

# LOOKING FOR A SECOND CHANCE

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It has just been seven years since the independence referendum was held in Scotland, and today there is the prospect of a second referendum on the front lines of the political agenda. There are some differences between what was announced in 2014 and 2023, including the consultation with the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, but one of the most significant is the proliferation of diversity in the sovereignty movement and, above all, in the pro-independence social movement.

More or less, three actors embodied the Yes movement seven years ago; The debate was led by the SNP's Scottish National Party-led Yes Scotland campaign, and the Radical Independence Campaign strengthened the Yes discourse from the left. In addition, Women for Independence, which is still in force today, played a significant role. Jim Sillars explains it in *In Place of Failure: Yes Scotland* was funded by the SNP itself, and although local groups in general had no party affiliation, the SNP's leadership at the national level overshadowed the diversity of sovereignty. That was the “weakness” of the movement, in Sillars ' words.

Today, with the proliferation of this scheme, it has become decentralized and, to some extent, out of political control. Yes Scotland has been deactivated, or partly limited to providing data and information to promote independence on social media. At the same time, many groups have been formed since 2014, some of which are no longer in line with the SNP's political strategy, even if they are not against it. The SNP remains an effective electoral machine, as the May elections showed -it won 64 of the 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament- but within the social movement, different strategies and interests are coexisting.

This can be felt on the street; on September 18, the seventh anniversary of the independence referendum, the Believe in Scotland platform called for a National Day for Action; 112 local groups prepared different types of mobilizations, mainly aimed at distributing leaflets and convincing those in doubt or those who did not have an aggressive stance against independence. It is mainly a platform for pedagogy.

Believe in Scotland was founded by economist Gordon MacIntyre-Kemp, who previously set up Bussiness for Scotland think tank, after seeing the pessimistic or concerned attitude of some economic sectors towards independence. It now has 47 employees on the platform, coordinating local teams, interacting with each other and, most importantly, providing material resources. That was one of the reasons for the movement's creation: in the weeks leading up to the 2014 vote, it was noticed that some groups did not have the resources to campaign, and that no one provided them with materials.

The debate over independence moves on economic parameters, and the efforts of the pro-independence discourse go in that direction, MacIntyre-Kemp says; Highlighting the resources that an independent Scotland would have and promising a fairer distribution of them: "Our key message is: we have the worst pension of the developed world as a percentage of final earnings. What we are saying is that you can't actually have a live of dignity if you rely on the state pension. We are proposing to raise the pension 200 pounds". This issue seems to be key, given the age-appropriate voting trend in the 2014 referendum: "Among 16 to 25-year-olds, the affirmative vote reached 76%. But the negative was 70% among those over 65". Fear of the inability to collect pensions was fueled by unionism on the eve of the 2014 consultation.

This fear, however, is being dispelled by Believe in Scotland with data: the number of net pensions replacement rates in the UK, according to figures from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development —The percentage of the last salary received through a public pension— was 29% in 2016, compared to the European Union average of 70.5%. In 2017, 17% of Scottish pensioners were in relative poverty, compared to the European Union average of 14%.

Not surprisingly, Independence Pensioners are one of the most prominent groups in recent years. Member Daniel Laurie explained to Berria the reasons for the group's existence: "We are one of the poorest groups in society; we have the lowest pensions in the so called civilized western countries. And, above all, we are aging, and we want the next generation to live in a country that cares for all people; In an independent Scotland".

In economic considerations, the viability of the new state is often debated; that it will issue its own money, that big companies will escape from instability ... "Every country has its own money, this is the easiest thing ever; Estonia was founded in six weeks. One has to wonder why pensioners live in poverty. We are now learning how to campaign; we are changing the dynamics of the dialogue".

This is why MacIntyre-Kemp wants to place “well-being” at the center of the debate: “Well-being is not something for the left or the right, and we use that. We want the right people to join us too. We can also convince conservatives with an approach to well-being, but not with a left-wing one”.

### **How to get over the %50**

In the 2014 referendum, pro-independence votes were 45%; ten points less than No vote, but as the date approached, the gap between the two options narrowed: independence was around 27% before the referendum was called. Now, surveys compare the two options, and it is often mentioned that 45% of 2014 would be now a floor rather than a ceiling. MacIntyre-Kemp: “The main change from the first referendum is that Labour was strong; over the years, they have dominated Scottish politics and led the campaign for the No; the Conservatives were left behind. Now, Labour says they want to stay in the UK, promising federalism; but they are not in a position to offer us anything”.

The lowering of Labour Party is the Scottish -and British- variant of the decline of social democracy in many European countries, leaving the main task of the opposition in the hands of the Conservatives. This could also have an impact on the referendum campaign, in the words of MacIntyre-Kemp: “The unity of the Conservatives, Labor and Liberal Democrats is over, and now the Conservatives must take the lead in the No campaign. And that’s a disaster for the No campaign. There is no Better Together”.

### **Once-in-a-generation**

For the campaign, however, a referendum must be called, which has become a hot topic. On the one hand, the fact that no date has been set yet allows the SNP to work on extensions; It has been announced for the end of 2023 if the COVID-19 pandemic is completely overcome. The Alba Party, however, wants to immediately start negotiations on the referendum with Westminster, and that is precisely the key problem: Prime Minister Boris Johnson is currently not ready to approve a second independence referendum.

Scots seem to agree with the Scottish Government’s timing: according to the Scottish Election Study, the favourite option for both SNP and Green supporters is to hold a referendum within two to five years, with both parties forming an absolute majority. The first option for voters, however, is to

vote “as soon as possible”. The question is when such a vote will take place and if Westminster can refuse it for a long time. It is clear from Johnson’s view that an independence referendum could be held “on a generational” basis, not more often; in fact, Johnson has an excuse: on the eve of the 2014 consultation, then-First Minister Alex Salmond and then-Deputy FM and current FM Nicola Sturgeon argued that it was a “once in a lifetime” opportunity.

However, things have changed since then: Brexit and Scotland, despite voting against, seeing themselves outside the European Union have completely changed the political scenario, and the SNP, in addition to its impressive 2014 membership growth, has easily won every election, promising a second referendum on the manifesto.

The governments of Scotland and the United Kingdom signed the Edinburgh Agreement in October 2012, which agreed on details of the referendum. The treaty does not specify anything about the possibility of a second referendum, but MacIntyre-Kemp recalls the example of the Northern Ireland and Good Friday Agreement: according to this, there should be no second referendum on Irish unity before seven years have elapsed. Seven years have passed since the first Scottish independence vote on 18 September 2014: "So there is a precedent in the UK".

### **The role of remainers**

The consequences of Brexit play an important role in the current context; 52% of the UK population backed leaving the European Union, but in Scotland, 62% voted against it. However, as part of the United Kingdom, Scotland is also outside the EU. One of the groups mobilized on 18 September was Yes for EU: a platform created in 2019 after Brexit to promote Scotland as an independent state within the EU. Three dozen people gathered in front of the Holyrood parliament, holding the flags of all the EU member states in their hands and around a Yes made up of cardboard letters.

David Spacey was one of them: “We have many people whose interest in 2014 was the No, that they were told that if Scotland went independent we would drag out of the EU; that was a lie, and the case has completely reversed”. So the platform brings together different profiles: all those who want Scotland to be in the European Union, but some who voted for Scottish independence in 2014, and others who voted against it at the time. Spacey is part of the second set: “I was very against in 2014, maybe because I didn’t want to lose my rights as a European citizen. But Brexit has completely reversed that. I spent 12 years living and working on the European Union, and that is a right my son or my grandchildren have lost; they will never be able to do that”.

How much can this affect the outcome of the second referendum? Spacey: “Yes for EU has brought a lot of new people to Yes position”. In fact, the Yes option has received significant support in recent months, as has the case with Labour First Minister Henry McLeish. However, there is also data to relativize this assertion: according to a study by the Scottish Election Study itself, pro-independence activists are better off mobilizing the demobilized than trying to convince the opposite; in fact, the opposites are quite sure of their opposite: those who went from affirmative in 2014 to negative in 2021 and vice versa are very similar: 16% are both sets.

### **Seeking mobilization**

All Under One Banner is one of the groups that has emerged since 2014. It was set up a few weeks after the referendum. On September 25th, it held a demonstration in Edinburgh, bringing together about 5,000 people. It was the largest mobilization of independence in recent times. Along the way, thousands of Scottish flags, but also numerous Catalan flags.

Neil Mackay, one of the promoters of AUOB, was not very euphoric, but he was happy with the participation and, above all, after the social distance caused by the pandemic, with independence once again taking to the streets. That is their intention: “The aim is regular, sustainable mobilizations to get the yes movement, to get people power; can’t just leave it to politicians, is very much about empowering scottish people”.

Party representatives also took the floor at the end of the demonstration: members of the SNP and the Scottish Socialist Party, among many other actors. So what is the relationship between the pro-independence parties and the social movement? What is their level of autonomy? Are the parties allies, or are they the target of their demands and critics? Mackay's explanation: «AUOB are not aligned politically with any party, but all pro independence parties we support them in a sense, because they support independence, and they can come and speak in the rallies». However, the parties are also the recipients of the demands, and especially the SNP, which is the main force in the Scottish Government: “We address both Holyrood and Westminster parliaments. The Scottish Government should take action now, to do what they promise”.

Mackay critical with Sturgeon: “I think it is possible to hold a referendum by 2023, but Nicola Sturgeon is not being entirely honest with people: I think she is playing politics, and more people are waking up to that, that are not happy with false promises or endless claims”. The complaint has

substance: in recent years, the government has been delaying a potential date. For example, in April 2019, Sturgeon proposed holding a referendum ahead of the May elections this year. Mackay believes the government has the legal tools to do so: “I would like to see them use the power of the parliament, because we have the power to do that; is self-determination. The Scotland Act in 1998, the section 30, is UK law. It’s international law. Why are they complaining with UK, which clearly is not gonna play fair; Boris Johnson is not going to say yes. So what do we gonna do? We need to go forward”.

In fact, he has a message for Westminster too: “We have the power to make Scotland ungovernable for the UK government”. He has therefore clear that the Scottish executive should move forward: «Sturgeon should ask for permission again, and give a deadline. And if not, then call a referendum. It would be legal. Even if Boris boycotted it, if the turnout was high. We need to crack on». They have their next meeting on November 6, as the independence movement will form one of the protests of the COP26 meeting to be held in Glasgow.

So the SNP will have to move in a balance. At the institutional level, the party showed in May that it is the main party in Scotland and, in particular, in the pro-independence sectors, but in the social sphere it also has what it takes to push for referendum. It remains to be seen how it manages this balance in the coming months.

## **“The Yes movement has to reemerge, and it has to be coordinated”**

*Maggie Lennon – Member of the National Committee of Women for Independence*

### **Which is the main duty of Women for Independence in this context?**

The main duty we have is to tell women and make women understand that the best way for women to have the kind of life that they need to live to be completely equal, is in a country that is based in social justice, with different structures, and the only way that we can do that is with full powers; so we need independence.

We also know from the last vote that it was women who voted no. It is more to do with they didn't believe the economic arguments, and for women that is more important, because, when economy goes wrong, women suffer more. When economy is weak, is women who lose jobs, is women who end up in lower paid unsustainable work. When care and health system brake down is women who take on that care. We know that austerity affects women much more than men. So, economic questions weren't fully answered.

Also, we felt that debate was quite dominated by shouty men. And we don't need shouty men. The cabinets of that time few women were involved; too many shouty men, and too many women not engaged in party politics. Party politics also mean attending meetings, what is not always easy, in the evenings. In rural areas is not always easy if you don't have transport to get to a political meeting. Political parties are not grassroots movements, and the thing that revolutionized the 2014 election was the rise of the grassroots movement, because people could find their tribe. There was literally a Yes movement for everything: there were Gamekeepers for Yes, lawyers, dentists... Even Conservatives for Yes! That is very important I think, in a way that political party is not a tribe anymore. Because no one can subscribe everything in a political party. I was in the SNP and I am not anymore, partly because I felt constrained by that.

No one expects the SNP for example to continue as a single party after independence; it will fracture. Because SNP is very broad. The grassroots movement was hugely important, but there wasn't a grassroots movement that was talking to women. It was very relevant, it was all over the country and did a lot of work in rural communities. It is run by a national council and is

regionalized, so there has to be two representatives from each political region in Scotland, so everyone's voice is listened to. And we were constantly looking at the rural dimension to everything that we do, because rural Scotland is a different country.

Women for Independence did attract older women. I would like younger women to be involved, but what older women for all the constituencies told us that WfI gave them a voice; a voice they never had.

In 2014, we started the campaign in %27-28 and we finished it in 45%. That's huge. We are not starting from 27% anymore, we would probably start from 45%. So, if we go the same increase... But it wouldn't be the same increase. There needs to be a radical shift in the campaign; someone has to take control of it, and at the moment no one is really feeling like is time to go out there and run events: because is a bit early, we don't know... Because the first time, we got the Edinburgh Agreement signed. So it was the game on. We are not in that position.

She always said she won't hold a referendum where it wouldn't get an international recognition. She doesn't want Catalonia, but there is a lot of people in the independence side saying "let's do exactly that". So that's where the tensions are. We are kind of sitting on the fence: when do we really start and plan a campaign?

In 2014 there were three main actors: Yes Scotland leading the campaign and linked to the SNP, Women for Independence and Radical Independence Campaign. Yes Scotland and RIC don't exist anymore.

No, but I think RIC will come again; it was hugely important, because it took the debate into the housing estates, in took the debate to the poor. Before I was involved in Women for Independence, I did a lot of my ground grassroots work in quite poor areas of the city (of Glasgow) trying to get people on the voting register. We had the highest registration ever. There were two polling stations on the day of the vote that by 5pm were closed because 100% had voted.

The point is: we know from general elections that the right wing would crawl over broken glass to vote. The left... People joke about that but it is true: poor people don't have cars, and if it's a miserable day of rain, you are less likely to go to the polls than if you are a tory and go in your fancy car.



Radical Independence was absolutely critical, and that is why I hope they reemerge, because we desperately we need it.

**Since 2014, new groups such as AUOB or Believe in Scotland emerged, apart from the SNP control.**

My view is that you don't change people's minds by waving flags. How would we feel if ten thousands people waving union flags came? I would go on the opposite direction. If I had that reaction to their flag, of course people of the other side would have reaction to other flags. To me is unnecessary. I won't condemn any one for going on a march; I just don't gonna do it.

**The point is how the whole Yes movement should be leading; which is the role of the SNP and the autonomy of the grassroots movement.**

The grassroots movement has to come back, and needs to be coordinated. Yes it probably does from a logistically point of view, but I don't think there needs to be any policy body dictating what the grassroots is thinking. Is a grassroots movement; that's its beauty. There has to be a separation between the grassroots movement and the political party. The recent agreement between the SNP and the Greens is helpful from that point of view, because makes people realize that the political coalition is a bit broader. Not everyone finds politics as where they want to put their energy, for the reasons I said at the beginning: male dominated, hierarchical structures (although Greens are not particularly). The grassroots movement has to come back, but for that to happen, somebody has to blow the whistle to start, and that is has to be the SNP. We are not in that position, so no one is quite sure.

**But the Yes movement should be ready for that moment.**

The grassroots movement will be emerged overnight, I have every confidence on that. There is an alternative, but that alternative vision has got to be articulated in a much stronger way, and at the moment is not being, because everyone is going ahead worrying with the pandemic. But we are not hearing anything from Nicola Sturgeon about what's gonna come next. It's like they don't know, and if they don't know that, why would you think they know how to run a country? Without the pandemic we would have been in a very different place; people could see the road ahead. Now people are tired, desperate... Life isn't back to normal yet and might not be for a long time. I think

lots of organizations have that vision but we are not really clear ourselves when is the time to start promoting them.

**Johnson's refusal for a second referendum could be a grievance for some people and may strengthen the Yes option. But, on the other side, if that refusal is quite long, the Yes movement could split, as somehow is happening. Some people expect a movement from the Scottish Government, and some people may not be that patient. That may be Johnson's main success.**

Absolutely, that's exactly what the plan is. Anyone can see that. Divide the rule. You are right, perhaps saying no could be a grievance, but unless Nicola Sturgeon is prepared to act on that, that grievance is wasted. She will lose the leadership, there is no one to take over from her, and if she loses the leadership, the SNP are finished. SNP wouldn't be in government there wouldn't be a referendum, because you need an independence coalition to see there's a mandate. There is not any succession planning. You cannot allow a referendum when it was clearly no mandate, and now it has to be a mandate. If it wasn't in 2014, why it has to be now?

**But the SNP won the majority in the 2014 election. Do you think it wasn't a mandate?**

It wasn't, because in 2014 the support for independence was about 29%. There was no mandate. Well, the independence was in the SNP manifesto, but that's still the case. That mandate hasn't changed. I think the popular mandate wasn't there, and now there has to be a popular mandate.

**Do you think it is sure that it will be a vote? Not maybe in 2023, but in a 2-5 years term.**

She [Sturgeon] has to have a vote before the next Scottish Parliament election, but she can't guarantee she will be in power beyond 2023. Not because there is some obvious person as her successor, but people will get worried that the movement is splitting, and they might lose their seat.

Have things changed since 2014? Absolutely. I would have said before pandemic it was all going on the right direction, but because of the pandemic, I have no idea. There is no clear vision for what is to come, there is no time frame that anyone can get behind and things are going to drift. And we don't know the time to make it drift. She should have politicised much more the pandemic, because they have.

Movements are by their nature dynamic, and short term, and have an energy because they don't need to be scared for. They are not in government, they don't have responsibility. Sometimes, when you are planning a revolution, is OK not to have a responsibility. It is OK for a movement not to have the long term, that is the job of the politicians. But you need the energy and the engagement of the people.

The movement and the politician have to form an uneasy alliance. A politician has to be supportive and grateful for the energy and the vision that the movement will create, even if some of the things the movement wants to happen the politician doesn't want. But they need to be equal, because if they are not, that's where grievances emerge, and the other side will exploit this. They are very good exploiting this. I don't think, if the union wins this time, would be because they've got a vision. They don't have an alternative vision because they don't need to. They don't have to proof their alternative is better.

## **How to win (the right to hold) a referendum**

Although it has no date, the debate over the second referendum is in full swing in Scotland, as the intention to do so itself puts all parties and the media into talking about the issue. The Scottish Government has announced that it intends to hold a second consultation by the end of 2023 if the COVID-19 pandemic allows, but the refusal of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the lack of permission from the Scottish Government opens many doors to what could happen. There are two generalized ideas: that it will not be voted on in 2023, but that, at some point, a poll will be conducted.

Seven years after the first ballot, the SNP is aiming for a second referendum, especially since Scotland backed remaining in the EU in the Brexit vote. The first screen to be crossed, however, is on Downing Street. They have Johnson himself as a nuisance in the Scottish Government because they believe he does not want to be the prime minister who made Scottish independence possible, and his whole strategy is based on the denial of the referendum: "Johnson has no strategy other than trying to block and delay - that is simply not a sustainable position in any serious democracy". The government is constantly using the discursive framework of democracy: "Ultimately, the people of Scotland will have their say in a free and fair referendum because in the end democracy must and will prevail".

However, the government wants "patience". In fact, Johnson's behavior opens up two possibilities: even those who would not vote for independence could support it, as they could be critical with the Prime Minister. Another option: to increase criticism towards the SNP within the independence movement; to lose patience. Patience, because the referendum must be legally accepted and agreed upon: both domestically and internationally. Every time Catalan agents are mentioned among Scottish actors, it is to be cited as an example of a path that should not be taken.

So strategic calm. The government plans to hold a referendum by the end of 2023, but many question the date. Demanding patience, the government leaves the door open to make deadlines more flexible, but the executive is not particularly concerned about the anger this could cause: the Alba Party, which demands the immediate activation of the process, did not get any representative in the Scottish Parliament election vote.

Even voices from the Scottish Conservative Party assume the second vote on independence will be held. "It can't always be denied," Tory sources told BERRIA. The question is when is the right time, and the pandemic allowed them to oppose the consultation so far. "Situations are changing, and so are priorities. It may not be a year or two, but then ... ». There is room for change; what cannot be done today is possible tomorrow.

In this regard, the UK elections, which are due to take place in 2024 but could be brought forward to 2023, will be important. Johnson is expected to continue as Prime Minister, but the results of the SNP will be closely followed by the Conservatives; once the pro-independence forces get good results, it would significantly flatten the slope for the second poll.

### **The devo-max hypothesis**

The Labour Party could play a significant role in the road to a referendum if the Conservative Party were in minority in Westminster after the 2023 or 2024 elections. However, it does not appear that Labour intends to pave the way for a second referendum; at a conference in early October, new UK Labour leader Keir Starmer announced that he would put former Prime Minister Gordon Brown on a committee to give Scotland more powers. Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar has also spoken out in recent weeks, criticizing the SNP for announcing its intention to call a referendum.

Labour Party has a dilemma inside; Approximately one-third of the votes cast in Scotland are pro-independence, and, at least in Scotland, the attitude shown in that debate has punished the party. This position has also done him no extra favour in London, where he has been in opposition and away from Tory numbers for a decade.

In doing so, Labour Party supports the idea of giving Scotland more powers or the federalisation of the UK. In 2014, the then First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond wanted devo-max option in the ballot paper, but that option was rejected by PM David Cameron, and in the end only two options were received. However, as the referendum was getting closer, the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats agreed "the vow" on the eve of the vote: to give Scotland greater political power.

Looking ahead to the second referendum, devo-max is not an option, according to the government; the terms of the referendum should be negotiated by the two governments, and the Scottish Government says it wouldn't accept to get the devo-max option in the paper. Conservatives believe that if given this option, it would win because people prefer a "soft change", but they do not see it as

a realistic option: the problem with the federal option is that there is no demand or desire for it in England, and the Labour Party raises the proposal as the party is in decline.

Institutionally, the pro-independence bloc has opportunities and risks. On the one hand, Sturgeon's leadership and his tenure is a variable to consider; she is broadly recognised as a good manager and a better communicator, but the prominence of his figure also causes side damage in the SNP: his shadow is so long that no other possible leadership appears in the party's horizon. Sturgeon has been in power for seven years, the SNP has been in government for fourteen years, and the First Minister will be in office for twelve at the end of her term. Few expect her to run again, and without training other candidates or expanding leadership, the SNP could have a problem in the medium term.

Time will tell if the SNP suffers from the erosion of management, but pro-independence movement has an advantage that it did not have a few years ago: the growth of the Green Party has presented another institutional offer to those who might get bored with the SNP. Greens have been taking advantage from Labour voters who are bored with Sarwar's party in recent years, and that feed is likely to continue to do so. This would also increase the amount of independence vote. The Greens have a young profile of voters, and, like the SNP, multiplied the number of militants the day after the 2014 vote; in three days it went from 1,300 members to 9,000.

That is the goal of the Greens: to fish in the troubled waters of Labour. "Labour hates all other parties, but they hate each other even more," could be heard at the Green Party conference on October 9th. They distinguish two profiles among Labor voters: those in line with former leader Jeremy Corbyn, who are annoyed with the current line by going to the Greens 'by themselves'. However, there is another profile: very loyal to Labour, over 50 years old, from industrial areas, which considers some of the Greens' proposals as a threat to their jobs (mainly oil and fossil fuels).

In any case, the lack of alternatives is the main drawback of the SNP; it has hardly any competitors in independence, and above all, it has no strong opposition in unionism. Because the main force of the opposition is the Conservative Party, which makes it very difficult for unionism to present a unified alternative. That could be the key that could open the door to independence: a campaign of for unionism driven by conservatism.

## **“The important moment we are in is that the challenge becomes a challenge to the UK Government, not to us”**

*Michael Russell - President of the SNP*

Michael Russell (Bromley, England, 1953) is the President of the SNP Scottish National Party since November last year, and since June he is in charge of leading the campaign for independence within the party.

### **Boris says No. What comes next from the SNP?**

The situation we are in is a different situation that we were one or two years ago, because that is no longer the important question, am I suggest. Up until this January, the question was always to us: “What are you going to do next?”. The question actually now is the other way around; what are they going to do next? Because we have said and published the bill in march; we have already passed already two bills: a generic independence bill and a franchise bill for the referendum. The bill that we published, when it is enacted -and Nicola [Sturgeon] has said that will be when the situation allows it given the pandemic-, then we move ahead to organize a referendum. It is up to the UK Government to say “fine, is OK with us”, to say “apply to a section 30 order and we will give you one” or perhaps they go to the Supreme Court to stop. Nobody knows, because this has never been tested. I would suggest to the UK Government is not a very good look when you have a parliament that passes a bill -because it will be passed-, it is supported by the majority of the parliament and in the country, that they would challenge that. So, the important moment we are in is that the challenge becomes a challenge to the UK Government, not to us. We know what we are gonna do; we are gonna organize a referendum, and if it is up to the UK Government, to stop that if they honestly believe that they should stop the legitimate expression of the people of Scotland.

### **When will be that?**

We will put the bill into parliament when is appropriate. It is not just a question of when it is safe; the type of campaign you need in an independence campaign is not the type of campaign we had in may for an election during COVID. A referendum campaign is a persuasion campaign, it is a doorstep and meetings campaign, so you need to have the ability to do that. So when the ability exists to do that, and Nicola has made it clear that she hopes that would be in the first half of this parliament, then that bill goes into the parliament and it will be passed. From then on, we are moving ahead and it will be up to the UK Government to stop it if it honestly believes that they

should frustrate the people of Scotland who have voted for it. And that creates an entirely new dynamic.

**In this situation, how do you see the Yes movement has a whole?**

There is a difference of opinion on this matter. The SNP's position is clear: in the SNP conference, in September, an overwhelmingly majority said there should not happen until the pandemic had diminished, because of the nature of the campaign. There are others who wish it to happen tomorrow. We simply disagree. It is not going to happen tomorrow because it is quite clear that two parties in government, the SNP and Greens, have agreed that it should be brought when it is appropriate to bring it in. One of the things I am trying to do is to work more closely across the Yes movement. I do accept that this has been a very difficult autumn and winter. The Alba situation was difficult, and it has been necessary for us to reestablish that relationship with other parts of the Yes movement, and I have been doing so. I've been speaking regularly to yes groups and I think that is building. It is a very different Yes movement from the one in 2014. In 2014, it was essentially difficult to manage but it was managed. I don't think you could manage it now. I think you have to accept that there are lots of different voices and we all work together with a common name but there are things we disagree on.

**Some people understand that increasing the groups is a weakness; some others, as a diversity within the Yes movement that needs to be coordinated. But most of them are expecting to be coordinated by someone.**

I think it beginning to happen. But is not coordination so much as an agreement to work together. And to accept there are things we won't agree on and other things we will. We just have to acknowledge that and we have to acknowledge that richness. The richness comes from the fact that the movement spreads much further than it did in 2014. Would I like a single Yes movement? It just won't gonna happen; that is gone forever. We have to be very clear that we set ourselves the goal of securing independence. I think the best way to do that is to do it positively and with courtesy. There is no point crying over spilt milk.

**What has the SNP learnt from the 2014 defeat?**

There are several lessons. We did a wonderful job on the 600 page prospectus about Scotland's future (White Paper) but perhaps we need to be briefer and be more precise. Another lesson is we must be relaxed about working with people who don't fully agree with us. As long as we agree on independence, now you get it. We shouldn't be too worried about working with people who disagree on other things. Because it is unity across the purpose. And, indeed, there is no exact



parallel, but in Catalonia, there are a range of people who can work together, because the cause of independence is not about... We must distinguish between what my vision is on independence of Scotland and what my neighbour's vision is. However, it is the freedom to have one of those visions putting to place that we are seeking. It is not necessarily about what change is. Understanding that, is perhaps that we didn't have a full grip on in 2014.

**Opinion polls suggest independence and union are 50-50. How could Yes increase support over 50% -or more, as Alistair Jack said-?**

50%+1 is the majority. Scotland takes a lot time to change. The potential is there and Brexit creates the potential, but it must be positive as well as negative. Brexit is a negative. But I think it will get a big boost when people sign on to the positive. The effort we have things to do on finance and elsewhere make it easier to accept the positive. A campaign based only in the negative in Scotland is not in my view going to succeed, because people want a vision of being able to change. I think it's going in the right direction. When the SNP first came to the government [2007] it was because it started campaigning positive.

**You said changes come slow. But from the Scotland Act to the first SNP Government, just 9 years went by; and another 7 for an independence referendum. The framing from devolution to independence has changed in few years.**

The SNP coming to power in 2007 was probably quicker than many people expected. The SNP changed very rapidly between about 1990 and 2007. I still think the potential is here; a lot of people expected in 2014 that the SNP would fall away.

**It happened the contrary.**

Absolutely the contrary. Within weeks of 2014 referendum the SNP had gone from 20.000 to 100.000 plus. New ground is gained, and then there is a pause. And then new ground is gained again. In politics, if you stop moving forward you start moving backwards.

**Do you think Tories will finally accept a referendum?**

It feels frustrating to us, because it is quite clear people wanted. In a normal democratic expression, when a political party wins an election and is able to form a government, it should be able to implement it. They understand it has to be a referendum; it is better for everybody that this is resolved for a number of years. Going on this argument again creates uncertainty.

## The profiles of independence

Since Scotland gained a 55% to 45% chance of staying within the UK seven years ago -and before-, numbers have partly defined Scottish politics; how much these percentages have grown and decreased, how much each variable affects these increases and decreases, what the profile of those who make one choice or the other is. It could be said that Scottish society is under constant monitoring. There are countless polls published in the media with the intention of voting for an independence referendum and as such, but there are also some benchmark studies that identify some common trends.

One of them is the one made in the run-up to the 2019 UK election and detailed in an article published by Professors Michael Keating and David McCrone in March this year. According to the British Election Study, 60% of Scots support the right to self-determination, and 17% disagree with it. From there, one of the main conclusions is that in the context of the 2019 elections, the vote has become polarized: between the pro-independence and pro-European SNP option and the Conservative, Unionist and Brexit fan base. "It seems that the sovereignty issue has reshaped Scotland's political space."

A new element is this combination of attitudes towards Brexit and independence, which were initially unrelated to the two trends: "There is evidence that the views on Brexit are very much in line with Scotland's self-determination." That is: when the UK polled in 2016 whether to stay or leave the European Union, the set of voters on both sides was more heterogeneous: the set of pro-independence voters was not fully aligned with remaining in the European Union, and not all unionists were in favor of Brexit; now, these two axes have come closer together.

The Common Weal think Tank came to the same conclusion in its study of the *Demographics of Independence* published in August 2021: "In 2016, attitudes towards independence and Brexit were not closely linked, but since then the correlation is much higher. It is much safer for voters to stay in the European Union to vote for independence". Overall, Craig and Ellen Dalzell have summed up in this work the evolution of the trend towards an independent Scotland: it fell from 45% to 40% between 2014-2018, hovered around 50% by early 2021 and returned to 45% by June.

There is another element that polarizes the electorate, and which is completely aligned with these two lines of rupture mentioned: the left-right axis. According to McCrone and Keating, the

sovereignists are very much grouped on the left; 96% of them say they are on the left, and 85% of unionists are on the right. Thus, it is clear that Labour has suffered in the polls: only half of those who voted for the Labor Party in 2015 held that vote in 2019, and those who benefited most from this loss were the Conservatives, who went there 23% of those who changed their vote; More than SNP (16%).

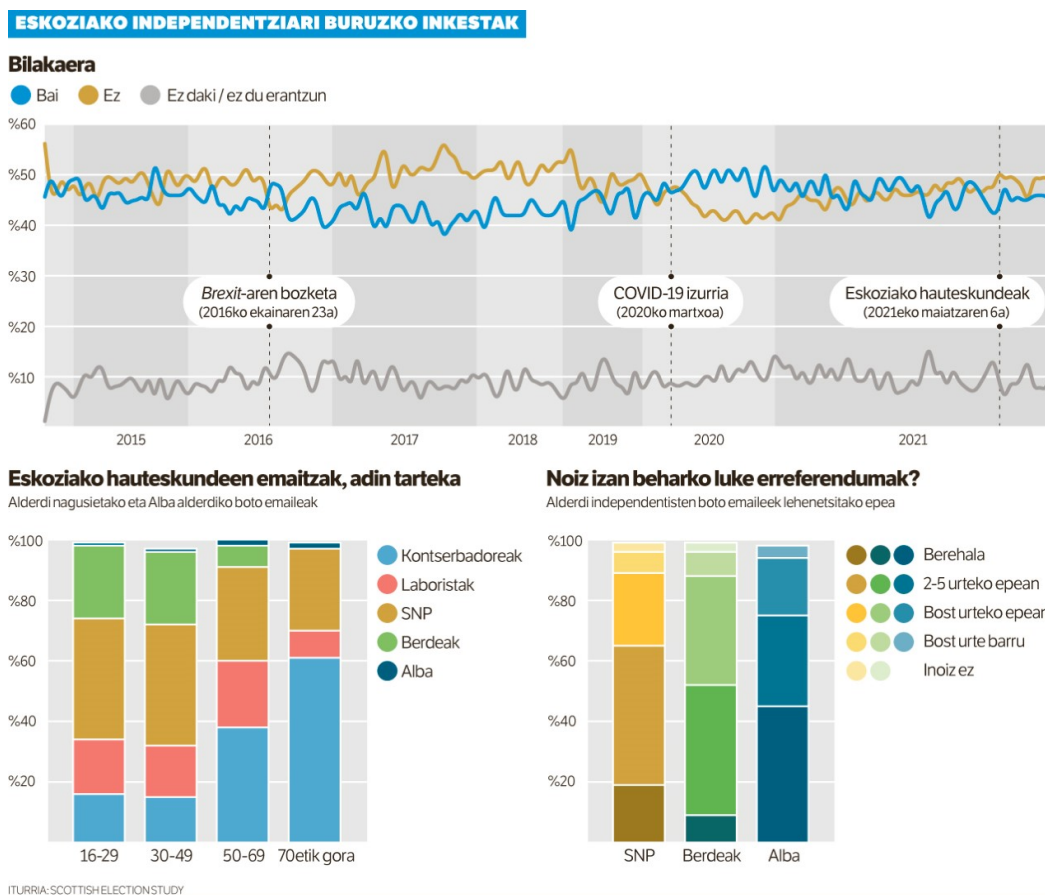
With these data in hand, what kind of profile do Scottish voters (especially pro-independence voters) draw in election results and subsequent scrutiny? In a nutshell: a pro-independence activist who is generally young, under 45, considers himself a leftist, has a university degree, has a predominantly liberal profession, and, in the field of national identity, considers himself solely or predominantly Scottish. Gender, however, is not a decisive variable in this regard.

### **Sovereignty at the base**

In this context, a significant variable is what the scenario is; in which discursive framework moves the debate between independence and unionism. In this public reflection, concepts such as the *right to decide*, *self-determination* or *sovereignty* are barely present, while the words *democracy* and *independence* can be heard much more frequently. There is a difference in the framework of the debate in the Basque Country. «In Spain, the question is the legitimacy of the question. It is just not a possibility, so you end up with these arguments are very much legalistic about the indissoluble union of the Spanish state. Whereas there are strong statements from the UK Government that referendum will not happen soon but the idea of referendum is completely accepted», explained Coree Brown Swan, researcher from the Centre of Constitutional Change and professor of the Queen's *University Belfast*: «Referendum is coming. It can happen, is legitimate; you can debate whether independence should happen, but there is an acceptance that a referendum is a legitimate means of policy making».

There is a way of understanding sovereignty at the heart of the choice of words, according to Brown: “There is a particular conception of sovereignty in Scotland; that Scotland has the right to decide its future. Self determination is quite assumed. Most of the arguments around independence and self-government is about: is this a good or bad thing? Is more a value arguments rather than core arguments about rights. Because there is an assumption that people in Scotland are sovereign and have a right to decide”.

Nicola McEwen, a professor of political science at the University of Edinburgh, speaks similarly: “In Scotland, there is a recognition that a referendum on this issue is legitimate; the Conservatives’ argument is that ‘this is not the time’. This is why, in her view, the key is how you define self-determination: “Especially after Brexit, the framework of self-determination is implicit over time; that we have made a decision and we have not left that decision to Johnson’s hands’ The framework for democracy, on the other hand, prevailed after the May election, McEwen said: “That is, there is a mandate. I think it is still very much tied to the framework of self-determination; the mandate would not make much sense without the prior right to self-determination”.



## **“Down south, they do realize that they have to come to a conclusion about Scotland sometime”**

*Jim Sillars – Former Deputy leader of the SNP*

First of all, there is no written constitution in the UK. And secondly, Scottish independence is accepted by everyone as a legitimate objective, and should Scottish people vote for it, it is accepted that it should get it.

You have to go back in the history in a sense to understand the reason why is legitimate. Essentially, on the one island, Wales has been part of the Kingdom of England since the XIII. century. In the island of Great Britain, there were two states: the English and the Scottish states. For a variety of reasons, they came to an agreement to create a new state. That implies that both states could theoretically resign from that agreement. It was a non-balanced union, and always has been. England was always the largest, economically more powerful. They are around 45-47 millions, and we are five million. There is no reason for England to want to become independent: they dominate the policy. For us, there are reasons. The historical one: the common people didn't want the union, but didn't have a vote at that time. It happened against the wishes of the people. As time went on, the upper classes benefited enormously from the empire. The working class in western Scotland benefited to some extent, because on the Clyde huge part of the British commercial fleet was built on the Clyde. I believe that is not coincidence that as major decolonization got under way, in 1960ies, and tory government began to decolonize, you got arise the Scottish nationalism. The empire no longer had that magic union factor for us. That was also at the same time when UK economy was seen manifestly not to be working as previously for the whole British population. For us, we are an adjunct of the english economy, and the english economy is dominated by the southern part. Always has been and always will be. So, the north of England and Scotland didn't feel well in the post empire world. The difference between the north of England and Scotland is not much that north of England could do about: we are a separate nation, we have an option that north of England doesn't have. My view is that there was a coincidence between the loss of empire and the rise of nationalism, which really first emerged in 1966 elections, when the SNP got the %28 of the vote. Previously they were a joke or not even known.

**The growth of SNP has been linked with its decision to turn to the center-left.**

The origins of the party were really cultural. There was a feeling that Scotland could be anglicized, and that couldn't happen. It became a little bit more political after the World War II, but it was hardly noticed. I had never heard about SNP; I was in the Labour Party. Suddenly, in 1966, 28% of the votes from nowhere. There was dissatisfaction. The empire UK, that was the glue that held Scotland into the union. There was nothing for us to benefit from. The economic failure by successive UK governments... I think there was a combination of factors: history, decolonization, dissatisfaction and the realization that there was a different way.

### **And economy.**

I was at the Labour Party. I was a unionist, I didn't believe even in devolution. I was brought up in the British tradition; my heroes are all British Labour Party people like Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee, I was in the British Trade Union Movement, and I didn't see anything in the SNP at all. I was elected as a labour MP in 1970. Then I experienced what is the reality of the UK, which is really the English state with a Scottish appendix. If you go back to 1707, we were supposed to have created a new state; actually, the reality was the English state absorbed the Scottish one. The House of Commons didn't change.

I discovered the United Kingdom disaffection. And if a clash of state interest came, then the English state interest would be the one that would prevail. I don't have any resentment of that; is just a fact. Realpolitik. You wouldn't expect the big unit to compromise its national interest in favour of the small unit, and I have proof of this: when we entered the European Economic Community, there was negotiations, and UK had to throw away cards to get in; one of the throw-away cards was fishing. Fishing represented probably no more than 1-2% of the UK GDP. When the Europeans said: "We are going to have a common fisheries policy", that was the throw-away card from Britain. It is true that fishing included the English places like the south-west and the east coast, but in Scotland up in the north-east, it was a big part of our economy. The English state interest is the dominant one inside the United Kingdom. From unionist to an advocate for independence with me was a very slow burden, and I think that has been the history of the Scottish people as a whole.

**From the Scotland Act (1998) to a SNP government (2007), there are just nine years. How do you explain this fast change of paradigm from devolution to independence?**

I didn't vote for devolution in (1998), I abstained. I read the White Paper, and that was the very minimum we could get. This devolution was a soap to nationalism, and most people south to the border and here unionists thought it would be the end of nationalism: "You got something at last,

now play with your toys". I read the White Paper and I saw no power. Margo [McDonald] was more correct than me, in the sense that, once the parliament was established, you began to get the Scots nation having a look at. We became not just symbolically different. Before devolution in Westminster elections, SNP could get %21 of the votes and three seats; but in Holyrood, SNP got a fair number of representatives making speeches, campaigning in Scotland. For the nationalist view, suddenly more and more people could hear it.

**Was the SNP message about independence at that time, or more about self rule and devolution?**

We come to an interesting point. I was deputy leader of the party, and the deputy leader was very powerful in those days. I was in charge of the election (1992). We fought an independence election. I didn't think we were gonna be independent, but the purpose was to argue for independence and build the independence vote. There was no ambiguity; we weren't saying: "Send us to parliament to have a stronger voice of Scotland in Westminster". We said: "Vote for us and you vote for independence". During the campaign, we were about %30 in the opinion polls, and then in the last week we went down %21, but we had gone up 7% from what we had previously. The problem there after from 1992 right up to referendum in 2014, the SNP never fought on election on independence; they fought on the softer slogan of a stronger voice of Scotland. Suddenly you have lots of people in an institution distinctively Scottish; unmistakably Scottish. So is much easier to get the Scottish message out. Indeed, the last election for Holyrood, Nicola Sturgeon this time said: "This is not about independence". Once again: "We can vote for us even if you don't agree with us".

**This is an interesting debate on strategy: whether a stronger SNP strengthens the independence cause.**

My wife [Margo McDonald] and I had a position. We were called fundamentalists. The reason we wanted every election to be about independence was that you were building year upon year upon year of the independence vote. You were building a hard vote, one that could sustain and attack upon it. Because if you win the election on the soft independence or not really independence, when the pressure comes on, the shell you've created is easily broken. And we got to 2014, we in a sense paid the price for all those soft, because in the February of 2014, independence was %29. That is why we got the referendum; the Prime Minister [David Cameron] thought: "That is gonna be easy". Suddenly, people appeared for all over the places campaigning for independence. That built up to the 45%. Just imagine what it would be like if we had fought on independence election on everyone from 1992. We wouldn't have started from 29% but for maybe 40%.

**You said the “project fear” has been a continuum: in 1979, in 2014. So it will be in the next independence referendum?**

In 2014, it was said there would be death and disaster: too small, too weak, too incapable to run your own affairs. And they targeted the most vulnerable, which were the pensioners. Gordon Brown said he was very worried about the United Kingdom pension fund; actually, there is no UK pension fund: my grandchildren are paying for my pension and their grandchildren will pay theirs. He sent a letter to every pensioner, and the pensioners voted no. It is very successful.

In 1979, project fear was astonishing for a really weak assembly, it wasn't for a real parliament. The No side got people who went on the train from London to Edinburgh, and they crossed the border, they put the uniforms on and were all demanding everyone to show their passports, because after the vote for this assembly, you have to show your passport to get to England. This was a pure lie. Project fear was tried in 1979, reemployed in 2014.

**How do you see the Yes movement to face a second referendum and this strategy of fear?**

I think we will get a project fear, but it will be framed differently. The next referendum will be independence versus maximum devolution. From 2014 I monitored what happens in opinion south of the border. I don't think we have learnt any lessons in 2014, because it has been no enquiry except my book [In Place of Failure: Making It Yes Next] which has had a very limited circulation. A number conservative thinkers saw the federalist solution to the Scottish problem, and others have said there is no need to go as far as federal, because federal means division of sovereignty. The Labour Party, David Martin, said home rule was independence within the UK; lots of powers to Scotland but we stay in. They say: “We understand your desire for more power, but that could be done within the union”. That is what they are going to propose against independence, and we are not ready for it, because there is no work being done in anticipation of that. That is a very seductive passage, because it indicates no disruption. We have to find answers to that.

**Cameron refused to include a devo-max option in 2014, but conservatives, labours and libdems offered something similar just before the vote.**

When they panicked, the three party leaders signed what was called *The vow*. If you actually examine the vow, it doesn't indicate anything serious. Next time, this is what we are going to face with: part project fear (huge deficit), but the biggest part of the package will be “we can deliver what the majority would really like without leaving the UK. Unless the independence movement is aware of that is what we are going to get, you don't have any counter attack. The counter attack would have to be this: we want to see this new vow in an act of parliament. We don't expect to



become policy until or unless we vote for it. The Scots will be voting for devo-max on the bases we can actually see.

**But there won't be a devo-max proposal until the referendum process sets up.**

There is going to be a referendum. There is no reason for Westminster to concede a referendum at the moment. There is no desire for a referendum among the Scottish population; not at the moment. We've gone through a pandemic that has destroyed businesses, jobs... So, what is the priority? Jobs, grandparents health, recovering from the pandemic... Then we would lose, because no work has been done by the SNP. Down south, they do realize that they have to come to a conclusion about Scotland sometime.

**How long can Boris Johnson refuse a referendum? General election is going to be on 2024, if not before.**

Governments in Britain only go for full term if they don't think they can win the year before. I am anticipating an election around september-october 2023. Could be next year, depending on circumstances. Now, what has the SNP to do then? If SNP increases its number of MPs in Westminster, and right on the start of its manifesto is demanding a referendum, they would find it impossible to say no. Is going to happen sometime.

**What role is Labour Party playing in this debate?**

Labour has to win England, but look at the figures at the last two elections: labour can't win in England and of course in Scotland. But you may get another minority tory government. If that's the case, you can really get a referendum if you have a sufficient number of SNP MPs. There is a lot "don't know", but a lot of potential. But one thing I am absolutely certain is that they realize that they will have to concede a referendum at some point, whichever government is in London. This has to be resolved. We were supposed to be hammered last time. But at the moment, is crazy to demand a referendum when you don't actually have the support of the people. This can change in a year time; pandemic is over, economic growth comes and something happens in Westminster... Priorities can shift quickly, and you can start demanding a referendum next year.

At the end of the day, so important is the retention of Scotland to the British state, that they will be prepared to concede devo-max. That is the problem independence movement is going to face, and that is what it should be thinking: how do we contest that.

**There is a relation between SNP, independence, remain and centre-left vote, as it is between conservatives, brexit, unionism and right. Which political space does the labour have to increase its support? And how does its position on the independence vote influence in that support?**

Labour Party made a catastrophic error in 2014 by coming out against independence. It was seen by their basic supports -working class, western Scotland; nor borders, nor north-east, nor islands- as a betrayal of them. The working class voted yes. The reason the Labour Party is in difficulty takes me into the socialist movement: they have never ever been able to come to terms and find a solution to the national question: how can you be simultaneously nationalist and internationalist. This is a theoretical problem for a socialist and communist party movements. How can you square that circle? Labour can't do it; they are just intellectually incapable of addressing the national question and coming to a conclusion that allows them to be very Scottish, still British and still international. They no longer speak the language to the people.

When I joined, SNP was less than a joke; it was detested because they got blamed for Margaret Thatcher. It wasn't until 1988 that I won the by-election in Goven; political climate changed. But is a long story.

They are selling devo-max as federal; it is very cleverly done. *Independence in the UK* will be the new slogan we are going to face.

**Do you expect any battle at courts?**

I can see doing that as a tactic. But if you go to court, the judges are not giving a political declaration. If the Scottish Parliament passed an act, then would be in conflict with the act setting up the Scottish Parliament, because we have no power over the constitution. If you go on the legal road, just for public relations: "We tried our best". But you set up a referendum against the wishes of anybody else, you win the referendum: are you going to declare independence? You can if you are about 80-90% of the public in your favour, the game is over then. But 50-50%, as we are? First of all, if you call a unilateral declaration of independence, you have to have the judges on your side, the Police on your side. One of my criticisms of the leadership is that it is too small group and they don't think on the road. They don't think of the consequences of some of the things they say they want to do. There is no intellectual regard, approach to policy. Normally, if you contemplate court action, you would set down and work out: we do this, what does the other side do. Which political and judicial territory does this take us enter; can we win in that territory? Have we enough public support on that territory? They don't do this.

**It seems that the Yes movement has spread.**

In 2014, SNP was the leading component of the independence movement. The SNP set up the national Yes Scotland. The SNP appointed the directing board of that movement. The movement spontaneously arose. People in villages and towns set up their own Yes campaign. The SNP produced the White Paper, and the people didn't agree with it. There wasn't a great movement outside the SNP, but inside, nobody had been consulted.

### **Has the Yes movement changed since then?**

Is worse. Because SNP has done no work. Sturgeon has talked about a referendum the last 4-5 years, instead of doing a new White Paper, but this time you have to bring in the rest of the movement, people from outside; she is not prepared to do that. The lack of national leadership of the movement has meant that people has become frustrated and they are doing their own thing: Independence Convention, All Under One Banner... No actual work on policy has been done. Then you have a split: Alba has split from the SNP. The movement is not in a good position.

In 2014, what should have been done was recreate the national movement; the SNP is a big part of the movement, the political arm of the movement, but we create the movement and we engage the movement in our policy; is not just the SNP policy. It didn't happen. They allowed the national organisation they set up to close the doors the day after the vote. Is a very weak position structurally.

### **Instead, you have three unionist parties for voters from different ideologies.**

Devo-max will unite them all. Is in the interest of the Labour Party to retain Scotland in union, because one day they may come back, and if they lose Scotland forever, they will fail forever in England.

### **In 2014, Better Together leaders were Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling. Both labour.**

If we just simply ask independence versus status quo, labour would run a separate campaign. But that is not the question will be. The question will be devo-max. Devo-max doesn't present a problem to tory, Labour and liberal democrat parties.

### **Even for tories?**

Yes. The basic strength of the tory party is that it had only one period which was ideological; that was Margaret Thatcher's period. It is purely pragmatic and opportunist. I don't say that in a pejorative way. And, if change is necessary to maintain the British state, they would make the adjustment. And Boris Johnson doesn't have any ideological item in his all body. He is a typical tory; he will do whatever is necessary to remain in power.

## **Analysis: A journey to Yes**

Jim earns his salary by taking tourists from the city centers of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the spectacular landscapes of the Highlands region. He is a cult man, an avid fan of history; he passionately recounts the battles between the Jacobites and the Hanoverians. Peculiar speech, tartan trousers, in love with whisky; typical Scottish. He doesn't shy away from sharing an analysis of the political situation: "I didn't vote in the 2014 referendum, but next time, after Brexit, I won't think twice"; will vote for independence.

David Spacey, a member of the Yes for EU group, has a different starting point but the same direction, as BERRIA reported last Sunday: "I was very opposed in 2014 because I did not want to lose my rights as a European citizen. But Brexit has completely reversed that; I have lived and worked in Europe for twelve years, and my sons and grandchildren have lost that right".

Jim and David are two expressions of the political moment that Scotland is experiencing in the independence referendum (2014) and in the vote on Brexit (2016) in favor of leaving the European Union. On the one hand, still and even in our latitudes the subject for those who want to reduce the debate on a country's sovereignty to purely identity terms: an independence referendum is about persuasion, public debate, politicization of citizens, choice between different political projects, change of opinion. In the 2014 referendum campaign, independence gained about eighteen points in almost two years, and Brexit — social events in general — creates the conditions to strengthen or weaken some of the demands.

This is precisely one of the lessons of the Scottish independence process, which is embodied by the two protagonists mentioned at the outset: the changes that can take place in the political opportunity structures and the dynamics that create these changes, such as Brexit. Sidney Tarrow wrote that citizens are involved in collective action when changes in political opportunities are perceived, and that the strategic use of this collective action creates new opportunities that will be exploited in other cycles of protest.

Recently, professor Mario Zubiaga has gone over the mechanisms that influence the change in political opportunity structures, and some of those mechanisms could be easily identified in the Scottish case.

The sudden imposition of grievance would be one of them, and Brexit, understood as a grievance, plays a role in the mentality of many Scots. With Scotland at risk of being left out of the European Union as one of the pillars of unionism in the 2014 referendum campaign, being part of the UK prompted Scotland, two years later and against its will (62% voted against) to leave the European Union. An opportunity opened up there, which remains open due to the presence of hard-Brexit supporters in UK Government and the fact that the consequences of this rupture are still very much present. Time will tell if the anger created by Brexit will subside over the months, or if it will be the last push needed by independence.

Other variables have also emerged, as can be noted in the interview published yesterday by BERRIA with the successor to former SNP leader Jim Sillars; In Sillars' words, in Scotland, the damage and dislocation of elite interests is fully linked to the decline of the British empire in the 1950s-60s, the weakening of the economic interests of local economic elites, and ultimately the growth of patriotism. Although not in the strict sense, it could be said that emulation processes are also gaining importance in the Scottish public debate: if it was possible in 2014, why not now? If the Good Friday Agreement says that a referendum on the unification of Ireland can be held every seven years, why wait any longer in Scotland?

In any case, surely (lack of) competition between actors is the essential mechanism for understanding the Scottish political moment. The Scottish Parliament elections showed that in the institutional realm the SNP promises sovereignty; it has hardly any competitors (the Alba Party could not get any MSP), and so the management of the time the SNP spends for the second referendum is a bet on pro independence movement. No counterweight inside the movement.

On the contrary, as has been said, there is unrest in some sectors towards the SNP; opportunities must be enjoyed, and institutional majorities should be use to give steps forward. The pro independence social movement is being organized apart from the interests of the SNP, which may serve to mobilize potential resentments, but it is essential to structure the movement far beyond party hegemony. Everyone could be necessary to reach the 50% next time.