Scots, Devolution, and Nationalism

1992 - 2016
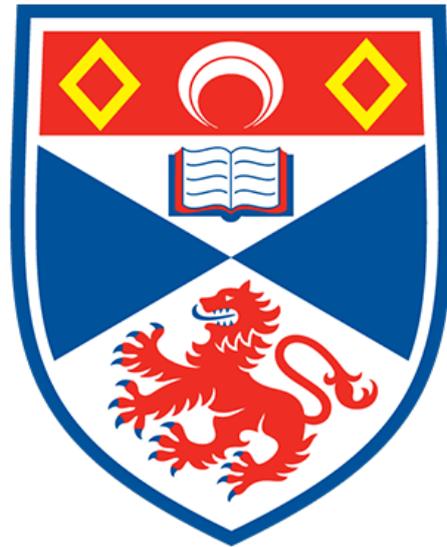
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Candidate's declaration

I, Ashley Douglas, hereby certify that this MLitt dissertation, which is 14,989 words (incl. footnotes) in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Abstract

The demise in status of Scotland's once institutional language of Scots went hand in hand with the loss of political power from Scotland in 1603 and 1707. The return of political power to Scotland in 1999 has not, however, correlated with a resurgence in the political status of Scots. Drawing upon manifestos; government publications; Scottish parliamentary debate and committee records; correspondence, and speeches, as well as primary survey and interview research, it is argued in this dissertation that this is illustrative of the ambivalent place of linguistic and cultural identity in the constitutional politics of modern Scotland, and not least in modern Scottish nationalism. Devolution did not, as intended, kill nationalism stone dead. Rather, the enduring and increasing nationalist threat since 1999, and particularly since 2011, means the nationalist associations of Scots have left it anathema for the Unionist parties, wary of the promotion of anything which may, by asserting national distinctiveness in the present, blow wind into the sails of political nationalism. Scots, however, has not been central to political nationalism in the modern period, focused more on institutional and political than cultural or ethnic identity. As such, though more sympathetic to Scots than the Unionist parties on the whole, the SNP since 2007 has gradually distanced itself from Scots, abandoned as peripheral to, and even incompatible with, its carefully constructed civic brand of nationalism. Around the 2014 referendum in particular, as the SNP redoubled its efforts to assert its civic credentials in order to secure a majority for independence, the promotion of an indigenous language could have no place. Thus too nationalist for the Unionists, but the 'wrong' type of nationalist for the Nationalists, Scots emerges as 'naebody's bairn' in the political sphere, its future at the hands of Holyrood, devolved or independent, uncertain.

Tae ma lass, Eilidh, whaes expectations o me are as unbridillit anely as her love

Contents

Abbreviations

CoE ECRML - Council of Europe European Charter for Regional and Minority Language

CPG - Cross-Party Group

EO - Equal Opportunities [Committee]

M - [Scottish Parliament] Motion Number

MWG - Ministerial Working Group

PR - Procedures [Committee]

S - Session [of Scottish Parliament]

SCCC - Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum

SLC - Scots Language Centre

SNP - Scottish National Party

SP OR - Scottish Parliament Official Record

SPPP - Standards, Procedures, and Public Appointments [Committee]

1. Introduction: Return of power, return of Scots?

By the mid-fifteenth century, Scots - the northern variant of Anglo-Saxon, closely related to, but distinct from, its southern neighbour, English - had displaced Gaelic as the dominant language of the Scottish kingdom. Scots in this period was the language of kings and commoners alike: the humble speech of the most mundane to the most intimate aspects of everyday life, as well as the prestigious and official language of the institutions of the state, including both the Parliament and the Privy Council. It was also the medium through which Scotland communicated with Europe and the wider world, not least as the vehicle of a highly acclaimed literature.[1] From the mid-sixteenth century, however, a series of historical developments led to Scots being replaced by English as the language of prestige and authority, resulting in its stigmatisation and neglect over the course of the following centuries, scorned by the Enlightenment intelligentsia and rejected by the educated classes. Paramount amongst these events were the dominance of English as the language of the Protestant Reformation, the removal of the Scottish king and court to London with the Union of Crowns in 1603, and, just over a century later, the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament and relocation of power to London with the Union of Parliaments in 1707.[2] Though greatly reduced in prestige and usage from its apotheosis as the official language of the state, however, Scots has remained resilient both as the vehicle of a vibrant literary tradition, and as the mother tongue and everyday speech of a considerable proportion of the population: a living, national language. In the 2011 census, 1.9 million people (38% of the population) stated that they could either, speak, read, write or understand Scots. 1.5 million of those (30% of the population) stated that they could speak Scots, with this rising to almost half of the population in the council regions of Shetland (49%), Aberdeenshire (49%) and Moray (45%).[3]

If the loss of political independence, culminating in the parliamentary Union of 1707, went hand in hand with the demise in status of Scots, then the return of political power and status to Scotland with the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 held potential also for a

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[1] The Eneados of Gavin Douglas, for example, a translation into Scots verse of Virgil's Aeneid (completed 1513) is ranked by scholarly consensus amongst the great works of European literature of the time.

[2] McColl Millar, R., *Language, Nation and Power: An Introduction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 89-93

[3] Notably, the figure of 1,541,693 obtained by the 2011 census accords almost exactly with the estimation of 1.5 million arrived at by the GROS following its 1996 survey, the consistency of which affirms the validity of each; There remains, at present, no standardised spoken or written Scots. Scots in this dissertation thus refers to the group of dialects which together constitute the West Germanic language of Scots as spoken and written across lowland Scotland and the northern isles today, retaining a common grammar and a large common vocabulary, but sometimes with striking idiosyncrasies. Scots is not to be confused with Scottish Standard English (SSE), essentially Standard English spoken with a Scottish accent; http://media.scotslanguage.com/library/document/SLC%20Analysis%20of%20Census%202011%20for%20Scots.pdf

political renaissance of its once national and institutional language. Moreover, the years since 1999 have also witnessed a rise in support for Scottish political nationalism as embodied by the Scottish National Party (SNP). First elected as a minority government in 2007, the SNP was re-elected with a majority in 2011, leading to the staging of a historic referendum on independence in 2014. Despite this referendum's failure to secure a majority for independence, the force of political nationalism appears to continue unabated, with the SNP enjoying a historic victory in the Westminster General Election in 2015, and being re-elected as a minority government in the Holyrood elections in May of this year. Following the recent UK-wide vote to exit the EU complicated by a Scottish vote to remain, moreover, the prospect of Scottish independence once again positively dominates political discussion.

Despite the opportunity presented by this political trajectory in Scotland over the past two decades, however, interest in the Scots language has been muted. It will be argued here that this is illustrative of the ambivalent place of linguistic and cultural identity in the constitutional politics of modern Scotland, not least in modern Scottish nationalism. Beginning in 1992 and ending in the present day, this dissertation examines the approaches towards Scots of the three main political parties pre- and post-devolution, analysing the changing status of Scots in political discourse. Particular attention is paid throughout to the relationship between Scots and nationalism, a topic which takes on particular significance during the years following 2007.

The first chapter focuses on the approach towards Scots of the Conservative and Unionist Party.[4] Re-elected as the party of the United Kingdom government for a fourth consecutive term in 1992, the Tories remained in power until the election of a Labour government in the UK General Election of 1997, which led to the staging of a Scottish devolution referendum the same year. This, of course, led in turn to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999, in which the Conservatives have thus far been in opposition, providing for highly insightful pre- and post-devolution comparison. The second chapter deals with the Labour Party, with particular focus on its role as the main party of the coalition Scottish Executive between 1999 and 2007. The third chapter concentrates on the Scottish National Party and analyses its understanding of Scots in relation to its raison d'être of Scottish political independence, as well as scrutinising the achievements and limitations of the action it has taken on Scots whilst in government between 2007 and the present

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[4] It is to be noted that the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, which has existed in its current form since 1965, is not a separate party, but the Scottish section of the United Kingdom Party. In the same way, Scottish Labour is the section of the UK Labour Party that operates in Scotland.

day. With all of the above in mind, the study concludes by considering the future potential for the political status of Scots, whether in a devolved or an independent Scotland.

A wide range of material is drawn upon, including manifestos, government publications, speeches, correspondence,[5] and debate and committee records of the Scottish Parliament, as well as primary research in the form of a survey of current MSPs, MPs, and MEPs, and a broad range of secondary literature. To afford insight into the wider context and perceptions of the progress of Scots since devolution, qualitative interviews were also conducted with prominent Scots activists, academics, and writers, many of whom were members of the Ministerial Working Group on the Scots Language,[6] including Dr Christine Robinson,[7] Professor Robert McColl Millar,[8] Dr James Robertson,[9] Matthew Fitt,[10] and Michael Hance.[11]

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[5] Obtained by Professor Steve Murdoch during the course of his academic research into Language Politics in Scotland in the 1990s.

[6] Established by the SNP Government in 2009, reported in 2010.

[7] Former Director of Scottish Language Dictionaries, former Preses of Scots Language Society, current guest lecturer in Scots at UHI.

[8] Professor of Linguistics and Scottish Language at the University of Aberdeen

[9] Writer and co-founder and general editor of Scots language imprint Itchy Coo.

[10] Scots writer, teacher and language consultant.

[11] Director of the Scots Language Centre

2. The Unionist Parties

2.1 The Conservative and Unionist Party

2.1.1 Pre-devolution

Neither the 1992 nor 1997 Conservative General Election manifesto, UK or Scottish, makes any reference to Scots. If this reflects that it was not of central importance, however, it does not extend to indifference. Rather, to assuage the perception of the post-Thatcher Conservative Party as anti-Scottish, as well as increasingly vocal demands for devolution, Scots was actively exploited by the party during this period as part of a wider project to assert both its Scottish credentials, and Scotland's distinct place within the Union.[12]

The most striking expression of the party's efforts to clad itself in tartan is perhaps to be found in the Tory-orchestrated return of the Stone of Destiny to Scotland on St Andrew's Day in 1996.[13] Pro-Scottish rhetoric permeates, too, the Scottish manifesto for the General Election the following year. The very title, 'Fighting For Scotland', is conspicuously nationalist compared with its more sombrely titled UK counterpart, 'You Can Only Be Sure With The Conservatives'. Any remaining doubt as to the Tories' anxiety to promote the party's Scottishness, meanwhile, is dispelled by Michael Forsyth's unashamedly nationalist foreword:

> The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party is the oldest political party in Scotland. We are proud of our roots; our heritage of service to the people of Scotland; and the identity which it confers on us. We are the Scottish Party [14]

Significantly, Scots played a central role in this project of cultural nationalism, as is most explicit in the party's usage of the language in election campaign material. In a letter of 1996, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party's Head of Research, Iain Stewart, left no room for misinterpretation, explaining the use of Scots in 'recent posters, newspaper adverts and leaflets' as a 'deliberate marketing strategy designed to both dispel the myth that our party is somehow 'anti-Scottish' and to help put over the message that some of the policies of our opponents are anti-

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[12] Leith, M. S., and Soule, D. P. J., *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 40-44

[13] Bluntly described by Murray Pittock as 'empty gesture politics' in response to the Constitutional Convention's proposals for self-government the year before. Pittock, M., *The Road To Independence? Scotland Since The Sixties* (London, 2008), p. 79

[14] Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (1997) *Fighting for Scotland.* See also John Major's efforts to woo Scotland with soft nationalism in the foreword to the 1992 Scottish Conservative manifesto: 'I have promised that when a Conservative Government is returned, it will be in Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city, that Europe finally agrees the completion of the Single Market'. Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (1992) *The Best Future for Scotland*

Scottish'.[15] The Conservative Scottish Office, meanwhile, in a letter of 1994, highlighted curriculum guidelines outlining the 'importance of fostering a sense of personal and national identity through pupils' experience and study of Scots writing and songs and through their conscious awareness of and use of the Scots language'.[16] In a letter of 1996, moreover, not only was it stressed that 'the Government considers that the Scots language is an important part of Scotland's distinctive linguistic heritage', but this was followed up with examples of concrete financial support for Scots language projects.[17]

In the mid-1990s, then, the Tories embraced cultural nationalism, promoting Scottish linguistic distinctiveness both in the past ('heritage') and in the present ('conscious awareness of and use of') as well as explicitly emphasising its important role in shaping national identity. Exploiting this, the Scots language was also consciously and conspicuously worn as a badge of Scottishness in UK election campaigns. Crucially, however, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party's notion of Scottish 'national identity' is firmly rooted within, and exploited in furtherance of, the British Union. This is manifest in the party's usage of Scots in election campaigns, with slogans such as 'New Labour - Nae Britain' signalling Scottish distinctiveness within an unambiguously British framework.[18]

2.1.2 Post-devolution to Present Day

From 1999 onwards, however, the Tories exhibit a markedly more reserved approach towards Scots, and, from around 2011, even outright hostility. The party, of course, vociferously opposed devolution on the grounds that it would constitute a slippery slope to independence.[19] If, in this context, the Tories' exploitation of cultural nationalism was primarily a ploy intended to stem the rising tide of support for a devolved Scottish Parliament, then it is perhaps unsurprising that these efforts were abandoned following the success of Labour's 1997 referendum. Thus whilst the promotion of Scots previously served as an expedient nod to cultural nationalism, the enduring and

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[15] Letter from Stewart, Iain (Scottish Con Party) to Steve Murdoch (1996)

[16] Letter from Ansdell, Douglas to Steve Murdoch (1994)

[17] Citing the provision of £50,000 towards the establishment of the Scots Language Resource Centre in Perth in 1994. Letter from Lindsay, Lord (Con Scottish Office) to Steve Murdoch (1996)

[18] Other examples include: 'Nae Tartan Tax with the Tories - Guaranteed' and 'You'll pay mair with Blair'. Letter from Stewart, Iain (Scottish Con Party) to Steve Murdoch (1996)

[19] A key pledge of the 1997 Scottish manifesto was to 'never endanger our Union by introducing constitutional innovations which are ill-thought out and which would corrode the strong bonds underpinning our Union', and there is reference elsewhere to 'the menace of separatism - introduced through the Trojan Horse of devolution'. Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (1997) *Fighting for Scotland*

increasing threat of political nationalism since devolution has left the Conservative and Unionist Party ever more reluctant to emphasise Scottish distinctiveness, for fear of blowing wind into the sails of political nationalism.

The most striking aspect of this shift towards reservedness has been that, post-devolution, Scots is no longer promoted as a living national language, but rather relegated to the realms of heritage. To the extent that Scots is acknowledged in the present, meanwhile, it is as an informal register of English, or as a disparate collection of local dialects.

This is immediately evident in the Conservative contributions to two early debates on Scots: in February 2000, a debate was held on a Point of Order by SNP MSP Irene McGugan, which sought to include a question on the Scots language in the 2001 census, and, in September of the same year, a debate was held, also in the name of Irene McGugan, on the programme of action for Scots and Gaelic in the European year of languages.[20] Speaking in the February debate, Education, Arts, Culture, and Sport spokesperson, Brian Monteith, made it clear that the Conservatives conceive of Scots as a language of heritage, stating that they 'favour artistic bodies giving far greater emphasis to Scots verse, literature and language' as a means of protecting and encouraging 'traditional heritage'. In terms of the present, meanwhile, it is clear that Scots is understood only as an informal variant of speech, with Monteith describing how Scots go from speaking 'standard English, probably with a Scots accent' in the formal workplace, to 'a Scots form of that standard English with his or her spouse, children, neighbours and friends—a number of Scots words will permeate the conversation.' The remarks of Conservative convenor of the Procedures Committee, Murray Tosh, in 2001, moreover, leave it beyond doubt that Scots is treated as an ancient language, neither widely understood nor spoken in Scotland today. Responding to a query by SNP MSP, Gil Paterson, regarding when Scots may be used in Parliament, Tosh stated that:

> The committee and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body have made it clear that we have no difficulty with the introduction of the old Scots leid or tongue […] but if parliamentarians wish to speak in the old Scots tongue, a translation will be required, not least because most members do not speak Scots. I do not think that anyone in the official report is particularly geared to understand it either. It would be unfortunate if our publications—electronic and paper—did not contain an English-language version of a language of which relatively few people in Scotland now have a command [21]

[20] SP OR 16 Feb 2000 S1M-554; SP OR 07 Sept 2000 S1M-1111

[21] SP OR PR 2001

It is worth acknowledging that there was some sympathy for modern Scots within the Tory party in the figure of MSP Alex Johnstone, who spoke in the February 2000 debate about how, growing up in a farming community in rural north-east Scotland, he was 'brought up to speak the Scots language as my first language'. Whilst more sympathetic than his colleagues, however, on closer inspection, Johnstone's understanding is of a fractured and ambiguous modern Scots, as opposed to a coherent and unified national language and culture, later stating that:

> While I believe that there is a Scots language, I do not believe that it is necessarily a single
>
> language. A very different language is spoken in Glasgow from what I hear spoken in
>
> Buchan. There is more than one culture that needs to be preserved [22]

Thus for the post-devolution Conservative Party, at worst, Scots is a historical relic akin to Latin; at best, a collection of disjointed regional variants: either way incapable of fulfilling the role of a coherent national language.

If the early years of devolution were characterised by a downplaying of Scots' significance, the renewed and increased threat of Scotland breaking away from the United Kingdom since 2011 has coincided with a shift towards outright hostility. This is strongly evident in the response of erstwhile Scots sympathiser, Alex Johnstone, to the Scottish Government's announcement in September 2015 of initiatives to support the Scots language, such as a Scots Language Policy and a Scots Language Ambassadors scheme:

> This a predictable stunt from a Scottish Government more interested in pandering to patriots
>
> than improving education. When it could be trying to push Scotland's schools up global
>
> league tables, or closing the attainment gap, it's actually trying to stir up the constitution in
>
> any way it can. It's been well proven that our school children would benefit far more from
>
> learning international languages which could open all kinds of doors for them [23]

Assuming that Johnstone's underlying sympathies have not changed from the early 2000s, it is clear that Scots has come to be regarded firmly as the preserve of the Nationalists. Not only is the promotion of Scots shunned as a politically nationalist ploy, but as one that is impliedly parochial and inward-looking, in contrast to the value of 'international languages': a far cry from the Conservative's promotion of Scots as an important part of national identity in the 1990s. Unionist hostility towards perceived nationalist posturing on language is evident, too, in the response

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[22] SP OR 07 Sept 2000 S1M-1111

[23] http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/holyrood-launches-drive-to-promote-scots-language-1-3883171

received to my research from Conservative MSP, Alexander Burnett: this included a link to a video by the comedian, David Mitchell, along with the remark that Burnett 'personally' considered that it 'brought some realism to the debate'.[24] The comedic video is dismissive of supporting regional and minority languages in general, refers to the promotion of Gaelic in Scotland as 'nationalist politicians using culture as a political weapon', and to Scots as 'more of a dialect of English' than a language.[25] Though void of such explicit hostility, the official party policy as of June 2016 does not indicate that any change in the party's general post-devolution stance is on the horizon, stating that:

> The Scots language is an important part of Scotland's heritage which is why there is such widespread recognition of, and support for, the cultural significance of authors such as Robert Burns, Walter Scott and Allan Ramsay and of course authors and poets such as Blind Harry and John Barbour. It is important to recognise the similar wealth of the Gaelic language and also local dialects found in Scotland, whether Doric, Lallans, Scotch or others [26]

Consistent with the Tories' approach throughout the devolved period, Scots is described as a historical language, preserved in literature, with reference made only to 'local dialects found in Scotland' in the present. The party evidently remains wary of promoting anything which may, by asserting national distinctiveness in the present, lend itself to modern political nationalism. Rather, the emphasis on disparate regional dialects serves to portray a fractured identity, as opposed to a single national language around which nationalism may rally. This all stands in stark contrast to the 1990s, when the modern Scots language was not only actively exploited by the party as a badge of 'Scottishness' in election campaigns, but explicitly recognised for its importance in forging national identity. As illustrated in this chapter, this shift must be viewed as a response to the threat of political nationalism which led to, and has not been abated by, devolution, leading the Conservative and Unionist Party to abandon the promotion of modern Scots as too nationalist. Furthermore, coinciding with the heightened threat of nationalism since 2011, we have seen a further shift towards outright hostility to its promotion, lambasted as a nationalist ploy.

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[24] Burnett, Alexander (Con MSP) to Ashley Douglas (2016)

[25] In order to represent Mr Burnett correctly, I contacted him to confirm whether these were views that he himself advocated. I received no response. The video can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvlQXPNwrqo

[26] Email correspondence with Conservative MSPs, including Party Leader, Ruth Davidson (2016)

2.2 The Labour Party

2.2.1 Pre-devolution

As with the Conservative Party, neither the 1992 nor 1997 Labour manifesto, UK or Scottish, contains any reference to Scots, signalling that it was not a key issue. Further insight into Labour's pre-devolution stance on Scots is, however, provided by former Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, George Robertson, who stated in 1994 correspondence that: 'Labour is keen to preserve our Scottish cultural diversity and to encourage the wider use of Scots and Gaelic'.[27] Whilst similar to the pre-devolution Conservative stance in both recognising Scots in the present day and actively encouraging its usage, significantly, Scots is viewed here in terms of 'cultural diversity', favouring a fractured multiculturalism over the singular and indigenous Scottish 'national identity' of the Tories. Even when the party ramps up its pro-Scottish rhetoric in response to the increasing threat of political nationalism during the 1990s, Labour's brand of Scottish nationalism emerges as rooted primarily in civic and institutional Scottish identity, one in which cultural arguments barely feature, and Scots is not mentioned at all. This is strongly apparent in the 1997 Scottish manifesto, where, promoting its major policy proposal to legislate for a devolved Scottish parliament, Scotland's 'distinct and proud national identity' is described by Labour as founded upon Scotland's 'own education system […] own legal system' and '[…] own structure of local government'.[28]

Though the Unionist parties played the Scottish card in different ways, however, the underlying motivation in each case was the same: to preserve the British Union by thwarting political nationalism. That this was the goal behind Labour's devolution proposals is indisputable, with the 1997 manifesto stating that:

> Our proposal is for devolution not federation…A sovereign Westminster Parliament will devolve power to Scotland and Wales….The Union will be strengthened and the threat of separatism removed [29]

Labour's anxiety to quash separatism remained just as urgent following the success of the devolution referendum in 1997, as became clear in the controversy surrounding the suppression of a draft Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) report in 1998. The SCCC had recently been commended for its progressive approach towards the teaching of the Scots in schools,

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[27] Robertson, George (Lab MP) to Steve Murdoch (1994)

[28] Scottish Labour Party (1997) New Labour Because Scotland Deserves Better

[29] *Ibid*.

but such embracing of the language was too much for the Unionist Labour party.[30]Amongst the abandoned recommendations of the original report were that 'teachers should teach regional Scots in conjunction with standard English and should introduce aspects of Scottish culture into virtually every subject on the curriculum', with the new draft, by contrast, speaking only in much looser terms of providing guidance and support to allow exploration of the culture of Scotland.[31] Neither the anti-nationalist motivation behind the watering down of the report, nor the perception of Scots specifically as a nationalist threat, appears to be in doubt: key authors of the report stated explicitly that the draft report was emasculated due to fears that it could be perceived as promoting nationalism, thus leading to funding cuts by the Labour government, with particular concerns about the recommendation to teach Scots.[32]

2.2.2 Post-devolution to Present Day

2.2.2.1 In Government: 1999 - 2007

Perhaps unsurprisingly against this background, as the main party of the Scottish Executive between 1999 - 2007, Labour conscientiously avoided doing anything that might raise the profile of Scots: if a new Scottish Parliament was established in order to suppress nationalism, it was unlikely that its Unionist governing party was going to allow it to be used as a platform for promoting a narrow brand of 'Scottishness'.

Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in Scottish Labour's response to the UK Government's ratification of Scots under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) in 2001.[33] It is immediately apparent that the UK Government's ratification of the Charter in respect of Scots was not called for by the Scottish Executive, and that the subsequent devolution of responsibility for its implementation to Holyrood was an unwelcome imposition. In a 2002 speech, after expressing scepticism as to the language status of Scots, Minister of the Labour Executive for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Mike Watson, reluctantly resigned himself to the decision of the UK Government:

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[30] Robertson, R., 'The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum', in Niven, L., and Jackson, R (eds.) *The Scots Language: its Place in Education* (Dumfries, 1998), pp. 129-133

[31] http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12020067.Row_on_Scots_in_schools_returns/; http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/08/18/a-catalogue-o-sair-neglect/

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] The charter was also ratified in respect of Gaelic in Scotland, Welsh in Wales, and Ulster-Scots and Irish in Northern Ireland. Manx Gaelic and Cornish have subsequently been added.

I dipped my toe in that water [debate as to language versus dialect status of Scots] at the Cross-Party Group last week, and my ears are still ringing, but the view had been taken, when the UK Government announced its intention of signing the Charter, that Scots will be firmly regarded as a language [34]

Of crucial note, however, is that whilst Gaelic was ratified under Part III of the Charter, which explicitly requires action to be taken, Scots was ratified only under Part II, leading to a situation in which, to quote McGugan, '[...] the focus is basically one of anti-discrimination - there is no requirement which commits the UK Government to protecting and preserving Scots. However, the Government is obliged to report from time to time on progress'.[35] Whatever the UK Labour Government's reasoning behind the differing classification of Scots and Gaelic,[36] the Labour-led Scottish Executive exploited the lack of explicit requirement for action to the full. When questioned in early 2002 about what it was doing to protect and promote Scots under the Charter, the Executive unabashedly responded that it '[did] not consider that any action is necessary to comply with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages', and that it had neither 'formulated any policy on the numbers of speakers of Scots,' nor 'set any targets to increase the numbers of Scots speakers.'[37] Five years into devolution, and three years after the inclusion of Scots in the ECRML, the 2004 report of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts lays bare the extent of the lack of action taken for Scots, summarising the situation thus:

There is no official policy for Scots and the authorities whether at local or regional level (Scotland) have not taken any steps to protect the language;

The Committee of Experts has been informed of few initiatives undertaken to promote the Scots language;

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[34] Watson, M., 'Towards a Language Policy for Scotland' in Kirk, J., and Ó Baoill, D (eds.) *Language Planning and Education: Linguistic Issues in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2002), p. 32

[35] McGugan, I., 'Scots in the Twenty-first Century' in Kirk, J., and Ó Baoill, D (eds.) *Linguistic Politics: Language Policies for Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2001), p. 33

[36] There appears to be no objective grounds for the difference in classification, and for Scots activists such as McGugan, the ratification of Scots under Part II as opposed to Part III, was seen as 'indicative of the fact that Scots is viewed as an inferior language'. McGugan, I., 'More Progress for Scots in the Twenty-First Century' in Kirk and Ó Baoill, *Language Planning and Education* (Belfast, 2002), pp. 23-26. The true reasoning of the UK Labour Government on this anomaly is difficult to discern, however, the discussion of the potential reasons for the difference in treatment of Scots and Gaelic in a Scottish context, set out later in this chapter, may also apply here.

[37] Niven, L., *The Scots Language in Education in Scotland* (Ljouwert, 2002) [Regional Dossiers Series, European Network for Regional or Minority Languages and Education], p. 24; Bryce, T., and Humes, W. M (eds.) *Scottish Education: Post-Devolution* (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 264

The Committee of Experts has not received any information of any particular measures adopted by the Scottish Executive to facilitate and/or encourage the use of Scots [38]

This state of affairs did not change during the remainder of Labour's time in power between 2004 and 2007, and it thus appears entirely correct to agree with the assessment of the Director of the Scots Language Centre, Michael Hance, that the Labour-led Executives did 'absolutely nothing' for Scots, as well as his suggestion that the Executive's inaction on Scots was informed by a:

[…] resistance to the notion of Scots as a language […] even when, absurdly, it is being asked   for information about the ways in which it has applied the provisions of an international   Charter to which it (indirectly) is a signatory and which not only recognises Scots as a language but has as its main purpose the protection and promotion of that and other minority languages [39]

Rather, in an approach echoing that of the post-devolution Conservative Party, Scots is treated by the Labour party as located firmly in the past, a language of literature and heritage, but not a living language of modern day Scotland, requiring of protection and promotion on that basis. Despite the odd positive reference to Scots as a language in Executive publications, the effect in policy and in practice - the true marker of commitment - is negligible.

The relegation of Scots to the realms of the historic is immediately clear in the 2000 Cultural Strategy. Following details of 'a vigorous programme to encourage the use of the language' for Gaelic, the section on Scots refers only to a planned 'feasibility study' for a 'centre for the languages of Scotland'. Based on a proposal put forward by academics concerned with Scots and Gaelic, it is suggested that it could house resources such as the Scottish National Dictionary and the dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue.[40] A modest proposal in itself, in which Scots features as a significant, but academic and literary relic, the proposed centre nonetheless never came to fruition.

Responses from activists and academics alike were unimpressed by the strategy's provisions for Scots. Corbett, for example, criticised that 'while Gaelic is explicitly 'valued' and practical means of support are listed […] the practical outcomes of the Cultural Strategy document for Scots

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[38] 2004 Report, pp. 10-12, quoted in Dossena, M., 'Scots in Institutional Discourse: 'Walcome til the Scottish Pairlament Wabsite', in Fairclough, N., Cortese, G., and Ardizzone, P., *Discourse and Contemporary Social Change* (Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 216-217

[39] Hance, Michael (Personal interview) (2016); Hance, M., 'The Development of Scots Language Policy in Scotland since Devolution' in Kirk, J., and Ó Baoill, D (eds.) *Legislation, Literature and Sociolinguistics: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2005), p. 73

[40] Scottish Executive (2000) *Creating Our Future... ...Minding Our Past. Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*

appear to be negligible.'[41] Jackson and Niven similarly noted that, 'whilst there is token reference to linguistic diversity […] there is little evidence to indicate that the Scots language is equally valued in practice [original emphasis].'[42] Professor Millar, furthermore, analysed the lack of concrete support and the 'focus on academic initiatives with little immediate effect for status or acquisition planning' as indicative of Scots being 'visualised as a commodity, marketable in terms of 'heritage', or as a subject for academic study, rather than as a living resource.'[43] It certainly appears that such views were held at leadership level. In the September 2000 debate, Labour First Minister, Donald Dewar, was criticised for 'chirping' during McGugan's opening remarks, understood by members to imply that he did not agree that the modern Scots language described by McGugan existed.[44] Academic linguist, John Kirk, furthermore, could recall Dewar remarking to the effect that 'as we all know what Scots is, there's no need to do anything for it', concluding that Dewar 'almost certainly […] considered Scots a literary language'.[45]

This understanding of Scots as a historical and literary language remained consistent throughout Labour's time in power, as reflected in the lack of any perceptible change between the Cultural Strategy published in 2000 and the Strategy for Scotland's Languages published during the final months of Labour rule in January 2007. Correspondingly, the response to the 2007 document from activists and scholars was again highly critical, with 'almost all of the responses to the consultation' concluding that it failed as a strategy with respect to Scots.[46] Indeed, the criticism attracted by the 2007 document matches almost word for word that levelled at the 2000 document published nearly a decade before, with Unger, for example, concluding that the 2007 strategy

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[41] Corbett, J., 'The Current State of Scots' (2001) Accessed from Association for Scottish Literary Studies, June 2016 http://asls.arts.gla.ac.uk/Executive_Report.html

[42] Jackson, R., and Niven, L., 'Language Law and Liberty' (2001) Accessed from Scots Language Centre, June 2016: http://media.scotslanguage.com/library/document/LanguageLawLiberty.pdf, p. 10

[43] McColl Millar, R., ''Burying alive': Unfocussed Governmental Language Policy and Scots' in *Language Policy (5)* (2006), pp. 63–86.

[44] Extract from SP OR 07 Sept 2000 S1M-1111: Alex Johnstone (Con): My concern particularly is the attitude held by a significant number of people in the Parliament, that there is no such language as Scots. When Irene McGugan was making her opening remarks, I heard a chirp coming from my left, where the First Minister was sitting at the time, suggesting that very thing. Michael Russell (SNP) Shame.

[45] The remark occurred during a discussion on Scots in October 2000, a few days before his death. Kirk, J., 'Scotland and Northern Ireland as Scots-speaking communities' in Kirk, J., *Sustaining Minority Language Development (*Belfast, 2011), pp. 243-248

[46] Unger, J. W., 'Legitimating inaction: Differing identity constructions of the Scots language' in *European Journal of Cultural Studies 13* (2010), pp. 99–117

'constructs Scots as no more than cultural and heritage resource', whilst 'its possible use as a viable functional and communicative medium is backgrounded.'[47]

If such benign neglect was the predominant approach of the party, however, more explicit hostility was expressed by Labour MSP and convenor of the European Committee, Hugh Henry, who rejected and even ridiculed the notion of a modern Scots language, whether written or spoken. Henry's derision is clear in a newspaper article written shortly after the February 2000 debate:

> There are some who believe that what is described as 'Scots language' should be given the same status as Gaelic…In support of this I received an email from, and I quote, the 'Secretair o Scots Tung'. My computer went into overdrive trying to spell-check the email…[48]

Amidst this consistent indifference and occasional hostility were also isolated expressions of sympathy for Scots as a living tongue. As with the Tories, however, even such ostensible support emerges as problematic on closer inspection, with the emphasis on Scots as a fractured collection of dialects, and not a coherent national language. Frank McAveety MSP, for example, contributing to a meeting of the Procedures Committee in 2002, noted that 'a variety of dialects and a variety of forms of Scots language are spoken, but I do not think that there is a commonality'.[49] Marlyn Glen MSP exhibits similar uncertainty as to what Scots is, questioning representatives from the General Register Office of Scotland during a committee meeting in 2005 as follows:

> What kind of Scots are you asking about? I mentioned it in the north-east and people immediately asked whether it was about Doric or Lallans. What is Scots?'[50]

The parallels in the approach towards Scots adopted by the two Unionist parties in the post-devolution period are thus clear, with Scots downplayed either as a language of the past, or as a series of disjointed dialects in the present. In terms of the motivations behind this shared approach, we have already seen how the Tories' reluctance to recognise or promote a modern Scots language was driven by a Unionist desire to suppress Scottish nationalism. Exactly the same explanation presents itself for Labour's less than forthcoming support for Scots as the main party of the

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[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Quoted in Kay, B., *Scots, The Mither Tongue* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 15-16

[49] SP OR PR 2002

[50] SP OR EO 2005

Executive. This is most clearly evident in the Executive's rejection of a question on Scots in the census, and in the glaring inequality of approach adopted towards Scots and Gaelic.

In terms of the census question, anti-nationalist bias is first hinted at in the figure of Labour MSP, Cathy Peattie. The exception that proves the general Labour rule outlined above, Peattie was vice-convenor of the Cross-Party Group on Scots during the early years of devolution and a strong proponent of the language in the chamber. When it came to the census vote, however, Peattie followed the party line and cast her vote against the inclusion of a question on Scots. Notably, Tory MSP, Alex Johnstone, similarly voted in line with his party against a question on Scots, despite his own sympathies for Scots as expressed during the preceding debate. If it is clear from these two examples that party-political priorities overrode personal sympathies for Scots, the overall composition of the vote strongly suggests that these priorities were in each case constitutional: all members of Unionist parties voted against, and all members of parties sympathetic to Scottish independence voted for.[51] Given that wider cross-party support for Scots evidently existed, it appears that anti-nationalist concerns ultimately took precedence. Jackson and Niven put it simply when they noted that:

> whilst some members of the 'unionist' parties may be sympathetic […] they are unlikely to sanction any measures which they believe may fuel the aspirations for separate nationhood and the consequent fragmentation of the United Kingdom [52]

Clearly, anti-separatism could not be publicly cited by the Unionist parties as the reason for their rejection of a question on Scots. The official reason for opposition was that the difficulty of defining Scots as a term would mean that any results obtained would be unsound.[53] The spuriousness of this stance upon closer inspection, however, serves to underline that other motivations, such as anti-nationalism, must have been involved.

Firstly, although opposing a question on Scots in the census, Labour MSPs such as Malcolm Chisolm were apparently content with, and called for, the inclusion of a question on Scots in the

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[51] All 28 SNP MSPs; Green MSP, Robin Harper; SSP MSP, Tommy Sheridan, and Independent MSP, Dennis Canavan

[52] Jackson and Niven, 'Language Law and Liberty' (2001), p. 2

[53] McGugan, I., 'Scots in the Twenty-first Century', p. 30. See, for example, Cathy Peattie during the February 2000 debate: My fear about the census is that if the question is not clear, and people do not understand it, we will not get a fair reflection of the number of people who speak Scots. I fear for the language and for the promotion of it that has come so far. Unless I can be convinced that the question is one that people would answer clearly, I will not support including it in the census (SP OR 16 Feb 2000 S1M-554)

notably less prestigious household survey. The contradiction inherent in this position was pointed out by SNP MSP, Brian Adam, during the debate, who noted that:

> I would have thought that the problems that are associated with asking a question about […] speech in the census would almost certainly be the same for the household survey [54]

Yet as long as the Scottish Executive lacked comprehensive data on Scots, it could continue to make the claim that it was unable to develop policy. For a party reluctant to promote Scots, it could thus be argued, as indeed was, that 'it is not in the government's interests to determine the exact numbers involved'.[55] This was certainly the conclusion reached by long-standing Scots activist and writer, Billy Kay, who viewed 'the refusal tae pit in a question in the last census' as demonstrating that 'there wes never an eident desire tae finn oot ocht aboot the leid an dae ocht for its survival'.[56] When criticised by activists for lamenting that it lacked data whilst simultaneously rejecting a census question, the Executive responded that 'it is not the purpose of the census to raise public awareness of social issues'.[57] This reveals that the purported difficulties of definition were not the only reason for Labour's opposition, but that there was also a reluctance to raise public awareness of Scots, viewed as a 'social issue'. That immediate political concerns drove the Executive's opposition is further supported by the fact that the Executive dropped hints at the time that a question may be included in the 2011 or a later census.[58] Perhaps Labour considered that by 2011 or 2021 devolution would have killed nationalism stone dead, and it would be politically safe to include such a question? In 2000, however, immediately after the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, the constitutional risks of promoting Scots in the 2001 census were too great. Indeed, the rejection of a census question on Scots caused prominent Scots activist, Dauvit Horsbroch to conclude just one year into devolution that: 'it's patent nou […] that Scots is seen as a naitionalist quaistion in Scotland an this is whit wey the admeinistration hums an haws ower giein it onie heize'.[59]

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[54] SP OR 16 Feb 2000 S1M-554

[55] Jackson and Niven, 'Language Law and Liberty' (2001), p. 2

[56] Kay, B., 'Lowsin Time, Yokin Time: The Scots Leid in Twa Thoosan an Seiven', in Kirk, J., *Sustaining Minority Language Development* (Belfast, 2011), pp. 206-211

[57] Jackson and Niven, 'Language Law and Liberty' (2001), p. 3

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] Horsbroch, D., 'Mair As A Sheuch Atween Scotland an Ulster: Twa Policie For The Scots Leid? in Kirk. J., and Ó Baoill, D (eds.) *Language and Politics. Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2000), p. 139

In addition to a focused hostility to Scottish political nationalism, shared by the Tories, it is worth noting that Labour's particular reservations towards Scots emerge on one level as part of a wider project of multiculturalism, shunning the favouring of indigenous majority cultures and promoting pluralism and inclusivity of all. This element of Labour's resistance to Scots was evident in the refusal of Jackie Baillie, Deputy Minister for Communities, in 2000 to include a question on Scots in the household survey, but to guarantee the inclusion of a question on the language spoken in the home of ethnic minorities, on the grounds that 'Scots are not an ethnic minority'. This same indifference to the indigenous and emphasis on diversity permeates all Labour policy documents too. In the 2000 Cultural Strategy, for example, the 'culturally diverse nature of the population' reflecting 'recent patterns of settlement' is stressed, along with a commitment to 'establish[ing] an action group to investigate how the languages and cultural traditions of Scotland's ethnic minorities can be supported and how their contribution to Scotland's culture can be recognised and celebrated'. Notably, then, the 2000 Cultural Strategy contains more in terms of concrete commitments to the languages of recently-settled ethnic minorities than to the indigenous national language of Scots.

Despite Labour's general aversion to indigenous cultural nationalism, however, Gaelic nonetheless consistently receives more favourable treatment than Scots, an anomaly which further reveals the anti-nationalism underlying Labour's approach to the latter.

Labour's inequity of approach towards the two languages permeates every official document and statement on Scotland's languages and culture; is glaringly apparent in the complete lack of Scots in the Parliament building alongside English and Gaelic, and was most strikingly realised in the legal protection afforded Gaelic through the The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, whilst Scots received no equivalent.[60] Labour's conscious recognition of this inequality - and acknowledgement of its near indefensibility - is revealed in an internal Scottish Executive memo of 2003 discussing the Gaelic Language Bill:

> Supporters of other languages, in particular Scots, will be quick to seek to gain an
> equivalence of treatment and other than reference to the danger of extinction there is
> little in linguistic grounds to defend a different approach to Scots. This will have to be
> addressed during the Bill's passage…[61]

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[60] The Act 'secures the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language', and afforded official status to the language for the first time.

[61] Scottish Executive internal memo to Peter Peacock, Labour MSP, Minister for Education, 28 May 2003. Quoted in Hance, M., 'The Development of Scots Language Policy in Scotland since Devolution', p. 71.

Whilst concerns about the financial burden of supporting Scots likely played some role, it is the relative nationalist threat, as opposed to the relative language status or endangeredness, of Scots and Gaelic that emerges as the main factor behind Labour's disparity in approach.[62]

Although both Scots and Gaelic became associated with political nationalism during the era of MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance, in the present day, Gaelic can be seen as both less associated with nationalism, and to pose less of a nationalist threat than Scots.[63] Gaelic is in danger of dying out; is spoken by only around 1% of the population in Scotland; is not understood by those who don't speak it; and is concentrated in the geographical area of the Western Isles and Northwest Highlands.[64] This endangered status and limited demographic base clearly limits its capacity for being harnessed to nationalist ends. The evocative associations of Gaelic with the Highland Clearances, as well as the attempted suppression of Gaelic culture in the aftermath of the Jacobite uprisings, furthermore means that any national commitment to Gaelic can be seen as rooted more in national atonement than in nationalism. In addition to its perception as an ancient and dying language, these immediate associations of Gaelic with events of centuries ago tie the language to a romantic and idealised Highland past, leaving it more benign in the present day.

Scots, by contrast, is spoken by roughly 1.5 million people across the country - with the exception only of the traditional Gaelic speaking areas - and, due to its closeness to English, is much more readily understood by those who don't speak it. It is thus considerably more of a living, national, language, and consequently holds greater potential for nationalist exploitation. Taken together with the high concentration of support for Scots amongst nationalist politicians, and the vocal support for independence of many prominent Scots activists, the starker nationalist connections of Scots are clear.

Even if Gaelic was judged as safer than Scots, however, the timing of the Gaelic Bill suggests that the Labour Executive was nonetheless anxious to ensure that any resulting boost to cultural nationalism would have minimal impact in the political sphere. There had been little appetite from Labour for a Gaelic Bill during the first parliamentary term, and indeed the first

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[62] 'Status and acquisition planning for Scots would be much more expensive [than Gaelic]. This may be a cost which no government (or population) in Scotland would be willing (or able) to foot'. McColl Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 196

[63] Gairn, L., 'MacDiarmid and Ecology', in Lyall, S., and McCulloch, M., *Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 91-94; Wilson, S (ed.) *The correspondence between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh, 2010); Pittock, M., The Road To Independence?, pp. 124-126

[64] As Millar put it, 'Gaelic […] if we are being cynical, [has] the advantage both of Abstand status and a geographical heartland which makes it relatively straightforward to be ignored by the great part of the population, except in highly formulaic and token circumstances', McColl Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 196

Gaelic Bill in the Scottish Parliament was brought forward by opposition SNP MSP, Michael Russell, in 2002, gaining preliminary assent before the dissolution of Parliament in 2003. It was not until September 2004 that the Labour-Liberal Executive introduced the second Gaelic Bill into the Scottish Parliament, which passed in April 2005.[65] Mid-way through the second term of a Unionist coalition, and before the prospect of an SNP government in 2007 had become a reality, it may have appeared at this point that devolution had succeeded in its aim of thwarting Scottish nationalism, and that it was thus safe to introduce a Gaelic Bill, placating the Gaelic lobby and accommodating cultural nationalists without fear of fuelling political nationalism.

As with the rejection of a census question on Scots, the spurious justification proffered for the neglect of Scots compared to Gaelic (and English) indicates that the real reasoning must be sought elsewhere. For example, though requests that Scots be featured on signage were turned down in 2002 on the grounds that it was international practice to have no more than two languages on signage, it is simple, in the first instance, to cite counter-examples from amongst comparable European legislatures, such as the Federal Assembly of Switzerland and its three official languages at federal level (German, French and Italian), which are completely equal in status.[66] Furthermore, insisting that only two of three national languages may be represented unavoidably requires a subjective selecting of two over the other, a process in which Scots, plausibly due to its nationalist associations, lost out. It would appear, then, that Scots suffered a double discrimination at the hands of the Labour Executive, meriting of special treatment neither as an ethnic minority language, nor as an indigenous language safe and appropriate enough to be promoted.

2.2.2.2 In Opposition: 2007 - 2016

The first, and only, shift in Labour's approach towards Scots is not evident until its manifesto for the Holyrood elections in May 2007. The first manifesto, Scottish or UK, during our period of study to contain any reference to Scots, it stated that:

> […] given its diverse nature, we will investigate the best way to promote Scots and
> will work to build a consensus on the most appropriate role in our society for it [67]

[65] Sutherland et. al (eds.) *Law Making and the Scottish Parliament: The Early Years* (Edinburgh, 2014), p. 85

[66] Schwab, P., 'The Swiss Parliament as a Plurilingual Forum' (Geneva, 2014). Accessed online (June 2016) https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/en/discours-philippe-schwab-asgp-geneve-2014-10-10-e.pdf

[67] Scottish Labour Party (2007) *Building Scotland*

The emphasis on its 'diverse nature' reinforces the fractured and incoherent modern Scots with which we have become familiar through our survey of the Unionist parties. Furthermore, the commitment to 'work[ing] to build a consensus on the most appropriate role' reflects that Labour lacks not only a clear vision of Scots, but also a clear vision for its role in modern Scotland. Nonetheless, the fact that Scots is mentioned at all marks a significant shift, and it is surely no coincidence that it occurred on the eve of an election in which the SNP posed a serious electoral threat, and did indeed go on to win. It would thus seem that Labour's new-found commitment to Scots was an attempt to brand itself, as the Tories failed to do in the 1990s, as more of a Scottish party in order to ward off the threat from the SNP. And just as the Tories jettisoned Scots after it failed to stem the rising tide of support for devolution; after a brief and unsuccessful flirtation in 2007, so was it abandoned by Labour. Scots did not feature in either of Labour's 2010 manifestos, nor in its 2011 Holyrood manifesto. In the 2016 manifesto, meanwhile, it makes only vague appearance in the statement: 'we recognise Scotland's rich cultural heritage including Gaelic, Scots and Nordic'. It is unclear whether 'Scots' here is intended to refer to the Scots language, or simply to 'Scottish cultural heritage', assuming, by analogy, that this is what is implied by the reference to 'Nordic'. If this is the case, then Scots has gone from being impliedly to quite literally subsumed within the realms of heritage and culture. The lack of clarity as to Labour's present position on Scots was not assisted by my research, with no Labour MSP, MP or MEP responding to my request for information on the party's current policy.

Echoing another theme familiar from the previous chapter on the Conservative party, there is evidence within the Labour Party of a strengthening hostility to Scots coinciding with the intensification of the Nationalist threat from around 2011. The most striking example of this is provided by prominent Labour figure George Robertson. As was observed previously, speaking as Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland in 1994, Robertson referred to both Scots and Gaelic in positive, if not nationalist, terms, noting Labour's commitment to 'Scottish cultural diversity' and to 'encourag[ing] the wider use of Scots and Gaelic'.[68] Speaking in 2013, less than a decade later, the same man said the following:

> There's no linguistic differentiation, no great cultural [...] discrimination that might argue for it [Scottish independence], like it does in some other countries, you know, in Flanders in Belgium they say 'Why can't we become an independent state?', or Catalonia and Spain, where a million and a quarter people marched in the streets. They say they want to become

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[68] Robertson, George (Lab MP) to Steve Murdoch (1994)

an independent state, but they've got language, and culture, and all these sort of things. We don't have any of that [69]

Given that this assertion was made during a debate at Abertay University in which Robertson was speaking against the motion that 'it is time for Scotland to become an independent nation state', it is undoubtedly clear that this almost desperate denial of any Scottish cultural and linguistic distinctiveness is to be understood as a Unionist effort to undermine the case for Scotland to be an independent nation. Thus if the anti-nationalist motivations behind Labour's neglect of Scots are hinted at throughout the devolved period, by the time of the independence campaign between 2011-2014, as embodied in the figure of George Robertson, they are beyond doubt: in the interests of the preservation of the British Union, Scottish distinctiveness in the present is denigrated, and certainly not promoted, and it is this point that permeates the Labour party's post-devolution approach to Scots.

It is insightful, too, that the aforementioned CPG on Scots was disbanded in 2014. This can be explained on the one hand as a result of the SNP Government since 2007 having responded to many of the key issues that were campaigned on during the early years of devolution (such as a census question), meaning that, to quote former convenor of the group and SNP MSP, Rob Gibson, 'the work of a cross-party group in the Parliament is therefore truncated'. Gibson also notes, however, that the group had become 'less and less of a cross-party group in terms of attendance, as the only people who have attended [in recent years] are members of the Scottish National Party and the Green Party'.[70] As the election of an SNP government led to Scots becoming more starkly politicised along constitutional lines, viewed as inextricable from the pro-independence cause, its dwindling Unionist membership has left it unconducive to a cross-party group, or at least one that transcends constitutional politics.

Although there was little progress made for Scots at the hands of the Executive between 1999-2007, however, it is important to conclude by noting that devolution nonetheless helped the cause of the Scots language. As was described to me in interview with both Dr Christine Robinson and Michael Hance, the new Scottish Parliament acted as a catalyst, providing a forum for debate and lobbying, and connecting previously disparate groups and individuals concerned about the Scots language. This prompted them to develop coherent policy and aims, and to develop their

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[69] Full debate online here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5oHTBvidgc [*quoted section at c. 35 mins 50 secs*]

[70] SP OR SPPA 2014; Dossena, M., 'Scots in Institutional Discourse: 'Walcome til the Scottish Pairlament Wabsite', in Fairclough, N., Cortese, G., and Ardizzone, P., *Discourse and Contemporary Social Change* (Peter Lang, 2007) pp. 213-232

skills in organising and presenting their arguments. The most significant manifestation of this was the establishment in 2002 of the aforementioned Cross-Party Group on the Scots Language, attended by MSPs as well as other groups and individuals. With the election of a more sympathetic SNP government in 2007, Scots activists were thus well prepared, and comparatively greater progress was indeed made from 2007 onwards, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. The Scottish National Party

3.1 Pre-devolution

The years leading up to the 1992 election were encouraging for the SNP, witnessing the adoption of the promising new slogan of 'Independence in Europe'; the victory of its architect, Jim Sillars, in the 1988 Govan by-election; the election of charismatic leader, Alex Salmond, in 1990; the defection of Labour MSP Dick Douglas to the SNP in the same year; and positive press from its lead role in the anti-poll tax campaign.[71] Riding on this wave of confidence, the SNP billed the General Election in 1992 as 'Scotland's Independence' election and urged voters to give the SNP a mandate, through a majority of Scottish seats, to negotiate for independence.

Nowhere in this plea for independence do either Scots or Gaelic feature. Rather, it is entirely focused on pragmatic issues such as getting rid of Trident and establishing a written constitution, alongside a range of other economic and social policies. This 1992 manifesto thus immediately introduces what is to become the single-most significant theme in respect of the SNP's treatment of Scots, namely, the marked lack of centrality of culture or language to the mainstream political case for Scottish independence. Instead, Scottish nationalism from the latter part of the twentieth century has been emphatically civic in nature, founded on institutional and political, rather than cultural or ethnic, identity. The 1980s and 1990s in particular can be seen as giving birth to the development of Scotland's self-identification as a compassionate and egalitarian nation, in contrast to the rampant right-wing individualism and free-market neoliberalism of Thatcher and the British state.[72] Out of this dichotomy emerged a home-rule campaign - whether for devolution or independence - centred around the injustice of the 'democratic deficit' of Scotland consistently and emphatically rejecting Conservative government at the polls, but nonetheless having its 'alien' policies imposed upon it. As Ben Jackson described in his 2014 article 'The Political Thought of Scottish Nationalism', 'for many nationalists the core of the case for Scottish independence ultimately reduces to the argument that Scots want to build a social democratic or socialist country while the English do not'.[73]

In terms of the SNP in particular, its current manifestation can also be traced back to the 1990s. Continuing the legacy of Billy Wolfe from the 1960s, its positioning as a firmly left-of-

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[71] Pittock, M., *The Road To Independence?*, pp. 75-78; Hassan, G., *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power* (Edinburgh, 2009), p. 173

[72] McColl Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, pp. 197-198; Hames, S (ed.) *Unstated: Writers on Independence* (Edinburgh, 2012), particularly the Introduction, pp. 1-18; Pittock, M., The Road To Independence?; Jackson, B., 'The Political Thought of Scottish Nationalism' in *The Political Quarterly, Vol 85,* (2014), pp. 50-56; http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/devolution/2016/01/what-does-scots-language-have-do-scottish-identity

[73] Jackson, B., 'The Political Thought of Scottish Nationalism' in *The Political Quarterly, Vol 85* (2014), pp. 52

centre social democratic party was solidly reinforced under the leadership of Alex Salmond, together with an increasing emphasis on its civic credentials.[74] These defining characteristics of modern Scottish nationalism have profoundly shaped the shifting approach to Scots of the SNP between 1992 - 2016.

Throughout the 1990s, despite its lack of centrality to the case for independence, the SNP nonetheless exhibits considerable sympathy for Scots, and a very different relationship to it than that of the Unionist parties. This is strongly apparent in a letter written by SNP MP, Andrew Welsh, in response to Murdoch's research into Language Politics in Scotland 1995. Welsh begins by highlighting how modern Scottish nationalism has 'tended to be based on institutions such as education, health, church and law, and, accordingly, 'driven by an opposition to 'the centralisation of all Government […] in London'. Within this broadly institutional concept of Scotland and the case for independence, however, Scots is acknowledged as part of the 'national identity' and of 'being Scottish' and its relationship to the constitutional question is described in the following terms:

> the languages of Scotland […] freed from the centralising control of London would flourish alongside English as a natural part of the Nation's change and growth. The SNP would ensure the equality of the Gaelic and Scots languages which is not possible under the United Kingdom [75]

Whilst a recognition of importance of Scots to 'national identity' was shared by the pre-devolution Tory party, any similarities with Unionist parties end here. In the first instance, Welsh also advocates legal protection on equal terms for Scots and Gaelic. Nor was such a commitment restricted to the opinion of one MP - rather, it featured explicitly in the SNP's 1997 manifesto two years later, which states that Gaelic and Scots 'must be given equal status with English, both legally and in broadcasting and the arts'.[76]

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[74] In a Herald article in 1994, for example, Salmond wrote that 'the SNP is engaged in the process of reinforcing our identity as a civic national party appealing to all of the people of Scotland regardless of origin'. Torrance, D., *Salmond: Against the Odds* (Birlinn, 2010), pp. 203-209. Note, too, the continuity with the 2014 speech in which Salmond referred to Scotland 'decid[ing] our future in a context based entirely on consensual, civic, non-ethnic and peaceful principles', accessible online here: http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/Alex-Salmond-in-New-York-Glasgow-Caledonian-University-speech-April-7-2014-b45.aspx; http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/103358?docPos=2; http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/billy-wolfe-politician-who-played-a-crucial-role-in-the-transformation-of-the-scottish-national-1924380.html; http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/mar/21/billy-wolfe-obituary

[75] Welsh, Andrew (SNP MP) to Steve Murdoch (1995)

[76] Scottish National Party (1997) *Yes We Can Win The Best For Scotland*

Further removed from the Unionist parties still, the return of political power to Scotland is promoted as laying the ground for a renaissance of Scotland's indigenous languages. The connection here between the SNP's nationalism and its stance on Scotland's languages is, however, highly nuanced. Scots is not part of the core case for independence, rather the two are connected only in as far as that independence would allow it to flourish and achieve equality: a happy corollary, and not a defining premise, of independent Scottish nationhood.

3.2 Post-devolution

3.2.1 In Opposition: 1999 - 2007

The SNP's commitment to legal protection for both Scots and Gaelic remains consistent throughout the first two parliamentary terms at Holyrood: the 1999 manifesto states that, 'English, Gaelic and Scots must co-exist on an equal basis in Scotland' and commits to 'grant[ing] Scots and Gaelic 'secure status' in the Parliament and national life'. This was followed by a commitment in more explicit terms to the introduction of 'a Languages Act, giving secure status for the Gaelic and Scots languages' in the 2003 manifesto.[77]

Moreover, as has been touched upon in the previous two chapters, opposition SNP MSPs were at the fore in championing the Scots language during the first two sessions of Parliament, whether in debates, committee meetings, or in asking questions of Ministers. The two early debates on Scots in 2000 were instigated by the SNP's Irene McGugan, and she was vocally and unequivocally supported in her promotion of Scots in each of them by SNP colleagues such as Michael Russell, Tricia Marwick, Gil Paterson, Linda Fabiani, Brian Adam, and Shona Robison. It was SNP MSP, Michael Russell, for example, who countered Alex Johnstone's remarks in the September 2000 debate that the different 'languages' spoken in Glasgow and Buchan precluded the existence of a 'single Scottish language', stating that:

> I wonder whether Alex Johnstone will reflect on the same difference in the English
> language. Perhaps he should go to Newcastle, then Aberdeen, Cornwall, Glasgow and
> Norwich. His argument is fallacious because in every language there are variations, but that
> does not make them different languages [78]

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[77] Scottish National Party (1999) *Scotland's Party; Scottish National Party* (2003) *The Complete Case For A Better Scotland*

[78] SP OR 07 Sept 2000 S1M-1111

In the census debate of February 2000, meanwhile, a question on the Scots language was supported by SNP MSPs on the basis of equality of recognition as well as the necessity of gathering data. To quote from McGugan's opening remarks:

> By opposing the question on Scots, this Parliament would effectively be opposing meaningful development of the Scots language, and denying equality to one of Scotland's indigenous languages [79]

It is clear that the SNP at this point demonstrates no reservations in identifying Scots as an 'indigenous' language, and as deserving of special treatment and recognition on that basis. Thus whilst members of the Unionist parties prevaricated as to whether Scots was a dead language, or a disjointed collection of dialects, members of the SNP during the early years of devolution were unanimous and unambiguous in their conception of Scots as a national language, made up of different dialects, both in the past and in the present.

3.2.2 In Government: 2007 - 2016

As the governing party in Holyrood - first as a minority following the 2007 elections, and then as a majority between 2011-2016 - the SNP did much in translating these positive sentiments towards Scots into action.

An early act of the newly-elected SNP Government[80] was to commission in 2008 an Audit of Current Scots Language Provision in Scotland in order to gather data from which to develop policy.[81] The speech given by Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Linda Fabiani, announcing this audit signals a clear change in tone from the previous Executive:

> Scots is a language of contemporary Scotland, and our approach to promoting it must be modern and forward-looking. Scots – in all its varieties - is intrinsic to Scotland's culture and identity. The Scottish Government recognises that it has a duty to protect and promote the Scots language, and the audit is the necessary first stage in the process to develop a competent and coordinated policy for the Scots language for the first time [82]

As in the pre-devolution and early devolved period, Scots is unequivocally recognised both as a national language - made up of different varieties - as well as a contemporary, living language.

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[79] SP OR 16 Feb 2000 S1M-554

[80] The SNP rebranded itself as the Scottish Government, as opposed to an Executive.

[81] Scottish Government (2009) *Audit of Current Scots Language Provision in Scotland*

[82] Quoted in *Ibid.*

Significantly, too, it continues to be promoted in nationalist terms as 'intrinsic' to Scotland's 'identity'. In stark contrast to the previous Labour Executive, moreover, the SNP Government not only recognises its duty to protect and promote Scots, but is explicitly committed to doing so in practical terms, a commitment affirmed through its actions over the following years.

In 2009, at a conference organised by the SNP Government to discuss the results of the audit, it was announced that the Government would take over the funding of two key Scots language bodies (Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre), following the removal of funding from the Scottish Arts Council. The same year also witnessed the commissioning of further research on Scots in the form of a 'Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language' survey, embracing the 'social issue' of Scots shunned by Labour.[83] Most significant in 2009, however, was the establishment of a Ministerial Working Group (MWG) on the Scots Language by Fabiani's successor, Michael Russell, a long-standing proponent of Scots in the Parliament. Consisting of prominent Scots academics, writers, educators, and activists, the group members were tasked with drawing on this wide range of expertise to advise the government on developing a strategy for Scots. The MWG reported to the government in 2010, and the government response in 2011 was positive, with some key recommendations - such as developing a national Scots Language Policy and establishing a network of Scots Language Co-ordinators - featuring as commitments in the SNP's 2011 manifesto.[84] Following the SNP's re-election in 2011, progress continued to be made. Significantly, Dr Alasdair Allan, a speaker and advocate of both Scots and Gaelic, was appointed to the newly-created post of Minister for Learning, Science & Scotland's Languages.[85] In the same year, and in a clear refutation of Labour's earlier opposition, a question on Scots was successfully included in the census, accompanied by the awareness-raising campaign, Aye Can.[86] Later in the second parliamentary term, delivering on its 2011 manifesto commitments, the SNP oversaw the appointment of four Scots Language Co-ordinators in 2014 to support and promote the teaching of Scots in schools, and the first ever Scots Language Policy was published the following year.[87]

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[83] Scottish Government (2010) *Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language*

[84] Scottish National Party (2011) *Re-elect A Scottish Government Working For Scotland*

[85] The Minister giving an interview to the SLC in Scots: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSK8qzqDAew : The

[86] Set up with £10, 000 of government support: http://www.ayecan.com. Unger, J., *The Discursive Construction of the Scots Language: Education, Politics and Everyday Life* (John Benjamins, 2013), p. 146

[87] http://www.teachingscotland.org.uk/education-in-scotland/curriculum-for-excellence/57-scots-language-coordinators.aspx ; Scottish Government (2015) *Scots Language Policy*

Consistent with the SNP's first term in power, the policy lays great emphasis on the importance and status of Scots as one the three 'indigenous' languages of Scotland. Furthermore, the symbolic significance and bold statements of the document are matched by concrete action points for raising and developing the status of Scots, with a strong emphasis on expanding its usage into all aspects of public life. Key priorities, for example, are listed as encouraging all stakeholder groups to develop and implement Scots language policies and supporting organisations that promote the Scots language.[88] The policy itself was produced in both Scots and English, embodying the Government's commitment to promoting Scots as a language appropriate for all forms of communication.

Such positivity towards Scots persists in the present SNP group: responses received from SNP MSPs, MPs, and MEPs during this research were invariably supportive towards the Scots language, proudly citing the commitment and achievements of the SNP Government in this respect. Many contained not only party-driven, but also personal statements of strong support, particularly in the case of members such as Michael Russell, Alasdair Allan, Maureen Watt, and Clare Adamson, who have been personally instrumental in the political progress of Scots.

It is thus indisputably clear that Scots has experienced drastically greater sympathy and progress under SNP Government between 2007 - 2016 than under its Labour predecessor between 1999 - 2007. The above should not, however, be mistaken either for a clear and meaningful trajectory of progress, or for a clear connection between nationalist government and progress for Scots.

Despite emphatic and repeated manifesto commitments to ensuring the equality of English, Gaelic and Scots, after nearly a decade of SNP government, Scots still lacks any legal status, an omission all the more glaring given that Gaelic was afforded such protection through Labour's Act of 2005. Neither does Scots have an equivalent of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which was set up even prior to the Gaelic Act in 2003. This inaction is all the more striking given that the audit commissioned by the SNP Government in 2009 highlighted the lack of a single lead organisation as having 'consequences for the strength of [Scots] provision across the ECRML's seven categories of public life', with only an 'active, highly engaged and highly skilled, yet fragile community engaged in delivering Scots language provision'.[89] Furthermore, as has long been a point of contention for

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[88] It is worth noting that published such a policy in 2015: Creative Scotland (2015) *Scots Language Policy / Scots Leid Policie*

[89] Scottish Government (2009) *Audit of Current Scots Language Provision in Scotland*

Scots activists, and indeed SNP MSPs, there remains a profound lack of visibility of Scots in the Scottish Parliament, in particular, its lack of appearance on signage. In this respect, there has been no change since 2002, and the strident criticism applied to the Labour-led Executive then applies just as much to the SNP today. Horsbroch, for example, criticised the Executive in the early 2000s for having 'biggit a language apairtheid […] whaur the richts o the Inglis-speakin communitie, an - til a faur lesser extent - the Gaelic ane, is upheld but at the same time latsna the Scots speaker get a shot at onie richts', citing the fact that 'oor leid isnae seen in the pairlament' as a particularly stark expression of this.[90] Significantly, the SNP's 2016 manifesto provides little indication that any change is on the horizon, stating only that 'we will also provide support for the Scots language', with no elaboration as to the form this support may take, and the short sentence rather appearing as an afterthought to the range of commitments listed to Gaelic.[91]

The Scots Language Centre, the main body campaigning for Scots, has expressed its dismay at the unequal approach adopted by the SNP Government towards Scots and Gaelic, criticising that such a policy: 'isna grundit on the nummer o speakers or even ony principle that's for ordnar applied tae the makkin o langage policy in society'.[92] Instead, the ambivalent and inconsistent approach of the SNP towards Scots can be explained on one level as due to the lack of centrality of Scots to the SNP's case for independence, meaning that promoting it has simply not been a priority amidst the political and financial pressures of government since 2007.

In the run-up to the 2014 referendum, moreover, as the party became increasingly anxious to disassociate itself from any trappings of a more ethnic or cultural nationalism - such as the promotion of an indigenous language - this passive indifference can be seen to give way to an active distancing from Scots.

The first evidence of a weakening in commitment to Scots is to be found in the SNP's 2007 manifesto, where, in contrast to the 1997, 1999, and 2003 manifestos, there is no reference to equality or legal status for Scots on the same terms as English and Gaelic. This reversal on legal status for Scots, of course, coincides with the increased probability of the SNP being elected to

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[90] Horsbroch, D.. 'The Executive o Scotland's Language Apairtheid' in Kirk, J., and Ó Baoill, D., *Language Planning and Education: Linguistic Issues in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2002), p. 157. Indeed, strikingly similar criticism has been aimed at the SNP Government on this issue. Matthew Fitt, for example, wrote in The National in 2016 that 'until the Scottish Pairlament mirrors wioot shame aw the languages o Scotland's sang, the biggin o oor democracy isnae feenished': http://www.thenational.scot/comment/matthew-fitt-pairlament-should-mirror-aw-oor-three-languages.13269. See also: 'Shame o Scots speakers treatit as third cless citizens': http://www.thenational.scot/comment/matthew-fitt-shame-o-scots-speakers-treatit-as-third-cless-citizens.16309.

[91] Scottish National Party (2016) *Re-elect [Nicola Sturgeon]*

[92] Scots Language Centre (2011) *Reply tae the makkin o plans for the Gaelic Leid*

government - and the party did, of course, form a minority government following the 2007 elections. It is thus clear that, on one level, the political and financial pressures of government were at play - James Robertson, for example, noting that, given that Scots has perhaps as many as 25 speakers for every one speaker of Gaelic, 'one can see why the thought of spending 25 x the Gaelic budget on Scots is a scary prospect!'[93] Nonetheless, however pragmatic the grounds for its neglect, the fact that legal status for Scots was *not* a priority for a nationalist party elected to government for the first time underlines the peripheral status of Scots to political nationalism.

If the SNP's watering down of commitments towards Scots in 2007 can be understood more in terms of lack of time and money than lack of sympathy, however, by the time of the 2014 referendum, a shift towards a marked aversion towards the promotion of Scots had taken place. Given that the SNP's carefully constructed civic brand of nationalism had been key to its success thus far, as the SNP redoubled its efforts to assert its civic credentials in order to secure a majority for independence, it would appear that the promotion of the indigenous language of Scots came to be viewed no longer simply as peripheral, but as contradictory, and even damaging, to the SNP's case for independence.[94]

Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the 2013 White Paper on Independence, in which Scots (and Gaelic) scarcely receive mention amongst the sober social and economic arguments for independence from Westminster.[95] The introduction sets the tone for the remainder of the document, stating that:

> With independence we can make Scotland the fairer and more successful country we all
> know it should be […] This is what being independent can deliver for Scotland and it is why
> the Scottish Government believes the people of Scotland, individually and collectively, will
> be better off with independence

The pragmatism of the case for transferring power from London to Edinburgh, in order that Scotland can pursue 'fairer' social and economic policies than those of the UK, is clear. It is this

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[93] James, Dr Robertson (Email interview) (2016)

[94] It is worth noting that the pro-independence stance of the Scottish Green Party, the other main yes-supporting party, is even more emphatically rooted in political pragmatism as opposed to national identity than that of the SNP. See, for example, the statement of co-convenor, Patrick Harvie, following the party's decision to formally endorse the cross-party Yes Scotland campaign in 2012: 'Greens are not nationalists, and we're not motivated by devotion to one flag or the other… But we can see huge opportunities to make our country fairer and greener.' http://stv.tv/news/scotland/193615-greens-brand-snps-plans-to-remain-in-nato-offensive-at-conference/

[95] Scottish Government (2013) *Scotland's Future: Your Guide To An Independent Scotland*

pragmatic goal, as opposed to any free-standing claim to nationhood, which constitutes the focus of the whole document.

Scots has never featured highly as part of the SNP's case for independence in the modern period, however, and this would not be particularly noteworthy on its own. As has been demonstrated, though, despite its lack of centrality to the political case for independence, the party has frequently and emphatically stressed the importance of Scots to national identity as well as its special status as an indigenous language, and afforded it concrete and meaningful support on this basis, both pre- and post-2014. In the SNP's 2013 White Paper, however, any such singling-out of Scots is conspicuously and entirely absent.

Scots is not referred to in any detail until page 312, where it is subsumed into a wider and vapid discussion of 'the inspiration and significance we draw from our culture and heritage, including Gaelic and Scots', which 'shap[e] our communities and the places in which we live'. Not only is Scots here firmly confined within the anodyne realms of culture and heritage, but it is described not as a national or indigenous language, but as merely spoken by otherwise unnamed 'communities', an approach affirmed in a later reference to 'supporting communities that speak Scots'. This stands in stark contrast to the SNP's unabashed references to Scots elsewhere, both before and after the referendum, as both a national and an indigenous language. It thus appears that the SNP is here buying into the language of a disparate and diverse, rather than a singular and national identity, in order to be 'inclusive' of all 'communities' and to avoid any charges of being 'exclusive' or as favouring indigenous culture. Notably, the word 'native' does not appear once in the White Paper. The word 'indigenous', meanwhile, appears only three times, and, even then, solely in relation to companies and industries, and not to culture.[96] The SNP's unambiguous distancing from any hint of ethnic nationalism is reflected, too, in the diligent references to the 'people of Scotland' which permeate the document, underlining that residency, and not ethnicity, defines Scottishness.

Turning to the 'Questions About Independence' addendum, the answer to the question 'What will our national languages be?' is given as follows:

> We propose no change on independence to the status of Scotland's languages such as
>
> English, Gaelic, Scots and British Sign Language. The Constitutional Convention appointed

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[96] 'indigenous companies and ownership' (p. 98); 'Scotland's indigenous and global companies' (p. 486); 'Scotland's indigenous defence industries' (p. 484)

after independence could consider the position of Scotland's languages within the permanent written constitution

On a kind analysis, an equal legal status of Scots with Gaelic and English is perhaps hinted at in the reference to a permanent written constitution. There is no clear suggestion, however, let alone any clear commitment, that the status of Scots will experience improvement at the hands of an SNP Government post-independence. This represents a staggering reversal in the SNP's stance compared to the 1990s and into the early 2000s, where, although Scots was not central to the case for independence, it was nonetheless pledged, and, indeed, celebrated, that it would flourish as a result of it. This striking shift in both tone and commitment towards the indigenous national language of Scots lays bare the extent of the SNP's anxiety to portray its nationalist cause as unequivocally and indisputably civic, with no favourable treatment of anything culturally or ethnically 'Scottish'.

The 2014 referendum, of course, failed, however, the disappointment of defeat for some and relief of victory for others was to be short-lived, with the SNP going on to win a seismic victory of 56 out of 59 seats in the 2015 Westminster General Election, and recently re-elected as the party of government in Holyrood in May 2016. The SNP has been led in this resurgence by Nicola Sturgeon, who, having gained prominence as Salmond's deputy and a leading light of the Yes campaign, stepped into the leadership gap following Salmond's post-referendum resignation.

Significantly, if Salmond had focused on fashioning the SNP as a thoroughly civic party during the 1990s, this aim has achieved its apotheosis in the figure of Nicola Sturgeon. The following statement from a defining address in 2012 is reflective of her overwhelmingly pragmatic and politically-driven approach to Scottish independence:

> My conviction that Scotland should be independent stems from the principles, not of identity or nationality, but of democracy and social justice [97]

Indeed, this statement is so pragmatic as to be somewhat perplexing - Scotland's right to social justice and democracy over, say, a region of England, would appear to have be founded on a recognition of Scottish nationhood. The resulting incongruity of such extreme emphasis on the civic credentials of Scottish nationalism has not got unremarked from within the pro-independence movement. Robin McAlpine, director of prominent left-wing pro-independence think-tank, Common Weal, for example, has questioned where 'emphasising our civic nature' ends and 'cringe' begins?', going on to note that 'if we want people to identify Scotland as a viable, separate nation

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[97] http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13083418.Sturgeon__Unionists_could_help_shape_independence/; Torrance, D., *Nicola Sturgeon A Political Life* (Birlinn, 2015)

state, why do we sometimes give the distinct impression that we'd really rather people viewed it as a convenient administrative entity?'[98] These questions may remain unanswered, but what is clear beyond doubt is that the SNP is at absolute pains to emphasise its thoroughly civic nature.

In recent weeks, the emphatic Scottish vote to stay in the EU, alongside an English vote to leave, has further fuelled the developing narrative of Scotland as outward-looking, civic and internationalist, in contrast to an inward-looking, nativist England and UK state. In this political context, and with Nicola Sturgeon charting the course of the party, and potentially Scotland's course to independence, the Scots language and its speakers appear set to remain confined to the periphery of an ultra-civic Scottish nationalism.

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[98] McAlpine, R., *Determination: How Scotland Can Become Independent by 2021* (Common Weal, 2016); Hames, S (ed.) *Unstated: Writers on Independence* (Edinburgh, 2012). See also George Gunn's 2015 article for Bella Caledonia: http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2015/12/29/culture-and-the-common-good/.

4. Conclusion: Naebody's Bairn?

If the demise in status of Scotland's once institutional language of Scots went hand in hand with the loss of political power from Scotland, the return of political power to Scotland in 1999 has not correlated with its resurgence in the official realm. Rather, whilst devolution immediately raised its profile through providing both a catalyst and a forum for debate and lobbying, successive Labour-Liberal Democrat Executives repudiated the very existence of a modern Scots language - a position notably shared by the post-devolution Conservative and Unionist Party - and scant progress was made between 1999 - 2007. Given that devolution was set up by the Unionist Labour party to kill nationalism stone dead, it is perhaps unsurprising that the nationalist associations of Scots emerge as having played a central role in this conscious neglect.

The election of nationalist SNP Governments in 2007 and 2011, by contrast, undoubtedly led to much greater progress for Scots, unequivocally recognised as a living, national language, and afforded explicit and practical support through such measures as the commissioning of research on Scots, the establishment of a MWG on the Scots language, and the inclusion of a question on Scots in the 2011 census.

It is thus clear that political conceptions of, and approaches to, Scots differ markedly along constitutional lines, suggesting that whether or not a party accepts and promote Scots as a language is determined within a wider framework of national identity and constitutional leanings.

For Unionist parties, it would seem that Scots in the past is considered a language in the same way that Scotland in the past was a nation. In the present day, however, Scots has been absorbed into the wider standard English of the Union, a highly differentiated variety, but not a language in its own right. For the SNP, meanwhile, just as Scotland has remained a nation throughout the centuries of Union, so too has Scots remained a national language. This is not to say that the trappings of national identity, and the significance of Scots as a symbol of Scottish distinctiveness, could not be exploited by the Conservative and Unionist Party when it was politically expedient to do so. The party's lack of conviction in support of political nationhood, however, meant that Scots could be easily discarded, and indeed subsequently denigrated, when such cultural nationalism became too dangerous.

Whilst more sympathetic to Scots on the whole, however, neither is Scots so central to the SNP's sense of Scottishness or case for independence that it cannot be discarded when it threatens to undermine its carefully constructed ultra-civic brand of nationalism. If the success of Scottish

nationalism as a respectable and powerful force has been rooted to a huge extent in its civic credentials, then it perhaps unsurprising that the increased momentum for independence, particularly around the 2014 referendum, has correlated with a reduction in emphasis on Scots, anticipating and avoiding any accusations of nationalism of a more ethnic brand. Ironically, then, as the Unionist parties increased their hostility to Scots post-2011, viewed as a nationalist ploy, the SNP was in actual fact distancing itself from Scots, viewed as an impediment to the progress of its civic brand of nationalism.

Far from setting Scots on an inexorable trajectory of progress, the rise of political nationalism which led to - and was not killed by - devolution, has in some ways left Scots in a worse political situation than pre-devolution. For the Unionist parties, Scots is now too nationalist to touch; for the civic nationalist SNP, however, Scots is the 'wrong' type of nationalist. In the context of the increasingly fraught constitutional politics of modern Scotland, in particular the relationship between cultural identity and nationalism, Scots emerges as unwanted by either side of the independence debate: naebody's bairn.

The marked marginalisation of Scots in the 2013 White Paper, and the lack of any concrete commitments to it in the SNP's 2016 manifesto, suggests that the SNP has gone as far as it is willing to go with Scots: certainly, a Scots Language Bill does not appear to be on the horizon. Reflecting in 2016, then, without a significant shift in either public or political will, it does not appear that further meaningful progress for Scots will be forthcoming from Holyrood, whether devolved or independent.

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[99] A picture of Nicola Sturgeon's face appears under the main heading 'Re-elect'.

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Appendix: Overview of References to Gaelic and Scots in Manifestos, 1992-2016

S - Scottish manifesto

Conservative and Unionist Party		
Year	**Reference to Scots**	**Reference to Gaelic**
1992	No	No
1992 (S)	No	Yes
1997	No	No
1997 (S)	No	No
1999	No	Yes
2001	No	No
2001 (S)	No	No
2003	No	Yes
2005	No	No
2005 (S)	No	No
2007	No	No
2010	No	No
2010 (S)	No	No
2011	No	Yes
2015	No	No
2015 (S)	No	No
2016	No	Yes

Labour Party		
Year	**Reference to Scots**	**Reference to Gaelic**
1992	No	No
1992 (S)	No	No
1997	No	No
1997 (S)	No	Yes
1999	No	Yes
2001	No	No

Labour Party		
2001 (S)	No	No
2003	No	Yes
2005	No	No
2005 (S)	No	Yes
2007	Yes	Yes
2010	No	No
2010 (S)	No	No
2011	No	Yes
2015	No	No
2015 (S)	No	No
2016	Yes *[assumably]*	Yes

Scottish National Party		
Year	**Reference to Scots**	**Reference to Gaelic**
1992	No	No
1997	Yes	Yes
1999	Yes	Yes
2001	Yes	Yes
2003	Yes	Yes
2005	No	No
2007	Yes	Yes
2010	No	No
2011	Yes	Yes
2015	No	Yes
2016	Yes	Yes