Continuity and Change in the Scottish Independence Movement

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Introduction

Sub-state nationalism has been a key feature of political life in multinational states for many decades. Although most sub-state nationalist parties began to make their mark from the late 1960s onwards, against the backdrop of a changing international order which challenged the sovereignty of the nation-state (Keating, 2001), these parties often have deeper roots. The broader political and economic context, nationally and internationally, not only helps to explain why these parties became a significant electoral and political force. It has also helped to shape their goals.

Existing literature has observed the variety of goals articulated by sub-state nationalist and regionalist parties, from cultural recognition, to varying degrees of autonomy, either by devolving powers from central government, securing constitutionally guaranteed autonomy afforded by a federal state structure, or securing independent statehood (Keating, 2001: 7). Viewed from a comparative perspective, the SNP has been somewhat distinctive, at least in the post-war period, in combining an unambiguously secessionist stance with both electoral success and the absence of an ethnic, linguistic or cultural component to its nationalist claims (Massetti, 2009; Hepburn, 2009). The growing electoral significance of sub-state nationalist and regionalist parties, and in some cases their transition from 'niche party' to serious contenders for, and sometime holders of, government office coincided with the development of a broad policy platform alongside the 'core business': the desire to defend territorial interests and advance self-government (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; Elias and Tronconi, 2011). At least in part in response to regionalist and nationalist demands and the electoral force they have garnered, most advanced democratic states have enhanced the autonomy of nations and regions within their boundaries, either by reinforcing the political autonomy of existing regional institutions or creating new ones. Between 1970 and 2005, 29 of 42 mainly EU and OECD states had become more 'regionalized', while only two had become marginally less regionalized (Marks, *et al.*, 2008).

Although the existing literature has pointed towards the variety of territorial goals, it is less clear on setting out what these goals actually mean, and how their meaning evolves and is shaped by the political and historical context in which the goals are articulated. This is particularly pertinent in the case examined in this paper. The Scottish National Party (SNP), one of Europe's oldest and most successful sub-state nationalist parties, will lead a campaign for independence

in a referendum to be held on 18 September 2014. The referendum is facilitated by the SNP's electoral success: the party has governed Scotland since 2007, securing a parliamentary majority (in a proportional system) in 2011, giving it an electoral mandate to hold an independence referendum and the parliamentary strength to facilitate one. The referendum question - Should Scotland be an Independent country? Yes/No – has sparked a debate about what it means to be an independent country in an interdependent world. The SNP clearly sees independence as embedded within broader political, social and economic structures, including the European Union, NATO, and the Commonwealth, but also with institutional arrangements within a UK/British Isles context. Is this apparently diluted form of independence – dubbed 'independence lite' in contemporary debates – a departure from previous articulations of the party's territorial goals, or can we see continuities in the ways in which these are framed?

This paper will examine the contemporary independence movement in Scotland, and in particular the Scottish National Party, in historical perspective. In particular, it will focus on the evolution of the concept of independence articulated by the Scottish National Party both in political discourse and in concrete policy goals. In so doing, it will consider the extent to which this evolution is shaped by the development of the UK state – from the Mother of the Empire to a middle-ranking global player and EU member-state – as well as a growing transnational inter-dependence which has shaped the opportunities and constraints faced by small states, especially in Europe. The paper is structured around three periods in the party's development. First, it explores the party's early years, when independence, sovereignty and self-government were articulated within the context of Empire. Second, it examines the evolution of the party's attitude towards the European Community/Union and Scotland's place within it. Finally, it will examine the prospectus for independence being developed within the current debate over Scotland's constitutional future in advance of the Scottish independence referendum, and in particular the extent to which this goal is articulated within the British Isles. Throughout we will draw upon conceptual tools offered by historical institutionalism to reflect upon the process of continuity and change in the setting of the party's territorial goals.

Case Study and Methodological Approach

Scotland has been home to one of the most successful sub-state nationalist parties in Europe. The Scottish National Party (SNP) was founded in 1934, following the merger of the Scottish Party and the National Party, which had themselves emerged a few years earlier from a disparate set of movements championing Scottish home rule. However, the SNP failed to make much of an impact electorally until the 1960s, when successes in local elections were followed by spectacular by-election victories and subsequent electoral success in the early 1970s, all of which brought the issue of Scottish self-government high up the political agenda of the more established political parties. That issue was to face a setback in the 1979 devolution referendum, whose majority YES vote proved insufficient to pass a legislative hurdle which would have led to the setting up of a Scottish Assembly.[1] However, the SNP's by-elections successes in the late

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[1] The 1979 referendum was a post-legislative referendum asking Scots if they wanted the provisions of the Scotland Act 1978 to be put into effect. Although it secured a majority Yes vote – 51.6% - the legislation had included a threshold stipulating that the majority had to represent at least 40% of those eligible to vote, i.e.

1980s, coupled with the dominance of the Conservative party in UK government, led by Mrs Thatcher, against a backdrop of that party's electoral decline in Scotland, exposed a 'democratic deficit' in the political system. This fuelled the demand for Scottish self-government, leading eventually to a successful referendum to establish a Scottish Parliament in 1999, as has been well-documented elsewhere (Keating, 2001; Denver, et al, 2000).

The creation of the Scottish Parliament brought new opportunities for the SNP. Whereas in a Westminster context, the party was destined to remain on the fringes of parliamentary debate, in the arena of devolved politics in Scotland it was a serious contender for government from the outset. The SNP found electoral success in 2007, forming a minority administration, and returning as a majority government in 2011. Holding the office of government has given the party a mandate and a means to pursue its central territorial objectives: defending Scottish interests, maximising Scottish self-government, and pursuing Scottish independence through the mechanism of a referendum. But what does the party mean by independence? And does the apparently diminished form of independence being sought in the 2014 referendum mark continuity or change from past articulations of this independence goal?

In seeking to understand the evolution of the party's territorial goals, and its understanding of independence and self-government, we will draw upon the conceptual tools offered by historical institutionalism. Steinmo (2008) notes that historical institutionalist analyses seek to answer the question 'Why do real world outcomes vary in the ways that they do?' While not discounting the impact of rational or strategic choices made by actors, historical institutionalism stresses the need to place these choices in temporal context. This allows for the incorporation of characteristics, including socioeconomic conditions, as well as the values, beliefs, and ideas held by individual actors that might be excluded in other types of analyses (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 946).

Historical institutionalists have developed several key concepts to help explain continuity and change. The first is a critical juncture in which change, 'the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement among two or more alternatives', may occur (Mahoney, 2000: 513). Ikenberry (1994) describes a period during which the weight of 'history's heavy hand' is eased, opening up options which may not have been feasible during periods of institutional equilibrium. While previous experience continues to shape an actor's goals and preferences, structural constraints are relaxed, allowing for substantial realignment (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 344). Such realignment is not necessary; an actor confronted with an opportunity for change may opt to maintain the status quo (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 348). Either way, once a decision is made, it is reproduced and the system recalibrates to perpetuate and reinforce this decision (Mahoney, 2000: 508). Change will once again be inhibited by institutional forces and may be difficult to achieve unless another critical juncture occurs.

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those whose names appeared on the electoral register. In the event, the majority represented only 32.9% of the eligible electorate.

Historical institutionalist analyses are typically built around the concepts of critical junctures or exogenous shocks which trigger change and then replication, noting that change is difficult and is unlikely to take place in the absence of an exogenous shock. The decline of the British Empire – a long process but one marked by periodic shocks, from the loss of India to Suez, which affected the UK's influence, global standing and self-perception – represented a backdrop against which Scottish nationalism made its electoral breakthrough. The UK's entry into the (then) European Community in 1973 and its affirmation two years later in a referendum may similarly have represented a critical juncture shaping the way Scottish nationalists viewed their aspirations for Scotland's place in the world. More recently, the setting up of the Scottish Parliament was undoubtedly a critical juncture which paved the way for a reconfiguration and consolidation of the Scottish party system. In particular, it permitted the territorial cleavage in Scottish politics to be expressed in parliamentary representation, facilitating the SNP's subsequent electoral success. The entry into government which that success triggered has given the party experience, responsibility and bureaucratic resources which have provided the SNP, for the first time in its history, with both an opportunity and – in advance of the referendum - an obligation to spell out what it means by independence.

On the other hand, it may be argued that the territorial goals of the SNP are marked more by continuity than change, even in the context of these significant institutional developments which have clearly altered the opportunity structures available to the party. From its origins, the SNP has understood and articulated its territorial goals in light of changing conceptions of the state, looking towards external structures when assessing the viability of independence. Adaptation, rather than abrupt change, may be a more appropriate description of the party's goal orientation. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) advocate an approach which considers gradual changes as of potentially 'great significance in their own right and gradually unfolding changes may be hugely consequential as causes of other outcomes' (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010: 2). They advanced four models of institutional change: displacement in which existing rules are removed and replaced; layering in which new rules are introduced on top of or in tandem with old ones; drift in which the impact of existing rules is changed in response to shifts in the environment; and finally conversion in which existing rules are deployed in a different manner (ibid: 17-19). Of these, layering and conversion are most relevant to our discussion. Layering takes place when 'institutional challengers lack the capacity to actually change the original rules', and 'each new element may be a small change in itself, yet these small changes can accumulate, leading to a big change over the long run' (ibid: 17). Layering is thus a more subtle process in which direct changes to old institutions and rules are not required. Conversion takes place when the rules remain the same but are interpreted and enacted differently (Thelen, 2003).

The data collection underpinning the analysis relies on documentary evidence to examine articulations of the SNP's territorial goals. These include party documents, including election manifestos, speeches, statements of MPs before the House of Commons and government papers.

The SNP and the Empire

In the early part of the twentieth century, the United Kingdom state remained at the heart of the British Empire. In 1922, when the establishment of the Irish Free State set it on the road to independence[2], the British Empire still spanned around a quarter of the globe, incorporating around 20% of the world's population (Ferguson, 2004; Louis et al, 1998). Yet, in the decades that followed, the Empire was gradually dismantled, reducing the status of the UK from 'mother nation' of the Empire to a middle-ranking power in a changing world. This process may have been too protracted to represent a 'critical juncture' in the historical institutionalist sense (depending on the historical perspective one takes) but it was marked by a series of exogenous shocks – from the loss of Ireland and the Indian subcontinent, to the Suez canal debacle – which diminished the stature, confidence and power of the state.

The Empire had played an important role in the development of Scotland and Scottish national identity, with Scots seeking economic, religious, and military opportunities in the overseas colonies and dominions of the British Empire (Paterson, 1994: 13). Both the narratives and realities of Empire influenced the territorial objectives of the SNP and its predecessors. Although there was always an anti-imperialist element, the dominant expressions of nationalism from the 1880s until the 1940s regarded the British Empire as an asset which would facilitate self-government rather than a liability which would undermine the sovereignty of Scotland (MacKenzie, 1993: 730).

Indeed, according to the historian, Richard Finlay, the British Empire 'provided an alternative focus for Scottish national identity which helped unify an increasingly divided nation' (Finlay, 1997: 13), and later helped ensure that a continued (and reinvented) articulation of Scottish national distinctiveness could develop hand-in-hand with a commitment to the Anglo-Scottish political union, and to the imperial project in which the Scottish elite regarded themselves as equal partners (Finlay, 1994; Morton, 1999; Kidd, 2008).

The near political consensus on the imperial mission in Scotland was challenged in the period following the First World War and became more apparent as the Empire began to decline (Finlay, 1997: 17). The imperial project faced challenges from home and abroad. The extension of popular democracy and the burgeoning demand for action on domestic issues drew attention away from the Empire, while Irish independence in 1922 inspired many of the UK's colonial territories to seek their own independent status (Harvie, 2000: 330). This process accelerated throughout the 1920s and 1930s and after the Second World War. For McCrone, this period was one in which 'the layers of the British imperium were peeling off', a movement which began with the white dominions, the independence of Ireland, anti-colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa, and later nationalist mobilisation in Scotland and Wales (McCrone, 1997: 593).

The Scottish nationalist movement in the early 20th century was somewhat fragmented, with a diversity of territorial goals. The Scottish National League was hostile to both England and to

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[2] The Irish Free State was a dominion within the British Empire. It quickly increased its autonomy from the UK state, formally becoming an independent, sovereign republic ('Eire') in 1937 following the adoption of new constitution.

the British Empire, arguing that independent statehood was necessary to address social and economic ills at home (Mitchell, 1996: 83; Finlay, 1992: 187). The SNL also supported independence movements in Britain's colonial territories as well as Republicans during the Irish War of Independence (Finlay, 1992: 186-8). These views remained after its incorporation into the National Party of Scotland, but the NPS was more ambiguous with regard to the Empire, underlining its commitment to the pursuit of 'independence within the British Commonwealth of Nations'. In the face of some internal opposition, it set out a vision of independence which sat alongside a commitment to sharing control of defence and foreign policy with England, the maintenance of a free trade area, and the joint administration of the British Crown Colonies (Finlay, 1992: 194-5). A third camp, represented by the Scottish Party, advocated a form of self-government which explicitly embraced the British Empire (as well as a policy platform which was ideologically to the right of the NPS). For the Scottish Party, self-government would 'strengthen the Scottish commitment to the Empire and the imperial ideal' (Finlay, 1992: 185), and ensure its recognition as an equal partner in the administration of the British Empire (Cameron, 2010: 170). As expressed by Andrew Dewar Gibb, then one of the leading figures of the Scottish Party who would go on to serve as leader of the SNP: 'True it is that the hegemony of Britain in the Empire is steadily becoming more and more formal and ornamental, but so long as that hegemony endures in the British Empire, it must reside in England and Scotland, never in England alone' (1930: 187).

Thus, when the Scottish National Party was formed in 1934, from the outset its membership expressed a variety of territorial goals, but these were generally envisaged as being achievable within the British Empire. This position was influenced by the continued, albeit diminishing, significance of the Empire, prevailing Scottish public opinion and widespread acceptance of its value, as well as the opportunities afforded to Scots from its participation (Robertson, 2006; Kennedy, 2006). The SNP sought the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, but one clearly embedded within the British Empire. The Constitution adopted at the merger outlined the party's goals as 'Self-government for Scotland on a basis which will enable Scotland, as a partner in the British Empire with the same status as England, to develop its national life to the fullest advantage' (SNP, 1934). The model of imperial administration was described by Sir Alexander MacEwan as one in which 'Scotland shall share with England the rights and responsibilities they, as mother nations, have jointly created and incurred within the British Empire' (Aberdeen Journal, 2 March 1934, cited in Finlay 1994: 153). Representatives of the party stressed their imperial credentials. In a public address at Derby in December 1934, John MacCormick, then one of its leading figures, reassured voters that while the Scottish National Party sought self-government, there was 'no question of the Scottish National Party ever aiming at, or dreaming of secession from the Empire' (Derby Daily Telegraph, 1 December 1934).

However, divisions within the party re-emerged in the midst of economic crisis, the relative success of Ireland as an independent nation-state, and the coming war. The SNP's stance on empire may have undergone a shift in the late 1930s as pacifist wings within the party began to emerge. A pamphlet published by the party entitled "Scotland and the World Crisis" set out the party's approach to conflict, noting that '*Scotsmen would fight in collaboration with England and the British Commonwealth, in a war for ideas appealing to our people*'. But it also urged a

return to diplomacy, particularly within the context of the League of Nations, noting that '*Scotland cannot voluntarily take part in the game of power politics, dangerous to the great State and suicidal to small nations. In such a game the small peoples must be merely the pawns of the great and the vassals of rival Imperialisms*' (Evening Telegraph, 29 October, 1938).

Following the war, the policy of the SNP was articulated as 'Self-Government for Scotland', defined as '*the restoration of Scottish National Sovereignty by the establishment of a democratic Scottish government, freely elected by the Scottish people*' (SNP, 1947). As a step towards this goal, many of its members showed willing to participate in cross-party efforts in pursuit of an elected Scottish assembly within the Union (Wright, 2009: 185; Hepburn, 2009: 192). But the rapid dismantling of the British Empire in the post-war period forced a re-examination of Scotland's place in the world, as well as undermining the rationale for maintaining what for many had been 'a Union for Empire' (Robertson, 2006). The SNP's vision for self-government was less ambiguous in the 1960s and 70s than in its early years, but it still included 'unifying' characteristics, including membership of the Commonwealth and the monarchy as the unelected Head of State, while an Association of British States or a customs union was seen as a means of maintaining economic and social integration in the British Isles (Harvie, 1998: 182; Hepburn, 2009: 192). The 1979 manifesto *Return to Nationhood* contests the notion that the party advocated the 'break up of the UK' but instead promoted a 'new relationship under the crown', one founded in partnership and equality rather than subordination (SNP, 1979: 29). This took the form, according to the 1983 election manifesto, of a special relationship between an independent Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, an Association of States of the British Isles in which cooperation between the governments and free movement could occur, pointing toward the Nordic Council for inspiration (SNP, 1983: 10). As the party began to move towards membership, or at the very least, close economic ties with the European Community, Commonwealth membership began to be combined with United Nations membership and understood as a means of furthering humanitarian aims, particularly in regards to aid for Britain's former colonies, rather than as a source of political or economic integration (SNP, 1979: 18; SNP, 1992: 11).

The SNP and the European Project

Whatever the original hopes British leaders invested in the Commonwealth and of other ventures like the European Free Trade Association, it became increasingly apparent in the 1960s that the benefits of membership of the European Community outweighed the risks of isolation from it. After shunning the opportunity to participate at its creation, the UK had to apply three times before its membership was granted. As Hugo Young eloquently observed, for the UK, 'entry into Europe was a kind of defeat: a fate she had resisted, a necessity reluctantly accepted, the last resort of a once great power, never for one moment a climactic or triumphant engagement with the construction of Europe' (Young, 1998: 2).

The project of European integration has also been widely acknowledged to have facilitated the growth of regionalism and nationalism at the sub-state level. Although initially sceptical (see below), by the 1980s many sub-state nationalist and regionalist parties had come to regard the

European Community as a mechanism through which their goals might be achieved (Elias, 2008). For regionalists, it held out the promise, albeit largely unfulfilled, of a post-sovereign political community in which Europe's regions could have a genuine voice. For nationalists, it provided a secure external framework facilitating a transition to independence, and which would embed a level of political and economic co-operation that could minimise economic and security risks hitherto associated with independence. Elsewhere, transnational organisations and agreements such as NATO and the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, could likewise provide an external framework within which the sovereignty of member-states could be mediated and pooled (Guibernau, 1999; McCrone, 1998; Keating, 2001; Tierney, 2005; Jolly, 2007).

Like others in this party family (Nagel, 2004), the SNP's position on Europe has shifted over time: it was cautiously supportive of European integration in the 1940s and 1950s, deeply sceptical in the 1960s and 1970s, and embraced a pro-European platform in the late 1980s and 1990s (Ichijo, 2004: 47). In the late 1940s, the SNP advocated a 'clear and positive linkage between Europe and self-government' with the party advocating European integration provided there was direct representation for Scotland (Minutes of the 1948 National Conference, quoted in Lynch, 1996: 28). In the 1960s, the SNP became increasingly hostile towards the European Community, reflecting a mistrust of another outside power as well as general disinterest among the Scottish electorate (Devenney, 2010: 100). When the UK first applied for membership in 1961, the SNP formally protested that, under the terms of Union, Westminster lacked the authority to cede sovereignty to the EU (Wright, 2005: 11). The SNP characterised the (then) EEC as a threat to Scottish autonomy (Devenney, 2010: 113). Following an SNP delegation to Brussels, party chairman Billy Wolfe described the EEC as an organisation which sought to '*establish political domination of the whole of western Europe and to tolerate no deviations from this line. The Common Marketeers of today are as much doctrinaire centralists as their opposite numbers in the Kremlin in Moscow*' (Wolfe, 1973: 139). The 1970 general election manifesto warned of increases in foreign workers, soaring food prices, political instability, undue German influence, and '*Macaroni for your Sunday joint*' (SNP, 1970). The SNP continued this 'hostile' stance during the 1975 referendum (Mitchell, 1996: 213), held to confirm the UK's membership of the European Community, in which it campaigned (alongside the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru) for British withdrawal (Ichijo, 2004: 49; Harvie, 1998: 190).

SNP opposition was, however, contingent, and was expressed more as an objection to a lack of self-determination than an ideological objection to the European project. Both the SNP and Plaid Cymru asserted the right of their nation to define its own relationship with the EEC (Fusaro, 1979: 375). The SNP's 1975 campaign was conducted under the banner, *'No voice, No entry'*, and argued that membership of the European Community conflicted with the terms of the 1707 Treaty of Union (Lynch, 1996: 31). Posters proclaimed: *'No - On Anyone Else's Terms'*, leaving the door open for a more favourable stance should Scotland become independent (Harvie, 1998: 190). The party remained somewhat sceptical towards the European Community for much of the decade which followed the referendum, perceiving it as a centralising body, 'damaging to many of Scotland's interests' (SNP, 1983: 11). In the place of European integration, the party envisioned trade agreements like those held by Norway and Austria.

Although the party's official policy did not shift until a vote in 1988, there were signs of change already in the 1987 manifesto, which stated that the party would recommend membership in the EEC following a negotiation to ensure that Scotland's interest were adequately represented and the voters approved membership through referendum (SNP, 1987: 7). However, the manifesto pledged to oppose further centralisation and emphasised the EC as a community of nations. In 1988, following a process of modernisation and internal debate, the SNP explicitly adopted a pro-EC position, re-orientating its central territorial objective to one of 'independence in Europe' (Mitchell, 1996: 233; Nagel, 2004). The internal debate was led by Jim Sillars, a former Labour MP and later SNP Deputy Leader, who argued that an independent Scotland would be able to enter the European Community as an equal partner in contrast to the unequal union with England (Wright, 2009: 179). His case was aided by other more traditionalist leading figures of the party, who came to recognise the opportunities for Scotland within an integrated Europe (Mitchell, 1998: 120). Sillars asserted that a policy of Independence in Europe '*provided an antidote of reason to the hysterical scare-mongering pursued by the twin Unionist parties, Labour and Tory*' (Sillars, 1989). As a constituent unit of the United Kingdom, he argued, Scotland is subordinated to Europe and has *'no means of asserting its national interest'* in Brussels. He urged Scots to *'move ourselves from the outer fringe of European politics to the centres of decision making'*. Speaking before the House of Commons in June 1989 while still the party's deputy leader, Alex Salmond outlined the benefits of independence within Europe (HC Deb, 28 June 1989, vol 155, cc 984-1030):

> Within the European Community, Scotland would have twice as many MEPs as at present, a Commissioner as of right, votes on the Council and a turn to lead the European Community through the presidency of the Council as a full and equal partner. We would have real influence in Europe to match real power in Scotland. That is the other side of the "Scotland in Europe" argument, and the argument for independence.

The expansion of competences held by the European Community may have contributed to this re-orientation of the party's independence goal. The integration process exposed Scotland's limited influence in Brussels, and weakened the authority of the UK's national sovereignty. For Ichijo, the party's shift toward 'Independence in Europe' was an explicit acknowledgement of 'the limitations placed on state sovereignty in the post-war era' (Ichijo, 2009: 163). The rebranding of the EU as a social project under Delors' Commission presidency also made it a more attractive option for Scots, and for the SNP which was itself becoming increasingly social democratic (Newell, 1998: 112; Harvie, 1998: 200; Cameron, 2010: 316). This is suggestive of a process of layering and conversion. There was no critical juncture forcing an abrupt change; no point at which a decision *had* to be made. Rather, the party responded to incremental changes internally and externally within the EC itself.

But domestic considerations also played a role. Delors' 'social Europe' provided a contrast to the neo-liberalism of the Thatcher governments, while the increasingly vocal Euroscepticism of the Thatcher and Major governments, coupled with the embrace of the European Community by the UK Labour Party and the trade union movement, also heightened its appeal for the SNP

(Keating, 2001: 58). In *Scotland's Future*, the SNP stressed the need for Scotland to become an 'independent member state of the European Community' (SNP, 1990: 4). The document emphasised an economic argument for Europe in the face of Thatcher's economic reforms, framing the decision as one of '*integration into Thatcher's England or independence in Europe for Scotland*' (SNP, 1990: 6). The party contrasted the '*mainstream of Europe*' with the '*backwater of Britain*' (SNP, 1992). In a 1993 House of Commons speech, Alex Salmond criticised the British government for favouring the interests of 'little Englanders' over the 'wider interests of the European Community', characterising those who stood against extending the powers of the European Union as 'the anti-Europeans' (HC Deb 21 May 1992 vol 208 cc509-600).

While supportive of EU regionalism and the Committee of the Regions, the SNP maintained an intergovernmentalist vision of the EU, in which the Council of Ministers would remain the dominant pillar with space 'at the top table' for an independent Scotland (Hepburn, 2009: 194). The party advanced a *'rigorously critical view of excessive Euro-enthusiasm, and creeping integrationism*', adding: '*We have a robust view of the need to set clear limits to what can properly be done at the all-Europe level and what must be retained by the states and their regions in accordance with subsidiarity*' (SNP, 2001: 1-2). EU membership remains central to the SNP's vision of Scottish independence today, with the issue of Scotland's entitlement to membership a central feature of the referendum debate. However, the party remains a critical friend, expressing reservations about the role of the EU in some areas, most notably the Common Fisheries Policy, and distancing itself from the single currency, a stance which pre-dates but has been exacerbated by the Eurozone crisis.

Embedded Independence within the British Isles

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 - following years of campaigning by the SNP, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and a wide spectrum of Scottish civil society, and convincing public support in the 1997 referendum – was a landmark in the development of Scotland as a nation within the United Kingdom. Although presented by the then Labour government as part of a package of reforms designed to modernise the British constitution, it was also clearly motivated by a desire to cement Scotland's future within the UK state. Yet, only 15 years after the introduction of devolution, Scotland will hold its first independence referendum. The result remains to be seen; current opinion polls point towards a decisive victory for the NO side, which would support the view that devolution had strengthened the Anglo-Scottish union, but only a fool would predict the outcome a year in advance of the referendum date. What is clear is that the Scottish Parliament has provided a vehicle for the SNP to win an election, form a government, and use its position in office to advance its central territorial objective.

The goal of Scotland as an 'independent country' – the subject of the forthcoming referendum – remains a vision of independence in which a degree of sovereignty is pooled within the European Union, marking continuity with the commitment embraced since the late 1980s. But the independence being sought by the SNP government also entails significant cross-border co-operation with the other states of the British Isles, especially with the remainder of the UK

(henceforth rUK), in a '*partnership of equals*' (Sturgeon, 2013). It is a form of 'embedded independence' (McEwen, 2013), in which sovereignty is negotiated not just within transnational frameworks or the European Union, but also embedded within new partnerships with the existing state. As Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon noted in a recent speech, '*far from marking a separation from our friends and relations across these islands, independence opens the door to a renewed partnership between us*' (Sturgeon, 2013).

This partnership would be manifest in a number of ways. In negotiating its independent membership of the EU (which it envisages doing from within rather than outside the EU), an SNP government would seek to negotiate an opt-out of the Schengen agreement in order to maintain a common travel area with rUK and Ireland, and facilitate a common labour market to support extensive cross-border trade and mobility. Scotland would remain within the Commonwealth, retaining the British monarch as head of state. The Scottish government has also declared its preference for retaining the pound sterling as its currency, and negotiating a formal currency union with rUK – which would in turn require a further negotiated solution to the challenge of accepting the *acquis communitaire* on assuming independent membership of the EU. The preference for a formal sterling currency union comes with an implicit acceptance that an independent Scottish government would have little influence over money supply, exchange rates, interest rates or inflation, although the assumption is that Scotland would be 'a full and equal partner' within that union, with formal representation within the monetary policy committee (Swinney, 2012a). According to John Swinney, the SNP government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, such a currency union would '*provide us with price and macroeconomic stability whilst not inhibiting future independent governments from using the full fiscal and economic flexibility that comes with sovereignty to change and adapt to new economic circumstances, promote growth and create jobs*' (*ibid.*).

Indeed, across a range of policy spheres, independence is envisaged as being realised within the context of institutional interdependence with rUK. Two areas of particular significance to the independence platform – social welfare and energy – serve to illustrate this broader phenomenon. The Scotland Act (1998) specifically reserved to the Westminster parliament control over social security, including pensions, national insurance, benefits and other cash transfers to individuals 'for social security purposes'. The defence of a progressive welfare state against the backdrop of UK government reform and retrenchment, especially under a Conservative-led government, is a key theme of the independence campaign – as it has previously been in the devolution campaign (McEwen, 2006) - with the suggestion that the powers of independence would enable Scotland to develop a more distinctive social democratic welfare state. Yet, the SNP government immediately accepted the recommendation of its own advisory group to maintain shared UK-wide arrangements for the delivery of pensions and benefits for an unspecified transitional period after independence. Under the existing bureaucracy, these benefits are processed in centres across the UK. Centres in Scotland process claims for pensions, working age benefits and child allowances on behalf of citizens in London and the north of England; tax credits and some allowances for carers and the elderly in Scotland are processed in delivery centres in England. The assumption made by the SNP government is

that these delivery arrangements can continue to be shared, even if the policies and entitlements diverge.

Energy was also listed as a specific reservation in the Scotland Act, including control over the generation, distribution, transmission and supply of electricity, oil, gas and nuclear energy, as well as control over the regulation of the energy industry and the energy market (Scotland Act, 1998; schedule 5, Head F; Head D). Control over energy resources has long been a desire of the nationalist movement since the discovery of North Sea oil. More recently, the demand for energy self-government is also regarded as a pre-requisite to fulfilling Scotland's potential to realise its ambitious programme in renewable energy and become the 'green capital of Europe'. Independence, it is argued, would provide the fiscal autonomy to borrow to invest, as well as design a tax and regulatory regime to match these policy goals. It would also give Scotland a direct voice in the EU, which as an increasingly important forum for the development of energy policy (see McEwen and Bomberg, 2013; McEwen, 2013). But here, too, the SNP government envisages a degree of connectedness with rUK which goes way beyond what would be expected from EU market integration. This includes joint regulation of the oil industry, the maintenance of a common GB energy market, and shared arrangements for designing and subsidising the incentives to boost investment in renewable energy generation (Ewing, 2012; interviews with officials, 2013).

The proposals upon which the Scottish independence referendum will be based offer a 'soft' vision of what it means to be an independent country – leading many observers to refer to it is 'independence lite'. To some extent, what is being presented as 'independence' looks more like confederation than sovereign statehood, but for the fact that it goes hand in hand with a desire to secure recognition in the international community as a sovereign state, and independent membership of the EU. The changing international order is a relevant backdrop, with speeches by prominent SNP figures making frequent references to global interdependence. Quoting Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun's expression, on the eve of the 1707 Act of Union, that "all nations are dependent, the one on the many, this we know", First Minister Alex Salmond, said (Salmond, 2013):

> Saltoun was emphasising a truth which is especially relevant in the modern world. All nations are interdependent. And an independent Scotland will achieve its goals through partnership. But as an independent nation, we would be able to choose our aims, our partnerships and our priorities.

Finance Secretary, John Swinney, nodded towards global economic interdependence, suggesting that: "*In an increasingly interconnected world, being independent offers an opportunity to put forward a distinct voice in the global economic community and to market Scotland's strengths*" (Swinney, 2012b).

Indeed, the world in which sub-state nationalist parties like the SNP are articulating their territorial goals has become more interdependent. Finance is increasingly global, challenging the sovereignty of national economies, while in politics and law, international and supranational

bodies have increased their authority to steer policy decision, issue directives and protocols, or establish norms which are difficult to defy. These developments have constrained the scope for individual states to exercise independence. Sovereignty constraints may pose a particular challenge for small states which usually have less political weight, often less economic might, and fewer administrative resources to engage in intergovernmental negotiation from agenda-setting to policy making and implementation (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2004; Falkner and Laffan, 2005; Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006; although for an alternative view of small state influence, especially within the EU, see Torsten and Sanneke, 2005; Björkdahl, 2008; Jakobsen, 2009; Aksoy and Rodden, 2009; Golub, 2012).

Yet, the independence promoted by the SNP, and its degree of embeddedness within the British Isles, seems to point towards a degree of sovereignty which is even more constrained than that exercised by existing states of a similar geographic and economic size. This may be influenced by the SNP's experience of government and the knowledge acquired from its first thorough examination of what becoming independent - and dismantling a 300 year old political union - could entail. Transport and other communications infrastructures operate across borders, and many fairly mundane functions remain centralised. Where services currently operating on a cross-border or centralised basis are non-contentious politically, it may make more sense to have continuity, freeing up space to focus on disentangling the more politically potent areas such as oil resources, the national debt or the armed forces. On interviewing senior members of the party, Mitchell, *et al.* found that the vast majority appeared comfortable with sharing services and institutions with the rest of the UK after independence (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2011). As one senior member – now Justice secretary – noted in a book exploring nationalism in Scotland:

> Is there a need for a separate DVLA or even Ordnance Survey?... Does a bureaucracy need to be created in Saltcoats as well as Swansea? Can we not simply pay our share as well as our respects? Do we need to reinvent the Civil Aviation Authority or other such Institutions as opposed to exercising control from north of the border even if the Institution remains located in the south of it... There are numerous other organisations and Departments where separation is not necessary but the right to direct and instruct is (MacAskill, 2004: 29-30; cited in Mitchell, *et al.*, 2011: 121).

In the context of the current referendum, the prospectus of shared services, from pensions delivery to the currency, goes beyond these apparently non-contentious issues, and it is far from certain that the new offer of partnership would be accepted by rUK, and less likely still that it would represent a 'partnership of equals', given the resource disparities – economic, bureaucratic, political, and reputational - between an independent Scotland and the rUK. Furthermore, the more institutional interdependencies that would remain, the less scope there would be for autonomous, *independent* decision-making.

Understanding the Evolution of the SNP's Territorial Goals: Continuity or Change?

To what extent does historical institutionalism help us to understand the evolution of the SNP's territorial goals? Has the party's behaviour and articulation of its goals been shaped by the

institutional environment in which they are made? It seems clear from the above analysis that the external political environment, and the historical and political development, of the existing UK state has had a significant effect on the nature of self-government being sought by the SNP for Scotland, with the party adapting its goals in response to the changes taking shape. In the latter years of the British Empire, when the SNP was born, the goal independence or self-government was situated firmly within an imperial setting, drawing inspiration from those other nations of the Empire which had already achieved dominion status. In due course, the European Union came to offer an alternative institutional environment in which sovereignty could be exercised and shared, shaping the behaviour and positioning of the SNP. The decline of Empire and the growth of the EU altered the rules of the game, diminishing the authority of the UK state and opened up new economic and political opportunities to nations like Scotland. Likewise, we may argue that the changing nature of the nation-state in the context of global interdependence has shaped the way in which the SNP is currently setting out its independence goals, with significant institutional ties to the rest of the UK.

Yet, notwithstanding the enormous changes which have taken place in the external political environment since the SNP's foundation, there remains a remarkable continuity at the heart of the vision of Scottish self-government. The SNP has throughout its history (at least until the establishment of the Scottish Parliament) been beset by internal divisions – usually characterised as between fundamentalists and gradualists – and these have been discussed frequently in studies of the party. But these have been differences of strategy and debates over the best way to reach the sovereignty goal. On the goal itself, the raison d'être, there has been considerable continuity inasmuch as independence, or self-government, has mostly always been set within a broader political environment beyond Scotland, from Empire, to Commonwealth to the European Union. A new relationship with the rest of the UK, founded on an equality of status, has also been a common feature, not just in membership of the Commonwealth and the sharing of a monarchy, but as documented in the 1970s and 1980s, also in institutional relationships that would facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and the free movement of people. Thus, if the latest articulation of the vision of independence being presented in the context of the forthcoming referendum is a form of diluted independence, this is not so new when one takes a historical perspective. Indeed, it is the late 1980s and 1990s, when the EU came to supplant the UK in the party's independence vision, which stands out as somewhat distinctive from both earlier periods and current pronouncements of what means for Scotland to be an independent country. What is new today is that the referendum is forcing the party and the government it leads to set out in detail what independence would mean in practice. In this sense, the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 – which created the opportunity for electoral success – and the party's election to government in 2007 and especially 2011 – have been watershed moments in the SNP's history, bringing it closer than ever before to realising its territorial goals, and compelling the party to transform these aspirations into concrete and feasible plans.

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Scottish independence (Scots: Scots unthirldom; Scottish Gaelic: Neo-eisimeileachd na h-Alba) is the political movement for Scotland to become a sovereign state, independent from the United Kingdom. Scotland was an independent kingdom through the Middle Ages, having won wars of independence with England. The two kingdoms were joined in personal union in 1603 when the Scottish King James VI became King James I of England, and the two kingdoms united politically in 1707. Political campaigns for Scottish