devolved administrations.

Further devolution would split the SNP once again in a way reminiscent of the gradualist-fundamentalist debate the party had in the 1970s. Some SNP supporters would say that further devolution would be enough for the foreseeable future and that it would be better for a second referendum to be put on the back burner until Scotland had more of an idea what life on the outside of the EU was like. On the other hand, some supporters would say that Scotland was just continuing to be ruled by Westminster and now, Scotland would not have the protections from the EU that they had previously enjoyed. They would argue that further devolution is not good enough and that rather, the time for a second referendum was now so that Scotland wouldn't be on the outside of the EU for too long. The internal party disagreement would run the risk of killing the momentum that the party had carefully been growing since they had entered government at Holyrood in 2007.

Provided that the SNP were able to hold their party together, they could continue to

govern in Holyrood and with even more policy areas to work with. This could allow them to further build the case for independence, especially if Scotland's economy begins to struggle on the outside of the European Union. However, once again, the SNP would come up against the uncertainty of whether or not Brussels would be open to them rejoining immediately. Skeptics have pointed out that Scotland may not automatically be considered. There are other states that have expressed an interest in joining the EU. To counter this claim, I can point out that none of the states that are currently in the process of trying to join the EU have been a member of the EU previously, whilst Scotland has.

*Possibility 4: No 2<sup>nd</sup> Referendum and No New Powers*

The fourth and final possibility would likely occur and then lead to a second referendum, but it is not clear as to when this would happen. If Theresa May returned from Brussels with a deal, either good or bad, she might decide not to devolve further powers to Scotland. Perhaps she may want a promise that the Scottish government would agree to hold no further referendums on independence before giving further powers to Scotland. The SNP could then meet this demand by attacking Westminster for holding the democratic will of the Scottish people to ransom. Moreover, Theresa May could simply insist that no more devolution will be occurring, in a bid to reverse the trend of decentralization that began in 1997. Arguably, it was the start of devolution that gave rise to a more powerful SNP.

If there are no new powers given to the Scottish government, a second referendum would remain on the table. Sturgeon has held onto this threat as a stick to beat Westminster with whenever they go against Scotland's wishes. Politics in Scotland are beginning to mirror the politics of Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, politics revolve around the constitutional question of whether they truly belong in the UK or whether they should rejoin Ireland. This

question has grown in complexity with the Brexit vote. Ireland is a part of the European Union whilst when the UK no longer is, Northern Ireland will be on the outside of the EU. This raises the dilemma of how the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland will work. The constitutional question has shaped the nature of Northern Irish politics and the same seems to be happening in Scotland (Hassan and Barrow, 2017). Right now, there is a risk that Scottish politics is going to descend into pro vs. anti-independence as the debate grows in both contentiousness and complexity. It is remarkable that the SNP began as a fringe, single-issue party and they have managed to grow both themselves and the issue of independence itself so that it now threatens to completely takeover Scottish politics until an acceptable conclusion is reached.

*Which possibility is most likely?*

Of these four possibilities, it is difficult to say with certainty which of these is most probable. It is also important to point out that there are many variables involved in these predictions and that it is possible some of these variables could change. After all, a week is a long time in politics. For instance, it is possible that Theresa May will no longer be prime minister by the time these negotiations conclude in 2019. There may be a new head of the Conservative party that could steer the party towards a harder or softer Brexit. The Conservative-DUP coalition could collapse, leading to yet another general election. The Labour party could build on their successes from 2017 and manage to gain a majority in the event of a general election, thus throwing the Brexit negotiations into chaos. The EU could stand firm and not allow Scotland to immediately re-enter. On the other hand, they could allow the Scotland's re-entrance to the EU to be expedited. This is not impossible. In the past, the EU have made exceptions – they fast-tracked both Eastern Germany and Cyprus when they applied to join

(Hassan & Gunson, Eds, 2017). There are also demands from parties, such as the Liberal Democrats, insisting that there should be a second referendum on the Brexit deal, effectively giving the British people the power to back out of the exit entirely. The SNP could be met backlash on account of a policy they have implemented in the past which could cost them support. For instance, during the time that this paper was being completed, Scotland and the entire UK were in the middle of a particularly strong flu season that was pushing the National Health Service (NHS) to breaking point. Sturgeon and health ministers were being met with anger from patients who were facing operations and procedures being cancelled due to weather-related and flu pressures (Johnson, 2018). The SNP are not immune to policy failure. Brexit negotiations continue, and it is still no clearer as to what the outcome of the negotiations will be. In the next year, the SNP must continue to nurture their core voters and continue to hold Westminster to account at both Westminster and Holyrood.

### *Conclusion*

The SNP has been the dominant political force in Scotland for over ten years and has recently emerged as a force in British politics. It is necessary to take stock of what they have achieved and what their blunders have been. With the creation of Holyrood, the SNP initially struggled to adjust to their new legislative arena whilst maintaining a presence at Westminster. This struggle was not limited to just the SNP, both the Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Labour endeavored to hone their policy platforms towards the Scottish electorate on devolved issues (Hassan and Barrow, 2017). The SNP were taken in the right direction under the leadership of Alex Salmond when he returned as leader in 2004 from Westminster. His return was the catalyst that began the SNP's professionalization regarding party financing, campaigning and policy-making. Once the SNP entered into a minority government in 2007, the party focused

on social justice issues towards the left of the political spectrum, putting it into direct conflict with Labour. The party also focused on campaigning for independence in a positive light in an attempt to bring more voters to their cause. As the SNP's experience in government grew, so did the policy goals they wanted to pursue. The British media began to take more notice of them, especially as the upcoming independence referendum was announced in 2011.

Whilst the SNP's internal transformation was the dominant reason for their rise, the external context must be considered as well. The party was able to use Westminster as their adversary and blame them for their policy failings. For instance, spending cuts and budget constraints imposed by the UK government on the Scottish government allowed the SNP to often divert responsibility for its policy failings towards Westminster (Hassan and Barrow, Eds, 2017). Budget austerity makes it difficult for the SNP to implement certain legislation which in turn, frustrates the SNP's left-leaning base. The SNP is constantly struggling to find the balance whilst maintaining its central policy goal of independence. In addition to the ever-present dominance of Westminster, the UK political parties' treatment of the SNP also contributed to the resulting SNP dominance. Neither the Labour party nor the Conservatives took the threat of independence seriously until the SNP were already making impressive gains during general elections. Neither of them could compete with the positive message of inclusiveness and social justice that the SNP rallied behind. The Liberal Democrats refused to enter into coalition with the SNP in 2007, which resulted in the SNP creating a minority government and this in turn was the beginning stage of SNP dominance in Holyrood. The collapse of the Scottish Socialist party in the run up to the 2007 Holyrood election meant that many of the Socialist voters voted for the SNP instead. Suffice to say that the SNP improved internally but it also owes a great deal of its success to the underestimation and actions from other UK political parties.

For now, it is still unclear as to what the future holds for Scotland and the United Kingdom. The 2017 general election was yet another bump in the road for the SNP. As is evident from tracing their journey back to when they first formed, the remaking of the SNP has not always been a smooth journey. I believe that if the SNP are to be successful, the party must re-examine their policy record and continue to re-invent themselves with a clear, long-term strategy despite the chaotic times we are living in. Only then will the party be able to complete their final goal of independence whilst maintaining their role as Scotland's governing party. The SNP are faced with the challenge of attempting to speak for an entire nation despite the fact that their popular appeal is limited (Hassan & Barrow, Eds, 2017). Furthermore, they have been in power for ten years now, meaning that they now have a policy record to defend to their opponents or to celebrate amongst their supporters. Now that the SNP have entered the third and final stage of becoming a credible governing third-party, they no longer possess what had originally made them so appealing – the role of the outsider, fringe group. They are now part of the Scottish establishment and are struggling to maintain the momentum that brought them to power. The Scottish electorate turned out in their droves to vote for independence in 2014 but since then, they have had to vote in two general elections and another referendum on EU membership. The Scottish people could be growing tired of making large-scale, political decisions and this could put a damper on a second indy referendum if it were to take place.

As for the UK and the EU, only time will tell. The entire international community is watching the Brexit negotiations with great interest. The vote to leave the EU came as a result of a culmination of economic anger, cultural anxiety and political alienation (Hassan & Gunson, Eds, 2017). Now that Article 50 has been triggered, the two sides must now negotiate an exit deal and then, an EU-UK trade deal. In addition, new agreements must be reached on security

and foreign policy issues. It is a daunting task and it will inevitably shape what could happen to the UK and the EU. If a bad deal is reached, perhaps with the UK on the outside of the single market, the UK government risks giving fresh ammunition to the SNP-led Scottish government, reigniting the question of independence. This could also have repercussions in Wales and Northern Ireland. If the EU handle the negotiations badly, they risk other member-states holding referendums on membership and the eventual unravelling of the whole multi-national entity. The Eurozone's economy is growing at its fastest pace since the economic downturn, with GDP growth up by 0.6% (Eurostat, 2018). This is likely to be met with dismay at Westminster and further push Scotland to independence in an attempt to remain in the area of economic growth. It is startlingly clear that in this period of uncertainty, any number of possibilities are feasible, and I look forward to observing the myriad of variables collide in the future.



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