



The Scottish Independence Referendum: A Lesson in How Not to Listen to the People?

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The Scottish Independence Referendum: A Lesson in How Not to Listen to the People?

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A Thesis in the Field of Government
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

The issue of Scottish independence has been and remains of much discussion in United Kingdom (UK) politics, and in this matter no voice has been more committed than that of the Scottish National Party (SNP) who to this day press for a further referendum. It is entirely conceivable such a referendum would take Scotland from its current post Smith Commission “devo max” status and present it with all the opportunities and burdens of a fully sovereign nation. The most recent referendum was hotly contested, and this thesis seeks to demonstrate the largest swing of opinion on a referendum issue ever recorded in British political history. The work examines events before, during, this period to ascertain underlying factors and developments within this period. The thesis builds a framework structured around public polling data that offers a narrative highlighting five significant events: the announcement of the ballot itself, two public debates between each side of the policy argument, the issue of “the Vow,” and the ballot process including the outcome.

The majority opinion within Scotland remained content to stay within the UK and retain the benefits of what David Rezvani termed “Partially Independent Territory Status.” The partially independent territory status offered more accurately represented the view of the “Median Voter” (Hotelling et al) indicating a preference for slightly increased levels of autonomy versus outright independence. This thesis demonstrates poor understanding of the public on the part of each side of the debate, each blind to what might be termed a ‘Silent Decisive Majority.’ Champions of future efforts might consider these historical lessons to better gauge the will and preference of the public at large before engaging in sweeping initiatives of sovereign consequence.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Following the Act of Union in 1707, the nations of Scotland and England became a United Kingdom.¹ Since that event, the union has by and large been peaceful, co-operative, and of mutual benefit. During that time both nations have simultaneously industrialised, democratized and evolved into the present form, one that in general has been conspicuous in its avoidance of extremism and national autarky. Since the idea of Parliamentary democracy was of course much more limited in scope in the early 1700s given that no serious attention was paid to the notion of extension of the franchise until the Reform Acts of the 1830s, the Act of Union was brought into effect without any democratic involvement from the Scottish people in the sense it is now understood whatsoever.

Until the late 20th century, no directly elected assembly was held in Scotland, and although measures discussed herein allowed Scotland a voice in the politics of the UK in general, there was no explicit degree of home rule in Scotland in particular. In his opening statement of his article *The Scottish Independence Referendum 2014*, Tom Mullen describes the history of government of the peoples of the British Isles as “complex” and highlights the well-known fact that it involves the governance of four historic nations and four peoples.²

It is however incorrect to say that during this period Scotland lacked any form of legislative representation, nor was there an absence of UK governance concerning to what might be termed “Scottish issues.” Indeed, there can be observed from the late Victorian period a continued trend of de facto separate provision and treatment of Scottish issues

¹ Formal UK statute citation 1706 c.11

² Tom Mullen, “The Scottish Independence Referendum 2014,” *Journal of Law and Society* 41, no.4 (December 2014): 627-640.

evolved by means of separate administrative function via a range of offices within the UK governmental structure and the (still to this day, unwritten) constitution adopted Parliamentary conventions within the legislative process all of which deal with Scottish issues such as the Sewell³ and (whilst it existed) “English Votes for English Laws” conventions.⁴ Detailed consideration of the history and development of these measures in appreciable detail is beyond the narrow scope of this thesis and would make an engaging subject for analysis in its own right, however this arrangement did not, does not and never could constitute the same level of autonomy of a national sovereign assembly in the purest sense of the word. In particular, the absence of the same necessarily prevents the exercise of a national vote for Scotland as a territory by means of a uniquely Scottish plebiscite. Rather, until recently and in balance however, it did allow a franchise in UK affairs in Scotland qua member of the UK that also obtained to every other part of the UK.

Notwithstanding the above, a movement arose with a key stated aim of obtaining full independence and this is at present represented in the form of the Scottish National Party. From modest beginnings it has grown to a party which at time of writing enjoys the majority of electoral support amongst the Scottish electorate and the only political party with an internal constitutional pledge to bring Scottish independence about.

Any report of this nature ought to contain an element of historical overview and I have endeavored to be as economical as possible concerning the history which these nations enjoy and focused on the development of the Scottish independence movement. Any review of the literature concerning the referendum is not short of general material. Mullen highlights a general observation in the body of literature that within the UK it is a common observation that regarding the issue of “nationality”, people in the UK may (and I would suggest, do)

³ Now enshrined in Section 28 of the Scotland Act 2016: UK Public General Acts 2016 c.11

⁴ A short-lived attempt to restrict votes in the House on solely English issues to the vote of English MPs, this was abolished on July 13th, 2021: Hansard Vol 699 debate title “English Votes for English Laws”.

entertain multiple personal opinions of identity, and these extend from the regional to in this context, the supranational, and readily combine their feelings of national (in the sense of belonging to a member nation) with the notion of being British.⁵ Even the most general acquaintance with the political situation in Northern Ireland for instance highlights the respective importance of this distinction as much as it demonstrates the potential difficulties over disagreement regarding it.

Mullen highlights that the existence of distinct political institutions within the governmental structure of the UK could be a matter which reinforces the existence of the existing union but could also undermine it, serving to focus attention on the innate capacity of the country to govern itself. He concludes by highlighting a “political necessity to honour a pledge for further devolution” an observation which at the time he wrote it was clearly tenable, however Mullen leaves open the question of why this may have been the case confining himself to the observation of how dangers may arise if the extension of further devolved authority fails to “engage the public.”⁶

Mooney and Scott in their paper *The 2014 Scottish Independence Debate: Questions of Social Welfare and Social Justice* come to a strong conclusion that as far as they were concerned, the dominant issues were welfare and their identification of a correlation between levels of support for the Yes vote and the areas of economic privation is noted.⁷ It is nevertheless implicit in their analysis that the issues they identify are simply two among many which serves to highlight the issue that as in any mixed question, there were many potential elements to the choice which the voters faced.

One published research endeavor approached the issue from the perspective of the potential issue of Prospect Theory and demonstrated that perception of risk and the framing

⁵ Mullen, “The Scottish Independence Referendum.”

⁶ Ibid, p.640.

⁷ Gerry Mooney and Gill Scott, “The Scottish Independence Debate: Questions of Social Welfare and Social Justice,” *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice* 23, no. 1 (February 2015): 5-16.

of it was relevant to potential economic issues.⁸ Morisi found perhaps unsurprisingly that Scottish independence risk evaluation and personal expectation was of influence in Scottish voter behaviour. In his paper “It all depends on your perspective: economic perceptions and the demography of voting in the Scottish Independence Referendum”, Professor Sir John Curtice emphasised this aspect of the matter and made the point that voter behaviour was correlative at least generally according to what he described as “social and economic circumstances.”⁹ He concludes the debate may have been an argument in part about whose interest might or might not be best served by changing the constitutional status of the country.

However (and this was beyond the scope of either paper) neither Morisi nor Curtice addressed the issue of where those interests and expectations came from in the first place and what might be the countervailing issues which militated for or against them. No review of the matter would be complete without consideration of whether the SNP paid consideration of what the Scottish people would in fact wish for in the first place. Historically this has led me to review the works of Stephen Maxwell, a writer by general repute taken to be a central figure in the formation of SNP policy. Maxwell was continually active from the 1970s until his death in 2012 and his published ideas are clearly redolent in the policy positions of the SNP today, and two of his key works, namely “Arguing for Independence: Evidence, Risk and the Wicked Issues” and his earlier “The Case for Left-Wing Nationalism” can be handily summarised in that nothing less than full independence was the only acceptable alternative to the then current model.^{10 11}

⁸ Davide Morisi, “Voting under uncertainty: The effect of information in the Scottish independence referendum,” *Journal of Election, Public Opinion and Parties* 26, no. 3 (2016): 354-372.

⁹ John Curtice, “It all depends on your perspective: economic perceptions and the demography of voting in the Scottish independence referendum,” *Fraser of Allender Economic commentary*, 38, no. 2 (2014): 147-152.

¹⁰ Stephen Maxwell, “Arguing for Independence: Evidence, Risk and the Wicked Issues,” *Scottish Affairs* 23, no. 2 (April 2014): 250-55.

¹¹ Ben Jackson, “The Case for Left-Wing Nationalism,” in *The Case for Scottish Independence*, Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Maxwell argued from a doctrinal standpoint however, and I find it telling that the issue of what the Scottish people might wish for was assumed to be independence, with no real consideration that this might or might not in fact be the case. The issue of independence attracted interest from the international academic community. In particular there was a deal of comparative analysis with respect to other provincial movements, namely Quebec and Catalonia.¹² However conspicuous by its absence in a review of the literature was any weighty consideration of whether and if so to what extent the binary choice presented was of itself a flawed endeavour inasmuch as it left open the issue that the preferred alternative was or may have been neither.

The only analysis I have found which raised the matter explicitly was a paper by Sharp et al of Durham University published after the event itself.¹³ Although the paper contains many observations, I found accurate, nevertheless, a central observation to this work, namely that “the binary question appears to block the path to devo max” was made almost in passing to the central analysis contained within it.¹⁴

The median voter hypothesis is a concept developed from the seminal work of Harold Hotelling by Duncan Black which posits that where voter preferences on an issue can be ranked according to their proximity to a voter’s individual preference, the preferred option will be the one which is the most proximate to the opinion of the median voter.^{15 16} Even the most ill-acquainted student of pre-calculus will intuitively appreciate the concept: effectively it will be the policy of a candidate most close to the median which stands to capture the greater area “under the curve” than the alternative which does not. For completeness here I

¹² See e.g. Duclos, “The Strange Case of the Scottish Independence referendum. Some elements of comparison between the Scottish and Catalan cases,” *Revue Francaise De Civilisation Brittanique*, XX no 2 (2015).

¹³ J.Sharp, A Cumbers, J Painter, N.Wood. “Deciding whose future? Challenges and opportunities of the Scottish Independence Referendum 2014 for Scotland and beyond,” *Political Geography* 41 (July 2014): pp 32-42.

¹⁴ See footnote 12 Ibid p.40.

¹⁵ Harold Hotelling, “Stability in Competition,” *The Economic Journal* 39, no. 153 (1929): 41-57.

¹⁶ Duncan Black, “The Median Voter Theorem,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 1948.

will note that although attractive as a basic concept, it does come with dangers: Further thought (and theory) yields another more nuanced observation.

In real life, distributions of opinion within a population can be and often are skewed and can even demonstrate bimodality. Though the median voter theorem was initially explored by Black in terms of being defined to apply only under classic “single peak” distribution terms, and under those conditions of course the ascertainment of where precisely the median lies is a simple matter to discern, it nevertheless highlights a danger in the oversimplification of the application of the idea. The danger is this: that an assumption that “the median opinion” will necessarily lie on the ordinal mid-point in the total spectrum of opinion expressed on any issue is not necessarily the case in a real-life population. Means are not necessarily Medians at all within a statistical context and it is equally erroneous to hold that they are within a political one either. A clear example of a context in which this observation can be said to apply is that observed by Messrs Jones, Sirianni and Fu who in their paper of 2022 observed that a bimodal distribution of voter ideology will serve to undermine the relevance of it to a given ballot.¹⁷ Yet there is a clear general body of support of academic and economic analysis supporting the underlying validity of the theory.

Academic writing has considered this issue in particular regarding the behaviour of what Adams et al referred to as “niche parties” in their article *Are Niche parties Fundamentally Differed from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties’ Policy Shifts 1976-1998*.¹⁸ This analysis provides support for the proposition that in the case of “niche parties” (which they would categorise the SNP as given the pre-eminent single issue approach to the independence matter) there is an

¹⁷ Jones, Sirianni and Fu, “Polarization, abstention and the median voter theorem,” *Humanities and Social Science Communications* 9, no. 1 (2022): 1-12.

¹⁸ James Adams, M Clark and others, “Are Niche parties fundamentally differ from Mainstream Parties? The causes and the Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties’ Policy Shifts, 1976-1988,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no 3 (2006): 513-529.

observable general failure to adjust policy posture in response to evidence of public opinion, even though Adams et al also concluded that this failure was not necessarily likely to enhance their level of support, more mainstream parties were both more likely to adjust and profit from the adjustment concerned in term of increased voter share. A subsequent development of this line of research was made by Bischof and Wagner in their 2020 study “What Makes Parties Adapt to Voter Preferences? The Role of Party Organisation, Goals and Ideology.”¹⁹ They highlighted inter alia that potential reasons for this might lie in the fact that niche parties are generally more staffed by and supported by activists, that they prioritise policy over popularity and lay particular emphasis on ideology as opposed to voter wishes as their primary *raison d’etre*. From the foregoing account, and in the material analysed here, it is certainly the case that on no occasion did the objective of any degree of autonomy other than the achievement of full independence appear to be under consideration by the SNP, which would appear to suggest conformity with the paradigm identified by these writers.

Returning to the Durham observation made earlier, the issue of whether or not the eventual position adopted by the no lobby, namely that Scotland was to remain within the UK under increased levels of autonomy may have been functionally neutered as a consequence of the binary nature of the vote offered and quickly put aside until the very eve of the vote itself, I posit here that to have done so may have been to ignore a crucial possibility, namely that it was an alternative which was substantially one which more closely represented the wishes of the median Scottish voter in the first place. The observation made by the writers noted above however, namely that more mainstream “big tent” organisations tend to be more open to and responsive to apparent shifts in public attitude would also appear to be worthy of consideration when analysing the response referred to as The Vow by the No lobby.

¹⁹ Bischof and Wagner, “What makes Parties adapt to voter preferences? The role of Party Organization, Goals and Ideology,” *British Journal of Political Science* 50 no. 1 (2017): 391-401.

Accounts of the live events within the timeline concerning the vote itself are gathered from a range of sources, notably the variety of Scottish National newspapers which are cited where mentioned, and also the published works of Iain MacWhirter, who notably recorded the events concerned.²⁰ Whereas MacWhirter's conclusions are open to challenge, his narrative and commentary on the events of the matter are verifiable in concurrence to other reportage, and as such appear to carry weight as a record of notable event.

As concerns the mathematical analysis, in the absence of any ability to show causal link from this data, which I concede is a substantial likely area of criticism in this enquiry. This work confines itself to trend analysis which can be timeously graphed and presented as both singular and aggregated representation of the raw data sets obtained to assess the rate of change within the relevant time frames of significant events and developments using a standard linear regression using publicly available dataq software.²¹

1.1.Key Dates Under Scrutiny

The baseline employed against which the hypothesis is tested is the date of August 7th, 2013, this date being the formal announcement of the ballot itself. Earlier data will be referred to later, principally with regard to exploration of the general issue of the possible pre-existence of a "third way" constituency issue which I hypothesise was something of an ignored alternative until immediately before the final vote itself.²² Although the hypothesis outlined demands only analysis and interpretation of trends from the announcement date itself I include earlier opinion data as some proof that there was indeed a pre-existing body of support for the third option. The campaign conducted was one which was fiercely fought and can be said to have contained three key events.

²⁰ Iain McWhirter, *Disunited Kingdom*.

²¹ One among many such engines and available generally at <https://dataq.com>

²² In Chapters 2, 3 and 5 of this work.

The first was a nationally televised and highly watched and reported debate on the matter conducted between the leader of the leave campaign, head of the SNP Alex Salmond, and Alistair Darling a former Chancellor of the UK (the second highest office in UK government). This occurred on August 5th, 2014.

The second was something of a “return match” conducted by the same two protagonists several weeks later on August 25th. Each debate was given extremely high levels of reportage in the media as well as similarly high levels of commentary, scrutiny and analysis and a narrative is included to provide background to the trends observed.²³

The third key event was the issue of what was universally referred to as The Vow. The Vow was a tied hands promise issued publicly and on unanimous terms by the existing UK political establishment as whole with cross party affirmation to grant further devolved powers to the existing Scottish assembly in the event that the Scottish electorate voted to remain within the UK.²⁴ One should note that this promise was honoured, and the recommendations of the swiftly following Smith Commission resulted in the grant of further legislative powers which amount to what is now referred to as the current “devo max” balance of authority.

The last event referred to is the ultimately determinative one: the final result itself which was polled on September 18th 2014. The result is a matter of public and well-known record. 55.3% voted to remain, and 44.7% voted to leave on a turnout figure of 84.6%.²⁵

My general research questions and hypothesis are:

²³ I have found in the Guardian newspaper to be the most exhaustive of the published narratives of the televised events concerned. In each case the narratives are found in the Guardian archive. The first was published in the Guardian in the August 5th 2014 edition in an article by S Carrell and L Brooks headed “1st Scottish Debate: Salmond and Darling in angry clash over independence” and can be found online at www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/aug/05/alex-salmond-alistair-darling-scotland-debate-independence and www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/aug/05/alex-salmond-alistair-darling-scotland-debate-alex-salmond-alistair-darling

²⁴ *The Daily Record*, September 16th 2014 p.1.

²⁵ “Scottish Independence Referendum Report” published by the UK Electoral Commission can be found at twww.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Scottish-independence-referendum-report.pdf

1. Did Scottish attitudes alter during the period under which the referendum was conducted in general, and following the three key events under scrutiny? Did the electorate change during the process, and if so by how much, in which direction?
 2. If so, what changes can be timeously correlated to the three key events referred to?
- Concerning the first question, my hypothesis is that polling data will reflect clear changes in Scottish views regarding independence before and after the three key events during the process, namely the aforementioned first debate, second debate and The Vow of greater autonomy itself. Concerning the second question, four sub hypotheses:

1. During the campaign there was a clear and substantial trend to be observed of growing support for the Yes vote.
2. That there was an apparent and substantial late shift in opinion between the issue of The Vow and the ballot itself away from the Yes vote position.
3. A pattern demonstrates support for the assertion that the underlying body of voter opinion contained a constituency which had to some extent been overlooked and not considered due to the binary nature of the choice initially presented by the ballot, namely that between full independence and the status quo ante.
4. This constituency, when taken together with the “No” constituency was significant enough in number to warrant the assertion that it represented the alternative most closely akin to the views of the median Scottish voter: a position akin to the Partially Independent Territory status.

To analyse this, voter behaviour during the period between the announcement of the referendum and the actual vote itself has been scrutinised by means of the analysis of periodic polling data from a variety of independent polling sources. Since Scotland is by any light an established democracy with a strong civil culture, the writer is fortunate in that the issue attracted continuous polling activity throughout the period concerned from a variety of

professional polling organisations. Notwithstanding this, and as counselled, the this thesis has been wary of the possibility of vagary in the collection and interpretation of collected data and has given consideration to such errors of interpretation as may arise such as asymmetric sampling within the surveyed sample, inadequate sample size where found to so be, and whether any differences may arise from response due to differences in phraseology in the question asked and found no substantial issue to arise from those considerations.

An analysis of the behaviour of the electorate in the period has been conducted against the general posture of the UK political establishment and in particular with respect to the aforementioned notable events which occurred during the timeline. Care has been taken to obtain and subject the published polling data to scrutiny regarding conduct and treatment of the data to ensure statistically valid conclusions can be drawn from it, and in particular any aggregation of the separate findings. Rates of change analysis have been taken and the results interpreted with the due caution concerning correlation and causation and tentative correlations between change the events and changes in voter behaviour identified, both away from and latterly towards the eventual result.

The analysis of the overtures used by the UK establishment has also given rise to a potential null sub hypothesis: namely that the tactic of attempting to persuade the Scottish electorate by means of engendering fear of the consequences had the very opposite effect and turned a starting level of opposition comfortably in favour of the status quo into a near majority of those in favour of independence courtesy of a shrinking “don’t know” constituency. Intriguing that such a conjecture may be, the writer acknowledges that the extent to which this could be investigated from the data set would be limited at best since post hoc, propter hoc is a potential logical fallacy that all should be wary of. It might however make for an interesting further topic of direct research, not least of all since a similar pattern

can be observed to have occurred during the infamous Brexit vote which occurred shortly after, and this correlation is dealt with within that limited context in the conclusions.

1.2. The Polling Data Proper

The data used here has been obtained from published reports conducted by polling organisations. These are YOUNGOV, Survation, and ICM.²⁶ Since it must be acknowledged that the secondary nature of the data collection means it cannot be presented as first-hand evidence, then it behoves me to assess whether or not the findings concerned can be taken as sufficiently reliable to be of use in considering the information they offer. It may be helpful to set these out here in preparation for the foregoing discussion.

In considering this matter for this purpose, I propose to take the self-reporting details concerning parameters, sample size and publication of data findings of each given survey at face value for this purpose as to the terms upon which it is purported to exhibit. I assert that this can be confidently assumed in the light of the general practice history of the organisations concerned. I am satisfied as to this from the general published criteria of each agency, all of whom are routinely regarded as being of such reliability as to deserve common and general citation in the UK. If this assumption can be reliably made, I posit that the data yielded can be confidently found to be accurate as to its assertions as to the following parameters:

1. It is taken as read by me from the published data that all surveys were conducted entirely within the Scottish jurisdiction on the dates advertised.
2. That in every case that preliminary questioning by each organisation concerned has screened subjects as to their nationality, age, capacity to understand and capacity to participate in the survey concerned.

²⁶ A collation of this data can be found at [Wikipedia.org/wiki/opinion_polling_on_Scottish_Independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/opinion_polling_on_Scottish_Independence). Much of it is also repeated at part 6 of the House of Commons Report research paper 14/50 entitled “Scottish Independence Referendum 2014 Analysis of results” and can be downloaded at researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk under reference RP14-50/RP14-50.pdf

A prudent researcher should be wary of appeals to authority however, and I have researched the publication history of all of the organisations whose data has been referred to and found that each of the organisations concerned are well established researchers in the field, and that on each occasions the conduct of the polling research appears to me to have been conducted under such conditions concerning sample size, manner of collection, location of subject, neutrality of approach to the subject, neutrality of approach to the subject and neutrality of phraseology of question as would be acceptable regarding the level of objectivity in their collection demonstrating reliability for the purposes of evaluation.

1.3.The Linguistic and Phraseological limitations which may arise from differences between polling questions

It is an inescapable fact that the polls of course differ in phraseology between each other. Different polls asked by different organisation ask differently phrased questions. The issue must therefore be addressed, and the question dealt with as to whether any difference in phraseology of itself is or is likely to result in a different or misleading conclusion as to its import than might otherwise have been the case. I posit that this matter can be addressed by a determination of the respective commonalities and apparent differences which can be said to obtain between the surveys themselves. I can report the following:

Each of the poll questions was phrased in a manner which allowed in principle at least, binary response to the issue of whether given a choice between either independence or remaining within the Union, the subject would have been able to reflect that choice.

Where any gradation of preference was examined, the inclusion of categories which reflected a “strong” or “very strong” preference of opinion for either alternative would, it is submitted be amply within such a category of opinion that allowed a parallel conclusion to be drawn of accord with those which did not facilitate a graded response.

The use and analysis of polling data has in both the world of academe and that of realpolitik attracted a substantial amount of scrutiny. In his most apposite article, *The Uses and Misuses of Polls*, Michael Traugott observes in a refreshing reminder that “the foundation of good reporting on public opinion is good data.”²⁷ That of itself gives rise to the observation that sampling can and may of itself give rise to many areas of inaccuracy which can arise for a variety of factors such as biased questions and unrepresented selective sampling. Whereas I hesitate to use the acronyms he employs for Self-selecting Listener Opinion Polls, and Computerised Response Audience Polls too liberally here, I make myself aware that any researcher must check that his data set does not contain, or at the very least must contain as little SLOP or CRAP as possible, and where present, the same must be scrutinised to ensure that the overall findings are not rendered invalid due to the degree of SLOP or CRAP upon which they are based.

Randomisation is of course a necessity in general analysis within a large population, and as such Traugott advises that focus group feedback and in particular surveys which admit of the potential for what is referred to in the UK vernacular as “larding” (ie which can create findings based on potentially biased findings due to multiple responses from those minded to attempt to influence the overall result by means of repeated response) should be avoided. The general rule of the Highway Code, “if in doubt, don’t” should apply to the treatment of such data sets also, and for this reason I have eschewed reliance upon them.

Likewise, he observes that sample sizes can be potentially misrepresentative when very small, and I note this and again have checked for this as a background issue. Traugott likewise makes the point that polling data generally collected is typically amassed through a request for preference between closed ended binary alternatives, and the data under scrutiny was collected in this fashion. Traugott observes that this has the advantage of ease of

²⁷ Michael Traugott, “The Uses and Misuses of Polls,” Semantic Scholar.

interpretation, and it is inherent that binary data sets are more easily interpretable within their terms than other more nuanced data sets, however he likewise observes in effect that dichotomous responses may tend to reinforce a tendency on the part of the media at least, to report as **published** opinion a state of affairs that oversimplifies what **public** opinion might accurately happen to be.

I would observe that in the context of a referendum, where the final question was itself posed as a binary alternative, this caution may be of more limited value than when considering for instance opinion in a multi-party or candidate election, it does nevertheless give rise to two significant observations in the context under scrutiny: the first is that within the context of this referendum, the alternative to “remain” within the UK was presented during the process and until the period immediately before the vote itself as meaning “remain on the then current terms of political autonomy from the general UK establishment.”

The second matter which follows from Traugott’s observation which I find particularly relevant to this analysis is that where polling data are collected via forced choice questions, presenting no opportunity to offer no opinion (and I would add, any furthermore nuanced preference), Traugott’s point that it creates dichotomous reportage which “often oversimplifies the world” is a matter I consider of potential relevance here.

Notwithstanding the observation that given that the eventual ballot was presented and was always advertised and presented as a binary alternative, reportage on the likely voting intention does not appear to address the issue of those voters who might say “given the choice between A and B I’d choose B (or A), but what I really want is C.” In the context of binary choice, those holding such a posture can be in a position which goes unremarked, unheard and ultimately ignored, or is at least for them a choice between the least unattractive alternative available. I fully acknowledge that the strength of conclusion which can be drawn

as concerns innominate or undecided conclusions is more nuanced and therefore more difficult to assess accurately, accordingly I deal with this issue in the following terms:

A particular issue relating to the position of the subject who reports an undecided opinion

I note that in each questionnaire, a record was made, and data was taken on the number of subjects who reported a non-binary approval. This raises an issue which is noted was the subject of no formal or apparently public deeper questioning in the data collection on their part as to the reason for their position or motive. Accordingly, this may raise the following issue concerning this. If a subject reports that they are simply undecided or in favour of neither binary alternative, are they to be taken as having an unsettled opinion on the matter generally, or as having a settled opinion in favour of an alternative which neither of the binary alternatives represents?

This is no idle observation as far as this thesis is concerned. First, the non-binary constituency represents a substantial proportion of those sampled in every poll conducted, with the occasions on which either binary alternative amounted to an overall majority against the sum total of it plus the other being limited to only one in number. If the reader can envisage the outcome of this plebiscite as a set of scales, it can be fairly said that the non-binary/undecided/neither of the above category has held the balance of it for well over 90% of the period in which this data has been collected.

This innominate constituency may have lacked a definite institutional voice, however as I suggest elsewhere here, a third alternative to the eventual binary two which appeared on the ballot was under active discussion, and eventually albeit in very late proximity to the vote itself not only became a platform policy of the pro-unionist faction, but also subsequently led

to the appointment of a Royal Commission and eventually the passing of a level of derogated authority which represents the present position between the two countries themselves.²⁸

This vagary apart and returning to the issue of the degree of conformity which can be said to amount to standardisation between them, the writer posits that there is a sufficiently high degree of similarity between the polls themselves as to give confidence in the overall cogency of their findings. In particular: Every one of the polls self-evidently address the same general issue, and on no occasion is it apparent to the writer that any survey referred to appears to raise any further issue apart from the posture of the sample on the issue of the present view of the subject upon the issue of independence at the time of the question.

I propose to deal with differences in phraseology in the following manner; where there are differences in phraseology, I have considered the extent to which any observable difference in phraseology amounts to any material reason to suppose it cannot count as supporting evidence concerning the underlying four issues listed. This approach provides a material degree of consistency and reliability as concerns the overriding attempt to garner a sufficiently cogent and accurate conclusion as to the four questions postulated above.

The phraseology of the poll questions

The ICM poll question was as follows; Do you approve or disapprove of Scotland becoming independent? The YOUNGOV poll question was as follows; Do you support or oppose Scotland becoming independent? The Survation poll question was as follows; Do you support or oppose independence?

It is to be observed firstly that the objective of the question was in all cases phrased in exactly the same manner. Independence, and given that only one word was employed,

²⁸ The Smith Commission Report- Overview SPICe Briefing of 8 January 2015 and can be downloaded via External.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_15_03_The_Smith_Commission_Report_Overview.pdf

independence without any qualification or caveat. Although political analysts can (and doubtless will) point out with force that there are degrees of autonomy which obtain between controlling bodies, it is nevertheless the case that the use of the term in the way it had several distinct advantages at least from the point of establishing standardisation.

Firstly, it presents independence as an issue which is a binary matter. It is submitted this has the result of focusing any issue over vagary of interpretation towards the response rather than the question itself, and therefore any issue of vagary or qualification about it is confined to the response given.

Secondly, whereas the use of the term may give rise to detailed dissection as to its niceties on the part of academics, it is not one which it is suggested the Scottish public have any reported difficulty in understanding. Independence is an ordinary English word. As such it has an ordinary and generally understood meaning. It is submitted that in a civilised and practiced democracy with universal levels of literacy and compulsory school education up to the age of 16, as has been the case in Scotland throughout the entire lifetime of the electorate concerned, the use of this term presents no more a difficulty on the part of the poll audience from any purported inability to sufficiently appreciate its meaning as a binary concept as would present itself in any other election such as for example the choice of which political party to vote for.

It is noted that controversies concerning the asserted level of understanding of the meaning of a term such as this are not unknown in the UK, and a similar canard was raised by opponents of the Brexit referendum of 2016.²⁹ It was frequently stated after the event by those frustrated at the result that the question to leave the European Union had been phrased in too blunt a fashion, and inter alia that the electorate had been given no clear understanding

²⁹ This topic was so often discussed in the public sphere I can confirm from direct experience that it became a matter of general public debate, however see e.g. Roch Dunin- Wasowicz: The brexit referendum question was flawed in its design? at [blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/05/17/the-brexit-referendum-question-was-flawed-in-its-design/?](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/05/17/the-brexit-referendum-question-was-flawed-in-its-design/) for an in-depth analysis from Roch Dunin-Wasowicz of the archetypal issues raised.

of the full meaning of the either the withdrawal or ramifications of the same, and that people in effect did not know what they were voting for. It is beyond the scope of this work to discuss whether this was true or otherwise, however it is submitted that this criticism is potentially flawed as it may be said to apply to the Scottish people in general and for the following reasons:

The first is from recent history within the British Isles. Although the UK did not hold a referendum on the issue to adopt the Maastricht Treaty proposals which in effect created the modern incarnation of the European Union, several other EU nations did. One of these was an English-speaking nation, namely Eire. The subject of the conduct of the “Maastricht vote” in Eire (the country next door to Scotland) is an immensely stimulating one, detailing as it does a history of firstly rejection and eventual implementation of a mandate to adopt the agenda concerned against a background of often passionate debate which is still a live issue in Irish politics.³⁰

The writer notes during scrutiny of the material garnered on that matter there appears to be no published evidence to prove that the Irish people at the time of either vote appeared to show any lack of appreciation of the concepts of “independence” or “national sovereignty” within this context, and at no time demonstrated any difficulty in recognising what degree of autonomy these terms would represent. Although one cannot of course automatically take this as proof of the level of appreciation of the term in Scotland, it is noted that the nations of Scotland and Eire are closely paralleled to each other in terms of culture, location, and levels of democratic development within their State.

It is therefore submitted that the apparent treatment of the terms independence and sovereignty by the Irish people during the Maastricht referenda can carry weight to support

³⁰ see e.g O Atikan: Asking the public twice: why do voters change their minds in second referendums on EU treaties found at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2015/10/19/asking-the-public-twice-why-do-voters-change-their-minds-in-second-referendums-on-eu-treaties/>

the inference that similar levels of appreciation concerning the meaning of the term would apply to the data scrutinised here.

Secondly and more forcefully the data was published during a period when both the independence manifesto and the National Conversation referred to elsewhere here were published and the subject of active promotion by the establishment of the time. Both initiatives clearly and repeatedly discussed the meaning and implication of independence and were reported on in the mass media on a continual basis during this time. As a general observation, the centrality of this issue to the Scottish people in general and the SNP in particular, and the decades during the 20th Century during which it was debated and held a continuous position as a platform policy at every election at least since 1967 as discussed elsewhere in this work cannot be lightly ignored to the extent that it is a tenable proposition to suggest that the concept was not generally understood to such an extent that any poll data concerning it ought to be rejected.

In addition to this, the extent of any particular and detailed position of the UK government as to what powers and legislative freedoms were to be exercised in a Scottish Parliament should it remain under the auspices of the UK were the subject of considerable scrutiny by the Scottish Government itself. Before the vote was held, in 2012 a consultation exercise was conducted by the Scottish government entitled “Your Scotland, Your Referendum.”³¹ It received 30,219 responses of which 21,198 were from individuals as opposed to those made via groups or campaigns which were separately noted in the breakdown produced. It reported that only 28% of the respondents disagreed with the wording of the proposed referendum question and those who did described it as “clear,

³¹ Your Scotland your Referendum published by the Scottish Government published 25th January 2012. The formal report of the exercise was published by the Scottish Government in “Your Scotland, Your Refendum’ An analysis of Consultation Responses at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-referendum-analysis-consultation-responses/> A word search on the site may be necessary to locate it via the general gov.scot website however.

concise, unambiguous, simple, straightforward, to the point and easy to understand) (ibid chapter 4.10). One potential answer to the question whether the phraseology of the question can potentially be answered at least in part by the response that the Scottish Government certainly found it to be so in this respect, moreover an event concerning one newspaper (the Daily Record) is of potential significance given its occurrence in the timeline of events.

The Daily Record was then a morning tabloid of high circulation within Scotland, and notwithstanding its editorial standpoint on the matter was continually in favour of remaining within the UK, during the campaign it issued frequent editorials calling for clarity on this matter. It is entirely clear that this position was eventually acknowledged within Westminster given the events of September 15th, and the fact that a last minute set of proposals (“The Vow”) was made and published in entirety as a full front page large print headline in the newspaper concerned on September 16th 2014.³² The fact of the declaration became itself front page news in every other Scottish newspaper the next day also and was lead item on local and national TV and radio news also. Although constitutionally it had no legal weight whatsoever, significantly it was signed by each of the leaders of the three largest Westminster parties and stands to this day as the only document of its kind ever issued by all three-party leaders in person.

It took the form of a fourfold pledge.

1. To immediately grant permanent and extended powers to the Scottish assembly after a review to be commenced no later than mid-September that year.
2. To continue Barnett support grant.
3. To continue to share resources equitably concerning the defence, prosperity and welfare of every citizen across the UK

³² Reported unauthorised by the Press Association and copied verbatim on the above terms in the Guardian Sept 16th 2014 “UK party leaders issue joint pledge to give Scottish parliament new powers”: it can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/16/meron-milliband-clegg-pledge-daily-record>

4. To specifically give the Scottish assembly the complete authority over NHS spending in Scotland.

The issues of ‘welfare’, ‘prosperity’ and ‘defence’ are examined briefly later, however the author posits that issues a, b and c (at least as far as prosperity and welfare were concerned (the issue of how defence contributes also to the Scottish economy and is therefore a sub issue of the other two) it is self-evident that these issues were central to the frame of the discussion concerning the vote at every turn.

Thirdly, it would appear that at least by those who advocate for Scottish independence post referendum, they themselves advance an argument for a further referendum which is heavily reliant upon the proposition that the public entertains a sufficiently high level of understanding concerning the issue.

When the UK exited from the EU, this was described by the SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon as a “change in circumstances”, and was specifically adopted by the SNP as a *causis belli* for a further referendum. The reasoning offered by the SNP on this matter was as follows: Please note that the following is not offered as research or comment upon the merits or demerits of those issues discussed here which clearly are too remote to this analysis to present here, they are offered as potential sources of corroboration on the fundamental issue of whether or not the electorate can be reasonably found to have appreciated the issues involved in the referendum to suggest that they made an informed choice.³³

³³ These are helpfully set out by Sean Swann PhD in: Sean Swann, “Scottish Nationalism, Brexit and the case for Indyref2.” *Political Science Association* (2017).
<https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2017/Scottish%20Nationalism%2C%20Brexit%20and%20the%20Case%20for%20Indyref2.pdf>

Proposition One

At the time of the original vote, a vote for remaining in the UK represented a vote to remain in the UK as a then present member of the EU. This is of itself a clearly true and valid position since the independence referendum was conducted two years before the Brexit vote and was finally conducted before the Bill proposing the Brexit vote has been laid before Parliament.³⁴

Proposition Two

That data presented both at the time and of the same effect show a substantial difference of opinion existed between the will of the Scottish and English peoples to remain in the EU or otherwise. Polling data on the Brexit referendum was offered to show that a substantial majority of the Scottish electorate vote to remain within the EU, and notwithstanding this, the 52-48 majority declared for the UK as a whole had therefore defeated the intentions of the majority of the Scottish electorate on that fundamental issue.

Again, the data supplied makes this proposition empirically sound. The Brexit vote itself was conducted under conditions of scrutiny which raised no issue and the vote per territory was published as a matter of record as occurred in exactly the same way as the referendum.

Conclusion Offered

That in the light of propositions one and two above, the constitutional gestalt under which the initial referendum had been conducted was now so altered and so far from the present will of the Scottish people as to render the original decision redundant and therefore

³⁴ Details of the same can be found in the official result of the Brexit vote as reported to Parliament and found at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/brexit-votes-by-constituency/>

making a further vote on the original matter appropriate. The syllogistic logic of the above is not lost upon me. I note that it is necessarily implicit in the propositions offered there that the concept of a full and proper level of understanding on the part of the electorate concerning issues of both national and supranational sovereignty is not only implied but is a centrally required assumption of each proposition offered. Briefly put, if it is to be asserted that the Scottish people lacked such an appreciation during either referendum, this of itself would fatally undermine the correctness of the underlying propositions that are adduced as justification for the conclusion which is applied for.

Such an argument does form something of an appeal to authority in as much as this is of itself dependent upon the proposition that the SNP view of the electorate is taken as determinative on the issue in the first place. However, the fact that this argument itself is well canvassed and has been repeated so often in the national media would lead me to conclude that that for it to become a national commonplace, there is an inevitable underlying assumption that the concepts of independence and sovereignty are sufficiently widely and fully understood. There must be no reasoned or reasonable doubt over the extent to which the framing and presentation of the word independence in the context of any polling data can be said to present a difficulty in interpreting the results.

The only other difference between the phraseology of the poll questions which merits consideration is the distinction between the three polling questions is between the ICM and Survation surveys which both asked if the subject approved or disapproved of independence and the YOUNGOV question which asked if the subject supported or opposed Scottish independence. It is submitted that the difference in phraseology in this respect amounts to little of significance, since although it is technically possible that a given individual could theoretically hold the position that they approved of the *idea* of independence but did not *support the realities of it*, that was not a nicety dealt with by either type of the questions

concerned, and in any event the voting position of such an individual would invariably be placed away from the binary alternatives presented.

Accordingly the writer takes the view that it cannot be inferred that a rational subject could simultaneously posit that they both supported and did not approve of Scottish independence, and vice versa, and furthermore that the ideological conflict identified above would be catered for by the fact that any given individual holding that position consciously or unconsciously would be certain to place themselves in the uncertain or undecided category as catered for in all the polls on each occasion.

1.4. In Conclusion

In the light of the above I posit that methodology of data collection is sufficiently robust to derive sufficiently high levels of confidence as to accuracy of the results delivered, and the level of similarities and lack of significant differences between the questions involved lead to the conclusion that each can be regarded for the purposes of this analysis as presenting data of direct relevance and weight on the issue in no significantly different a way than the other. In Scottish vernacular they can be regarded as “aa’ o’ a piece”. Having hopefully established an appropriate level of empirical certainty it now behoves me to outline the background, recount the events and posit conclusions.

Chapter II

An Analysis of Events and Voter Opinion in the Lead-Up to the Referendum and the First Debate

This chapter will concern itself with the following subjects: a short overview of events leading up to the declaration of the 2014 Referendum, an examination of events between the declaration and the first major televised debate of the campaign & an account of the first debate. It will conclude with a tentative conclusion regarding voter behaviour in that timeframe.

2.1: An Overview of Events Leading up to the Referendum

The Position within the period 1900-1975

Party political control in Scotland was as recently as the 1950s in the hands of the Conservative Party³⁵ who enjoyed a position of relative dominance within rural and suburban Scotland, with Labour party influence, often of a militant tendency, centering largely in urban centres such as Clydeside.³⁶ The politics of Scotland can be said during this period to reflect the binary distinction of the wider UK and it is perhaps also worthy of cultural note that at this time membership of another “conservative” body, namely the Church of Scotland was at its highest ever recorded level³⁷, indicative perhaps of the zeitgeist given that both institutions were firmly rooted in the idea of the United Kingdom to the extent that neither can be found

³⁵ D Clarke, “Share of votes in General Elections in Scotland from 1918 to 2019 by Political Party,” Statista, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1057795/scottish-election-results/>

³⁶ See e.g Red Clydeside-Glasgow after the Great War (author unknown) www.scotland.org.uk/history/red-clydeside for a narrative and suggestion as to why.

³⁷ WW Knox, “Religion in Scotland,” in *A History of the Scottish People* https://www.scran.ac.uk/scotland/pdf/SP2_8religion.pdf

by the writer to have ever considered the issue of separatism in any published work the writer can discover.

Times were however changing. In the early part of the 20th century, 20% of the world's commercial ships were built on the Clyde, and a host of heavy industry supported full employment, something other post WWII European countries struggled to achieve, however by the 1960s this source of wealth, and status was in full and continual decline.³⁸ It is beyond the scope of this work to offer manifold reasons for this- foreign competition, unworkable trade union relations being the two most frequently cited, however de-industrialisation within the Scottish industrial heartland had a clear effect of relative impoverishment, and from the early 1960s, support for the Labour party in Scotland increased no doubt as the politics followed the economics, and voters looked to the developing welfare state and Keynesian economic theory for possible solutions.

Scotland in this period became trenchantly supportive of the Labour Party. What appears clear to the writer is that the Labour Party of the time was, however, unionist.³⁹ It was taken as read by all major parties that an independent Scotland was not ultimately economically self-sustaining and was ultimately dependent upon wider UK economic support for public expenditures. This was a position which had been acknowledged as long ago as 1888 with the development of the Goschen formula, and the revised incarnation, namely the Barnett quotient.⁴⁰ This is discussed *passim* later in this work, however it is significant to note that in the 1960's there appears to have been no argument to the contrary view that the

³⁸ National Records of Scotland Shipbuilding Records www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/shipbuilding-records; WW Knox, "Patterns of employment in Scotland 1940-1940," in *A History of the Scottish People* www.scran.ac.uk/scotland/pdf/SP2-2Employment.pdf; WW Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland 1800-Present* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.255.

³⁹ I can find no reference in Hansard to any comment made on behalf of the Labour Party calling for the secession of any part of the UK in any paper or debate.

⁴⁰ The UK government record of the details of this initiative can be found under the reference Use of Goschen formula to calculate Exchequer grants for Scotland, which contains the official record of calculation and implementation and can be found at https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C4385466_official_ref_SS55/65/01; "The Barnett Formula a Quick Guide" contains the Parliamentary working brief for this and can be found at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-barnett-formula-a-quick-guide>

writer can discover that an independent Scotland could sustain given levels of public expenditure- a viewpoint which in a time of increasing unemployment would clearly augur against economic separation. This presumption came under swift revision in the 1970s for one single but compelling reason. Substantial oil and gas reserves were discovered in the North Sea in territorial waters which under international law would have made it the licensable property of an independent Scottish government.

There is a discernible correlation that the writer can find between the discovery of North Sea Oil and the increasing levels of political rhetoric from the independence movement, as well as growth in electoral support and the levels of influence enjoyed by the SNP as a de facto political party, even to the extent that they held the balance of power in Westminster albeit briefly.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) – a Brief Note of its History and Development

Almost all political parties begin as pressure groups of one form or another, and the writer has researched the formation and policies of the SNP in the run up to and following the inauguration of the Scottish Assembly. Briefly put, this took root in the formation of informal movements, noticeably at first within certain sections of the UK Labour Party, but first formally by amalgamation of the Scottish Party and National Party of Scotland in 1934⁴¹ nevertheless within the confines of those active in Scotland itself, as little if any regard was paid to the matter by the wider UK establishment during the first half of the 20th century.

Political pressure in the later 20th Century and to date via the Scottish National Party led to the formation of the Holyrood assembly, a body initially possessed of substantial local legislative powers, a body now dominated by the SNP as the controlling party of it. However, before the formation of the Holyrood assembly, and within living memory, the SNP

⁴¹ Scottish Devolution a History published by the SNP (no attributed author) refers to this at www.scottish-devolution.org.uk/snp/html.

representation in Westminster was of pivotal significance in the holding of a referendum on this very issue in 1979. It is considered informative to include a short account of this as part of the narrative since the referendum under scrutiny was the second such referendum in recent political history.

The First Referendum

As Marcus Aurelius observed, every current position or event has an antecedent. Here is a short account of the background to the first debate to appreciate the context of it.

The background of Scotland in the early 21st century is largely reflective of that of the UK in general. Scotland played a full part in the industrial revolution and the economic and territorial expansion under the British Empire, and after WWII a host of heavy industry supported full employment, something other post WWII European countries struggled to achieve, and it is noted elsewhere here that by the 1960s this source of wealth, and status was in continual decline. It is also clear that in terms of voting behaviour Scotland in this period became trenchantly supportive of the Labour Party⁴².

What appears clear to the writer is that the Labour Party of the time was however trenchantly Unionist, and with the exception of the founding of the Kilbrandon Commission as discussed below, no initiative corresponding to a Parliamentary call on behalf of the Wilson led term of the Party for independence whilst either in power or in opposition can be located by myself in Hansard. During this period it was taken as read by all major parties that an independent Scotland was not ultimately economically self-sustaining and ultimately dependent upon wider UK economic support for public expenditures- a position which it is significant to note that since I can find that there appears to have been made no public

⁴² Generally understood and known within the UK however chronicled by C N Trueman. Labour Party in Scotland from 1900 to 1979 at www.historylearningsite.co.uk/british-electoral-history-since-1832/labour-party-and-scotland-1900-to-1979.

argument to the contrary view that I can discover that an independent Scotland could sustain given levels of public expenditure- a viewpoint which in a time of increasing unemployment would clearly have augured against economic separation. This presumption came under swift revision in the 1970s for one single but compelling reason. Substantial oil and gas reserves were discovered in the North Sea in territorial waters which under international law would have made it the licensable property of an independent Scottish government.

There is a discernible correlation that I can find between the discovery of North Sea Oil and the increasing levels of political rhetoric from the independence movement, however there is no such correlation in the levels of influence enjoyed by the SNP as a de facto political party. From the first oil being extracted in 1975, the rhetoric of the SNP on the issue of independence became noticeably stronger and of greater influence electorally. The formation of a minority Labour administration under James Callaghan resulted in a first Independence referendum in 1978.⁴³ I can find no significant mention on the part of any protagonist in the second referendum to the events of the first, and as such it can be said to have played little role in the dialogue and issues which were made the subject of the debate on the second occasion. However, as Mooney concludes, the events of that period might fairly be said to immediately precede the polarisation of the positions of the SNP and the UK establishment in a manner directly affecting the recent historic background under which the second one was conducted, and left the issue in several respects as “unfinished business.”

Following the election of an SNP MP in 1967 the Kilbrandon Commission was created to assess the viability of a potentially devolved Scottish assembly.⁴⁴ The project however became something of a political football, and at the time of the report’s issue in 1973, nothing was done to act upon its findings; however, support for the SNP grew in the

⁴³ Gerry Mooney, “1979: The first Scottish Referendum on Devolution,” provides a full narrative at <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/people-politics-law/1979-the-first-scottish-referendum-on-devolution>

⁴⁴ Royal Commission on the Constitution 1969-2973 Cmnd 5460.

early 1970s to the extent that the election of 11 SNP members to Westminster in 1974 proved crucial in the interim.

The incumbent Labour administration of James Callaghan from 1974-79 was under a variety of pressures, both economic and social. It was a minority administration and conducted its business against the background of a great deal of industrial and fiscal unrest. As such it was reliant upon the continued and full SNP support to continue in power in the face of increasingly critical opposition. After much internal wrangling (there were over 400 amendments), and as the price of SNP support, it passed the Scotland Act in 1978 that resulted in the first referendum on the creation of a devolved Scottish assembly.⁴⁵

The vote was held on March 1st, 1979, and resulted in a 51.6% yes, 48.4% no decision.⁴⁶ The writer was very amused to discover this since it almost exactly corresponds to the margin by that the 2016 Brexit referendum was decided. Yet since a term of the referendum in question was to the effect that the result would be null and void if less than 40% of those eligible to vote (a provision that did not apply to the Brexit measure) the low turnout of 32.9% meant that the government was not obliged to implement the result, and they duly declined to do so.⁴⁷

The aftermath was costly for all who had involved themselves in it. As a result, the SNP withdrew support for the Callaghan administration, provoking a vote of no confidence in the whole government. The loss of that count (by a single vote), brought about a General Election at that only two of the 11 SNP candidates were re-elected, the Callaghan government was resoundingly removed, and the resulting 43 seat majority for the Conservative Party prompted the arrival of Margaret Thatcher, and a period of Tory rule that

⁴⁵ Scotland Act 1978 : 1978 c.51

⁴⁶ The official result is recorded in the UK Parliamentary Archive at Results of Devolution Referendums 1979& 1997 research paper 97/113 published Nov 10 1997 and can be found at the House of Commons website under <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP97-113/>

⁴⁷ See note 48

lasted until the arrival of Tony Blair in 1997 following a complete re-write (some would say abandonment) of the Labour Party's former constitution. The British system of First Past the Post in elections and Single Member Voting by their very nature make conduct of a minority administration an insecure affair, (the fact that no minority administration has ever lasted a full Parliamentary term to date once the coalition involved broke down perhaps illustrates this). Against that background it may be reasonably observed that eventual defeat of the Callaghan government was something of an inevitability. The influence of the SNP upon the events of what became known as the winter of discontent in 1979 was pivotal and served to create a clearly antagonistic posture between the SNP and their former fellow traveler, the Labour Party which lasted over 20 years, and which has never been repaired to the extent of the formation of any plan for an electoral coalition between them since.

It is noticeable that this period also fostered the emergence of Alex Salmond, who himself formerly worked as an oil economist before entering politics. His influence can be fairly described as a continuance of the first attempt towards a devolved assembly and is discussed later. His platform of "free by 93" was rewarded by only three seats in the 1992 election.⁴⁸ Despite the rising unpopularity of Conservative measures in Scotland, of which the "Poll Tax" (a local community tax felt by many to be unfair on the less well off) was a notable example, the dominant party in Scotland during this time continued to be the Labour Party. The writer concludes that it was under this aegis that the Scottish independence movement received the only mechanism it has ever held which would have made a second claim for independence a feasible one: the creation of the devolved Scottish Assembly.

The Labour Party of the mid 1990s was led by a man with the completely anonymous name of John Smith - the very equivalent of the American "John Doe." However, he was far

⁴⁸ General Election results, 9th April 1992 - UK Parliament Briefing paper No 61 can be found at www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-information-office/m13.pdf

from unexceptional. He was by all accounts a gifted lawyer, a conspicuously clever rhetorician, and he also enjoyed a most rare position in politics. Smith was practically universally liked and respected, even across party lines.⁴⁹

Smith was also Scottish, and during his tenure from as early as 1976, 1978 and latterly as Leader of the Labour Party he campaigned actively for the creation of a Scottish Assembly, pledging that if Labour were elected that there would be another vote upon the creation of a devolved assembly, albeit one with devolved and therefore subordinate areas of sovereignty.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Smith died prematurely, however his pledge made it impossible for the subsequently elected administration (who maintained their position of dominance with 56 seats returned for them in Scotland) to resile from.

Opinion is divided upon the reasons for the adoption of this as Labour policy. Some hold that it was a genuine attempt by John Smith to address a perceived democratic deficit. Some hold that the newly formed Blair administration saw it as a way of consolidating power in Scotland and limiting SNP influence, a point of view that was at least for the ten years following inception, justified by the electoral results there. Whatever the reasons may have been, they are of little account to this analysis since in any event the vote was carried out within four months of the election of the Blair government in September 1997.

The vote on whether to create a Scottish Assembly was on two independent questions: whether there should or should not be a Scottish Parliament and whether such a parliament should have tax raising powers. On a turnout of 60.4% a substantial majority of 74.29% voted to create it with 63.48% voting that it should have revenue raising authority.⁵¹ Blair was

⁴⁹ E.g Tom Watson MP May 14th 2019 Remembering the life and work of John Smith MP available at <https://fabians.org.uk/remembering-the-life-and-work-of-john-smith-mp/>

⁵⁰ Contributions by Smith are many in the Parliamentary narrative. Pertinent contributions can be seen there at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1976/dec/13/scotland-and-wales-bill>; HC deb 06 July 1978 Vol 953 cc 677-747 gives another example.

⁵¹ Parliament, London. <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-information-office/m15.pdf>

quick to capitalise upon this result. The day after the election in a public address in Edinburgh City Center he proclaimed the creation of the Assembly as a third way, a permanent alternative between separation and no change. The view of the SNP was of course very different. Alex Salmond immediately proclaimed it as demonstrating the need for a subsequent vote towards complete independence on the same day.

The National Conversation

The 2007 election produced a 47-seat administration for the SNP, the first such majority of any type for that party. This administration immediately conducted a wide-ranging fact-gathering programme that it called “The National Conversation.”⁵² For public consultation and feedback on it, a (then novel) internet portal was set up. Following that, and the gaining of an outright majority on the part of the SNP in 2011 a white paper was promulgated⁵³ which amounted to little more than a manifesto for proposed devolution.

There is good reason to suppose that support for the independence initiative was not universally popular at this time. A particular interpretation of poll data collected by the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey published by J Curtice published then suggested that active support for full independence had flatlined by this time, with only 24% of the Scottish voters asked reporting themselves to be in support of independence in 2007 and only 23% in 2011.⁵⁴ However, at this stage that the polled level of support for independence was against the background of an SNP majority in the Scottish Assembly, and as such there is an observable

⁵² Officially published by the Scottish Parliament itself at The Scottish Parliament 2007 Election Results <https://www.parliament.scot/msps/elections/2007-election-results>; A summary of it can be found at Choosing Scotland’s Future: A National Conversation: Independence and responsibility in the modern world 18/02/2015 archived at <https://webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20150218121248/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2007/08/13103747/0>.

⁵³ Author unknown: Scotland’s Future issued 26th November 2013 ISBN:9781784120689 and www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands/future/

⁵⁴ J Curtice, “Who supports and opposes independence-and why?” May 15th 2013. This can be found at www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/papers/supports_opposes_independence.pdf

dichotomy between the level of support for “the Party” and the level of support for this policy as a standalone issue. This resulted in the publication of a Bill which was passed into law and conduct of the referendum approved by the UK Parliament.

What did emerge from The National Conversation was a significant level of support for a greater level of autonomy from Westminster, in particular regarding revenue raising and public spending, and the results of this exercise were clearly instrumental in consolidating the preferred tactic of some away from the afore-mentioned fundamentalist approach towards a more gradualist one.⁵⁵ Significantly, and with a marked change of approach at least as far as an historical posture was concerned, the entire exercise was conducted with the full support of the then Conservative government in Westminster. It is against that background that the current analysis is conducted.

The 2014 Independence Referendum Itself: Some General Observations

A preliminary matter of note is that the level of registration for the referendum was an historically high one. No less than 4,283,938 people – 97% of those eligible to vote according to published information registered an intention to do so.⁵⁶ I have not found any recorded level of voter registration in any other jurisdiction which employs a voluntary system of registration to approach this figure. Further there have come to my attention several anecdotal accounts that many Scots who had previously chosen to remain “off the register” for personal reasons- often to do with the fact that those owing money are much easier to find by pursuing creditors- made their registration in the full knowledge that the discovery of their whereabouts would likely follow- a fear which was entirely based given that further

⁵⁵ See for instance a submission admittedly long after the event by Michael Gray in September 2019: Gradualism is good, we can’t rush to independence at <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2019/09/28/gradualism-is-good-we-cant-rush-to-independence/>

⁵⁶ The Electoral Commission report findings published by HM Government can be found at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/scottish-independence-referendum/report-scottish-independence-referendum>

anecdotes are also available to show that Local Authorities at least scrutinised and actioned council tax arrears proceedings after the vote based on these declarations.⁵⁷

The vote itself attracted an overall turnout of 84.6%⁵⁸, a much higher level of engagement than the previous one which as mentioned previously failed for want of sufficient turnout, and this figure again represents the highest ever level of voter turnout ever recorded in the UK for an electoral event since the introduction of universal suffrage. It is of course self-evident that the number of registrants will give of itself no clue as to which side they may support, and of course no guarantee that their opinion would remain the same on polling day to that which obtained when they happened to register, however as a preliminary observation, it cannot reasonably be quarreled with that this level of registration and turnout represents the highest pro-rata level of interest and willingness to engage in a democratic event that the UK has ever seen.

The final vote of course fell by a margin of 55% to 45% in favour of remaining within the UK. This represented of itself a considerable shift away from a historic position during the previous three decades for which it can be said that on average consistent support for an independent Scotland was reported by Curtice and Ormston in January 2013⁵⁹ to show only 23% in favour in 2010, a figure which was if anything lower than that reflected in the last poll before announcement of 29% in favour. Significantly however, the work of Curtice and Ormston referred to also showed “devolution” as being the consistently most popular option, with only 2 years of reported result (2004 and 2005) scoring less than the overall absolute majority position. Furthermore, in 2012 Professor Curtice and Rachel Ormston also issued a

⁵⁷ Some are recorded in Iain McWhirter: *Disunited Kingdom*: ISBN 978-1-908885-26-5 at pp.82 et seq

⁵⁸ As note 50

⁵⁹ J Curtice and R Ormston, “Scotland’s constitutional future Initial findings from Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2012 <https://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/176147/2012-scotlands-constitutional-future.pdf> NOT IN BIBLIO

discussion paper entitled “More devolution: an alternative road?”⁶⁰ This work remains the only academically cogent data set (page seven) to deal with the supposed level of popularity within Scotland for “the idea of giving the Scottish Parliament more power and responsibility within the framework of the Union” in the period before the poll. Significantly, it found that in the years 2012-2012, the aggregated figure for support for the “Devo Max” and Status Quo and “no devolution at all” options when taken together significantly outweighed support for independence in each year of polling. I will expand on this later in the thesis.

For completeness, I note that further demographic evidence as is available suggests that the demographic breakdown in favour of remaining was predominantly more likely to be older than younger, female than male, rural as opposed to urban dwelling, higher earning and in more “middle class” form of occupation than the demographic of those who voted to leave.⁶¹ However, since the objective of this thesis is to attempt to determine the reasons for the observed general changes in the pattern of opinion in the time frame under consideration, I have treated the potential exploration of demographic issues in particular as being beyond the narrow scope of this enquiry.

I raised the issue of the potential difference between published and public opinion when discussing the limitations of data collected under closed questioned binary alternative earlier. It is worthy of remark here that the considerations narrated above suggest the potential pre-existence of a dichotomy between the stated policy objective of the SNP and the potential will of the Scottish electorate as regards their view of the desirability of full independence from the UK in the time frame surrounding the referendum and beyond, the obvious questions to ask are whether there was during the period between the announcement

⁶⁰ R. Ormston and J. Curtice, “More devolution: an alternative road?” Scotcen Social Research <https://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/176042/2012-more-devolution.pdf>

⁶¹ Published by HM Government in the report Demographic Differences and Voting patterns in Scotland’s Independence Referendum published 23rd September 2014 <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/demographic-differences-and-voting-patterns-in-scotlands-independence-referendum/>

of the referendum and the poll itself, there were any localised and empirically significant developments on the matter, and if so which side did they serve, and to what extent?

In order to do this, I have conducted a review of such polling data as has been obtained in the period from January 2012 until the eve of the referendum proper and then attempted to correlate such trends and changes in it as can be observed with the significant events outlined in the narrative gathered.

Chapter III

An Account of Matters Between the Referendum's Announcement and the First Debate

I have endeavoured to structure this part of the analysis with respect to the following: Firstly, a presentation of the data in graphical form, secondly a derived set of graphs showcasing the development of each "side" in the debate, and thirdly to inform the information by an account of the most significantly reported events within the period concerned.

Table 1. Initial polling data (i.e. the initial poll for or against the decision *ipsos mori*)

Survey End Date	Yes	No	d/K	Yes Lead
29/01/2012	39	50	11	-11
14/06/2012	35	55	11	-20
15/10/2012	30	58	12	-28
09/02/2013	34	55	11	-21
15/09/2013	31	59	10	-28
05/12/2013	34	57	10	-23
25/02/2014	32	57	11	-25
01/06/2014	36	54	10	-18
03/08/2014	40	54	7	-14
16/08/2014	47	49	5	-2

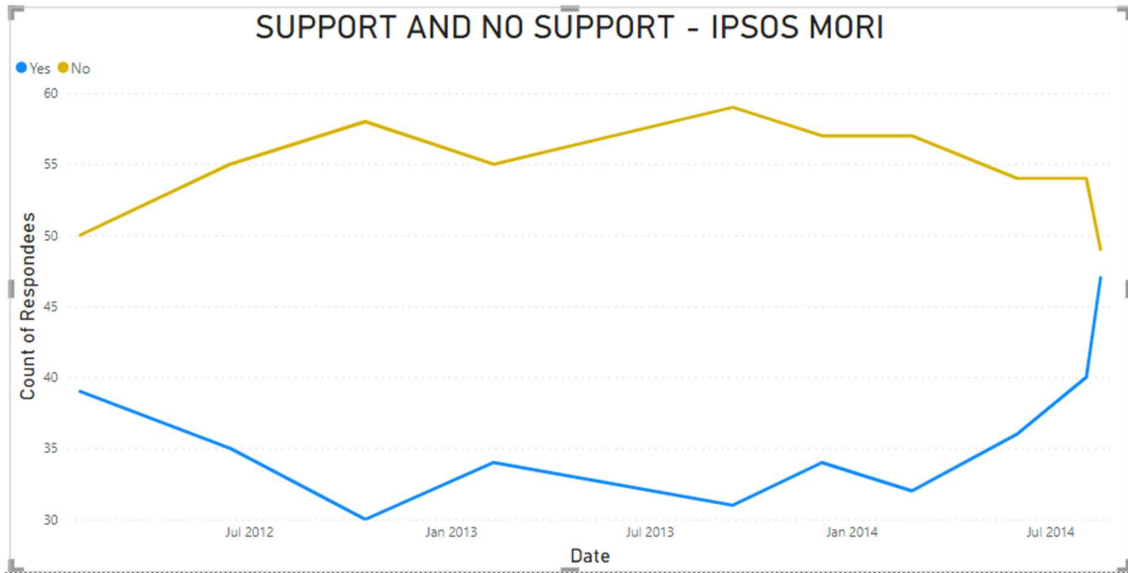


Figure 1. A graphical interpretation of the relative levels of reported support and reported lack of support for independence as reported by the IPSOS MORI data during the entire period under scrutiny.

Figure 1 would suggest that there is a visibly clear pattern of switch between support for the two alternatives, corresponding falls in the number professing no support are time matched by generally timeous corresponding increases in those professing support for it, and whereas the No vote remained the more popular option, support for it suffered its most pronounced fall immediately prior to the ballot itself, and the margin between it and the leave alternative was narrower at the point of the ballot than at any point in the timescale recorded.

Table 2. Survation

Survey End Date	Yes	No	D/K	Yes Lead
31/01/2014	32	52	16	-20
18/02/2014	38	47	18	-9
07/03/2014	39	48	13	-9
07/04/2014	37	47	16	-10
15/04/2014	38	46	19	-8
12/05/2014	37	47	17	-10
10/06/2014	39	44	17	-5
08/07/2014	41	46	13	-5
01/08/2014	40	46	14	-6
07/08/2014	37	50	13	-13
28/08/2014	42	48	11	-6
09/09/2014	42	48	10	-6
12/09/2014	42	49	9	-7
16/09/2014	44	48	8	-4

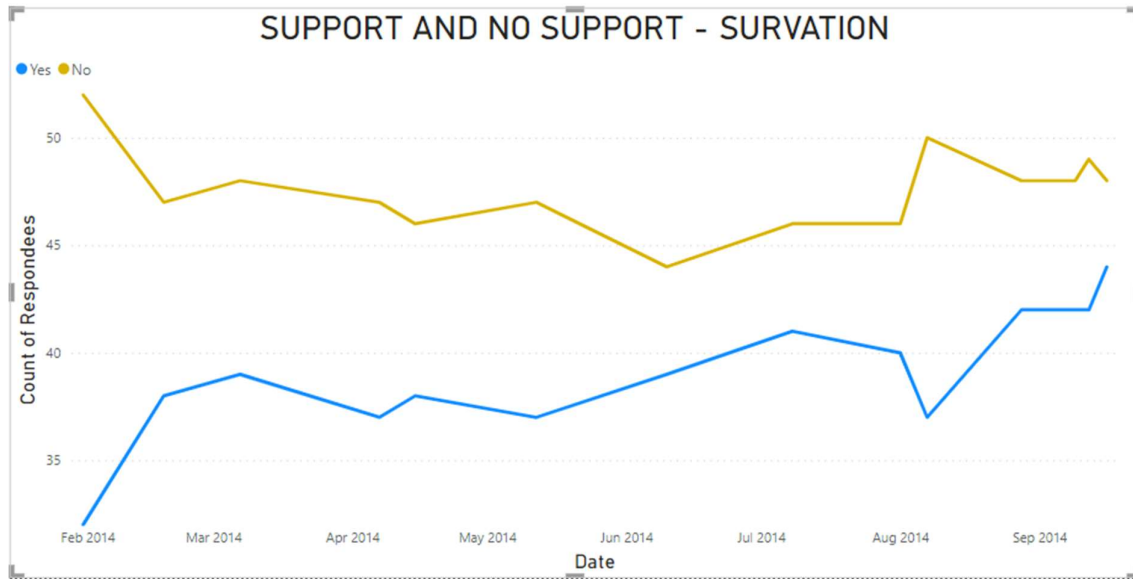


Figure 2. A graphical interpretation of the relative levels of reported support and reported lack of support for independence as reported by the Survation data during the entire period under scrutiny

Figure 2, albeit with a greater degree of variation than figure 1, offers a similar conclusion to the overall one drawn in the previous one.

Table 3. ICM

Survey End Date	Yes	No	D/K	Yes Lead
13/09/2013	32	49	19	-17
24/01/2014	37	44	19	-7
21/02/2014	37	49	14	-12
21/03/2014	39	46	15	-7
16/04/2014	39	42	19	-3
15/05/2014	34	46	20	-12
12/06/2014	36	43	21	-7
11/07/2014	34	45	21	-11
14/08/2014	38	47	14	-9
11/09/2014	40	42	17	-2
11/09/2014	48	42	10	6

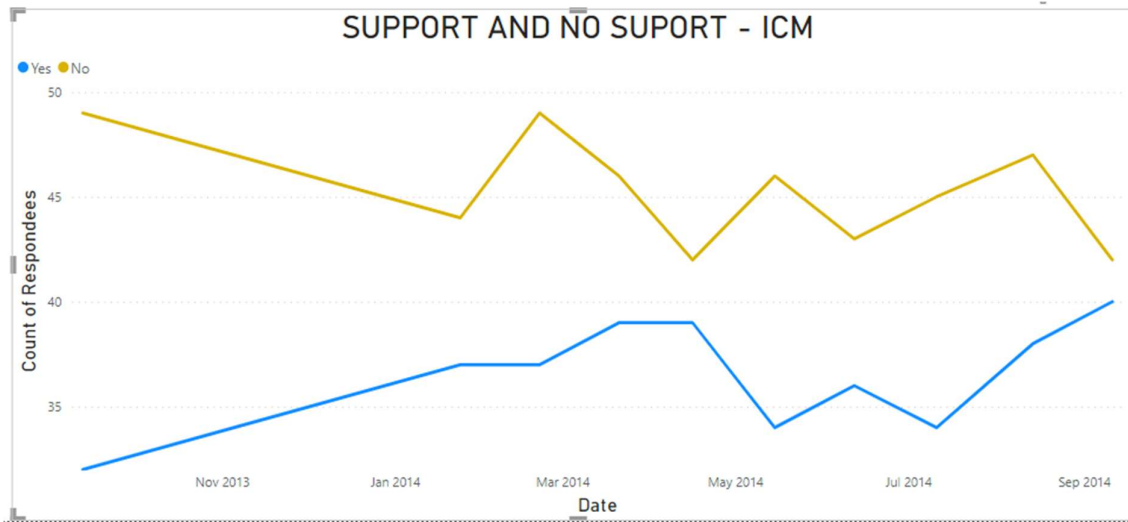


Figure 3. A graphical interpretation of the relative levels of reported support and reported lack of support for independence as reported by the ICM data during the entire period under scrutiny

This graph also demonstrates albeit with variations of its own differing from the preceding two, a similar conclusion to that offered by them.

Table 4. YUGOV

Survey End Date	Yes	No	D/K	Yes Lead
21/05/2012	33	57	n/a	-24
21/05/2012	33	57	16	-24
20/07/2012	30	54	16	-24
24/10/2012	29	55	14	-26
22/08/2013	29	59	10	-30
16/09/2013	32	52	13	-20
09/12/2013	33	52	13	-19
27/01/2014	33	52	12	-19
05/02/2014	34	52	12	-18
28/02/2014	35	53	11	-18
24/03/2014	37	52	10	-15
28/04/2014	37	51	12	-14
16/06/2014	36	53	9	-17
29/06/2014	35	54	10	-19
07/08/2014	35	55	9	-20
15/08/2014	38	51	9	-13
01/09/2014	42	48	8	-6
05/09/2014	47	45	6	2
11/09/2014	45	50	4	-5

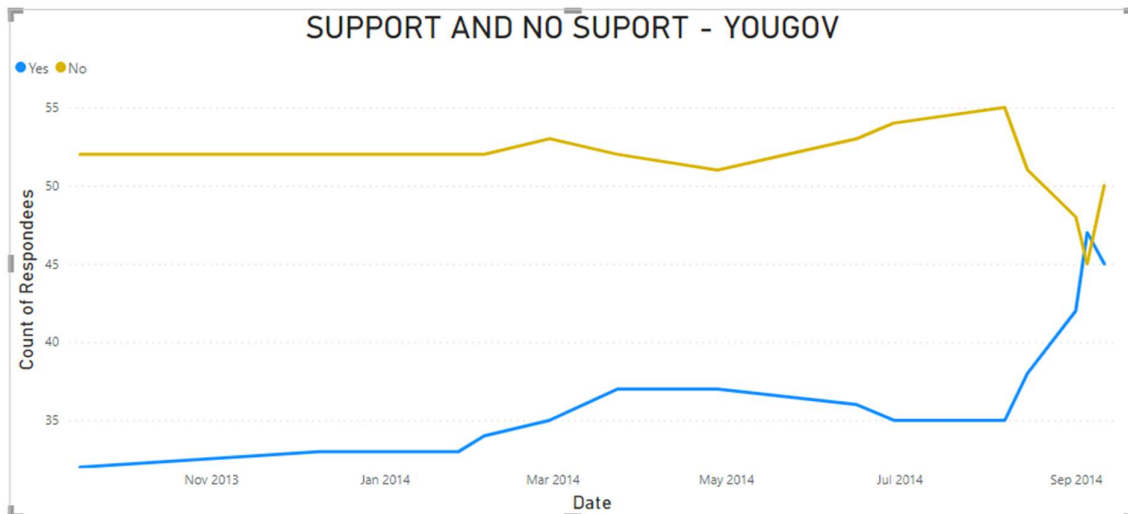


Figure 4. A graphical interpretation of the relative levels of reported support and reported lack of support for independence as reported by the YOUGOV data during the entire period under scrutiny

This data serves to demonstrate a clear lead in support for the No vote which suffered rapid collapse in the period of August 2014 with commensurate growth in support for the Yes vote, only recovering in the period immediately prior to the vote itself. As such it appears both timeously and generally corroborative of the trends observed and remarked on in the preceding three.

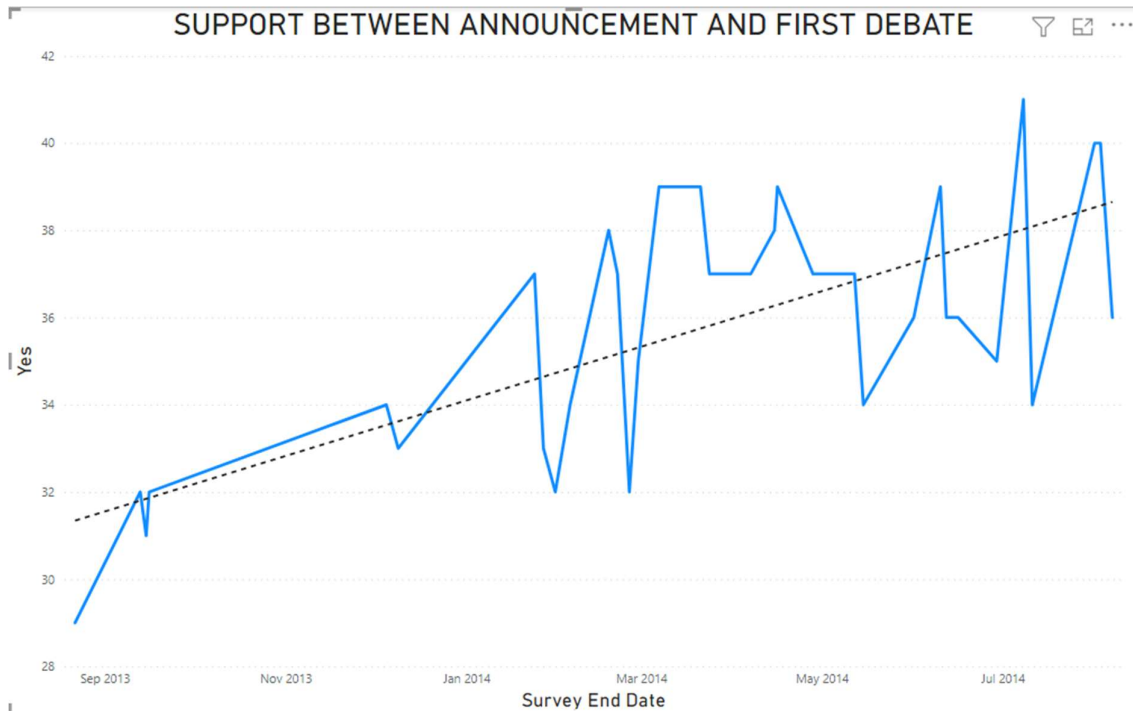


Figure 4. A graph showing the aggregated level of reported support for the pro-independence position in the period between the announcement of the referendum and the first debate.

Although far from uniform, Figure 4 demonstrates a steady unidirectional increase in support for the Yes vote in the period leading up to the first debate. As such it provides no inconsistency with the general trend presented by the preceding three graphs.

Table 5. Trends between those two dates.

Timeline	Rate of Change	Direction
07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5 th August 2014(First Debate)	$2.29 * 10^{-16}$	Positive

3.1. An Account of Significant Events between the Announcement and the First Debate

The call for the referendum at least had one unifying feature. Each of the Scottish divisions of the three mainstream UK parties agreed upon resistance to it and even founded an organisation called “Better Together” as early as June 2012 to orchestrate a joint program of opposition to it.⁶² Although this was a time of a Conservative/ Liberal Democratic coalition government in Westminster, it was chaired by a Scottish former Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Alistair Darling, who remained a figure of high general respect in Scotland at the time, again a clear indication to me of the extent to which establishment co-operation and influence pooling was in play from the beginning of the campaign.

Although I find that organisation received no funding from any political party, relying instead upon individual donors (a large one in particular, at least by British standards, being JK Rowling of Harry Potter fame, who donated £1 million to it), any examination of the composition of the board, or the extent to which it orchestrated events and input from senior figures within all three mainstream UK parties meant that it represented a cross-party coalition group in all but name.⁶³ A measure of the level of establishment co-operation can perhaps be garnered in the fact that by way of party-political assistance the continued grassroots party volunteer machinery used by the Labour Party in Scotland was put at the disposal of Better Together to mobilise and secure attendance at polling stations.

By way of formality, under UK Electoral Commission rules this organisation was explicitly designated as the official lead organisation representing the “no” alternative, which fact could not make it clearer to the writer the universal extent to which mainstream opposition to the independence vote existed.⁶⁴ The author has conducted an extensive trawl of

⁶² Various announced in the MSM via inter alia the state sponsored and largest news organisation in the UK namely the BBC of which a report can be seen at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-18572750

⁶³ Scots Independence: JK Rowling donates £1M to pro-UK group: no author cited, but reported by the BBC at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-27793967

⁶⁴ Announced by the Electoral Commission on 23rd April 2014 at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/electoral-commission-designates-yes-scotland-and-better-together-lead-campaigners-scottish

the published opinion of the main political parties in the mainstream published media and finds as follows:

1. No one instance can be found where an official spokesperson for any of the mainstream UK parties at any time or on any occasion voiced any support for the position of leaving.
2. By contrast all of the published opinion surveyed throughout the period was in favour of the remain position a position corroborated by a study carried out by Dr David Patrick of the University of the free State (SA) which having analysed 1,578 articles in the UK press over the relevant time period found that “articles showing evidence of clear bias were weighted three to one in favour of a pro-union position” and the factor to which pro-union headlines outnumbered anti-union headlines he puts at 4.3 to 1.⁶⁵ A similar report to this effect was made by Prof John Robertson of the University of the West of Scotland who reported that from 730 hours of content analysis the major TV channels BBC and STV were favouring the No campaign by a ratio of 3 to 2.⁶⁶
3. There was present a continued and settled emphasis upon the potential negative socio-economic consequences of any separation, frequently expressed in language which verged on the alarmist.
4. The only strand of media presentation on the part of the establishment which ran contrary to the negative narrative was that which formed the subject of the meeting of heads on June 16th which prefigured the issue of the Vow in the week of the poll.

⁶⁵ David Patrick, “Bought and sold or Hype in Bold?- Newspaper Framing of the Scottish Independence Debate,” Scottish Constitutional Futures Forum, September 2014, <https://ewds2strath.ac.uk/scf/OpinionandAnalysis/ViewBlogPost/tabid/1767/articleType/ArticleView/ArticleId/4255/David-Patrick-Bought-and-Sold-orHype-in-Bold-Newspaper-Framing-of-the-Scottish-Independence-Debate.aspx>

⁶⁶ Dr John Robertson of the Creative Futures Institute “Fairness in the first Year?” published Jan 20th 2014 issuu.com/creative_futur/docs/robertson2014fairnessinthefirstyear

Since YouGov research reported in the Press Gazette at the time found that 60% of Scots relied on newspapers or their associated websites for news concerning the referendum and 71% relied upon TV and Radio⁶⁷ I find that it is unlikely that media slant concerning the issue was a factor which could be excluded as one of potential significance in the milieu within which the campaign was therefore conducted.

The separatist campaign by contrast was conspicuously less well equipped and organised than unionist campaign. Aside from the SNP's support, the director of it, Blair Jenkins, was a former BBC executive who had no previous experience of organising a political campaign of any type⁶⁸ and no less than 5 of the "executive directors" either left or were asked to leave during the campaign. In addition, however a coalition of like-minded pressure groups formed which became known as the Radical Independence Campaign. This group was formed as a federation of leftist and environmental groups and served as the hands and feet of the campaign, doorstepping in much the same manner as the Labour Party faithful did on behalf of the Better Together campaign in working class areas.

3.2. "Project Fear"

The overarching strategy of the Better Together campaign was to lay heavy emphasis upon the potentially negative consequences of a "Yes" vote. Continued issue of propaganda throughout the campaign raised issues as diverse as the question of retention of the Pound, funding of public services such as Health and Social Security, membership of the EU, even the possibility of interruption of Mail services, the issue of Driving Licences, and the

⁶⁷ Dominic Ponsford: Press Gazette October 16th 2014 Survey reveals importance of media in helping Scots make referendum decision. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/survey-reveals-importance-media-helping-scots-make-referendum-decision/>

⁶⁸ Severin Carell: The Guardian 2nd January 2014 Yes Scotland campaigners prepare to make the case for independence. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/02/yes-scotland-campaign-independence-blair-jenkins>

prospect of additional roaming charges on mobile telephones.^{69 70} It is important to acknowledge that, in a free democracy, it is an entirely appropriate freedom and perhaps in situations where there are legitimate concerns as to the effect of an initiative, something of a duty to point them out, and I have analysed some of the claims as to their potential veracity later in the work, however it is of note, that the director of communications Mr Robert Shorthouse was recorded as giving the title “Project Fear” in an informal address in the presence of journalists at the Conservative Party conference in June 2013, a matter which neither he nor the organisation ever denied when this became known, which he later publicly admitted, and which would appear to me to be entirely in keeping with the negative tenor of the material published.⁷¹

At its head was Alistair Darling, a Scot and former Labour Chancellor. The tenor of the remain campaign can perhaps be understood no more clearly than by an analysis of his posture when he and Alex Salmond met in the first televised debate conducted in Glasgow on August 5, 2014.

3.3: An Account of the First Debate & Conclusions Regarding Voter Behaviour in that Timeframe⁷²

Darling focused entirely upon one issue throughout the debate: the unavailability of the pound or any form of currency union to an independent Scotland. The nature of Darling’s

⁶⁹ Dennis Campbell: The Guardian 15th September 2014 Scottish NHS becomes key issue in independence as doctors debate future <https://www.the-guardian.com/uk-news/2014/sep/15/Scottish-nhs-independence-doctors-warn> also Andrew Grice The Independent April 24th 2014. An Independent Scotland would be unable to support its own welfare system, Government insists. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/an-independent-scotland-would-be-unable-to-support-its-own-welfare-system-government-insists-9279025.html>

⁷⁰ Rajeev Syal: The Guardian Feb 16th 2014 Independent Scotland ‘would find it extremely difficult to join EU’ www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/16/independent-scotland-extremely-difficult-join-eu

⁷¹ Tom Gordon: I admit it: the man who coined Project Fear label: The Herald 21st December 2014 www.heraldsotland.com/news/13194407.admit-man-coined-project-fear-label/

⁷² The debate is archived as footage accessible via www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-scotland-28927917#! A cogent narrative of the main points covered here and polling data during and immediately after the event is provided by Severin Carrell and Libby Brooks: The Guardian 6th August 2014 Scottish debate: Salmond and Darling in angry clash over independence www.the-guardian.com/politics/2014/aug/05/alex-salmond-alistair-darling-scotland-debate-independence

challenge was unashamedly combative, referring to a currency union as “stupidity on stilts”, at times verging on taunting Salmond to say what his “plan B” was when he was refused the use of Sterling, and referring to his inability to demonstrate an alternative as a disgrace. His highlight remarks included such observations as; “every 8-year-old can tell you the flag the capital and the currency of a country. The flag will be the Saltire, I assume the capital will still be Edinburgh. You can’t tell us what the currency will be can you?” Salmond, by contrast, could do no more than say “the Pound is as much ours as yours.” Tellingly during the debate when the convenor asked Darling to offer opinion on whether Holyrood would be likely to gain further powers in the event of a no vote, and Darling did not offer a response, Salmond appeared not to offer any question to him as to why.

An ICM viewer survey conducted after the event put Darling as the winner by 56 to 44.⁷³ However support for the Leave contingency ICM also recorded that in terms of live opinion taking, support for Leave actually rose during this “car crash” performance by 2% during the debate itself and after a short period of fall continued to rise thereafter.⁷⁴ This was by no means the first time this issue had been placed at the forefront of the agenda. On February 14th, 2014, the then current Chancellor George Osborne attended a pre -arranged press conference at which he was the only guest. He informed the “conference” that the pound was not something “like a cd collection to be divided up after a divorce” and stated, “if Scotland walks away from the UK it walks away from the UK pound.” He took no questions, and promptly left.⁷⁵

The form of this tactic was completely unambiguous. It even prompted the Sunday Herald to lead with a headline depicting Osborne as indulging in “Dirty Harry politics” and

⁷³ See footnote 76.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Press Association: Alex Salmond attacks George Osborne over rejection of currency union The Guardian 16th February 2014 www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/16/alex-salmond-attacks-george-osborne-currency-union

holding a gun to Scotland's head with the infamous "d'ya feel lucky, punk?" tagline.⁷⁶ This was a far cry from other notable contributions such as David Bowie's "Please Stay", and incumbent Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement that he would be "heartbroken" if the union were to be dissolved.⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ The UK press which was universally in favour of remaining immediately reported the alarmism concerning the currency issue and apparent lack of response to it on the part of the Yes campaign as a clear victory on the issue for the Remain camp. It was variously reported as front-page news over the next few days that, inter alia: "Chancellor crushes all hope of using the Pound" -The Times; "Salmond has nowhere left to hide"-The Daily Express; "Salmond ducks out with his currency plan blown to pieces"- The Daily Mail.

These headlines were accompanied by numerous articles in the aforementioned periodicals indicating that numerous UK concerns as diverse as Standard Life, Aggreko, BP and Sainsbury's issued statements which amounted to substantial commercial warnings if that contingency were to arise, and all forecast Scottish job losses, lessening in investment and price rises in consequence. It was made the subject of a particular report in the Financial Times that a spokesman for the British Retail Consortium had reported that certain High Street concerns such as Tesco, John Lewis and Marks and Spencer would have reservations about their trading positions within Scotland if independence were to become a reality and higher costs for consumers were an area of concern.⁷⁹

There were other, more insidious aspects to the reportage. Accusations of a variety of negative behaviours (up to and including direct physical intimidation) were a constant feature

⁷⁶ Sunday Herald Feb 16th, 2014, page 1.

⁷⁷ John Ferguson: David Bowie's plea for Scotland to stay part of UK stirs up public debate..and online jokers Daily Record February 21st 2014. This article covers some other entertainment celebrity views on the matter. It is felt to be of peripheral value to the matter under consideration, however.
<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/entertainment/celebrity/david-bowies-plea-scotland-stay-3168336>

⁷⁸ 10th September 2014 Widely reported worldwide

⁷⁹ Brian Groom: UK top retailers speak out against Scottish independence: Financial Times February 16th 2014
<https://www.ft.com/content/3f59c83a-96f7-11e3-809f-00144feab7de>

of the press coverage. This included direct accusations of voter intimidation the day before the vote. Since these are anecdotal, they cannot however be referenced with any appropriate verification but are mentioned here for completeness.

Although the official working title of the campaign was the more optimistic “Better Together” slogan, it is clear from the above that the focus of the material was clearly on emphasis of the potential negative socio-economic consequences involved. However, the graphical data in consideration of the timeline however shows that as this narrative continued, the surveyed level of support in favour of independence steadily increased as tabled and graphed here with a calculated rate of change of 2.29×10^{-16} .

In effect the voter intention concerning support for independence increased from an aggregate starting value of 29% around the date of announcement to 40% on the eve of the first debate, and although by common consent, Alistair Darling was conspicuously perceived to have “won” the debate itself on a “project fear” platform, and a substantial dip to 32% can be observed to have followed this event, it is also correct to observe that this dip was extremely short lived to the extent that in the period immediately following the fall, it rose again and regained its former pre first debate level within nine days.

Again, there is no means available to the writer to discern whether this is simply post hoc, or propter hoc, however this pattern does appear to support the general proposition that during the time it was conducted, the emphasis upon negativity did not correlate with any rise in support for the Remain alternative up to the point of the first debate.

Chapter IV

An Analysis of Events Between the First and Second Debates, the Second Debate and The Vow, the Period Between the Vow and the Poll Itself, and a Consideration of the Series of Events and Variation of Opinion Relevant to this Time Period.

The first measure of significance reported concerns the debate itself. The snap ICM poll conducted concerning the debate itself conducted immediately after concluded that that the winner of the debate was Alistair Darling by a measure of 56% to 44% however it is to be noted that same polling exercise found that despite this, support for the Yes vote was found to be at 47% for Independence, and 53% for Remaining, which is of course support for the assertion that the effect of Darling's forensic 'win' in the debate was not sufficient in its own right to reverse the opinions of a significant number of those in favour of independence at all. A more Euclidian observation on this might be to assert that it afforded support for the assertion that notwithstanding the observation that a significant majority of those who saw the debate found the argument made against a more convincing one than the argument made for independence, that in and of itself was NOT found to be of such moment that it affected opinion in a manner or degree to alter the substantial body of opinion against remaining.

Moreover, the data researched shows that notwithstanding a drop in overall popularity to vote Remain which immediately followed the first debate, the overall trend observed previously to the first debate resumed and increased in the same direction of change as it did in the previous period. This trend and the appropriate rates of change under regression analysis is depicted in the graph below and shows a fall in support immediately after the first debate as canvassed in the last chapter however a reversal of fall after a period of nine days and slow gathering of support albeit at a lesser rate than before the second debate without general reversal which continued without general reversal until the period

immediately before the issue of The Vow. As can be readily seen a drop in support for the Leave campaign can be noted, however this is apparent to be confined to the short period immediately following the debate, was all but eradicated within 14 days and did not amount at all to a permanent trend after this.

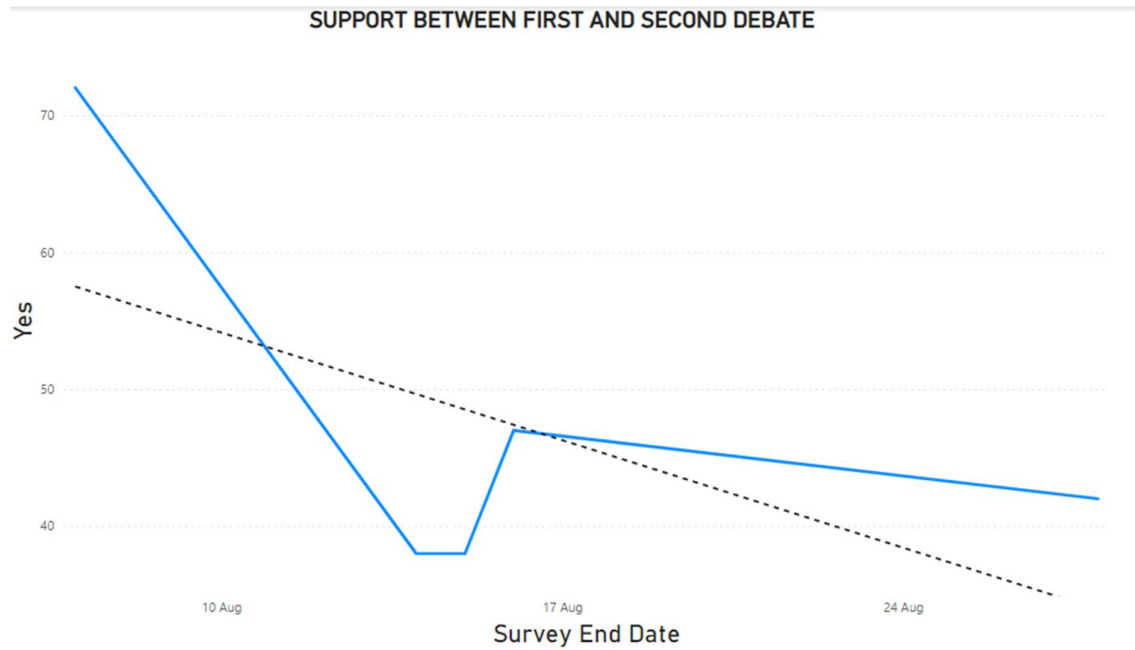


Figure 5. A Graph showing the direction and rate of change for the level of support for the pro-independence position in the period between the first and second debates:

Table 6. Explaining the data presented in Figure 5 and referencing previous rates of change

Timeline	Rate of Change	Direction
07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5 th August 2014(First Debate)	$2.29 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$3.79 * 10^{-15}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$2.68 * 10^{-16}$	Positive

It can be observed that the rate of change regression line between these two dates can be viewed as an immediate and sharp drop followed by a comparatively small correction, and a further much gentler smaller fall than that which obtained immediately after the debate itself.

4.1. The Second Debate Itself

The second debate between Alistair Darling and Alex Salmond which was televised and took place on August 25, 2014. Concerning the detail of the debate I would observe that four issues were raised during it. The first was again the issue of currency. During the debate Alex Salmond claimed that he had offered three plan B alternatives for the price of one and raised the issue of whether Darling would on behalf of the UK accept that a Yes vote would count as a mandate for Scotland to use the pound.⁸⁰

This raises an objectively difficult question in and of itself- namely whether and to what extent any mandate would thereby also arise as to how the voters in the rest of the UK would react to it, and such polling data as does exist appears to suggest that the majority of voters in the rest of the UK would not be in favour, however the positioning of Salmond during this could be clearly seen as adopting a posture of himself as defending the interests of

⁸⁰ A helpful narrative of it can be found at <https://www.itv.com/news/border/story/2014-80-25/second-scottish-leaders-debate/>

Scotland in the face of what was by then a clear pattern of resistance towards what he wished the audience to perceive as concerted antagonism based on what he posed was a policy invidious to the interest of the Scottish electorate.⁸¹ It in effect was a clear example of “them and us politicking”.

The second was the issue of potential privatisation of the NHS, the UK’s public health care system. Again this was portrayed by Salmond as a threat to Scottish interests as at the time the UK government was pursuing a policy of privatisation where possible-something which was clearly inimical to the median Scottish voter.

Again, since it had already been stated UK government policy prior to the debate that Holyrood was to adopt devolved control of NHS Scotland in due course and in any event, this was as an issue something of a dead letter, however it can be observed that this too was employment of the “them and us politicking” adverted to above.

The third was the issue of child poverty. Alex Salmond claimed that relentless pursuit of the current UK wide public spending agenda was likely to put 100,000 Scottish children in poverty. It is not clear where this figure came from, however in the context of the debate, it was a comment clearly calculated to question the then current “austerity measures” of the UK government at that time. Rather tellingly, the obvious riposte to this, namely that the manifold published forecasts concerning economic contraction in the event of independence would foster levels of economic difficulty of a considerable magnitude in its’ own right was not explicitly made in counter during the exchange.

This posture and framing were further continued in relation to the other measures of significance, namely the location of the UK nuclear deterrent (Currently at HMB Clyde) and

⁸¹ Tom Clark: Independent Scotland should not use pound say 63% of English and Welsh. The Guardian 15th September 2014. The poll was conducted by the Guardian/ICM and published at www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/15/independent-scotland-not-use-pound-english-welsh-voters

the mis-named “Bedroom Tax”, both issues which were commonly known and understood to be issues to which the Scottish voter held negative opinion.

Again, a clear point in rebuttal which stood to have been made was that the location of RMB Clyde is of clear and ongoing contribution to the locality in terms of job provision was not made, and Darling was forced into the rather invidious position of in effect having to advocate for a raft of policies that his party was staunchly against in Westminster.

The feedback data on the event in question was clear. An ICM/ Guardian poll delivered the verdict that Salmond had won the debate by a convincing margin- 71% to 29%.⁸² From that point it can be observed that the pace of growth in support for the Yes campaign grew at a substantial rate to the point that briefly it found itself in the majority (ibid). It is of course beyond the normal parameter of research to attempt to divine whether this debate was of itself a crucial factor in the change of opinion, and one cannot ignore the potential effect that the campaigns mounted by either side would or would not have had on any local or individual level. It is however worthy to note that the activity of each camp was substantial at these levels also. As well as the mobilisation of the political heavyweights discussed earlier, by way of political assistance the entire continued grassroots party volunteer machinery used by the Labour Party in Scotland was put at the disposal of Better Together to campaign and on the day, to mobilise and secure attendance at polling stations.

Although the official working title of the campaign was the more optimistic “Better Together” slogan, I posit that the focus of the material was clearly in emphasis of the potential negative socio economic consequences involved. What does occur to me upon an albeit cursory examination of the little literature issued by the left leaning independence campaign in their own right is the absence of the more “traditional” mainstream Marxist

⁸² Tom Clark, “Poll:71% find Alex Salmond victorious in second Scottish independence debate,” *The Guardian* 25th August 2014. www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/aug/25/guardian-icm-poll-alex-salmond-winner-scotland-debate

dialogue in it, such as worker empowerment, class struggle and the generally hostile posture towards all forms of non-state-controlled business. Regardless of content however consideration of the timeline shows that as this narrative continued and despite the immediate post second debate popularity data, suggested that it was having a potentially negative effect upon the popularity of the position at that point, as Project Fear continued, the surveyed level of support in favour of independence steadily increased as tabled below.

The rate of change under regression in two time periods is notable. After the debate the rate of change between the second debate and the Vow was recorded to be 8.25×10 to the minus 16. This compares with a figure of 2.68×10 to the minus 16 in the period from first announcement until the second debate itself. This is entirely interpretable as showing that support for the Leave campaign not only continued to grow in support, but also that the increase in support was itself gathering pace at a rate unseen by either side prior to the second debate. In general terms, as Project Fear continued, support level for the alternative not only grew, but grew faster than before as shown by the table and data later presented.

Again, there is no means available to me to discern whether this is simply post hoc, or propter hoc, however this data does appear to support the general proposition that during the time it was conducted, the emphasis upon negativity by Better Together did not prevent the increase in popularity of the Leave contingent in the period following the second debate. Project Fear however was not the only measure employed by Better Together. It has to be considered in tandem with another initiative which it appeared to be the last event of significance which the writer can find in the timeline concerned.

4.2. The Antidote to Project Fear: Calton Hill and “The Vow”

There is record of a meeting on June 16, 2014, between the three eminent figures within the Scottish pro remain establishment, namely Ruth Davidson, Johann Lamont, and

Willie Rennie. This became known as the Calton Hill announcement, following the place at which it was made.⁸³ The announcement was by way of the issue of a pledge for the grant of increased powers to the Scottish electorate- an unprecedented and unrepeated action in Scottish politics. This was made at time when as the data set already canvassed shows that support for the leave vote was gaining and appeared to be on a clear trend line to eventually catch and pass the remain vote and has been demonstrated potentially due to the drop in the level of previously undecided voters. It was explicitly denied by Ruth Davidson that this initiative was a reaction to this development, which she acknowledged in an interview with the Daily Telegraph that day and in that same interview made a clear assertion that this initiative had been discussed for over a year before this, however I cannot find any mention of a like plan or offer to the Scottish people made by either Ms Davidson or the Better Together campaign before this date and that the timing of this announcement may be said to have been made at time one would be very tempted in a legal context to term “convenient”.

The terms of the announcement were general. However, they were unequivocal as to the certainty of the intent, namely a guarantee of increased fiscal responsibility in general, and over Social Security (which includes pension payments) in particular. A level of orchestration is noted by the writer that same day approval of this initiative was publicly announced by both David Cameron (then PM) and Ed Miliband (then LOTO). It is against that background that The Vow of September 2014 was offered, in effect offering the same guarantee but with the specific additional promises of continued Barnett support and a pledge to affirm the formerly offered full control over health service spending also.

⁸³ Ben Riley Smith, “Scottish independence:UK parties pledge more powers for Holyrood,” *Daily Telegraph* 16th June 2014 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scottishindependence/10904076/Scottish-independence-UK-parties-ledge-more-powers-for-Hollyrood.html

4.3. The Last Scottish Prime Minister & His Role

I have already adverted to the influence of Gordon Brown. It was at this point that his influence was brought to bear by the Remain campaign. On September 9, 2014, he delivered a public and nationally covered speech at Loanhead Miners' Club which was unequivocal and amounted to a "tied hands" pledge by the UK government regarding the vow. It is worth quoting relevant extracts in some full measure; "...the plan for a stronger Scottish Parliament we seek agreement on is nothing less than a modern form of Scottish Home Rule within the United Kingdom" adding that it would be "as near federalism as is possible in a nation where one-part forms 85% of the population."⁸⁴ As far as Brown himself is concerned, the writer notes that this was not a personal volte face of any description; in his work *My Scotland, Our Britain* published in 2014 he had already espoused this as his preferred option on the matter and it can be said to be such a clear central theme to the work that simple recital of pages referencing the same is of little value.⁸⁵ Since Labour was not in power at this time, his comments of course carried no formal weight. It was made clear however in this address that he represented the voice of the establishment in this speech.

⁸⁴ Severin Campbell and Patrick Wintour, "Scottish independence: No camp send for Gordon Brown as polls tighten," *The Guardian*, September 9th 2014. www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/08/gordon-brown-leads-scottish-labour-drive-rescue-no-campaign

⁸⁵ Gordon Brown, *My Scotland: Our Britain* ISBN 10:1471137481

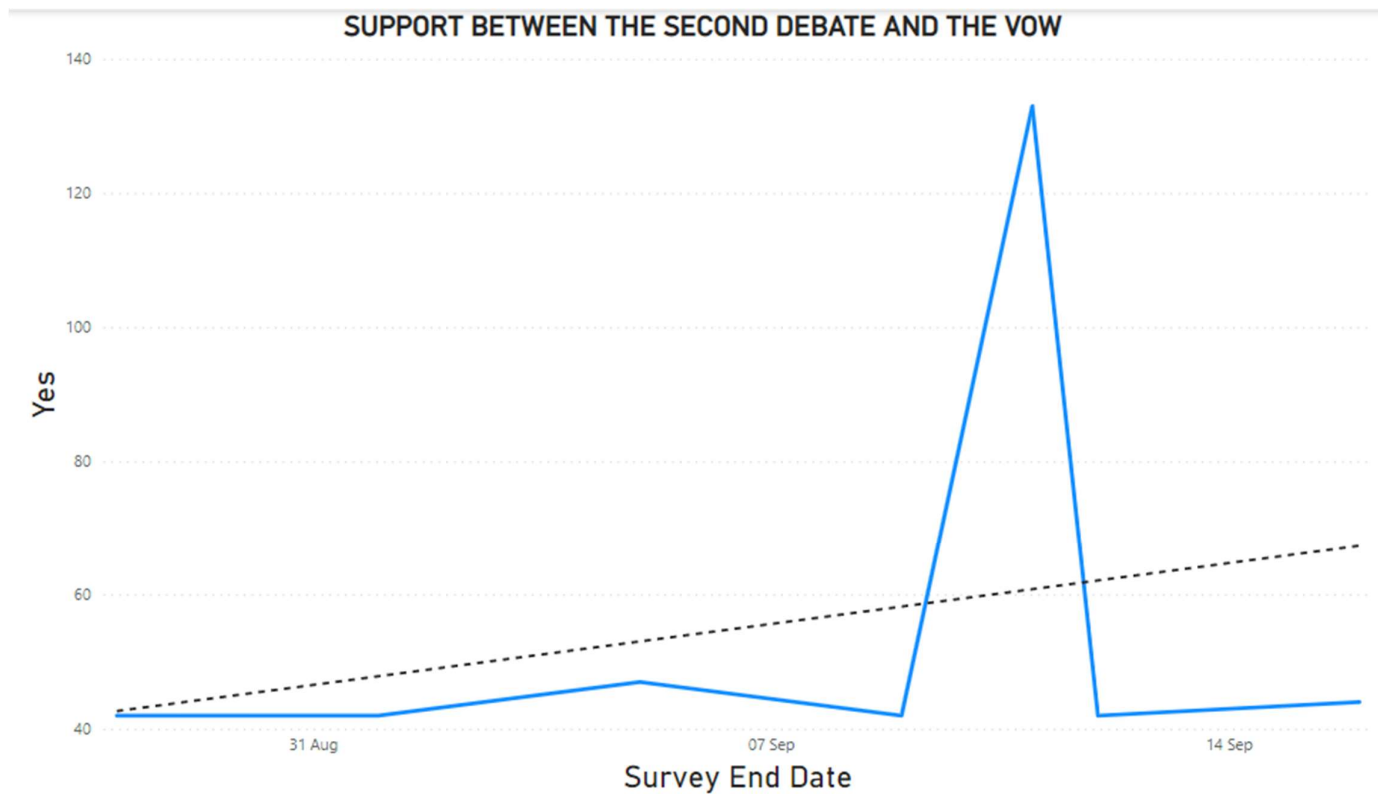


Figure 6. A Graph Representing the Direction and Rate of Change in the period from the Second Debate to “The Vow”.

This graph attempts to chart the direction and magnitude of change in levels of support for the Pro-independence position during what can be termed here the “angry period” between the first and second debates. As can be seen there is a pronounced “spike” in levels of support followed by a corresponding fall, however the general smoothed trend is also recorded and as can be seen, the trend line was clearly set (if continued in like manner) to achieve majority but for the sudden fall.

Table 7. Table explaining the data in the graph presented in Figure 6.

Timeline	Rate of Change	Direction
07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5 th August 2014(First Debate)	$2.29 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$3.79 * 10^{-15}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$2.68 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$8.25 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$1.999 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$3.49 * 10^{-16}$	Positive

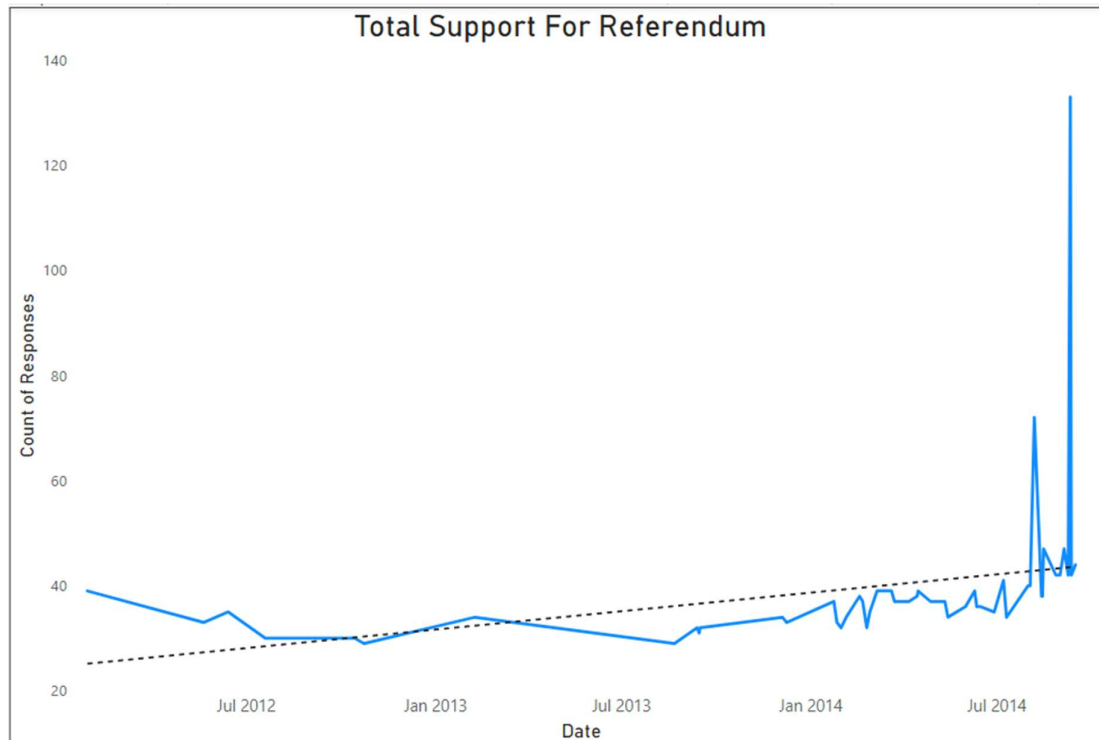


Figure 7. A graph representing overall support for the leave position in the entire timeline of the referendum process:

It is to be noted that there was observed a clear and pronounced late increase in support for the pro-leave faction as the referendum date approached which only regressed in the very short period after /the Vow was made.

Table 8. Table explaining the data in the graph presented in Figure 7.

Timeline	Rate of Change	Direction
07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5 th August 2014 (First Debate)	$2.29 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 25 th August 2014 (2 nd Debate)	$3.79 * 10^{-15}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 25 th August 2014 (2 nd Debate)	$2.68 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate) - 16 th September 2014 (The Vow)	$8.25 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 16 th September 2014 (The Vow)	$1.999 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 16 th September 2014 (The Vow)	$3.49 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
16 th September 2014(The Vow) – 18 th September 2014 (Final Vote)	$-3.47 * 10^{-14}$	Negative

There can be observed from the data a clear and strong correlation between the issue of the Vow and the substantial change of opinion between the date immediately prior to it and the vote itself. Not only did the final result reflect a 6% overall change from 51% in favour of independence to 45% who eventually voted for independence, crucially taking away the notional majority of those who indicated that they would have voted for it. The rate of change was also the largest rate observed at any time under scrutiny and by a substantial margin.

4.4 Conclusions Regarding this Time Period

I am of course wary of inferring causation from correlation. It appears that the data demonstrates that notwithstanding the perceived losing performance of the Scottish First Minister in the first debate, popularity for the Leave campaign rapidly recovered after a temporary and small fall, and the continuance of the previous persuasion tactic of the Better

Together campaign amounted to events against which background the popularity of the Leave campaign continued to grow at an increasing rate until the period immediately before the Vow, a promise which in effect altered the paradigm upon which the UK establishment had up to that point predicated its stance for the previous 18 months. That the change which proved to be pivotal occurred because of what I posit is an inescapable conclusion, not least because I can identify no other issue which occurred at that time, and which made such a likely impact. I will now offer a possible reason as to why.

Chapter V

An Enquiry into the Potential Reasons for the Late Reversal of Trend and Eventual Outcome

Having established a numerical correlation of The Vow upon the eventual outcome, I will offer an examination of the information available in support of the hypothesis. As previously found, during the period under detailed scrutiny in the preceding chapters, only one poll on one occasion demonstrated an outright majority finding in favour of independence and this was in the week immediately prior to the vote itself.

In every other poll, the modal report of voting intention fell in either the category of outright majority opposition or taking the conservative interpretation of this, that due to the fact that those reporting indecision were in such number that they could easily have affected the outright result. In effect, it could not be ruled out as an interpretation that if those reporting as undecided were to opt for remaining, the leave campaign would lose. Since unlike the former vote under the Callaghan government, there were no overall minimum turnout requirements in order to ratify this decision, the extent of support for “undecided” would not be directly significant to a consideration of validity of the election per se. However, opinion in this period was clearly something of a moving tableau, and in general it can be said that opinion was not static by any means.

5.1. Did the Opinion of the Scottish Public vary over this time as to the Desirability of Scottish independence, and if so, to what extent?

As to each of these two questions, there is a clear answer. Opinion did vary over the time concerned as to the desirability of Scottish independence, and according to an observable pattern during the period. The level of professed support for full independence began at a level of 28% and a trend line can be observed over the two-year period over which

a general and steady rate of increase in popularity of the option rose to a highest observed figure of 51% in the week directly before the poll itself, and when taking into account the final poll result, 45% who actually voted in favour.

As to the second question, the extent of the overall growth in this period was on any view, substantial. It is of course an increase of 21% and represents an increase of a magnitude of 82.1% in popularity over the period to the peak figure, and 64.3% as concerns the final result. When viewed against the background of electoral swings as represented in UK general elections, the magnitude of this figure is unprecedented. Although the SNP resurgence in 2015 has yielded empirically greater electoral “swings” in support in Scottish constituencies in parliamentary elections⁸⁶, the observable growth in opinion in support of this issue far outweighs any reported Parliamentary swing between parties reported at any general election, the largest recorded of which was “only” 14.4% recorded in 1931, and which of itself can be regarded as an extraordinary event as the “Party” in favour of which that figure lay was in fact an emergency coalition formed to tackle the Great Depression, and which of itself is substantially greater than the second largest which was the 1945 post war swing of 11.8% from the Conservative led wartime administration to the Labour Party.^{87 88}

War and national emergency aside, the next largest swing recorded was 10.2% with the advent of New Labour, Blair-led administration in 1997, a figure which was variously described as sensational, a “landslide” and also loosely correctly described as “unprecedented in peacetime.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Summarised in Wikipedia at United Kingdom 2015 General election in Scotland Votes Summary https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_United_Kingdom-general_election_in_Scotland#Votes_summary

⁸⁷ Author unknown: 23rd August 1931 a day of meetings leads to the formation of the National Government. recorded at <https://liberalhistory.org.uk?s=1931>

⁸⁸ Generally known in the UK and recorded by Wikipedia (author unknown) in its article concerning the 1945 UK general election https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945_United_Kingdom_general_election

⁸⁹ Recorded as such by David Cowling: The Landslide of 1997: BBC news archive May 8th 2001 news.bbc.co.uk/news/vote2001/hi/English/newsid_119500/1195057.stm

A comparison with the behaviour of opinion concerning the Brexit referendum is perhaps appropriate here. Firstly, it is to be observed that concerning that matter, only the Remain position exhibited a trend line of growth of greater than 6 months duration, however that of itself was only from a period from October 2012 until May 2015, and “only” represented a shift of 10%, from 36% to 46% wherefrom it fell to 43% until rising in the months before the referendum to peak at the final count of 48%⁹⁰. A smaller variability was exhibited by the Leave contingency which saw swings from an initial position of 45% in January 2013 to a low of 37% and then a climb to a final share of 52%⁹¹. By any measure of comparison those results represent a significantly smaller shift in opinion than the measure under consideration.

In summary therefore it can be asserted that over the period concerned a pronounced shift occurred in the opinion of the Scottish electorate to an extent that can be justly described as unprecedented in documented British political history. This shift was towards the position that supported an independent Scotland, and although it cannot on any reasonable view be found to consistently represent an outright majority view, only outweighing both remain and innominate opinion at one data point and by a narrow margin, it nevertheless represented a shift of opinion to such a degree that by the time of the poll itself a majority vote for full independence had become an entirely realistic prospect, a situation which was not the case at the beginning of the polling period. However, this rapid growth in apparent support must be tempered by another related counterfactual consideration.

⁹⁰ A very detailed and continuing data set is found via the archived surveys of YOUNGOV at <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/explore/issue/Brexit>

⁹¹ Ibid

5.2. Did the Opinion of the Scottish Public Vary over time as to the Undesirability of Full Independence, and if so, to what extent?

This is of course a slightly distinct question to the first. Unlike the first variable, a far more stable picture of support is present, with the Ipsos MORI poll recording a spread from commencing figure of 50% via a high of 59% recorded in the period May-September 2013 to a gradual fall recording 54 in June –August 2014 and a late dip to 49 as of August 16th 2014. This pattern is echoed in shape and degree by the YOUNG poll which commenced with a 55 figure in October 2012 and consistently remained within of 51 to 55 from September 2013 until August 2014 after which a dip to an all-range low of 45 was recorded in the first week of September 2014 with a rise to 50 the next week and a final figure of 55 in the poll itself.

The Survation findings show a lesser level of variability, with all falling within the range 44 to 50 and at no time do they demonstrate a lead over the leave figure of less than 4 points, the mean overall lead during the period being 7.33 points with a maximum figure of 13 points recorded in August 2014. A Panelbase data set shows a strong parallel to the Survation findings.

The writer posits that the OVERALL key finding here is the fact that the vast preponderance of the data showed that notwithstanding the growth in support for the leave position, support for the “no” lobby consistently outweighed it, and the eventual poll result was no more than a reflection of that general overall position as revealed by the data during that period.

5.3. The Origins of the Apparent change of Opinion which Manifested

If the polling data showed no overall reversal of opinion, but did demonstrate a substantial narrowing in the gap between independence and remaining within the UK, what were the origins of any apparent change of opinion which manifested itself in this regard? It appears to the writer that a correlation can be observed between the growth in support for the independence position and a lessening in the quota of persons who expressed support for neither alternative.

It is of course impossible to state in any individual case whether the drop in support represents a direct switch of opinion from “support for neither alternative” to independence, however when one considers the drop in unexpressed opinion with the rise in popularity for the independence position, it becomes apparent that a general correlation can be said to appear. It is a truism of research that correlation does not prove causation, however the writer notes an important corollary of the work of Popper et al to the effect that there has of course never been known to be a proven cause in the absence of a correlation also.

If the above demonstrates a transfer of support from the innominate category to the independence category, and then lately back to its former position is obviously important for this research to attempt to find the cause of these shifts. This can be at least considered by examining the initial background, campaigning vectors, and governmental pledge which were made.

5.4. What was the milieu against which background the apparent shifts in opinion, firstly from Remain to Leave and latterly from Leave to Remain occurred?

A potential clue as to this emerges in consideration of four findings, two before the campaign, one during the campaign itself and a retrospective one made shortly after concerning voter motivation.

The first potentially significant matter presents itself in the findings of the Curtice and Ormston research mentioned earlier.⁹² This enquiry specifically dealt with the issue of what level of potential support there was or may have been for not two but three alternatives, namely full independence, remaining in the UK under the existing general status quo subject to the granting of greater levels of autonomy of the existing Scottish legislature, or remaining under the then status quo. As any Scotsman would immediately observe, this is much “cannier” question than the simple binary one. The findings referred to the two year period concerned, the aggregate figure for those consciously reporting a wish for Devo Max as an alternative in its own right were in some parallel with the figure for those desiring independence (32:28 in favour of devo max for 2010, 29:43 in favour of independence in 2011 and 35:32 in favour of independence in 2012).⁹³

I posit that on any reasonable view these findings demonstrated a substantial and abiding level of support for what might be termed a “third way” which was more than significant enough numerically to amount to a constituency in its own right, and in particular note that when taken in aggregate with the 27% in 2010, 21% in 2011 and 24% of those wishing to remain under the status quo, amounted to a substantial aggregate majority against independence alone.

Further, at Chapter 6 of the report referred to earlier entitled “Your Scotland, Your Referendum” it is of note that the consultation exercise conducted considered the potential inclusion of a second question.⁹⁴ Exploration of this question dealt with the possible terms of such a question, and even as to whether the second question should be nested and/or from a gateway question to the first. Significantly, the report noted at 6.24 that 32% of those

⁹² R Ormston and J Curtice, “More Devolution: an alternative road?” referred to earlier and also found at <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/more-devolution-an-alternative-road.pdf>

⁹³ As 96 at Chapter 7 graphically shown in figure 2:2 Constitutional preference (alternative measure) 2010-2012

⁹⁴ Scottish Government Your Scotland, Your referendum: An Analysis of Consultation Responses 23rd October 2012 on the Scottish Government website <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-referendum-analysis-consultation-responses> by typing in “your Scotland, Your Referendum in the search bar ISBN 9781782561880

responding to the issue felt that a second question raising the issue of “Devo Max” should be added to the ballot paper, and specifically noted that of those who disagreed, neither the SNP in general or the Lanarkshire campaign or Scottish Labour addressed the question in their block responses. I posit that in;

1. Ignoring the likelihood that the 32% identified as wishing for a third alternative in that exercise notwithstanding the fact that the data sample was identified at the time as consisting substantially of responses made by non-aligned private individuals in that exercise,
2. Ignoring the possibility that the block response received to it by way of party involvement in response may have negatively skewed the accuracy of any assessment of the level of support for a devo max option, and simply placing a binary alternative on the ballot paper, The Scottish Government in the form of the SNP risked making their position a hostage to fortune and thereby rendered it vulnerable to any initiative the Remain campaign might take to reposition themselves nearer to the actual median level of devolution desired.

The last poll was conducted by Lord Ashcroft after the event and published in The Guardian indicated that as many as 25% of those who voted to remain did so on the basis of greater powers being given to Holyrood.⁹⁵

I further posit that the survey data which allowed the subjects to express a preference between the binary choices offered by the other polls and ultimately the ballot itself form support for the view that at the point of enquiry there was a considerable level of support for a constitutional arrangement which amounted to the enlargement of the power of the national assembly to a level creating a de facto PIT government there as described by Dr Rezvani, in

⁹⁵ Author unattributed: Scottish independence: poll reveals who voted, how and why: The Guardian 20th September 2014 www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/20/scottish-independence-lord-ashcroft-poll

his work, such an arrangement which latterly became referred to as the “devo max” option, and which following the Smith Commission became the eventual legislative position.⁹⁶

These are of course only three surveys; however, the existence of this data lends immediate support for the proposition that this third position apart from the other two formed not only a constituency but a constituency of such potential size that it was capable of holding the balance of the outcome during the relevant time period.

As Thomas Kuhn might have noted it is perhaps the awkward finding of fact which questions the level of committed support in Scotland for the underlying paradigm which certainly appeared to form the basis of SNP policy and position, that is to say a position of full autonomy. Whether this was explicitly recognised by the Remain camp or otherwise, there is every reason to infer from the data that it was the recognition of this constituency and the late intervention of the establishment in the undertaking to grant more extensive powers which was of pivotal effect upon the outcome.

The data presented for the period between The Vow and the final result shows immediate correlation with the late reversal away from what the trend lines identified and discussed in the previous chapters as a growing level of support for independence, and a position which it is suggested is demonstrated to have become a likely majority vote in favour of independence to a substantial (that is to say 10 point) majority to remain within the UK. I am aware that there is no means of knowing whether this occurred post hoc or propter hoc short of conduct of a further poll garnering data from voters who participated at the time, and have to concede that there is now no means of reliably ascertaining this, however I posit that it would be equally unfounded to suggest against the background of the previously observed trend towards a pro-independence vote that this was not of significance particularly

⁹⁶ David Rezvani, *Surpassing the Sovereign State*.

given that is of itself represented a change of posture and marked change of establishment rhetoric in some cases.

It is clear from the data presented that as of June 16th, 2014, the date of the Calton Hill announcement, support for the leave vote was gaining and appeared to be on a clear trend line to eventually catch and pass the remain vote and has been demonstrated potentially due to the drop in the level of previously undecided voters. I re-emphasise here that was explicitly denied by Ruth Davidson that this initiative was a reaction to this development, which she acknowledged in an interview with the Daily Telegraph that day and in that same interview made a clear assertion that this initiative had been discussed for over a year before this, however it is worth re emphasis that I cannot find any mention of a like plan or offer to the Scottish people made prior to this date.⁹⁷

The terms of the announcement were general; however they were unequivocal as to the certainty of the intent, namely a guarantee of increased fiscal responsibility in general, and over Social Security (which includes pension payments) in particular. A level of orchestration is noted already in this work that same day approval of this indicative was publicly announced by both David Cameron and Ed Miliband. It is against that background that The Vow of September 2014 was offered, in effect offering the same guarantee but with the specific additional promises of continued Barnett support and full control over health service spending also. I conclude that the lack of prior declaration in this context makes the assertion that there was any prior intent on the part of the Establishment to offer further devolved powers a weak and unsupported one.

⁹⁷ Ben Riley Smith, “Scottish independence:UK parties pledge more powers for Holyrood,” *Daily Telegraph* June 16th 2014 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/Scottish-independence/10904076/Scottish-independence-UK-parties-pledge-more-powers-for-Holyrood.html> referenced earlier in this work.

5.5. Voting intentions during this period – What can be garnered from the Scottish Electorate’s behaviour during the outlined time period with reference to events presented in the above narrative?

It is considered appropriate to examine this aspect of the matter with respect to several data points. The obvious initial starting point to take is the date of the announcement itself. The following table shows the breakdown of the rate of change, the flow and scale or magnitude of change between the announcement date on 07 August 2013, the date of the first debate on 5th August 2014, the date of the second debate on 25th of August 2014, the date of the Vow on 16th, and lastly 18th September, the date of the referendum itself.

A linear regression model was used to calculate the rate of change between the specified periods with the results below:

A RESUME OF THE APPARENT RATES OF CHANGE AT RELEVANT POINTS

Timeline	Rate of Change	Direction
07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5 th August 2014(First Debate)	$2.29 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$3.79 * 10^{-15}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate)	$2.68 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
25 th August 2014(2 nd Debate) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$8.25 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
5 th August 2014(First Debate) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$1.999 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
7 th August 2013(Announcement Date) - 16 th September 2014(The Vow)	$3.49 * 10^{-16}$	Positive
16 th September 2014(The Vow) – 18 th September 2014(Final Vote)	$-3.47 * 10^{-14}$	Negative

5.6. Scale or Magnitude of Change

For this I have calculated the percentage increase between different periods. It is felt that this enables a better understanding of the rate of change

1. Between the **07 August 2013(Announcement Date) - 5th August 2014(First Debate)** and **5th August 2014(First Debate) - 25th August 2014(2nd Debate)**:

$$\frac{3.79 * 10^{-15} - 2.29 * 10^{-16}}{2.29 * 10^{-16}} = 1550 \% \text{ increase}$$

2. Between **7th August 2013(Announcement Date) – 5th August 2014(First Debate)** and **5th August 2014(First Debate) – 16th September 2014(The Vow)**:

$$\frac{1.99 * 10^{-16} - 2.29 * 10^{-16}}{2.29 * 10^{-16}} = -13.1 \% \text{ decrease}$$

3. Between **5th August 2014(First Debate) – 25th August 2014(2nd Debate)** and **25th August 2014(2nd Debate) – 16th September 2014(The Vow)**:

$$\frac{8.25 * 10^{-16} - 3.79 * 10^{-15}}{3.79 * 10^{-15}} = -78.23 \% \text{ decrease}$$

It is posited that the results of the above give clear scope for the strong inference that during the period of concerted pressure on the part of the establishment to dissuade the Scottish electorate for voting in favour of independence by whatever means, the overall trend

of intention was in great part so unidirectional, and up to the point of The Vow, the rate of change was such that voiced position on the part of the establishment appeared to have little palpable effect against it. With this in mind, I posit that the UK establishment conducted the vast majority of the campaign in either:

1. The settled initial belief that the inherent level of support to remain coupled with inertia on the part of the Scottish electorate would make it unnecessary for them to consider the possibility that support for independence would become a realistic threat,
2. The belief that the tactic of Project Fear would mobilise support towards their position without the necessity to grant further concessions, in each case, they made little if any consideration of what position might more accurately reflect the position of the median Scottish voter.

Though it is never possible to demonstrate actual causes for such matters, a safe conclusion to draw would be that the disposition of the Scottish electorate was clearly not served to motivate it away from the posture of seeking independence by the initiatives offered, and furthermore, that the only overture which is timeously consistent with any such change was the Vow itself.

5.7. The Median Voter Hypothesis & its Potential Application: Several Offered Premises

The vote in question was of course phrased entirely in terms of a decision upon a binary choice. It therefore gave scope for the offering of preference under Condorcet conditions, however, gave nothing more than a choice between the ranked preference of the 2 alternatives expressed. From this and following Hotelling⁹⁸ and in particular Black⁹⁹ it

⁹⁸ H Hotelling, "Stability in Competition (1929)," *The Economic Journal* 39,41-47

⁹⁹ Duncan Black, "On the Rationale of Group Decision Making," *Journal of Political Economy* 56, no. 1 (1948): 23-34.

follows that the vote in question can be categorised as representing a single issue median preference. As noted in the first Chapter, the median voter theorem is felt by some there previously cited to be something of lesser significance to the formation of party policy in Single Issue parties than by more established “Big Tent” organisations. The material reviewed here makes it clear beyond peradventure that as such the posture of the SNP was and remained throughout committed to a clear and unambiguous objective, namely the achievement of full independent sovereignty, irrespective of any consideration of even the concept of the wishes of the median voter within this context. As such the SNP can be said to have adopted a position typical of that identified by Bischof and Wagner and be vulnerable to the same vulnerability in the position as they identify as a result.¹⁰⁰

What such an approach ignores is that by way of general application of the Median Voter Theorem it can be assumed that there is a distribution of preference on the issue along a spectrum representing the degree of autonomy which would be preferable to the Scottish electorate. This can be confidently inferred from the data presented which always demonstrated substantial levels of support for either alternative- at no point was there unanimity of opinion on the issue or anything even approaching that in general. This supposition is given further weight from the existence of earlier polling data referred to. It is submitted that this data identified a constituency of opinion which when asked in terms facilitating the ability to voice a preference beyond the binary alternatives, actively preferred what may be termed a third alternative, sufficiently different from the other two to amount to a body of opinion in its own right which fell on the spectrum of degree of autonomy between the other two alternatives.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Bischof and Markus Wagner, “What makes Parties adapt to Voter Preferences? The Role of Party Organization, Goals, and Ideology,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 50, no. 1 (January 2020).

I posit that the issue of the Vow here had the likely effect of redefining the terms under which the Remain alternative was offered, and that the redefinition in question was on such terms as represented more closely the general will of the median Scottish voter regarding the degree of autonomy preferable to them than the alternative of full independence. I concede here that nothing beyond a tenuous correlation can be offered here in order to support this assertion as no polling enquiry is available to support this assertion, however I posit that given

1. The trend lines and rates of change observed in the period leading up to the issue of the Vow.
2. The abrupt alteration in the trend line immediate period following the Vow
3. The absence of any other event of significance in the time period between the issue of the Vow and the vote itself
4. The findings of the Lord Ashcroft poll referenced earlier

I can also report that I have scrutinised the material presented to find some agent of change which could present a counterfactual to the above and have found no evidence of any other data or information to invalidate the hypothesis offered.

In layman's terms, I posit that under the new offered terms of the Vow, a significant number of voters who were previously disinclined to remain within the United Kingdom on the then current terms altered their view and perhaps for the first time were offered a level of autonomy which more closely reflected their wishes. Further that the abrupt and significant shift in opinion which followed it demonstrated that this proposed "new package" more closely approximated the wishes of the median Scottish voter in the first place.

Accordingly, I posit that neither party adequately considered the likely posture of the median voter in adopting their initial positions on the matter, and in all likelihood, the only party to this event who did so at all, did so very late, and when faced with the prospect of

losing if they failed to. The democratic process may by nature be something of a blunt instrument, but it is not a blind one, and was at least in this context capable of discerning its wishes to a nuanced degree perhaps unappreciated by either side when they began the process concerned here.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

I posit in conclusion that without even being aware of the concept, the United Kingdom has been continuously conducting a live experiment in consocialism for the last 313 years. With all due respect to Lijphart, the United Kingdom is at least as strong an example of consocialism as the Netherlands, and it has proved that as a consocial entity it can adopt, adapt, and improve itself.¹⁰¹ The striking feature of all the representations made to Smith Commission following the vote was to me at least the high degree of correlation between them. In effect there was little argument between each side in that exercise about the degrees of autonomy that each side was prepared to acknowledge as acceptable. It may be appropriate at this point to consider the ideas of Ernest Gellner who memorably and in something of an echo of Tom Paine held that democracy is inconceivable without nationalism of some form, springing from the fact (initially of course expressed by Aristotle in book 1 of *The Politics*) as he found it that people live in “natural communities.”¹⁰² If true it is therefore logical to conclude that such an arrangement would inevitably serve to create a dynamic in a situation where (as here) any two nations have a joined democracy.

As regards the interpretation of the findings contained here, my central conclusions are that the answer closest to the intentions of the median voter in this matter was the posture eventually offered by the Remain vote, namely an increased degree of autonomy more akin to PIT status than that before, but nevertheless not amounting to complete secession from the United Kingdom. A further conclusion which presents itself albeit with the benefit of hindsight is that the whole issue might have been better handled by each side had they had the presence of mind to acknowledge the issue more as a debate between two degrees of

¹⁰¹ Lijphart A, *Patterns of Democracy* (1999, 2nd Edition 2012)

¹⁰² Gellner E. *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society And Its Rivals* (1996)

nationalism, rather than a binary competition, and at that, one which had only begun to assert itself recently in history because it could not have done so in electoral terms before full representative democracy was fully established and only began to appear attractive when the former undoubted benefits to each of a full union in a clearly successful empire began to wane and at least a semi-autonomous position began to appear attractive. Indeed, without doubt there was a poorly understood yet critical bloc of voters that shaped the outcome of the referendum. On their own they may not have themselves been the majority of the voting population. However, under the conditions of the referendum they did prove to be a what might be termed the *decisive silent majority* that determined the result.

The Bischoff and Adams et al articles referred to earlier highlighted that an observable general trend of single-issue parties is that they can prefer pursuit of an ideological aim above a vote winning one. In a single-issue vote such as this, such a posture is eminently understandable given that the SNP itself is supported and staffed by those for whom this ideological aim was seen as paramount. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no dialogue towards possible achievement of the eventual position was undertaken by either side during the campaign. Such an approach might well have avoided the worst aspects of the campaign such as the “us and them” posture created by the wrangling over use of the currency and other divisive postures which hallmarked and (I hope I have proved, at least to the standard of balance of probability) only served to exacerbate the appetite for greater separatism. That the establishment embodied in the Remain camp only moved in a direction which recognised their own failure to account for the wishes of the natural constituency identified is also a failing on their part.

It appears to me that the great strength of consocialism arises when there is a perception on the part of the minorities concerned that they are not being disadvantaged by virtue of being minorities. I hope I have demonstrated that in adopting the arrangement which

they eventually got an opportunity to vote for, there is now at least no reason for Scottish citizens not to feel that their democratic franchise is well enough served enough under this present arrangement to retain it.

Likewise, a basic premise of full autonomy is that one cannot pick and choose the advantages and disadvantages it brings. I hope I have demonstrated that the Scottish electorate or at least a substantial part of it found the alternative sufficiently fraught with potential difficulties and risks that they felt much the best course for Scotland was to remain under the now present arrangement.

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