FIGHTING FOR THE POLITICAL PERIPHERY

The Image of the Scottish National Party in *The Times* and *The Scotsman*
During British General Elections in 1970, 1997 and 2010

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Introduction

The biggest political party in Scotland is the Scottish National Party\(^1\) which forms a majority in the Scottish Parliament.\(^2\) Its main agenda is to gain full independence for Scotland, which is in contrast with the Act of Union\(^3\) agreed with England in 1707.\(^4\) The long and complex history of the relationship between Scotland and England creates an interesting dissonance within the United Kingdom. As a nationalist party, the SNP has had and continues to have a negative connotation for some Britons.

Scottish nationalism is a highly topical issue now that an independence referendum was held in Scotland on 18 September 2014. The SNP achieved one of its long-term goals by organising the referendum, but the main goal of independence was not reached. The referendum resulted in 55 per cent voting against independence while 45 per cent supported independence. A high turnout of 84.59 per cent was celebrated by both sides of the debate.\(^5\)

Questions about media bias were raised during the referendum campaign. The BBC was accused of bias against the independence campaign, and a protest was held outside the BBC Scotland offices on 14\(^{th}\) September 2014.\(^6\) Earlier in the year, JOHN ROBERTSON from the University of West Scotland published a research which argued that the BBC and STV had been biased against the Yes campaign for independence in their coverage between September 2012 and 2013.\(^7\) The *Sunday Herald* was the only newspaper in the United Kingdom and in Scotland which openly supported the independence campaign.\(^8\)

In my research I will look at how the image of the Scottish National Party has been presented in two British newspapers: *The Times* from London and *The Scotsman* from Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland. I will analyse and compare the coverage of the newspapers before and after three British General Elections in 1970, 1997 and 2010. The topic is highly relevant and timeless at the same time since it relates to the current political

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\(^1\) Also referred to as the SNP.
\(^3\) Treaty that effected the union of England and Scotland under the name of Great Britain. “Act of Union”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.
\(^4\) Constitution of the Scottish National Party, electronic doc.
\(^5\) BBC News, 19.9.2014. “Scotland Decides”.
\(^8\) George Monbiot, WHow the media shafted the people of Scotland” (opinion). *The Guardian* 16.9.2014; *Sunday Herald* editorial 4.5.2014.
affairs and to the relationship between mass media and politics. Newspapers are interesting as a source because they can be seen to play a part in constructing the national consciousness and work as a socially unifying force in the national community (Anderson 1991).  

Research Situation
The Scottish National Party has been studied from various perspectives but especially in relation to their conception of Scottish national identity and the idea of ‘civic nationalism’. MURRAY STEWART LEITH has discussed these elements in his research article *Scottish National Party Representations of Scottishness and Scotland* (2008) where he describes the SNP’s own self-image defined in the party’s manifestos from 1970s until 2007. Leith expands his manifesto analysis to the four main Scottish parties in *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland*, co-authored with DANIEL P. J. SOULE, and compares the ideas of nationalism held by the political elite and the public.

BEN JACKSON offers a more critical analysis of the concept of ‘civic nationalism’ in his article *The Political Thought of Scottish Nationalism* (2014) where he also outlines his arguments against Scottish independence. Similarly ANDREW MYCOCK has raised questions about the SNP’s ‘civic nationalism’ in his article *SNP, Identity and Citizenship: Re-imaging State and Nation* (2012), arguing that the idea of an inclusive form of civic nationalism is in conflict with the very nature of nationalism itself.

PETER LYNCH has published *The History of the Scottish National Party* in 2002. A more recent book about the SNP was published by JAMES MITCHELL, LYNN BENNIE and ROB JOHNS in 2011. Their book, *Scottish National Party: Transition to Power*, focuses on the party’s success after the 2007 Scottish Election. They also manage to challenge some of the most popular myths about the public image of the SNP. The two most evident differences between the public image and their research interviews and data were about the gender and age composition of the party.

*The Times* as a historical resource has been studied quite extensively, but not from this particular perspective. JESPER STRÖMBÄCK and ADAM SHEHATA have done comparative research on the biases in election result coverage in newspapers in Sweden.

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and United Kingdom, with *The Times* being one of the primary sources. This research was published in 2007 and focuses on two 21st century elections. OLIVER DADDOW has studied media representations of Europe and the EU in British newspapers in a research published in 2012. Daddow contends that Rupert Murdoch has been responsible for the Eurosceptic stance of his newspapers, *The Sun*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, which in turn has contributed to the overall attitudes of the British public.

*The Scotsman* has not been studied as extensively as *The Times*. FIONA DOUGLAS’ book *Scottish Newspapers, Language and Identity* (2009) offers the most up-to-date and extensive study of how Scottish newspapers, *The Scotsman* included, have played a part in the construction of a modern Scottish identity through language. *The Times* is also included in the research data. MICHAEL HIGGINS has published various research articles discussing coverage from *The Scotsman* and other Scottish newspapers during the 1999 Scottish Parliament Election.

A research by JANE B. SINGER was published in 2009 about the election coverage of the newspaper’s website ‘scotsman.com’ before the 2007 Scottish Parliament Election. John Robertson has studied the news coverage of *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* during the Iraq War in 2003.


The lack of historical study of the image of the Scottish National Party in the media makes this particular research subject all the more relevant. This research will provide historical qualitative analysis on the image of the SNP with the help of linguistic tools and methods.

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Research Problem
The aim of the research is to examine how *The Times* and *The Scotsman* have presented the Scottish National Party, its candidates and ideology, during British General Elections in 1970, 1997 and 2010. What is the prevailing image of the party? Why have certain aspects been lifted to the fore? How and why have these two newspapers differed in their approach to the SNP? The research will examine how and why has the party’s image changed in time, if it has, and relate that to the political and social context in Britain at that time. The analysis will focus on articles published one week before and one week after the British General Elections in 1970, 1997 and 2010. The elections were held on 18 June 1970, 1 May 1997 and 6 May 2010. The two week period is justified with the nature of electoral news naturally increasing and concentrating closer to the election. By including news coverage from one week after the election as well, it is possible to include more in-depth analysis of the campaign, for example, in the data.

The SNP rose to the British political arena permanently in the 1970s, and the 1970 General Election marked the first general election victory for the party. The 1970 General Election will offer a historical context and reference point to the two later elections in my research. The first referendum on Scottish devolution\textsuperscript{11} was held in 1979 but the required majority was only reached in the 1997 referendum, and the Scottish Parliament was opened in 1999. In a national British context, the 1997 general elections marked a watershed for Labour party and the Conservative dominance since 1979.\textsuperscript{12} The 2010 General Election represents a new phase in the history of the SNP since it has been the party of government in Scotland since the 2007 Scottish Parliament Election. The 2010 election saw the return of the Conservative party as the party of government after a period of Labour dominance.\textsuperscript{13}

The newspaper articles will be divided into four different categories: news, feature, opinion and editorial. The news and feature pieces are seen as *informative* whereas opinion pieces and editorials can be seen as *evaluative* articles. Furthermore, news are representing factual information on current events, and feature articles take the information further by providing more background information on the current events or

\textsuperscript{11} Devolution: The moving of power or responsibility from a main organization to a lower level, or from a central government to a regional government.
\textsuperscript{12} Dunleavy 2000, 127.
\textsuperscript{13}“British General Elections of 2010”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.
people for example. Opinion pieces offer clear evaluations of the situations and can advocate different opinions from the editorial line of the newspaper. Editorials are seen as representing the institutional voice of the newspaper by offering advice and evaluations of current events to its readers.\(^4\) Columns and analysis have been labelled as opinion pieces since they offer evaluative information on the subject. It should be noted, however, that even the seemingly informative news articles can and do sometimes bear private opinions with them as well.

The main chapters are divided chronologically and each chapter has three thematic subcategories. The themes rose from the data and represent the main three fields of discourse visible in the newspapers. These are (1) party candidates and success, (2) party and ideology and (3) Scottish issues.

**Methods and Sources**

My two primary sources are *The Times*, one of the leading newspapers in the United Kingdom, and *The Scotsman* which is a Scottish national newspaper and the biggest broadsheet\(^5\) in Scotland, alongside *The Herald* from Glasgow. The papers were chosen because they represent the two capitals, London and Edinburgh, and they have a similar upper and middle class readership. These two papers create and interesting contrast with each other since *The Times* is widely regarded as an Anglo-centric newspaper whereas *The Scotsman* is clearly aimed at Scottish readers.\(^6\) This comparative starting point offers a wider perspective for the study itself. Both, *The Times* and *The Scotsman*, are independent newspapers without clear ideological commitments. In recent years, however, *The Times* has been openly Conservative in its editorial stance. I have not included the Sunday issues of either newspapers in my research since both, *Scotland on Sunday* and *The Sunday Times* are independent from their sister papers. A separate Scottish edition of *The Times* is also published, but it is hard to pin down the exact date to when it was started. The first Scottish Editor of *The Times* was appointed in December 1998, and additional pages covering Scottish sports and news have been added to the

\(^4\) Higgins 2006, 31–33.  
\(^5\) Broadsheet represent quality newspapers in Britain, whereas tabloids are the popular newspapers with bigger circulation. *United Kingdom – Newspapers*. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.  
\(^6\) Douglas 2009, 59.
main UK edition ever since. The Scottish edition is not, however, inherently different from the main UK edition and remains very close to the original even today.\textsuperscript{17}

Through the 1960s the editors of \textit{The Times} emphasised the paper’s role as an independent and nonaligned newspaper.\textsuperscript{18} Due to continuing labour disputes, the paper suffered from stoppages in the 1970s. Finally this led to the closing of \textit{The Times} in November 1978, which lasted for almost a year.\textsuperscript{19} In 1981, the change of ownership showed what a strong status the paper had in British society: The suitability of Robert Murdoch to manage the paper was brought to discussion in the Parliament, and Murdoch had to legally guarantee to maintain the quality and independence of the paper.\textsuperscript{20} The underlying theme in the history of \textit{The Times} has been its focus on providing correct and objective information on current events, independently from any institution or ideology. In the 1980s it was still generally regarded as a Conservative paper.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Times} did not endorse any particular party in the 1997 General Election but encouraged its readers to vote for Eurosceptic candidates.\textsuperscript{22} In 2010, \textit{The Times} openly supported the Conservatives and David Cameron.\textsuperscript{23} \textit{The Times} newspapers have been accessed through \textit{The Times Digital Archive} available online. There are three days missing from the 1970 research data because the paper was not published on those days due to a national newspaper strike.

\textit{The Scotsman} was founded as a politically independent newspaper in 1817.\textsuperscript{24} The paper has branded itself as markedly Scottish as can be observed from its name and the use of the Scottish national flower, thistle, on its front cover.\textsuperscript{25} Its journalism is based on liberal and social democratic values.\textsuperscript{26} In 1997, \textit{The Scotsman} openly supported Labour before the election.\textsuperscript{27} \textit{The Scotsman} did not declare its support to any of the four main parties – Conservatives, Labour, Scottish National Party and Liberals – competing in Scotland in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Personal correspondence with The Times Archivist Nicholas Mays. 24.3.2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Torvinen 1982, 89.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Woods–Bishop 1985, 364–368.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Torvinen 1982, 90–91.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Torvinen 1982, 88.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Times} 29.4.1997.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Scammell and Beckett 2010, 294.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} “The Scotsman”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Douglas 2009, 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Robertson 2004, 461.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{The Scotsman} 30.4.1997.
\end{itemize}
2010. The Scotsman newspapers were not available online, so the articles have been copied from microfilms from the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.

The editors of The Times in the research period were William Rees-Mogg (1967–1981), Peter Stothard (1992–2002) and James Harding (2007–2012). Rees-Mogg had been a Conservative candidate in a by-election in 1956 and at the General Election in 1959 but did not win the seat and decided to focus on his career in journalism instead. He resigned from his position as Editor of The Times soon after Rupert Murdoch had bought the newspaper in 1981. In 1992, Rees-Mogg returned to The Times as a columnist. Peter Stothard was appointed editor of The Times Literary Supplement in 2003. James Harding was made to resign by Rupert Murdoch, for unspecified reasons. He was then appointed the corporation’s director of news and current affairs at the BBC. Rupert Murdoch’s role in Harding’s resignation seemed to undermine the independent national directors of Times Newspapers Holdings, whose purpose was to safeguard the editorial freedom of the newspaper from the proprietor, Rupert Murdoch.

The editors of The Scotsman were Alastair Dunnett (1956–1972), Martin Clarke (1997–1998) and John McLellan (2009–2012). Alastair Dunnett put The Scotsman firmly behind the home rule movement and supported federalism, which was campaigned by the Liberals. Martin Clarke, more famous as a tabloid editor, was hired to make The Scotsman more competitive and to sharpen the paper’s news edge. He changed the paper’s long support for devolution into a more reserved tone. John McLellan was fired from The Scotsman because of a cost-cutting management restructuring. Shortly after this, he became the Communications Director of the Scottish Conservatives. He has openly stated

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28 Scammell and Beckett 2010, 295.
31 “British Academy President’s medal”. British Academy for the humanities and social sciences.
his support for Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom, and said in an interview after joining the Conservative campaign:

_A strong, modern Scottish Conservative voice with the values of hard work, just reward, personal responsibility and choice at its core has never been so badly needed as the SNP and Labour slug it out on the left._\(^{38}\)

While newspapers play an important part in informing, educating and entertaining the public, they are also shaping and forming group identities.\(^{39}\) Most people in Britain learn about politics from the media, and, therefore, the mass media has a huge role and influence in shaping public attitudes towards political parties and the political system.\(^{40}\)

The papers seem to reflect the party loyalties of their readers, and the media has a tendency to reinforce rather than change political views.\(^{41}\) The influence of the readership and the newspaper can, therefore, be described as an interactional relationship where both influence the other. Because of this need to create a “shared community consciousness” with the readership, the Scottish national newspapers, for example, have a strong Scottish identity and are designed to appeal to a Scottish audience.\(^{42}\)

According to Fiona Douglas:

_Rosie et al. (2004:437) found that English migrants to Scotland noticed a difference of agenda and content in Scottish newspapers from those they were used to in England. Migrants commented on the Scottish newspapers’ localism and overt flagging of news as ‘Scottish’, and also on the Anglo-centrism of the UK press._\(^{43}\)

The interests of free enterprise have been pursued most strongly by the Conservatives in Britain, and therefore it is not surprising that the privately owned newspapers have mostly been pro-Conservative in their political stance.\(^{44}\) Newspapers are commercial enterprises whose main objective is to make a profit, and this inevitably influences the values they promote.\(^{45}\) The mass media play an important role in shaping the public opinion and in setting the agenda for public debate. Also, the newspapers seem to have a strong influence

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\(^{39}\)Williams 2010, 13.

\(^{40}\)Coxall et al. 2003, 156.

\(^{41}\)Kavanagh et al. 2006, 505, 508.

\(^{42}\)Douglas 2009, 51.

\(^{43}\)Ibid.

\(^{44}\)Coxall et al. 2003, 158.

\(^{45}\)Ibid.
on what is broadcasted on television and the radio.\textsuperscript{46} According to surveys the readership of quality newspapers, such as \textit{The Scotsman} and \textit{The Times}, is predominantly upper and middle class.\textsuperscript{47} The ‘tabloidisation’ of the British press has been evident since the 1980s. This has meant an increase in more trivial and entertaining news content at the expense of more deep and analytical news coverage.\textsuperscript{48}

This comparative historical research will utilise historical image research in the formation of a more coherent theory of the subject at hand. OLAVI K. FÄLT has characterised historical image research in the introduction of \textit{Looking at the Other – Historical Study of Images in Theory and Practise} (2002). Image, as a concept, is defined as a simplification of reality and as “longer-lasting and more durable than opinion or attitude”.\textsuperscript{49} Images can be seen as “intellectual heritage” that we have absorbed from our culture and various influences around us. One of the main hypothesis of image formation is that people tend to accept messages that seem to reinforce their previously held stereotypes. Despite their durability, images can change as a result of a dramatic event or the consequence of repeated action over a longer period of time. The most lasting, latent images, are resistant to change and do not seem to alter despite how many new features we add to, or reduce, from them.\textsuperscript{50} DAVID RATZ has also worked with definitions of historical image research and images: “What is being described when we talk about image is ‘an underlying orientation,’ that has developed ‘toward a subject,’ that helps organise experience and knowledge however gained.”\textsuperscript{51}

The study of historical images is focused on the creator, or possessor, of the image.\textsuperscript{52} Images are always subjective, therefore different editors and journalists would have had different individual images of the SNP, but this research will try to reveal the combined image which has been intentionally and unintentionally constructed by the newspapers as a whole. Obviously, there are clear limitations to what a historian can try to reveal about the subjective mind\textsuperscript{53}, but with the help of discourse analysis and historical contextualisation it is possible to offer tentative evaluations of the image created by the

\textsuperscript{46} Coxall et al. 2003, 159–160. \\
\textsuperscript{47} Coxall et al. 2003, 165. \\
\textsuperscript{48} Williams 2010, 10, 198. \\
\textsuperscript{49} Fält 2002, 8. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Fält 2002, 8. \\
\textsuperscript{51} Ratz 2007, 203. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Fält 2002, 9. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Ratz 2007, 219.
newspaper. Good knowledge of the context and reliance on other sources will help the researcher in maintaining an objective stance on the subject.

The analysis of the text is based on discourse analysis. Discourse is always shaped in a particular context, and it is influenced by the time, place and the creator of that discourse. Therefore, the same word can have different meanings in different contexts, and by exploring the context, through historical research for example, we can understand and interpret the discourse. Because language is always a social construct, it is possible to learn more about the surrounding society through language and vice versa.54

The media discourse analysis presented by NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH is a form of critical discourse analysis which discusses language from two perspectives: language is socially shaped and socially shaping at the same time.55

Calling the approach ‘critical’ is a recognition that our social practice in general and our use of language in particular are bound up with causes and effects which we may not be at all aware of under normal conditions (Bourdieu 1977). Specifically, connections between the use of language and the exercise of power are often not clear to people, yet appear on closer examination to be vitally important to the workings of power.56

It is these hidden power structures of language that the critical discourse analysis often focuses on and tries to question the perceived ‘truth’.57

All the articles that mention the Scottish National Party, Scottish Nationalists or any SNP party candidates have been used in the analysis. Therefore, all of the newspapers have been manually scanned through. Business and sports news have been left out from the screening process because of their specific focus. Initially, the Business section was also included but did not prove fruitful in this instance.

The articles will be analysed through discourse analysis. Historical image research will offer a more comprehensive tool for the final synthesis of the analysis.

55 Fairclough 1995, 55.
56 Fairclough 1995, 54.
57 Fairclough 1995, 47.
Historical Background

The Scottish National Party was formed in 1934 but struggled until the 1960s with lack of funding and clear political direction. Their biggest breakthrough came in the October 1974 general elections when they gained eleven seats in the House of Commons. The SNP remained a relatively marginal player in British politics without strong electoral success up until their major electoral victories in the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2007 and 2011.

Despite their fluctuating electoral performance the party established a substantial stronghold in British politics since the early 1970s when they started campaigning for Scottish North Sea oil. They succeeded in bringing the Scottish issues into political discussion and forced the British government to turn their heads up north. The SNP support had fallen in the polls already since 1978, when Labour passed the Scotland Act in the Parliament, which meant that a referendum would be held over Scotland’s devolution. Now that Labour was campaigning for Scottish issues as well, many working class supporters turned back to Labour. A majority of the voting electorate voted for devolution in March 1979, but it was not enough for the bill to go through. A 40 per cent majority of the total electorate would have been required and only 32.9 per cent of all the electorate voted for devolution. This was a big loss for the SNP and it fractured their election campaign in the May 1979 general election where Scottish issues seemed almost non-existent.

During the 1970s the party struggled with an identity crisis when it was divided on the question of how socialist the party should be. Since 1979 the SNP was even more clearly defined as a centre-left political party. This anti-conservative sentiment became more prominent in Scotland in the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher was leading Britain to a more conservative direction.

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62 Devolution = the moving of power or responsibility from a main organization to a lower level, or from a central government to a regional government. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
63 Lynch 2002, 149–150.
64 Lynch 2002, 152.
The traditional two-party system in Britain, led by the Conservatives and the Labour party, was shaken by the rising support of the third parties in the 1970s. The leading opponents were the Liberals in England and the Scottish National Party in Scotland. The Scottish National Party posed a real threat by gaining more supporters in the 1974 elections. This success was not long-lived, however, and the party lost most of their seats in the following election. In the 1983 election, it was the Alliance with the Liberals and Social Democrats who were anticipated to gain a respectable vote that could severely damage the two major parties. Despite the growing support for the third parties, neither the SNP nor the Alliance managed to make a real breakthrough into the main arena in British politics, mainly because of the majoritarian electoral system.

Alex Salmond was elected leader of the SNP in 1990. The Labour party had their famous landslide victory in the May 1997 general elections, and The SNP secured six places in parliament. Alex Salmond decided to side with Labour and the Liberal Democrats in supporting a yes-yes vote in the September referendum on Scottish devolution in 1997, although some members of the SNP considered devolution to be a poor substitute for full independence. Majority of the Scottish electorate supported devolution, and the first Scottish parliamentary elections were held in May 1999. The SNP secured 35 seats in the Scottish Parliament and came second after Labour in the first Scottish elections.

Salmond decided to leave his role as an MSP and stood down as party leader in 2000. Four years later he was re-elected and returned to his position. The SNP won the 2007 Scottish elections and formed a minority government in the Scottish Parliament. As the

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67 Kavanagh 1985, 122.
68 Kavanagh 1985, 94–95.
69 Kavanagh et al. 2006, 396.
70 Kavanagh et al. 2006, 356–357.
72 Torrance 2010, 160–162.
73 Two questions were asked in the referendum on 11th September 1997. First, should there be a Scottish Parliament and second, should the Scottish Parliament have tax-varying powers. Torrance 2010: 166.
77 Member of Scottish Parliament.
78 Lynch 2002, 236.
79 Torrance 2010, 229.
SNP party leader, Alex Salmond was elected First Minister of Scotland. The Conservatives formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats after the May 2010 general elections, and the SNP gained 6 seats in Westminster. Alex Salmond resigned from his position as leader of the SNP and First Minister of Scotland after the independence referendum on 19 September 2014. Nicola Sturgeon was elected party leader and First Minister of Scotland in November 2014.

The SNP defines Scottishness in territorial rather than ethnical terms and, therefore, their nationalism is not culturally orientated. The Scottish National Party has come a long way from a marginal party advocating independence to the leading party in Scotland. Mitchel et al. note that:

For most of its history, the party was on the fringe of Scottish politics and even when it became a significant force in Scottish politics it remained on the fringe of British politics.

This fringe element was still evident during the 2010 General Election, but after the independence referendum in 2014 and a huge rise in public support for the party, the party has taken a tighter grip on British politics as well. The election polls are predicting significant gains for the party in the General Election on 7 May 2015.

The Westminster Parliament has 650 members of parliament. Each MP represents a constituency, and today there are 533 constituencies in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland. Each candidate has to pay a deposit in order to register for the election. The deposit is returned if a candidate polls a certain percentage of the total votes. Currently the deposit is £500, and candidates have to poll at least 5 per cent of the votes to get their deposit back. A majoritarian, first-past-the-post electoral system is used in the general elections in the United Kingdom. The candidate who

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80 Torrance 2010, 243–245.
83 The SNP has defined its brand of nationalism as ‘civic nationalism’. This term, however, has been disputed by some political scientists. See Leith, Mycock, Jackson and Mitchell et al.
84 Mitchell et al. 2012, 1.
86 “Deposit”. The UK Parliament website.
87 “Parliamentary constituencies”. The UK Parliament website.
receives the most votes in the constituency wins the seat, so some parties might win a larger share of the vote but still receive fewer seats than others. The system exaggerates the lead of the winning party and, therefore, minimises the chance of a coalition government. In the past, this has tended to favour the two main parties, the Conservatives and Labour, in the UK.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{89} Coxall et al. 2003, 90–92.
1. 1970 General Election – A Minority Party Fighting for Scotland

In this chapter, I will discuss the image of the Scottish National Party during the June 1970 General Election. The data consists of two weeks of newspaper coverage from *The Scotsman* and *The Times*. Due to a national newspaper strike, *The Times* was not published on the first three days of my research period, but the issue on 15 June stated that it would cover the main news from the days it was not published.\(^{90}\) The chapter is divided into three thematic units which rose from the data and which together will form a synthesis of the overall image of the Scottish National Party. These themes are (1.) candidates and electoral success, (2.) party and ideology and (3.) Scottish issues.

During the two week time period, the SNP was mentioned in 13 different articles in *The Times*. Seven of these articles had more than one mention of the party. One article mentioned the party in a heading (“Nationalists gain seat” 20 June). In *The Scotsman*, the party was mentioned in 44 articles, not including letters to the editor and poll results. 40 out of these articles had more than a short reference to the party. There were 18 headlines that mentioned either the party or an SNP candidate. The SNP was mentioned in three editorials in *The Scotsman*.

The Conservatives won the election, and Edward Heath became prime minister in 1970.\(^{91}\) Labour beat the Conservatives in Scotland, winning 44 out of 71 Scottish seats. The Liberal Party came third with three seats in Scotland. The SNP won their first seat in a general election, but failed to hold on to their by-election win from 1967. The party still had a claim for the title of the third most popular party in Scotland, since its share of the vote was 11.4 per cent and the Liberals won their three seats with only 5.5 per cent of the vote in Scotland.\(^{92}\)

The Liberal Party merged with the Social Democratic Party in 1988 to form the Liberal Democratic Party.\(^{93}\) Therefore, the Liberal Democrats will be discussed in the following chapters dealing with elections in 1997 and 2010, instead of the Liberal Party.

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\(^{90}\) “For the Record” (news), *The Times* 15.6.1970.
\(^{91}\) “Edward Heath”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.
\(^{93}\) “Liberal Party”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, electronic doc.
1.1 Respectable Third Party Totals – Party Candidates and Electoral Success

As might have been expected, the coverage was more extensive in The Scotsman which covered all the Scottish constituencies and offered a more in-depth analysis of the SNP’s chances in the different seats they were competing for Parliament. The Times offered brief news articles before the election and two analysis of the result after the election.

During the 1970 elections, not much was said about the Scottish National Party candidates in The Times. In one article, journalist Leonard Beaton had misspelled the party name and was talking about “Scottish Nationalist Party”, while pointing out that the party could pose a potential threat for Labour in Dundee. “It is not a situation inviting total neglect”, he said.94 The spelling error seems careless and implies a lack of interest in the party in particular. Even as an honest mistake it added a certain emphasis on the nationalist cause. Beaton’s statement of the SNP’s challenge to Labour included the prediction that the party was not a real threat and was expected to be neglected from talks about the party competition: the phrase ‘not inviting total neglect’ implies that the SNP could easily be taken for granted. It created an image of a party that had up until that point been in the margins, not successful enough to be taken seriously.

Patrick Brogan, the travelling journalist from The Times, described the SNP’s problems on his election excursion to Scotland:

> It is very striking in Scotland how much superior Liberal candidates are to their rivals. One of the reasons for the decline of Scottish nationalism since their triumph at Hamilton and their brave show at the Pollock by-election is that the party cannot get men of sufficient calibre to run for Parliament.95

This view seems a little simplistic, and Brogan does not go into more detail as to how the Liberal candidates are far more superior in his opinion. It could also be noted that ‘men of sufficient calibre’ was probably not the most apt remark to describe the SNP candidates since a female candidate, Winifred Ewing, had been the public face of the party since her by-election win in Hamilton in 1967.96 Even if this was an unconscious word choice from the journalist, it still reinforced the image of a masculine world of politics, and did not

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94 Leonard Beaton, “‘Into Europe’ Issue in the Open” (opinion), The Times 15.6.1970.
95 Patrick Brogan, “Rural Drive” (opinion), The Times 17.6.1970.
give credit to the public image the SNP was trying to create through prominent female candidates such as Winifred Ewing. The overall description was very negative in this case, and represents the SNP candidates as poor competitors to the Liberals.

*The Scotsman* offered more space for the SNP candidates with detailed surveys of all of the Scottish constituencies in an article series under the title “Guide to General Election 1970” where the competing candidates were all presented per constituency. In most of the constituencies, the SNP candidates did not seem to oppose an immediate threat to the main parties although they were, admittedly, still an “unknown quantity” in many of the constituencies. On the polling day on 18 June, Chris Baur wrote about the Scottish voting estimates in general: “The second unknown quantity is the disruptive force of the Scottish National Party.”

There were still seemingly hopeless seats as well that were being contested: A cartoon titled “Marginal Waters” depicted the three main competitors in Ayr and the caption read “And artist Coia has put SNP floating vote-catcher Mr Leslie Anderson in a deck-chair: only a freak tide will get him home and dry.” The writer of the article that the cartoon illustrated seemed quite convinced of Anderson’s slim chances of succeeding: “Mr Anderson, who helped steer the Nationalists to success in Glasgow, talks of an eve-of-poll parade led by a pipe band when it is obvious that tartan gimmicks are of no interest to the people of Ayr, harassed by the cost of living.” The disparaging comment of ‘tartan gimmicks’ stands out as a slur on the nationalist sentiment that the SNP was building on. By combining the article with Coia’s cartoon of the three candidates, with Anderson sitting relaxed in his deck-chair apart from the other two, it was quite apparent that Anderson was not paraded as a likely winner.

In *The Times*, the only candidate with real potential seemed to be Winifred Ewing, who had gained the first seat in the Westminster parliament for the SNP in the 1967 Hamilton by-elections. Ewing held the greatest potential before the election according to *The Scotsman* as well. “Hamilton is at once their greatest opportunity and their greatest test”,

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100 *Freak (tide) = very unlikely*. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
102 “Caution could be Labour’s enemy at Ayr” (opinion), *The Times* 13.6.1970.
The report from Hamilton read. The writer concluded that if the SNP would fail to hold the seat, its competitors would think the party was finished. The chances for winning were not the best in Hamilton either.104

The SNP’s electoral performance in 1970 was as mixed as the estimates in *The Scotsman* seemed to be. The SNP competed a record number of 65 seats out of 71 Scottish seats for Parliament, winning only one seat. They did, however, come second in nine constituencies and gained more support than the Liberals in Scotland. With the first-past-the-post105 system, the Liberals still gained more seats in Scotland.106

*The Scotsman* was quick to report of the lost seat from Hamilton on 19 June when all of the results had not been published, and the party had not won any seats yet. The front page read: “A deep disappointment for the Scottish National Party must have been Mrs Winifred Ewing’s failure by some nine thousand votes to retain Hamilton.”107 This disappointing defeat was mentioned in the editorial as well.108

The election outcome for the SNP was reported as “the biggest surprise of the general election in Scotland” in *The Times* on 20 June, since the party gained a new seat from the Western Isles, which had been a Labour-stronghold for 35 years. The winning candidate Donald Stewart was featured on the front page with a small picture and the article following on the second page.109 In the same news article Richard Sharpe pointed out Ewing’s lost seat in Hamilton and the higher expectations the party presumably had on her electoral success:

> Mr. Wolfe [the SNP chairman] had earlier spent most of the day putting a brave face on the nationalist’s performance at the polls. Labour captured the Hamilton seat of Mrs Winifred Ewing – victor of the by-election of 1967 – with a majority of 8,582.110

Later Sharpe repeated the exact same numbers which served as a clear emphasis of the party’s big loss. It was not surprising that Winifred Ewing should get attention on her lost seat.

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105 First-past-the-post = using a voting system in which a person is elected because they get more votes than anyone else in the area that they want to represent. Cambridge Online Dictionary. For more information on the electoral system, see Kavanagh et al. 2006, 399.
110 Ibidem.
seat, which she gained from Labour, against all odds, in 1967. By becoming the first Scottish National Party MP\textsuperscript{111} she gave the party a new public image, one that was “young, female, charismatic and highly educated”\textsuperscript{112}. Her victory helped the party to get more national media coverage as well.\textsuperscript{113} Being the new face of the party she was a popular media target for good and for bad.

Despite of the main focus of the article being on Ewing’s loss, the description of the winning candidate Donald Stewart conveyed a very neutral, almost positive tone. The party chairman William Wolfe’s trust in Stewart was high and came across from the comment featured in the article:

\begin{quote}
We are absolutely elated. We could have no better member for the S.N.P. in Parliament than Donnie Stewart.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
We have lost one seat and we have won one. We are delighted that we have someone in Parliament who knows many of the real problems of Scotland and we can build on this.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

Also the title “Nationalists gain seat” drew a picture of a successful campaign for a small party, although the article did focus on the lost seat and the financial losses to the party.\textsuperscript{115} The 1970 general election was, in fact, a big financial loss to the party, so the emphasis seems justified.\textsuperscript{116} The party lost 43 deposits out of 65.\textsuperscript{117} Although they gained one new seat, this did not quite amount to the success the party had been expecting.

The front page of \textit{The Scotsman} from 20 June was dominated by the article “Last-gasp win for the SNP in the Isles” by Chris Baur. Baur wrote how Stewart’s victory “avenged” Winifred Ewing’s Hamilton defeat and claimed that the victory would galvanise the Home Rule movement. He even confronted possible critics by saying that:

\begin{quote}
“Although some will tend to try to laugh the result away as one which was only achievable in the mad Celtic fringe of the Islands, and will doubtless point to the fact that it was not so devastating a blow as Hamilton, which took
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}\footnotesize\textsuperscript{111} MP = Member of Parliament.\textsuperscript{112} Lynch 2002, 116.\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.\textsuperscript{114} Richard Sharpe, “Nationalists gain seat” (news), \textit{The Times} 20.6.1970.\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.\textsuperscript{116} Lynch 2002, 124.\textsuperscript{117} Mitchell et al. 2012, 21.\end{flushright}
the SNP right into Labour’s heart-lands, it remains an astonishing success."\textsuperscript{118}

This offered a clear distinction between the perspective offered in The Times and The Scotsman as the victory was clearly celebrated in the latter and strictly reported in The Times. The reason for this difference could be explained with the different editorial stances of the papers: The Times supported the Conservatives and the existing governmental arrangements, whereas The Scotsman demanded a more novel approach to the centralised government in Britain.

Journalist Chris Baur’s personal opinion on Scottish devolution became very clear from his article “Home Rulers written off too soon” from the same issue from 20 June. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
The exuberant drive for change which had bubbled with the Liberals and the Nationalists through most of the 1960s, seemed certain to be consigned to the oblivion of the 1970s, with the dream of a Scottish Parliament becoming an increasingly distant and fading feature on the Scottish political landscape.\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

He concluded that his biggest regret was that the Liberals and the SNP could not form a united Home Rule movement together but had to compete separately.\textsuperscript{120} This declaration of support for Scottish devolution was supported by his positive choice of words like the ‘exuberant drive for change’ and ‘the dream of a Scottish Parliament’. Baur seemed to reflect empathy for the Nationalist and Liberal causes and did not attempt to stay neutral on the matter.

A brief news article described the high spirited mood of the SNP after their victory in the Western Isles:

\begin{quote}
Mr William Wolfe, chairman of the Scottish National Party, said on Saturday that against all odds, against exclusion from television, and against the strongest campaign ever mounted by Labour and Tories alike, the party had arrived in the ‘first division’ of Scottish Politics.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{119} Chris Baur, “Home Rulers written off too soon” (opinion), The Scotsman 20.6.1970.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} “SNP in ‘first-division’” (news), The Scotsman 22.6.1970.
This was considerably more positive and optimistic in tone than the account of the financial losses to the party reported by The Times.

In the 1970 election speculations in The Times, the SNP was presented only as a minor threat that could affect the votes indirectly. After the election, it was said that the nationalists had polled “respectable ‘third party’ totals” in Scotland and Wales. Although there were some talks about the effect of the SNP, among other “minor parties”, influencing the swing in the votes from the Conservatives and Labour, they did not yet seem to pose a real threat for the two main parties in 1970.

The reporting in The Times was fairly neutral on the candidates, but it was extremely marginalised and there was no special interest in the candidates. The editorial stance of the newspaper seemed to explain why the party’s minor success was not celebrated in the newspaper.

The Scotsman’s image was a little more encouraging. In many of the Scottish constituencies, the SNP candidates were described as the ‘unknown force’ before the election, and the victory in the Western Isles was celebrated in the paper. After the election, the SNP was the third political party in Scotland, ahead of the Liberals in support.

1.2 Putting the Heart Back into Scottish Politics – Party and Ideology

The guiding ideology of the Scottish National Party in the 1970s was naturally nationalism, since its goal was to gain independence for Scotland, but the party had a commitment to social democracy as well. The 1970 party manifesto focused heavily on the party’s main policy of independent Scotland but had no real references to Scottishness. William Wolfe, Party Chairman since 1969, made a significant impact in turning the party into a social democratic party. He wanted to emphasise the SNP’s role

123 Professor Richard Rose, “Analysis of the swing to the Conservatives” (opinion), The Times 20.6.1970.
125 Ideology = a set of beliefs or principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organization is based. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
126 Leith 2008, 85–86.
as “an open, democratic alternative to the Conservatives and Labour”. 127 Wolfe even referred to the party as “SNP – the Democratic Party” in the mid-1960s. The main motive for Scottish independence, according to Wolfe, was to deliver economic growth and social justice for the Scottish people. In a report to the National Executive in 1966, he explained why a strong focus on nationalism was not needed: “I foresee that the Party will become less obviously nationalist as it increasingly realises that 90% of the people of Scotland are already nationalist and do not require to be made particularly conscious of that fact.” 128 The centre-left gradualist perspective of William Wolfe had a bigger impact on the SNP policy only after 1974 according to Peter Lynch. 129

The political ideology of the SNP was not particularly touched upon in The Times. The apparent nationalistic inclination of the party was evident from the use of ‘Scottish Nationalists’ in reference to the party and its candidates. 130 One article noted that: “Nationalist spirit is hard to find in most of the 65 constituencies being contested by the Scottish National Party.” 131 This ‘nationalist spirit’ was not elaborated on in any way, but it gave a strong focus on the aim of independence in the SNP campaign.

In two articles, the party was labelled together with the Welsh national party, Plaid Cymru. 132 It can seem harmless and only logical to discuss the parties together: “The nationalists failed to gain or hold any seats 133 in Scotland or Wales.” 134 But, even though they are both nationalist parties, their nationalism differed in terms of cultural and territorial dimension. The Welsh nationalism had been described more culturally orientated and the public support for devolution or independence was not as big in Wales as in Scotland. 135 The Scottish National Party has for a long time defined its nationalism in territorial and more inclusive terms. This can be seen even in the 1970s manifestos, although a distinct hostility towards the English was still present then. 136

127 Lynch 2002, 103.
128 Ibid.
129 Lynch 2002, 104.
130 The Times 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 June 1970.
131 Richard Sharpe, “Polls or no, party workers are in buoyant mood” (news). The Times 17.6.1970.
133 Notice that the article has been written before the final results from the Western Isles had been published.
135 Kavanagh 1985, 105.
136 Leith 2008, 86.
One could argue, following critical discourse analysis\textsuperscript{137}, that although Rose does not try to describe the specific brand of nationalism of either of the parties here, on an implicit level he does combine the parties in an ideological sense. When the writer has labelled the nationalists together under the same label, the reader has no inclination of the type of nationalism that is being discussed. Here, the writer is relying on an existing set of presumptions people associate with the word ‘nationalist’ and not questioning whether these presumptions apply to these two nationalist parties. The problem comes from the two commonly accepted meanings of the word ‘nationalist’. According to the Cambridge Online Dictionary, the noun refers to either, 1. a person who wants their country to be politically independent, or, 2. a person who strongly believes their country is better than others. It is true that often these two aspects are intermingled together in nationalist thought. It should be noted, however, that nationalism can take various forms in modern politics, and the ‘civic nationalism’ of the SNP is one brand of nationalism which tries to distance itself from nationalism based on ethnicity for example.

William Wolfe drew a picture of the social democratic ideology of the SNP in his article “Putting the heart back into Scottish politics” in \textit{The Scotsman} before the election. He stated clearly that independence was the first priority of the party that would enable a social reform to follow:

\begin{quote}
Independence is not an end; it is a means. It is a means to make Scotland more democratic, more egalitarian, more unselfish, more co-operative. In general philosophic terms, our first responsibilities are as members of the human race, to strive for a better quality of life for all people, wherever they live, whatever they may believe.\textsuperscript{138}
\end{quote}

This social democratic thinking within the SNP was not visible in \textit{The Times}. It is impossible to say whether \textit{The Times} intentionally left out this aspect of the SNP’s ideology and policy, but it is easy to say that \textit{The Scotsman} was able to present a more comprehensive picture of the SNP as a political party with other political substance in addition to the goal of independence.

Wolfe branded ‘real Scottishness’ as the sole possession of the SNP in his article, and contrasted other people’s English-dominated ideologies against the SNP’s Scottish

\textsuperscript{137} See Fairclough 1995, 46.
\textsuperscript{138} William Wolfe, ”Putting the heart back into Scottish politics” (opinion), \textit{The Scotsman} 13.6.1970.
ideology. He said: “The members of the SNP can be total Scots in a way that members of other parties find impossible.”¹³⁹ This rather harsh comment was a clear indicator of how the SNP wanted to distance their political aims from those of the Liberals who supported federalism. SNP wanted to be the main Home Rule party and get all the votes from the supporters of self-government.¹⁴⁰

In the following issue, Russell Johnston, Vice-Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Party, outlined the Liberal policy for federalism. In describing the main difference in the Liberal and Scottish National Party ideology he said: “If as a Liberal I were to take on basic point which divides me from the Nationalist, it is that I seek the creation of a form of government which gives fair opportunity of expression to individuals whatever their origin.”¹⁴¹ The comment seemed to imply that the Scottish nationalism was ethnically exclusive. This is in contrast with William Wolfe’s article from the previous day where he welcomed all non-scots who had come to Scotland to join the SNP if they shared their hope of Scottish independence.¹⁴² The party manifestos of the SNP from the seventies did, however, still include some anti-English sentiments which could be what Johnston was criticising.¹⁴³ This was a clear example of the traditional party political rhetoric of defying oneself in contrast to the opposing parties. While this comment by the Vice-Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Party was not directly linked to the image The Scotsman was implicitly constructing, it had a stronger legitimacy after The Scotsman published its endorsement for the Liberal Party in its editorial two days after.

The Conservative and Labour responses also rejected the SNP’s policies explicitly.¹⁴⁴ Gordon Campbell, Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, said “That Scotland should be a separate state we utterly reject.”¹⁴⁵ William Ross, Secretary of State for Scotland, emphasised how the Labour party had “fought separatism tooth-and-nail”.¹⁴⁶ This idea of ‘separatism’ was seen as less favourable to the SNP. In British Politics Today (1980) GEOFFREY LEE described how the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru were reluctant to use the term ‘separation’ but wanted to emphasise ‘self-government’ and

¹³⁹ Ibid.
¹⁴² William Wolfe, “Putting the heart back into Scottish politics” (opinion), The Scotsman 13.6.1970.
¹⁴³ Leith 2008, 86.
‘independence’ instead.\footnote{Lee 1980, 18.} This is a good example of the power of words and the images they convey. Of course, the SNP was aware that by principle independence meant separation, but the term carried unwanted negative connotations with it and was therefore avoided.

The SNP wanted to seem to be the only party really concerned of Scotland’s interest: this message seemed to reach many of their supporters writing for the “Points of view” section of The Scotsman, which was comprised of Letters to the Editor. Although these private opinions might not represent the official opinion of the newspaper, it is interesting to look at the readers’ responses to the political discussion at that time. The lack of letters from SNP supporters in The Times is understandable since most of its readers would have lived outside the Scottish constituencies where the SNP was competing.

One concerned Englishman wrote in The Scotsman: “But for Scotsmen who take politics and Scottish nationhood seriously, can there be any choice other than the SNP?”\footnote{D. Watkin Powell, “Some advice from England” (opinion), The Scotsman 15.6.1970.} Another reader was worried that the Scots are losing their national identity.\footnote{John Hulbert, “Stand up and be counted” (opinion), The Scotsman 16.6.1970} Reader James Leslie had started to question the whole existence of the Scottish nation: “One thing is sure the people of Scotland are slowly disappearing – all over the world.”\footnote{James Leslie, “Which nation?” (opinion), The Scotsman 17.6.1970.} For these supporters, Scottish independence seemed to be at the heart of Scottish identity, and the SNP seemed to be the only protector of this identity.

Anthony Kerr was advocating a strong Scottish approach to politics, but he also pointed out the unsuitability of traditional left-right thinking in Scottish politics. He wrote in a letter to the editor:

\emph{The National Party’s future depends on being itself rather than a poor imitation of one of the other parties. It must present a distinctive and relevant Scottish answer to Scottish problems, rather than try to fit into a British Left-Right pattern. Those who think in Left-Right terms also think British and vote Labour or Tory by choice rather than through lack of something better. The SNP’s appeal is to those who look for something better, and think Scottish.}\footnote{Anthony J. C. Kerr, “Points of view” (opinion), The Scotsman 23.6.1970.}
This rejection of the left-right allegiances gained support from another reader, Archie Lamont, as well. These observations emphasised the special nature of the Scottish National Party in guarding Scottish interest. This was a very favourable image from the party perspective because it had already positioned itself in opposition the two main parties especially, which were described as anti-Scottish in the SNP rhetoric. These private opinion pieces might have lacked the institutional authority often ascribed to editorials for example, but they were published in the paper nevertheless. For other SNP supporters at least, who were looking for reinforcement to their pre-existing favourable images of the party, these positive evaluations would have served as a verification of that image.

According to CHARTERIS-BLACK, metaphors are central in efforts to legitimise political speeches, and they have a strong persuasive force because they rely on our “unconscious emotional association of words.” William Wolfe relied on popular metaphors in his talk of the bright future for Scotland: “The people of Scotland can ensure victory for Scotland by voting SNP tomorrow and, in doing so, can hold their heads high and march with their children into a future Scotland of great promise.” A similar rhetoric echoed in a letter from the Welsh Nationalists to the SNP: “You face the same problems as we do, and you care for the same things for your country’s future and the kind of nation your children will grow up in.” William Wolfe’s words of “victory for Scotland” relied on the famous metaphor of politics as conflict or a battle. Popular ‘journey metaphors’ were visible in both articles mentioned above: ‘a march to the bright future’ and ‘the future nation for your children’. The choice of children as an example was a clear attempt to appeal to the reader’s emotions, and the emotional message was reinforced with the use of metaphors. These served as rhetorical tools to strengthen the nationalist argument for independence.

The Times did not offer any explicit descriptions of the SNP and its ideology. It was simply reporting news and relied on pre-existing ideas of Scottish nationalism. The Scotsman offered a more comprehensive picture of the party because it gave substantially

152 Archie Lamont, “Policy for Scotland” (opinion), The Scotsman 25.6.1970.
153 Leith and Soule 2012, 144.
154 Higgins 2006, 33.
156 “SNP leader says main aims being achieved” (news), The Scotsman 18.6.1970.
more news coverage to the party than *The Times*. The party was able to present itself, in their own words, firstly as an independence party but also as a Social Democratic party. The letters to the editor in *The Scotsman* emphasised a favourable, heroic image of the party as a guardian of Scottish identity.

1.3 Sweeping Europe and the SNP under the carpet – Presenting Scotland and Scottish Issues

Patrick Brogan’s reportage of nine cities outside London, called “Rural Drive”, covered Scotland in three reports.\(^{159}\) The cities included Barnstaple, Bristol, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Birmingham, Nottingham, Glasgow, Inverness and Thurso.\(^{160}\) The title of Brogan’s column reflects the London-centric view of *The Times* which is perhaps even more prevailing today.\(^{161}\) Describing big cities like Cardiff, Birmingham and Glasgow as ‘rural’\(^{162}\) can seem almost a little condescending although it must be noted that it was a matter of artistic and editorial choice as well. The style of the writer also implied that he was talking about a rather distant and strange place: “The B.B.C. would be burbling on about Enoch Powell and quoting Harold and Ted being catty about each other, just as though the election was still going on full blast somewhere to the south, while in the north the sun shone and the people slept.”\(^{163}\)

He went on describing the surroundings in Glasgow, Inverness and Thurso quite positively but with a touch of nostalgia – as if, this was some country from a different time and space:

> I learned at school that Britain was a small island off the north coast of Europe. Not so: it is vast, and the Scottish end, hills, lochs, heather and all, seems bigger than all the rest. I had never seen the Highlands in the sun: it is disquieting, making them look like southern France or Greece, with great lakes everywhere and green hills. Quite rightly, the Lowlanders are pouring

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159 Patrick Brogan, “Rural Drive” (opinion), *The Times* 16, 17 and 18 June 1970.
160 Patrick Brogan, “Rural Drive” (opinion), *The Times* 30 May and 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 16,17 and 18 June 1970.
162 Rural = In, of, or like the countryside. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
north every weekend to see this strange new country before the spell breaks and the rains come down again.  

Without reading too much into the meaning of the title “Rural Drive”, it still stands as an example of the type of marginalisation other regions have experienced in the London-centric press; the regions were covered in nine short columns which were a mixture of election analysis and a travel log. In 1970, formal political power was still highly centralised in Britain, but a broader social centralisation was evident as well: England dominated Great Britain and London dominated England.  

According to Dennis Kavanagh (1985): “London is the centre, the rest of the country a series of peripheries.” The national newspapers were naturally concentrated in London because it was already the centre for so many different sectors. This still prevailing issue of ‘London bias’ in media coverage was already evident in The Times in the seventies and arguably influenced the views of its readership. These two aspects, the social centralisation and centralisation of national news, seemed to be feeding on each other and both contributing to the marginalisation of other ‘peripheral’ regions compared to London.

The Scotsman took a positive stance towards the SNP in two of its editorials before the election. The paper did not offer a clear support for the party, but they seemed to take their policies seriously:

A statement issued by the SNP goes to the heart of the matter by showing that the present kind of government, in spite of its façade of administrative devolution, can treat Scotland only as a peripheral region, in whose interests policies may be modified, but for which independent initiatives are not possible. As the SNP put it, the present machinery is “limited to attempts at ameliorating the ill-effects on Scotland of UK policies.”

The editorial went on to state that: “-- their restrained restatement of the radical unsuitability of the present system for dealing with Scottish problems is the most effective case for self-government, which does not mean separatism.” By this, it seemed that The

164 Patrick Brogan, “Rural Drive” (opinion), The Times 17.6.1970.
165 Kavanagh 1985, 15.
166 Ibid.
168 Editorials on 11 and 17 June 1970.
Scotsman wanted to distance itself from the idea of an independent Scotland while supporting some type of constitutional reform in the United Kingdom. This was still a clear statement on the shared attitudes of The Scotsman and the SNP who both saw Britain’s Scottish policies quite seriously lacking.

In the same issue from 11 June, Chris Baur wrote in his article “SNP hammer out their challenge on ‘misgovernment’” how convincingly SNP’s chairman, William Wolfe, had laid out their claims for a constitutional reform. The article lied heavily on citations, giving a lot of space for the arguments of the SNP. Baur did give credit to Wolfe in his own words as well: “Both in content and language this must rank as one of the more significant statements by the party in justification of their demand for greater local control over the administration of Scottish affairs.” At the end of the article, Baur concluded that: “It was quite apparent that the present machinery was totally unsuited to Scotland’s needs.” This comment seemed to validate the SNP’s argumentation against the minimal role the Scottish Office had in economic decision making in matters concerning Scotland. The article still maintained the form of a news report rather than an opinion piece or a personal column. The article was linked to the editorial with a mention of the page number of the editorial at the end of the article. The article did not comment against the claims made by the SNP and created a positive image of the party and their policy for Scotland.

On page 5 of the same issue, another voice was given to an SNP candidate who also denounced the dominance of London:

Mr James Shepherd, SNP candidate for Dundee West, yesterday claimed that the other parties were not even convinced that Scotland was worthy of consideration, far less as a world government. Their proposals for devolution made clear that the real power was to be retained in London.

William Wolfe mirrored the same idea that the other parties, Labour and Conservatives in particular, have no real interest in Scotland, and they have nothing to offer: “Punch and Judy are part of the same act, and Scotland gets sandwiched and beaten between them.

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171 Ibid.
172 “Round the hustings: voting advice for the swithering Liberals” (column), The Scotsman 11.6.1970.
173 Punch and Judy show = a traditional children’s entertainment in which a man, Mr Punch, argues with his wife, Judy. It was especially popular in the past as an entertainment in British towns by the sea in summer. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
There is nothing to choose between them.”\textsuperscript{174} This use of a joke to illustrate a serious point works well because it creates a visual memory in the mind of most readers.

A day before the election on 17 June, *The Scotsman* advocated its support for the Liberals while also encouraging votes for the SNP as well:

\begin{quote}
*We do not agree with many aspects of SNP policy, but we wish them well. Two or three seats would give their morale a considerable boost and, more important, provide a base for more mature political growth.*\textsuperscript{175}
\end{quote}

The editorial made the case for federalism in United Kingdom as had been the Liberal policy during the election.\textsuperscript{176} *The Times*, on the other hand, did not even consider any other than the two main parties in its editorial on 17 June and offered its cautious support to the Conservatives by advising against a landslide\textsuperscript{177} for the Labour party.\textsuperscript{178}

The prominence of the two-party system in Britain was evident in the approach that *The Times* had adopted. *The Scotsman*, however, was strongly against the dominance of the two main parties, Labour and Conservative, and demanded the British system of government to be “shaken up” and assured its readers that: “There is no such thing as a wasted vote.”\textsuperscript{179}

\begin{quote}
The British system of government needs to be shaken up and we suggest the goal to aim for is a federal Britain which would demand new thinking, even throw up new parties to shake the constituent nations of their lethargy. We recommend the Scottish electorate to vote for those interested in Scotland as a nation.\textsuperscript{180}
\end{quote}

The SNP was very vocal in *The Scotsman* about not receiving enough national broadcasting time. Gordon Wilson, the National Secretary of the SNP, complained how the party was only allowed five minutes on Scottish radio and television when all the other parties with over 50 candidates running for parliament were offered complete coverage in the United Kingdom. The SNP with their 65 candidates should have been

\textsuperscript{174} “Round the hustings” (column), *The Scotsman* 12.6.1970.
\textsuperscript{175} “The goal to aim for” (editorial), *The Scotsman* 17.6.1970.
\textsuperscript{176} Lee 1980, 17.
\textsuperscript{177} Landslide (victory) = The winning of an election with an extremely large number of votes. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
\textsuperscript{178} “Against the Tide” (editorial), *The Times* 17.6.1970.
\textsuperscript{179} “The goal to aim for” (editorial), *The Scotsman* 17.6.1970.
\textsuperscript{180} “The goal to aim for” (editorial), *The Scotsman* 17.6.1970.
entitled to the same. Journalist David Gow praised William Wolfe’s television performance the next day:

\[
\text{The precious, bitterly resented five minutes telly-time given to the SNP were used to great effect last night by Willie Wolfe. The SNP chairman inevitably talked of the London-based conspiracy to squeeze them out and the lack of time he had to spell out distinctive SNP policies, but it was not with self-pity that he spoke but rather with a stirring appeal to nationalist sentiment.}
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Although Gow did not comment directly on whether the SNP’s claims were right, he gave room for William Wolfe’s argumentation and ended in a positive note.

Another SNP candidate, David Rollo, told The Scotsman how “disgusted” the voters were by the way the bigger parties had excluded the SNP from television. On the election day, William Wolfe discussed the party’s success “in spite of the fact the people of Scotland were denied their democratic right to question the SNP on television.”

The Times did not comment on the issue of the lack of air time given to the SNP, but a comment by the Welsh Nationalist leader, Gwynfor Ewans, presented the issue from the Welsh perspective: “Mr. Evans, like others in his party, feels that the ‘carve-up’ of television and radio time by the big parties left the nationalists rummaging for the crumbs and at considerable disadvantage.”

The writers in neither The Times nor The Scotsman commented on these claimed disadvantages brought by the biased television coverage. The Scotsman, however, did publish the SNP’s view on the matter on several occasions, unlike The Times. This could be due to the fact that The Times was a pro-establishment paper which supported the Conservatives, so it did not feel the need to voice out the concerns of a minority party which, on a national scale, was concerned about the problems of only a ‘peripheral region’.

An interesting issue that was not strongly present in the discussion before the election was Britain’s possible entry into the European Economic Community which had been a

184 SNP leader says main aims being achieved” (news), The Scotsman 18.6.1970.
The Scottish National Party seemed to be the only party concerned with the issue before the election, and William Wolfe claimed that the other parties had agreed to “sweep the Common Market issue under the carpet” and not discuss it on television either. The Scotsman reported quite frequently about the SNP’s concerns over the Common Market, and admitted in an editorial on 20 June that the issue was not discussed by the main parties because it was not a vote-catching issue in this election. The editorial from The Times had concluded the same: “Like the Labour party they [Conservatives] did not want to discuss Europe because they though Europe would lose them votes.”

The Scotsman and its London-based journalism did not discuss Scotland in in any great detail. Scottish issues definitely represented a minority view in The Times, and the SNP’s main concerns during the election – failing UK policy for Scotland, the Common Market and the broadcasting bias – were not visible in The Times at all. The Scotsman naturally provided a completely different outlet for Scottish issues. In matters concerning the SNP, it gave the party considerable space as well. The Scotsman shared the SNP’s concerns to defend the Scottish interest in the United Kingdom. This gave certain credibility to the party and the presented image was definitely a positive one of a capable party guarding the Scottish interest. The Scotsman also shared the ideal of a separate Scottish Parliament, even though it supported it in the form of federalism.

Summary

By combining the elements of these three chapters together, a synthesis of the SNP’s party image can be created. The image constructed by The Times was that of a minority party with very limited influence in British politics. The image was marginalised, distant and vague. In The Scotsman, the SNP was presented as a more positive, reforming force in British politics. The party gained a considerable amount of coverage and seemed quite central in Scottish politics. Its minority status was not emphasised in the paper. The Scotsman had a clearly different attitude towards the major parties in Britain, since it

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186 Kavanagh 1980, 30.
187 "SNP leader says main aims being achieved" (news), The Scotsman 18.6.1970.
188 "Mr Heath’s tasks" (editorial), The Scotsman 20.6.1970.
189 "Dead to the world" (editorial), The Times 18.6.1970.
supported the Liberals and indirectly the SNP as well, instead of Labour or the Conservatives. The image of the SNP was that of a champion of Scotland, fighting for the nation’s voice to be heard.

The reason for these differences in the newspapers’ attitudes towards the SNP can be explained with their different editorial lines. The editor, William Rees-Mogg, was sympathetic to the Conservatives and wanted to preserve the establishment and the Union. From the newspapers’ perspective, the SNP was a minor party and only a marginal player in British politics, and the image they created sought to maintain this status. *The Scotsman*, on the other hand, was clearly sympathetic to the SNP because it wanted to see a change in the British government. Its editor, Alastair Dunnett, endorsed the Home Rule movement in its pursuit for a Scottish Parliament. By associating positive attributes to the party image, *The Scotsman* enforced its positive message of progressive politics at the same time. The SNP’s claims for furtherance of Scottish interests were foregrounded in *The Scotsman* because it supported their wish for a political change in the UK.

Both newspapers supported the Scotland versus London discourse in their own way. The minimal amount of reports from Scotland in *The Times* presented Scotland as rural and remote. Combined with the absence of Scottish issues in the newspaper, *The Times* seemed to effectively marginalise the whole region and created a contrast between England and peripheral Scotland. The SNP’s opposition to London and Westminster led policies were clearly expressed by the party in *The Scotsman*. This way, the party enforced the discourse of peripheral Scotland in the context of British politics. The SNP wanted to be seen as the guardian of Scotland against the dominating London, and this strong division supported Scotland’s position as somehow separate from the political centre of London and England.
2. 1997 General Election – A Potential Left-Wing Threat

The second chapter will look at the coverage during the 1997 General Election. The Scottish National Party was mentioned 12 times in the articles in *The Times* during the two week period. Seven of these articles had more than a short mention of the party. Only once was the party mentioned in a headline and once in an editorial.

*The Scotsman* had 78 articles mentioning the SNP or its candidates, not including Letters to the Editor or poll results. 58 articles had more than a sentence about the party. The party or its candidates were mentioned in 11 headlines and four editorials.

After the election, Labour won a clear majority of the Scottish vote with 56 seats, and the Conservatives lost all of its seats in Scotland. Therefore, the contest of who would represent the official opposition in Scotland was contested between the SNP and the Liberal Democrats. The SNP won six seats in the election and 22 per cent of the votes cast in Scotland, whereas the Lib Dems secured ten seats but only 13 per cent of the votes.\(^{190}\)

2.1 Political Entertainment and Fickle Youth Support – Party Candidates and Electoral Success

Again in the 1997 data, the *The Times* made the apparent mistake of spelling the name of the SNP as Scottish Nationalist Party. The article “Nationalists win Edinburgh school poll” had a positive message about the SNP’s success among young people in Scotland: “The SNP, which has wooed the youth vote with a promise to enfranchise 16-year-olds, polled the most votes in all age groups.”\(^{191}\) This was the only headline awarded to the SNP over the two-week period in *The Times*. Too much emphasis cannot be laid on this type of mistake in the party name because it was not systematic during the two week period. It would, however, suggest a level of carelessness, if not indifference even.

\(^{190}\) Lynch 2002, 217.

The Scotsman also noted the same school poll in Edinburgh two days later, providing an opinion piece on the same news item. Journalist Jim Luckhurst wrote his analysis of the situation under the title “Young and radical, but for how long?”. Luckhurst reported that the SNP had “achieved good results on unlikely territory” by winning the mock election at Edinburgh’s Royal High.192 He did not elaborate on why it was considered as unlikely territory. The real question, however, was whether that was a good indication of a real growing support:

The SNP claimed that the schoolroom votes are evidence of real support for independence. A party spokesman said: “Young Scots see their future lying with independence. We are seeing the effects of generational shifts. People who voted SNP in the 1970s now have children who vote SNP too. We’re beginning to see SNP voting families.”193

This very positive view of the situation presented by the party itself was quickly contrasted by Luckhurst, and he asked whether the support would last as the young supporters matured into adult voters. He put his opinion quite crudely: “The evidence for school ballots is no more scientific than a ouja board or close scrutiny of crystals.”194 Some validation was, however, also offered about the SNP’s claims of growing support among younger voters. Luckhurst pointed out that according to research the SNP was attractive among radical younger voters, but the problem was that there was “no proof that young converts stay loyal”.195 While Luckhurst’s analysis of the situation remained rather neutral by bringing out both sides of the conversation, the image that The Scotsman managed to construct was evident from one of their editorials from the same issue.

The editorial talked about the SNP’s success in several Scottish school polls, which the SNP had interpreted as “evidence that a demographic time-bomb has been activated and will tick relentlessly towards independence”.196 If this tongue-in-cheek comment was not enough for the reader to realise the opinion of the newspaper on the matter, then at least the conclusion left no room for interpretation:

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193 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
This is wishful thinking in the extreme. Politicians are born optimists but these classroom ballots prove nothing. The young are natural radicals but adolescent passion rarely survives into adulthood.197

This clear rebuttal of the SNP’s claims for growing support for independence was negative publicity for the SNP which wanted to emphasise its youthful image. In their research from 2012, James Mitchell et al., came to the conclusion that this public image of the SNP as a young person’s party did not hold true anymore. The party had not been attracting younger members in huge numbers since the youthful generation which joined the party in the 1970s, although the youthful image had been existent in election surveys at least up until 2012.198 It is interesting how persistent the party’s youthful self-image had been among its supporters, even though it must have been challenged in public discussion, as The Scotsman’s example suggests. By stating that the SNP’s claims were “wishful thinking in the extreme” The Scotsman was downplaying the party’s attempts to reinforce its youthful image.

The next day, on 26 April, the SNP got another chance to promote its side of the story about the indications of the school polls. The article discussed the Scottish school polls which were a part of the BBC’s Newsround general election. The extremely positive headline “SNP landslide as pupils go to polls” featured a comment from the SNP leader, Alex Salmond:

“This scotches the myth peddled by other parties that the young are disillusioned with politics – perhaps they are just disillusioned with London lies.”199

The SNP’s message gained emphasis from an authoritative commentator as well:

Peter Snow, the Newsnight presenter and BBC election analyst, seemed to endorse the SNP’s hopes that the poll could signal Nationalist electoral timebomb. “I always find the results of the Newsround election a very illuminating glimpse into the future. We may well be getting a first impression of the likely patterns of voting in the 21st century.” he said.200

197 Ibid.
198 Mitchell et al. 2012, 140.
200 Ibid.
This showed Alex Salmond in a very positive light, advocating respect for younger voters and opposing the SNP against the other parties, which he presented as being out of tune with young people. He also had the opportunity to play the ‘London card’ which has been an important feature of the rhetoric employed by the SNP.201 The SNP has constructed its self-image in opposition to Westminster and the main ‘London parties’ which, according to the SNP, are advocating a narrow interest of London and people in the south of England. This has been evident in their party manifestos although a hostility towards the English has disappeared since the 1970s.202

Two candidates from the Scottish National Party were discussed in more detail in The Times. The article, “Decent folk don’t talk politics”, by Ben Macintyre, focused on the SNP candidate for Argyll and Bute, Neil MacCormick, as the journalist joined him while canvassing203 on “the tiny island of Coll”. The article started on a humorous note, with the journalist describing how a flock of sheep had to be removed from a field to make room for a landing strip for MacCormick’s plane. The farmer, Alan Brodie, had made a windsock from his old fishing waterproofs to guide the pilot.204 A rural, remote setting was created for the interview with a humorous, friendly tone, right from the start.

MacCormick, Regius Professor of Law at Edinburgh University, was described in the article as: “a more agricultural than academic figure clad in peat-brown checked suit and tweed cap, and strongly resembling a country auctioneer.”205 This was a charming description with an informal touch to it – it did not give a very serious impression of the candidate however. The journalist went on to describe canvassing on the island:

Coll has 117 voters. We are planning to be here for three hours, which makes a possible hit rate of roughly 40 voters an hour. But campaigning in the Western Highlands is not like that. First there is gossip to exchange, tea to drink, lambs to bottle-feed, bumpy roads to negotiate in wheezing banger, newspapers to deliver and plenty of gazing in awe at the scenery. Despite

201 In this research data the London rhetoric appeared in four articles in The Scotsman in 1970, three times in 1997 and two times in 2010. In 2010, the London rhetoric took the form of Westminster rhetoric and appeared in six articles in The Scotsman during the two week period. In addition to this, the same rhetoric was echoed in several Letters to the Editor during the research period. This rhetoric was not visible in The Times.
203 Canvass (v.) = to try to get political support or votes, especially by visiting all the houses in an area. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
205 Ibid.
Professor MacCormick’s formidable energy, a charming languor tends to creep into proceedings that could not be further removed from the furious campaigning in more stressful parts of the nation.\textsuperscript{206}

Macintyre gave a positive image of the candidate, but at the same time, the article maintained its humorous tone. The reader might wonder, whether this was serious political news at all? Although friendly in tone, the emphasis on the rural, slow and simple style of living bore some attitudes with them. Even the regional accent which was demonstrated in a quote from the candidate: “Och, d’ye see that great big hare?”, gave certain implications to the reader. Studies suggest that native English speakers associate certain stereotypes with regional accents. Contrasted with Received Pronunciation\textsuperscript{207}, people using regional accents are often thought as less intelligent and not as highly educated, but at the same time, they are perceived as being more reliable, good-natured and having a better sense of humour than people using RP.\textsuperscript{208}

Even the picture\textsuperscript{209} featured in the article illustrated this humorous attitude towards the whole concept of canvassing on the island of Coll. The picture depicted MacCormick on a bike, cycling along the shoreline with the caption: “Neil MacCormick cycles off in search of the voters of Coll. Our reporter found out that campaigning on the island is the opposite of frenetic.”\textsuperscript{210} It was a classic setting for a mission impossible accompanied by an idyllic scenery on the background and no other people in sight.

The journalist ended on a funny, yet lonely note by going back to the start and to the farmer’s waterproofs substituting a windsock: “Then the tiny plane is bouncing off again down the Brodies’ field, heading to nearby Tiree, as Mr Brodie’s waders flap stiffly in strange two legged salute.”\textsuperscript{211} The tone and style of the article indicate that this particular feature article was perhaps written with the purpose of entertaining rather than explaining.\textsuperscript{212} The space given to the SNP candidates in \textit{The Times} seemed more like trivial entertainment than serious political journalism, as the other example also suggests.

\textsuperscript{207} Receive Pronunciation (n.) = the standard way in which middle-class speakers of southern British English pronounce words. Cambridge Online Dicitonary.
\textsuperscript{208} Morris-Wilson 2004, 13.
\textsuperscript{209} Appendix 2.
\textsuperscript{210} Ben Macintyre, “Decent folk don’t talk politics” (feature), \textit{The Times} 26.4.1997.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{212} Higgins 2006, 32.
The only other feature article with an SNP candidate in *The Times* was from 30 April. The article by Alan Hamilton concentrated on “the loneliest voters in Britain” in the Western Isles in Scotland. The description of the SNP candidate sounded more like a dating advertisement than a serious political interview:

> Gillies, a fiftyish and freshly remarried blond with a successful past as a Gaelic singer, recording artist and television presenter, is from Oban, a six-hour ferry journey away, and now lives in Glasgow. She therefore might as well be from Outer Mongolia, but she compensates by campaigning largely in Gaelic.²¹³

The SNP candidate for Western Isles, Anne Lorne Gillies, was also featured in a picture in the article with the caption: “SNP’s Anne Lorne Gillies: willing to sing for votes”. The message was elaborated at the end of the article where the journalist illustrated how the audience at a campaigning event wanted to hear a song from Anne after a short political discussion.²¹⁴ Once again, not much was awarded to the political stance or policies of the candidate.

Both of these candidate interviews in *The Times* reinforced popular Scottish stereotype of a rustic, humorous country character. DAVID MCCCRONE has labelled this stereotype as the ‘Kailyard stereotype’ in reference to the Kailyard school in Scottish literary fiction from the 19th century.²¹⁵ Some of the most common elements connected to the stereotype are “domesticity, rusticity, humour, humility, modesty, decency, piety and poverty”.²¹⁶ Most of these elements were visible in the articles about Neil MacCormick and Anne Lorne Gillies.

Anne Lorne Gillies, managed to make it into the headlines the same day in *The Scotsman* as well. “SNP candidate in row over TV ban on Sundays” was the provoking headline. Gillies’ intentions were explained in her own words: “I was not proposing that TV should be banned on Sunday. I said there was a special day already in Finland where families and friends get together”.²¹⁷ The whole article seemed like trivial piece of information

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since Gillies’ ideas were not discussed in more detail or debated. She appeared as a peculiar outsider advocating an unusual policy.

Perhaps surprisingly, Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, was not overtly visible in the coverage of *The Times*. He was only mentioned once in an article after the election. This seemed surprising since in the 1990s the SNP had become more professional and a prominent media actors as well, and by 1997 Alex Salmond was already a popular media target.\textsuperscript{218}

The contest between the Liberal Democrats and the SNP for the title of the official opposition in Scotland was discussed in *The Times*. The journalist Magnus Linklater reported how the Liberals had “laughed off” Alex Salmond’s claims for the SNP standing as the official opposition to Labour in Scotland after the election. However, Linklater also pointed out the irony in the Liberals’ claims for the main opposition role since they had to argue their case based on the first-past-the-post system, which the party had for long been advocating against.\textsuperscript{219} Linklater’s opinion on who should be credited as the official opposition in Scotland remained neutral as he pointed out both sides of the argument.

The official opposition title was discussed in *The Scotsman* on five different occasions.\textsuperscript{220} Three of the news articles seemed to lean towards favouring the SNP’s claim for the title while one article remained neutral on the matter and one was clearly advocating the Liberal position, which was not surprising since the opinion piece was written by a prominent Liberal Democrat, Sir David Steel. Overall, the position of the SNP, on this particular matter, was more favourably presented in *The Scotsman* than the Liberal claims. Therefore, the SNP could have been seen as the official opposition in *The Scotsman*.

Alex Salmond received considerably more coverage in *The Scotsman* than in *The Times*. A group of undecided voters had been interviewed for an article where they also expressed their opinions on the political leaders. Alex Salmond was praised for his debating skills, and one voter said that he was “quite convincing”, while another voter

\textsuperscript{218} Lynch 2002, 218.
\textsuperscript{219} Magnus Linklater, “Few hearts brave enough to challenge devolution” (opinion). *The Times* 3.5.1997.
concluded that: “Alex Salmond is very good, a good debater and someone I can understand, but I think the SNP need more time to get everything into gear.” These clearly positive evaluations of Salmond’s skills conveyed an image of a talented politician.

Some comments in *The Scotsman* seemed to undermine Salmond’s authority and statements. “Alex Salmond ignored his party’s own static poll showing by predicting the Scottish National Party would achieve its best ever election result,” one article read. Another journalist commented on Salmond’s insistence on relying on Ireland as an example of the economic possibilities for Scotland, despite the fact that Ireland’s fast-growing economy had been achieved with the price of an unemployment rate which was nearly twice as high as Britain’s. The most negative evaluation of Alex Salmond’s character, however, came from Sir David Steel in his opinion piece:

> Salmond shrugs off each SNP disaster. He claimed we’d be “free by ’93” and got three MPs. Then we were to be in heaven by ’97 with 37 elected and a mandate for independence. He has got six seats now, five fewer than in 1974.

The SNP’s electoral success, or lack of it, cannot be disputed. It is interesting, however, how Steel attacked Salmond as a person for SNP’s campaign slogans, rather than the party itself. According to Lynch, the ‘Free by 93’ slogan had been the invention of the fundamentalist wing of the SNP before the 1992 General Election, while Alex Salmond was the leader of the gradualist wing, seeking a more focused campaign which focused less on independence. After the election, it was Salmond as the party leader who had to explain why the party had not delivered on the expectations of the delusional claim to achieve independence by 1993. It is typical to identify the party with the party leader, and this kind of personification of the party through the leader was definitely visible in the comments regarding Alex Salmond.

The SNP’s electoral result was not seen as a great triumph for the party in *The Scotsman*. The SNP would have wanted to challenge Labour to include a question on independence

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222 John Penman, Andrew Parker and Jason Allardyce, ”Major and Blair finish with impassioned pleas, but polls remain the same” (news). *The Scotsman* 1.5.1997.  
224 Sir David Steel, ”Wild Tory charge against the tide of history” (opinion). *The Scotsman* 7.5.1997.  
in their planned devolution referendum. With only six MPs against Labours 56 in Scotland, this seemed very unlikely, and the Scottish Political Editor, Peter MacMahon, put the facts crudely: “-- the Nationalists can huff and puff all they like: the political reality is they will get nowhere in this attempt.”

Journalist John Curtice was wondering about the future of the SNP, as the election result seemed “as far away from a breakthrough as ever.” Ian Bell summed up the result for the SNP in “Landslide that buried Nationalists’ arguments” by stating the evident victory of Labour in Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole:

After 18 years, Scotland indisputably has the government it wants. As a bonus, it is a Tory-free zone with home rule on the way. The West Lothian question has been blasted into irrelevance and the SNP remains, beyond doubt, a minority party.

It will be impossible now for the Nationalists to raise the issue of popular sovereignty. The people have given their answer, with little equivocation. All the signposts point to Edinburgh.

This was a clear dismissal of the SNP’s independence aspirations, since the public had manifested their support for Labour and devolution. The label of minority party positioned the SNP still in the political sidelines.

The SNP’s support in the mock school polls were noted in both newspapers, but The Times was simply reporting on the issue and did not comment on the indications of the polls. The Scotsman saw the indications of the polls rather differently from the SNP which naturally hoped it was an indication for real growing support for independence among the younger voters. They did not specifically endorse the SNP’s image as a youthful party.

The SNP candidates were presented as political entertainment in The Times, and the party leader, Alex Salmond, did not gain publicity in the paper. The Scotsman represented Salmond considerably more, and while he was described as a talented politician, some comments sought to undermine his authority as a serious party leader. The contest between the Liberal Democrats and the SNP was presented more favourably from the

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226 Peter MacMahon, “Home rule obstacles are cleared” (opinion). The Scotsman 3.5.1997.
SNP’s perspective in *The Scotsman*, but the overall election result forced the SNP to maintain the status of a minority party.

2.2 Left-leaning Bravehearts – Party and Ideology

*The Times* declared its clear support for Eurosceptic\(^2\) candidates in its editorial on 29 April.\(^3\) The former editor of *The Times*, William Rees-Mogg, positioned the SNP as a pro-EU party, alongside the Liberal Democrats, and saw these two as a threat to independent Britain within Europe:

_The same willingness to accept the next stage of the advance to federalism is to be found in the SNP. No one who values the independence of Britain, or indeed of Scotland, can vote for either of these two parties without the risk of giving it away. Their influence could be particularly dangerous if there were a hung parliament._\(^4\)

This was quite strong rhetoric against the party, and the opinion of Rees-Mogg could be argued to hold a certain level of authority among *The Times*’ readers because of his long career at the newspaper.\(^5\) Positioning the SNP and the Liberals as a risk to “the independence of Britain” and labelling their influence as “dangerous” could be seen as a construction of an enemy image where the creator of the image attempts to find different ideologies and ideals in the existing enemy.\(^6\) Here, an image of the SNP and the party ideology was created with a biased representation of the situation since the party’s own opinion on the matter was not visible. Rees-Mogg’s Unionist credentials were clearly visible here as he sought align two minority parties as a threat to the unity of Britain.

The only space that was given to the party’s own formulation of their ideology was in the interview of Neil MacCormick, the SNP candidate for Argyll and Bute. Talking about independence, MacCormick said:

\(^2\) Eurosceptic (n.) = a person, especially a politician, who opposes closer connections between Britain and the European Union. Cambridge Online Dictionary.


\(^6\) Wunsch 2002, 77.
In the 1970s I was very convincedly a gradualist. I now think that if we’re going to do it, let’s do it quickly, cleanly and with goodwill.234

The journalist continued that “The question of Scottish independence, oddly, barely arises as the candidate strolls around Coll.”235 The journalist did not offer any evaluation of MacCormick’s aspirations for independence, but the support for independence was not represented as a dominant view on the island of Coll. MacCormick’s choice of words was pleasant and unthreatening: Achieving independence “cleanly and with goodwill” did not seem to pose a radical danger. At the same time, the friendly and humorous tone of the article downplayed any serious threat from the SNP.

As more coverage was given for Alex Salmond in The Scotsman, so were there more opportunities for outlining the SNP ideology by the party leader as well. In an article on 26 April, he managed to position the SNP left of Labour and to define the party in opposition to the two main parties: “He said the negative campaigning which has dominated throughout much of the UK was a result of “new Labour moving onto the Tories’ social and economic agenda”.236 Salmond made an emotive appeal to the voters:

“I think we are very close to achieving independence. If we can get across our message of head and heart in the next week, then believe me, the SNP will take some stopping.”237

This message of ‘head and heart’ echoed the essence of the SNP professionalization that had taken place during the 1990s, under Alex Salmond as leader of the party.238 Salmond wanted to demonstrate that the party had a legitimate claim for independence and that the party was the only party protecting the interests of Scotland.

“Come 1 May, I believe the people of Scotland will also follow their principles and vote for the only party that respects each and every citizen of this land.”239

237 Ibid.
In the same article, Dr Allan McCartney from the SNP, declared that “The Government’s record in providing overseas aid is absolutely appalling.” He stated that the SNP was committed to meet the United Nations spending target for international aid and argued that “neither the Tories nor Labour would be prepared to come anywhere near matching the target set by the SNP.” This policy statement served as an indication of the values the SNP was willing to promote.

In another article, Alex Salmond, supported by positive polling results, declared that the choice in Scotland was between the SNP and “new” Labour which could not be trusted to deliver for Scotland.

*He claimed it was the SNP which could most effectively speak for Scotland on the constitution and on health, education, jobs and pensions. It was the party which could reflect the twin Scottish values of enterprise and compassion.*

The combination of values enterprise and compassion seems like an interesting choice from a party which wanted to be seen as more left-wing than Labour. The word ‘enterprise’ is perhaps more often associated with the rhetoric of parties that are right-of-centre, whereas the value of ‘compassion’ is central to the left-wing emphasis of solidarity. The Cambridge Online Dictionary defines ‘enterprise culture’ as “a society in which personal achievement, the earning of money, and the development of private business is encouraged”. Then again, the combination of enterprise and compassion could have been an attempt to appeal to a wider audience as a catch-all party.

The positioning of the SNP as a left-leaning party was evident in *The Scotsman* issue on 28 April. A small news article titled “Labour rebels join SNP” described how two Scottish Labour “activists” had defected to the SNP just under the election. The candidates had said that were “disgusted at Labour’s lurch to the right under the leadership of Tony Blair”. In the editorial of the same issue, “Reinvention is Tories’ keyword”, this left-leaning tendency of the SNP was contrasted in a negative light with the liberal economic policies of the Conservatives:

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242 Mitchell et al. 2012, 32.
However, if they [the Conservatives] owe it to themselves they owe it in even greater measure to the people of Scotland. Neither Labour, especially the Old Labour die-hards who still infest so much of Labour in Scotland, nor the increasingly left-leaning Scottish National Party will trumpet the market-oriented policies which Scotland must continue to have is it to prosper.\(^{244}\)

This was a clear evaluation of the SNP ideology by *The Scotsman*. The editorial with its institutional authority can be seen as the voice of *The Scotsman*, and this voice was clearly not supportive of the SNP, as it saw it too left-wing for pursuing the economic interests of Scotland.

Labour’s Shadow Scottish Secretary, George Robinson, got an opportunity to criticise the SNP’s rhetoric and core values in an article on 30 April in *The Scotsman*. He said:

\[\text{To try and resurrect this Braveheart feeling that we have got to liberate ourselves from something which does not oppress us anyway I think has undermined the credibility of the Nationalists.}^{245}\]

In essence, Robinson claimed that the Scottish National Party did not have any real issue to fight against as English oppression was only a myth. This sought to undermine the whole London enemy rhetoric by the SNP.

The Eurosceptic *Times* saw the SNP’s positive stance on Europe as a threat to the independence of Great Britain and Scotland. The party was effectively positioned as a left-wing party in *The Scotsman* and had considerable amount of space to represent its own core values. From the paper’s point of view, however, the party was too left-wing for the best interest of Scotland.

2.3 The Threat of Tony Blair and London – Presenting Scotland and Scottish Issues

The concerns of young SNP supporters about Scotland’s interests were voiced in *The Times* on 24 April.\(^{246}\)

\(^{244}\) “Reinvention is Tories’ keyword” (editorial). *The Scotsman* 28.4.1997.

\(^{245}\) Peter MacMahon, “Robertson clings on to his dream in face of adversity” (news). *The Scotsman* 30.4.1997.

Simon MacLean, 17, has been a member of the SNP for six months. “I think Tony Blair treats Scotland with total disdain. I think he sees it as a place which gives a guaranteed vote for Labour but I don’t think that will always be the case. The SNP is always going to be hampered by the electoral system but it is the only party which can deliver meaningful change for Scotland.”

This view of Tony Blair as an enemy of Scotland was deployed excessively by the party. His right-wing policies under New Labour were attacked as Tory policies by the SNP. This was evident in the newspaper data as well.

In The Scotsman’s article, “Blair’s St George message ‘shows disregard for Scotland’”, the chief executive of the SNP, Mike Russell, condemned Blair’s remarks from an article that had been published in the English edition of The Sun newspaper.

“By referring to England as ‘our country’, Tony Blair has made it very clear that Scotland is marginal to new Labour’s concerns”, said Mr Russell. “Mr Blair’s commitment to Scotland is as mythical as the legend of St George and the dragon.”

Russell also blamed Blair for Euroscepticism for his promise to ‘slay the dragon of European superstate’ if one were to emerge under his watch. Russell concluded that this kind of rhetoric represented “a right-wing prejudice straight out of the book of the Tory Eurosceptics”. A strong alignment of the SNP against New Labour was visible here.

A useful opportunity appeared for the SNP when Labour leader Tony Blair made the mistake of comparing the planned tax-raising powers of a Scottish parliament to an English parish church. He also declared that sovereignty would rest with him as an English MP even after devolution. These comments were widely criticised and discussed in Scotland at the time. The SNP’s contempt for the comments was covered in The Scotsman under the title “Salmond says Scots will desert ‘arrogant’ Blair to vote SNP”.

Alex Salmond exploited Blair’s rhetoric in his speech at Calton Hill, which was Labour’s planned site for the future Scottish parliament:

249 Peter MacMahon and Jenny Booth, “Blair’s St George message ‘shows disregard for Scotland” (news). The Scotsman 24.4.1997.
250 Ibid.
251 Lynch 2002, 216.
“We meet in front of this empty Scottish parliament building in Edinburgh in order to underline just how vital this decision is,” he said. “Scotland today has no voice – we must decide if we wish to speak as a powerless parish council, or with the full authority of a sovereign parliament representing a sovereign people.”

The negative response to Blair’s comments was utilised by the SNP, but it did not prove successful in keeping the Labour landslide from reaching Scotland.

Neither of the newspapers were advocates of the SNP and its cause for independence. The Times presented its opposition to independence in its editorial on 8 May:

*The verdict that the Scots gave on May 1 was for devolution within the Union. Although the SNP won more seats, its vote hardly rose. The clear majority was for the Labour and Liberal Democrat case that a Scottish parliament would assuage the nation’s resentment and bind it more closely into the United Kingdom. Yet a badly designed Scottish parliament could give succour to the nationalists and boost demands for independence. That is why it is critical that the devolution plans work well.*

Any advances for the Nationalists were seen as ‘critical’, which is not a surprise from a unionist paper. The Scotsman seemed to be arguing a cooperative stance for Labour and the SNP in the pursuit for devolution. The editorial on 29 April said that Labour should not present the Scottish parliament as an obstacle to the SNP, which might well realise that a home rule parliament was the best thing the party could hope for. The editorial made a distinction between Alex Salmond and some of the party absolutists who might not accept devolution.

SNP’s stance on devolution was made clearer after the general election. George Reid, a member of the SNP, said that the SNP would look at the devolution White Paper prepared by the government and decide its stance on devolution based on what was

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255 White Paper (n.) = in various countries, a government report on a particular subject giving information and details of future planned laws. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
promised. The party sources said that no one was advocating a ‘no’ vote to devolution within the party. Furthermore, devolution was not seen as an obstacle to independence:

Mr Reid said: “I think we should recognise there is nothing in a ‘yes, yes’ vote which prevents the SNP from still mandating itself to go for independence. I think there is a general will in Scotland that a Scottish parliament should be a success.”

The SNP declared its official report for the ‘Yes’ campaign for devolution only after the government White Paper on devolution, *Scotland’s Parliament*, was published on 24 July 1997. By delaying the announcement of support, the SNP was able to gain more attention in the media and to influence the Labour government to deliver on their promises about the referendum.

The *Scotsman* seemed to be interested in the SNP’s stance on devolution during the general election, although the SNP had intentionally stayed relatively quiet on the issue because of the painful divisions caused by the 1979 referendum which turned out to be a disaster for the SNP. The memories of 1979 were visible in the SNP’s attacks against Labour’s devolution plans, which were evident in Alex Salmond’s harsh comments against Tony Blair. He did not trust Blair to deliver a fair deal for Scotland. Both, *The Times* and *The Scotsman*, saw that the SNP had a crucial part to play in the devolution plans because of the fear of their influence if the plans did not work.

As it was visible from Alex Salmond’s attacks against Tony Blair, the SNP’s opposition to the ‘London parties’ was again an important feature of the SNP’s rhetoric. In the research data from 1997, the opposition to London was employed in three different articles in *The Scotsman*. Alex Salmond’s powerful soundbite of young Scottish voters being disillusioned with “London lies” was an exceptional example of the way the SNP

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257 Lynch 2002, 221.
258 Lynch 2002, 220.
has attempted to brand the other parties, especially Labour and the Conservatives, but also the Liberal Democrats, as being London controlled and even anti-Scottish. The other three main parties, and London, seem to serve as the ‘other’ which can threaten the civic Scottish nationalism fostered by the SNP.

Another example of the ‘London rhetoric’ was also employed by the SNP leader in *The Scotsman*:

*The Scottish National Party claimed yesterday that in a magazine interview in 1986, Mr Rifkind had compared his powers as Scottish Secretary to those of a “colonial governor”.*

*Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, said that given the choice, the vast majority of Scots would prefer a sovereign parliament for a sovereign people, rather than a “colonial governor” imposed from London.*

The SNP’s emphasis on its opposition to rules imposed from London was duly noted by *The Scotsman*, and Fordyce Maxwell used the opportunity to joke about the SNP’s rhetoric in “The Scotsman Diary” on 25 April:

*An SNP tale in the interests of impartiality: Both Labour and Conservative parties in Scotland are using the Scottish-based Press Data Bureau to monitor coverage of their campaigns. The SNP, on the other hand, is using the London-based Broadcast Monitoring Company.*

Strong use of certain rhetoric and repetition could therefore backfire as well. The comments of Labour’s George Robinson about the SNP’s attempts to appeal to a “Braveheart feeling” to liberate Scotland from English oppression were a case in point of such counterattacks to certain rhetoric.

The SNP’s position against Tony Blair and his right-wing Labour policies were voiced in both newspapers, especially in *The Scotsman*. The SNP sought to represent Blair as a threat to Scottish integrity, and utilised this in its rhetoric against the London establishment. Both *The Times* and *The Scotsman* wanted to see the SNP cooperating in

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262 Leith and Soule 2012, 144.
the future devolution plans rather than endorsing the case for Scottish independence. Independence was clearly seen as a threat in both newspapers, and therefore, the image of the SNP was negative and perhaps indirectly threatening.

Summary

The SNP was presented as a minority party in both newspapers, but The Scotsman attributed the title of official opposition in Scotland to the party ahead of the Liberal Democrats. The candidate interviews had a trivial tone in The Times and The Scotsman focused more on Alex Salmond than the other candidates. The party successfully positioned itself ideologically left of Labour in The Scotsman, but the paper judged the SNP as too left-wing for Scotland’s economic interests. The Eurosceptic inclinations of The Times had an influence on their attitude towards the pro-European SNP, which was presented as a threat to British independence. After the election, both newspapers saw Scottish independence as a threat if the devolution plans would not work effectively. Both papers clearly stated their opposition to independence and through that their opposition to SNP as well.

Compared to the situation in 1970, the editorial lines of the newspapers had come considerably closer together. The Times maintained its distant approach to the SNP and clear support for the Union. The potential influence of the SNP was seen as critical and even threatening. Then again, the trivialisation of the SNP candidates and the superficiality of the party coverage in general seemed to soften this image. The image constructed by The Times was arguably an attempt to keep the party in the margins of political conversation. The Scotsman was highly more critical of the party than in 1970. The image of the SNP as a prominent player in Scottish politics was still visible, but the editorials voiced reservations about the implications of the SNP policies. With a more critical tone, The Scotsman represented the SNP as too radical and too left-wing from the paper’s point of view, creating an image of a protest party.

Once more, the SNP relied on the anti-London rhetoric to maintain its self-image as the lone champion of Scotland, fighting against the oppressing Westminster rule. This stance also received criticism and counterattacks in The Scotsman, which slightly undermined the SNP’s position and self-image. The Scottish coverage in The Times focused mainly
on rural and peripheral constituencies again, as in the 1970 coverage as well. This reinforced the Kailyard stereotype of Scotland and the SNP candidates.
3. 2010 General Election – A Ridiculous Party and Campaign

During the two week period, *The Times* published 20 articles with a mention of the SNP. One of these was in an editorial and one written by a party member. Nine of the articles had more than a brief mention of the party. *The Scotsman* mentioned the party or its candidates in 117 different articles, not including Letters to the Editor or poll results. 89 articles offered more than a sentence on the party or the candidates. The party name or a candidate were mentioned in 27 headlines and in four editorials.

Conservatives gained the most votes in the general election but did not manage to hold an overall majority to form a majority government. Therefore, talks began between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats over a possible coalition. When these talks did not immediately lead to any conclusions, Labour took their chance to negotiate their own coalition with the Lib Dems. This coalition would not have had an overall majority in the parliament, so Labour and the Lib Dems would have had to take the minor parties, including the SNP, into account and rely on their cooperation in getting crucial government bills through the parliament. For this reason, the SNP gained more publicity right after the election. The party wanted to present itself as an important part of the negotiations, although Labour disputed these claims. In the end, the Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government with the Conservatives. Labour won 41 seats in Scotland, the Conservatives held on to their one seat, the Liberals maintained 11 and the SNP six seats out of the 59 Scottish seats in the Westminster parliament.

3.1 The Leader as the Party – Party Candidates and Electoral Success

The SNP’s election results were briefly touched upon in *The Times*. The Scottish Political Editor, Angus Macleod, gave an account of the results in Scotland after the election on 7 May. Macleod said that while the SNP’s share of the vote had risen from 18 per cent to 20.3 per cent, “there was no sign of a breakthrough in any of their Labour-held targets”.

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The Times did not offer any thorough analysis into the SNP’s electoral performance in 2010.

According to the Feedback Editor of The Times, the paper has no specific editorial line on Scottish political news, and if a story is deemed to be “of national interest” it would appear in the main UK edition of The Times. The separate Scottish edition can include stories which are of “more local interest”. This would be an apparent reason for the lack of news about the SNP, but at the same time it is interesting how Scottish political news would not be considered to be of national interest to any great extent even though the general election have an influence on all the nations in the United Kingdom. For The Times, national interest seems to be a substitution for English national interest, rather than the national interest of the United Kingdom. This is perhaps not surprising since most of its readership is based in England and particularly in London.

Journalist Lesley Riddoch noted in her article on 3 May that the “SNP candidates now represent a party of government not a protest movement”. In The Times, however, the party was still perhaps more of a protest movement than a key political player because of the lack of analysis on their performance or policies. Then again The Scotsman did not present the SNP as a prominent player in the general election either.

Even before the election, The Scotsman seemed to downplay the SNP’s expectations, by basing their judgements on the electoral polls and a poor campaign. In their editorial on 3 May commented on the SNP campaign and the indications of recent polls:

*The SNP looks to fall short of the declared ambition to secure 20 seats, due in part to a quite unrealistic campaign message that somehow Scotland could and should be protected from measures to bring down the worst budget deficit in our peace-time history. That is unrealistic.*

This theme of “20 seats” appeared to be popular in The Scotsman, as journalists kept on reminding the readers of the 20 seats predictions Alex Salmond had made before the

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269 Personal correspondence with The Times Feedback Editor Rose Wild. 12.3.2015.
271 Lesley Riddoch, “Story of blues as polls forecast doomsday scenario” (opinion). The Scotsman 3.5.2010.
The SNP’s “unrealistic campaign message” of “More Nats Less Cuts” was also condemned on several occasions, and even a source within the SNP branded the campaign as “delusional” in *The Scotsman.* Alex Salmond was the laughing stock in a political cartoon on the front page of *The Scotsman* on the day of the general election with his sign “More Nats Less Cuts” and a goofy look on his face, while the other party leaders, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg, were preparing themselves for the inevitable storm of tax rises and cost cutting. The fact that the cartoon was published on the election day and on the cover of *The Scotsman* gave the message more emphasis: Salmond and the SNP campaign slogan were portrayed as a ridiculous option next to the other leaders. Although Salmond was not running for parliament himself, this did not do any favours to the party image in general.

Journalist Tom Peterkin outlined the SNP’s failure, from unrealistic expectations to an unrealistic campaign, in his article from 8 May:

> But Mr Salmond’s hopelessly optimistic forecast was just one of a number of misjudgements that hampered a campaign that was always going to be difficult for a party that could never emerge as an overall winner in a UK election.

This harsh evaluation of the SNP’s future prospects could be interpreted in more than one way. If the writer meant that the SNP could not win an overall majority in the Westminster Parliament, then he was just stating the obvious, since the SNP would only compete Scottish seats, meaning 59 out of 650. If he meant that the SNP could not win a majority of the Scottish seats, then he offered a very pessimistic evaluation of the SNP’s chances in the future.

As in 1997, Alex Salmond as the party leader, and the First Minister of Scotland, was the most visible of the SNP party members, although he was not running for the Westminster
Parliament in 2010. Musician Billy Bragg, gave a favourable account of Salmond in his article in *The Times*, when he contrasted Salmond as a Scottish Nationalist with the leader of the far-right British National Party, Nick Griffin. He said:

> Mr Griffin is not a nationalist like Alex Salmond, of the SNP, who wants the best for his nation and everyone in it. Mr Griffin wants the best for his race, to the exclusion of all others.

This contrast with the Scottish National Party and the British National Party was extremely favourable to Alex Salmond as the BNP stood for very different values as the SNP. Considering the complexity of the nationalist discourse in its multiple different meanings, this kind of statement was exactly the kind of validation that the SNP would have wanted for its civic nationalism.

Salmond had one opportunity to represent himself in *The Times*, when several opinions about the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition were offered from different sides of the political spectrum. He focused on speaking on behalf of the SNP and not from the first person perspective. In Salmond’s rhetoric, the emotive hero figure was the party and not the leader.

Another, less favourable, comment about Alex Salmond in *The Times* came from a Labour spokesman who regarded the SNP’s coalition talks as “a desperate attempt by Alex Salmond to make himself look relevant”. The same rhetoric was used by Labour in *The Scotsman* as well. Labour’s leader in the Scottish Parliament, Iain Gray, accused Salmond for attention-seeking on two occasions. This image of Alex Salmond as a self-absorbed leader in search of power and influence was a reappearing theme in *The Scotsman*. Headlines such as “Salmond tries to spin himself a win” and “Salmond eyes levers of power should Tories be pushed aside” were part of the discourse where Alex

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278 Kavanagh and Cowley 2010, 123.
279 Billy Bragg, “Candidacy is a smoke screen to seize power at local council.” (opinion). *The Times* 6.5.2010.
280 Alex Salmond, “A missed opportunity to govern for the whole of these island” (opinion). *The Times* 12.5.2010.
281 Charteris-Black 2005, 22.
283 Tom Peterkin and John Robertson, “Too late’ Alex loses battle with Auntie” (news). *The Scotsman* 29.4.2010. ; “Salmond fields referendum attack with Canavan’s support” (news). *The Scotsman* 6.5.2010.
Salmond was practically the SNP, and Alex Salmond was a threat. A picture of him with a caption “Alex Salmond: Keen to gain influence at Westminster” was attached to the second headline.286 These emphasised the role of the leader in the election campaign, as the public discussion was adopting more presidential characteristics.

On 12 May, The Scotsman reported on the various coalition talks that had been underway on the previous day, before resulting in a Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition. The SNP’s hopes of a coalition alliance with Labour and the Lib Dems had been dashed when Labour’s Douglas Alexander reportedly said he could not see the party in agreement with the SNP:

That statement effectively killed off Alex Salmond’s dream of making Westminster dance to a Scottish jig and raised more questions about how the alliance would get enough MPs to command a majority in the Commons.287

The journalist, Tom Peterkin, was referring to Alex Salmond’s bold assertion of “making Westminster dance to a Scottish jig” at the SNP spring conference in 2008.288 Branding the SNP’s coalition hopes as “Alex Salmond’s dream” were once again reinforcing the idea of the SNP as Alex Salmond’s private endeavour.

Peterkin elaborated the reasons for Labour’s dismissal of the SNP from the coalition talks in his article and quoted Labour MP Tom Harris who had said that: “There is some concern that Alex Salmond did not come into politics to help provide a stable government for the UK.”289 This was similar to other Labour comments labelling Salmond as attention-seeking and primarily concerned with his own self-interest. A subtle construction of an enemy image of Alex Salmond could be seen here with direct attacks against the person rather than the party.

Different caricatures of Alex Salmond were featured on five different political cartoons during the two week period in The Scotsman.290 Two of the cartoons were attacking the SNP’s economic policy against further cuts, and two depicted Salmond as a yellow

286 Ibid.
287 Tom Peterkin, “High drama as No10 changes hands in minutes” (news). The Scotsman 12.5.2010.
288 “Salmond wants Westminster to ‘dance to a Scottish jig’ as he targets 20 seats” (news). The Scotsman Online 20.4.2008.
289 Tom Peterkin, “High drama as No10 changes hands in minutes” (news). The Scotsman 12.5.2010.
290 “No cuts! Get back!” by Iain Green, 30.4.2010; “Anyway the wind blows” by Iain Green, 5.5.2010; “Tax Rises and Cost Cutting” by Brian Adcock, 6.5.2010; “Vote best of a bad choice” by Iain Green, 6.5.2010; “Coalition disco” by Brian Adcock, 8.5.2010.
teletubby.291 The yellow colour represented the colour of the SNP, and the teletubby character was presumably aimed at portraying Salmond as a comical character rather than a serious politician. In the other cartoon, Salmond had “local chump292” written on his stomach, and he was lined next to the other party leaders.293 The last cartoon portrayed Salmond with a sour face, sitting at the back, while the other three party leaders were dancing together in a “Coalition disco”.294

In all of the cartoons, Salmond was depicted as the outsider and odd one out of the group, although other party leaders received their fair share of mockery as well. This seemed to reflect the public conversation where Salmond’s election predictions and campaign were branded as ridiculous. The “local chump” cartoon was published on the election day on 6 May, alongside the other cartoon on the first page, where Salmond was holding a “More Nats Less Cuts” sign with a mad look on his face. Both of these were presenting the SNP leader as an unintelligent, delusional and irrelevant politician. As he was not running for parliament himself, it was true that he was irrelevant to the election in that sense, but he was still representing the SNP as a whole. Therefore, the image created of Alex Salmond and the SNP in the cartoons was marginalising and diminishing.

A series of six small articles were published in *The Scotsman*, where the success and performance of the four party leaders, Cameron, Brown, Clegg and Salmond, was evaluated as either having a “good day” or a “bad day”. These articles could be described as news, as they were reporting the events of the previous day, but at the same time they were offering evaluated content because of the events that were chosen. Alex Salmond’s days were evaluated as bad in all of the six articles.295 The days approaching the election were starting to seem quite desperate:

*Another day of near anonymity. The whistle-stop tour of key targets was overshadowed by the arrival of David Cameron and Nick Clegg in Scotland.*296

291 See appendix 3-6.
292 Chump (n.) = a silly or stupid person. Cambridge Online Dictionary.
293 Appendix 6.
294 Appendix 7.
And the last blow came on the election day: “A tepid First Minister’s Questions could not help the SNP leader raise his profile at the end of a campaign to forget.”

Again, the failure of the campaign was foregrounded, which seemed like a durable theme in *The Scotsman* throughout the two-week period.

Alex Salmond did also have a couple of positive representations of his character in *The Scotsman*. In a news article on 1 May, Salmond attacked the Labour party for relying on the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair’s, assistance in the Labour campaign. He said, “I would have thought the Labour Party had enough difficulties in its campaign without deploying its weapon of self-destruction.” This conveyed an image of a quick-witted and effective speaker. After the televised Scottish leaders’ debate, Salmond’s debating style was described as “typically aggressive”.

This ruthless style echoed in reported speech where Salmond’s comments were described as “withering attacks”. Aggressiveness could be seen as a negative attribute in some cases, but it can be a desired quality in debating skills. The Cambridge Online Dictionary gives two definitions of ‘aggressive’: 1. *angry*, behaving in an angry and violent way towards another person or 2. *determined*, determined to win or succeed and using forceful action to win or to achieve success. Perhaps the second description fits the use of aggressive in *The Scotsman’s* evaluation of Alex Salmond’s debating skills. In this respect, he could be seen as a skilful and determined politician.

*The Scotsman* published their own polls reflecting different aspects of political support on 5 May. One of the polls indicated that the respondents had rejected the SNP’s campaign slogan “More Nats Less Cuts”, since 43 per cent of them disagreed with the message and only 21 per cent agreed. In “Electorate ‘rejecting SNP and its policies’” David Maddox reported on the poll indications on Alex Salmond as First Minister:

> Mr Salmond’s personal rating has also slipped, with only 38 per cent believing he has done a good job, compared with 36 per cent who think he is doing a bad job.

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298 “It takes two to Tango as Tony turns on charm to help Gordon”
300 David Maddox and Eddie Barnes, “Bigot jibe has shown us real man, says Salmon” (news). *The Scotsman* 30.4.2010. ; “Cameron has plans to steal Scottish cash” (news). *The Scotsman* 5.5.2010.
301 “How the figures stack up in our exclusive Scotsman/YouGov poll” (news). *The Scotsman* 5.5.2010.
In an article by Gerry Hassan the next day, he mentioned Nick Clegg’s “impressive 53 per cent positive rating” and Alex Salmond’s 38 per cent, and said that the polls seemed to suggest that: “None of the four party leaders is hugely unpopular in Scotland.”

This was a more positive evaluation of Salmond’s support rating than Maddox’s reading of the polls. The results from an extensive survey carried out by Mitchell, Bennie and Johns, between 2007 and 2008, suggested that new members of the SNP were more open to leadership influence in their decision to join the party. Alex Salmond had been the leader in a vast majority of those cases where the particular leader had sparked the motivation for the individual to join.

A personal attack against Alex Salmond from a “prominent Nationalist”, Jim Sillars, received a lot of attention in *The Scotsman* on 10 May. Sillars’s opinion piece was advertised on the first page of the issue as “Opinion: Salmond’s delusion” with a short caption from the article. An article titled “SNP ‘in need of a revolution to bring delusional Salmond to heel’” was also dedicated for reporting the contents of Sillars’s article.

A third mention of the article before the actual opinion piece was featured at the top of page 27 with the caption: “Election confirms Alex Salmond’s irrelevance and that SNP need to return to its roots’ Jim Sillars, page 29.” This all seemed like an obvious attempt to sell the article to the readers. The newspaper was not necessarily agreeing with Sillars but his provocative style was definitely utilised in seeking the readers’ attention.

In the actual article, Jim Sillars seemed to account most of the SNP’s mistakes as the personal failures of Alex Salmond:

*Alex is clever, but has been shown in the run-up to, and during, the campaign to have limited ability. A great counter-puncher parrying interviews on television, and, so far, good at beating up verbally weak opponents in the Scottish parliament. But “big” he is not. He has weakened, not strengthened, the intellectual capacity of the party; and doesn’t know how to reach out to others to broaden the support base for independence. He pic acolytes instead of robust advisers. He thinks a tactic is a strategy.*

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304 Mithcell et al. 2012, 81–82.


Although this was clearly Sillars’ personal account and opinion of Alex Salmond and cannot be directly linked to *The Scotsman’s* opinion of Salmond, it does bear strong emotive images with it. All the three mentions before the article gave it considerable focus in the newspaper and seemed to highlight its importance.

*The Times* did not comment much on the SNP’s electoral results. Alex Salmond had a favourable representation in *The Times*, although the only perspectives were from an outsider and Salmond himself. *The Scotsman* was pessimistic about the SNP’s electoral success from the start and branded the whole SNP campaign as ridiculous. Although, once again, Alex Salmond emerged as strong and skilful debater, the overall image was dominated by the diminishing comments from his opponents. The presidential style of the election coverage in general was evident in Salmond’s prominence in the news, but this resulted in a strong identifying of Alex Salmond with the SNP. He was presented as attention-seeking and even self-absorbed. The political cartoons marginalised him and the SNP.

3.2 “No cuts! Get back!” – Party and Ideology

The SNP’s economic policy against further cuts was in line with their political alignment as a ‘moderate left of centre’ party. Despite the over simplified slogan of “More Nats Less Cuts”, the SNP manifesto for 2010 naturally explained their policy in more detail. The SNP believed in creating economic stimulus through protected spending on health, education and jobs. They wanted to see cuts in projects such as the UK’s nuclear deterrent, Trident, and the ID card scheme. These details were not discussed in either *The Times* or *The Scotsman*.

In *The Times*, the SNP’s economic policy was referred to three times. Two articles mentioned the SNP’s opposition to spending cuts in Scotland. In Alex Salmond’s own comment on the coalition government, he said that the SNP alternative for the economy

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Mithcell et al. 2012, 123.


Camilla Cavendish, “Our democracy has emerged intact, arguably healthier than ever before” (opinion). *The Times* 12.5.2010.; Francis Elliot and Tom Whipple, “Staffing problems already as Cameron tries to appease Left, Right and Centre” (news). *The Times* 13.5.2010.
would have been “action to boost economic recovery”. Not much was said on the economic policy, but the dominant idea was simply: no cuts for Scotland. This could have seemed divisive for an English audience.

On a couple of occasions, the SNP’s economic policy was referred to by a party member in *The Scotsman*. Alex Salmond’s opposition to the planned cuts by the three main parties was reported in an issue on 30 April:

*SNP leader Alex Salmond yesterday launched a fresh attack on these plans. “They [the three UK parties] have made visible only a fraction of their plans, leaving out billions of pounds of additional cuts. And like an iceberg, it is the enormous bit that remains unseen, that poses the greatest risk and will cause the most damage,” he said.”*

Another “attack” from Alex Salmond was reported in “Cameron has plans to steal Scottish cash, says Salmond”, the day before the election on 5 May. This was clearly an attempt to define the SNP in opposition to the Conservatives, and the statement also included a dismissal of the Labour party as “finished” and a warning of the Liberal Democrats’ plans to “get into bed with Tories”.

*We know, thanks to his would-be chancellor, George Osborne, that the Tories are planning a special ‘Cameron cut’ just for Scotland, on top of the savage spending cuts for vital public services that they plan right across the UK.”*

Both of these examples from Alex Salmond’s rhetoric with regard to economic policies showed an emphasis on the risk of cuts to public services. This consolidated the SNP’s image as a left-leaning party.

Another insider view of the SNP’s economic plans came from a columnist and an SNP candidate, George Kerevan, in *The Scotsman* on 13 May. He explained how in the last week of the election, Alex Salmond had called up a press conference where he outlined the reasons for enhanced fiscal autonomy for Scotland in more detail by explaining how the SNP government could fill in the gap caused by future cuts made by the Westminster government. According to Kerevan, this unfortunately came too late in the campaign and

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310 Alex Salmond, “A missed opportunity to govern for the whole of these islands” (opinion). *The Times* 12.5.2010.
311 David Maddox and Eddie Barnes, “Deficit will force £1,000-a-year income tax rise” (news). *The Scotsman* 30.4.2010.
312 “Cameron has plans to steal Scottish cash, says Salmond” (news). *The Scotsman* 5.5.2010.
the media’s response to the economic initiative was “limp”.\textsuperscript{313} Clearly there had been problems with the election campaign, but the lukewarm media response might have played a part in the poor response as well.

The SNP’s hopes for forming a “progressive alliance” after the election with Labour, the Liberal Democrats and other minor parties also gave an indication of the party’s main principles. The Home Affairs Correspondent, Gareth Rose, outlined the SNP’s demands for a coalition as “fair funding for Scotland and Wales; protection of local services and the most vulnerable; action to help the green economy and support for business growth”.\textsuperscript{314} Only fair funding for Scotland and Wales had been mentioned in \textit{The Times}. Thus, the image created by \textit{The Times} of the SNP was considerably more superficial and simplistic than in \textit{The Scotsman}.

The main reaction to the SNP’s economic policy in \textit{The Scotsman} was not as positive as the party representation. In most cases, their campaign “More Nats Less Cuts” was branded as a ridiculous attempt to save Scotland from cuts.\textsuperscript{315} One of the cartoons depicted a defensive Alex Salmond shouting “No cuts! Get Back!” as the other Scottish party leaders, Iain Gray, Tavish Scott and Annabel Gouldie, appeared as threatening bullies who claimed they were not after the economy.\textsuperscript{316} The cartoon seemed to portray both sides of the argument: Alex Salmond was pictured with no real backup for his opposition to cuts, and the other party leaders were armed against him with knives ready for cuts. On the other hand, Salmond was defenceless against the economic necessity of cost-cutting but the other parties could not hide the savage cuts they would have to make.

One of the harsh evaluations of the SNP’s economic plans came from an editorial on 5 May:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The SNP, even though it has a core of pro-enterprise, low-tax supporters, has stretched credibility beyond breaking point with Alex Salmond’s ludicrous}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{313} George Kerevan, “SNP counting the cost of delaying financial offensive” (opinion). \textit{The Scotsman} 13.5.2010.

\textsuperscript{314} Gareth Rose, “Salmond eyes levers of power should Tories be pushed aside” (news). \textit{The Scotsman} 11.5.2010.


\textsuperscript{316} Appendix 4.
insistence that Scotland can somehow be better insulated against cuts simply by voting Nationalist. Though they may not admit it in public, most sensible Nationalists – and most are sensible – accept that Mr Salmond’s case makes no economic sense.\textsuperscript{317}

In the same editorial, the paper said it could not offer its support to any of the main parties in the election, although the Conservatives were presented as having perhaps the most potential. This was a clear rejection of the SNP’s economic policy, and this was crystallised in the conclusion that “the SNP has displayed no vision”.\textsuperscript{318}

Bill Jamieson threw a punch at the SNP’s campaign after the election as well:

\textit{Who could take seriously the SNP’s line of “No Cuts Here”, a slogan that could only have been dreamt up for a subsistence economy based on sheep and with no phone on the island.}\textsuperscript{319}

This comment echoed the attitude towards the SNP, which was prominent in \textit{The Scotsman}. This attitude seemed to suggest that the SNP was somehow not a serious option in the election. The party’s economic campaign was dismissed as ludicrous, and its details were never debated in either of the newspapers.

The SNP’s core ideology, independence, was raised as a subject by other sides of the debate in \textit{The Scotsman}. Alex Salmond’s vocal opponent but a fellow nationalist, Jim Sillars, argued that “SNP failure to flesh out independence agenda in election campaign requires urgent redress.”\textsuperscript{320} After the election, David Torrance gave similar comments about the independence issue: “The independence message, which many Nats believe should have been boosted, was conspicuous by its absence.”\textsuperscript{321} These comments were interesting because according to Leith and Soule, the SNP’s election manifesto for 2010 had significantly more emphasis on independence than the five previous manifestos. Almost 20 per cent of the manifesto had been dedicated to the independence message.\textsuperscript{322} There must have been a radical discrepancy between the manifesto and the actual election campaign, since the reception was so radically different from the contents of the

\textsuperscript{317} “Vote for a new era” (editorial). \textit{The Scotsman} 5.5.2010.
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{319} Bill Jamieson, “Scots No 1 conservative (small c) in Britain” (opinion). \textit{The Scotsman} 8.5.2010.
\textsuperscript{320} Jim Sillars, “Scotland must rise to fall of the English Empire” (opinion). \textit{The Scotsman} 29.4.2010.
\textsuperscript{321} David Torrance, “Salmond tries to spin himself a win” (opinion). \textit{The Scotsman} 8.5.2010.
\textsuperscript{322} Leith and Soule 2012, 56.
manifesto. The comments were, however, reflecting this particular research data, since there was no focus on the independence message in the SNP’s own rhetoric during this time period.

The respondents of *The Scotsman* polls were reported to reject the SNP’s core belief of independence. David Maddox wrote that “there was a resounding rejection of independence, with 58 per cent saying they would vote No, while just 28 per cent would vote Yes.”

Joyce McMillan’s opinion piece echoed a similar suspiciousness of the SNP’s campaign in relation to independence:

> -- ; on Thursday night, the SNP, as the party of independence, emerged with barely 20 per cent of the vote. So when Alex Salmond says that this election result has dealt his party “a mighty hand”, he is only half right. It has shown that Scotland is a different country, all right, with a different political culture; in that sense, the electorate has made the SNP’s case for it. But it has not demonstrated any growing support for independence. On the contrary, it is now clear that, if the SNP wants to demonstrate that independence represents Scotland’s only possible route to the Nordic-style social democracy it wants, then it is still barely at the start of the process of persuasion; and the SNP’s slightly shifty ideological performance in the campaign has done nothing to advance its cause.

Although the message was a bit doubtful of the SNP’s strategy, it outlined their aims for a Nordic-style social democracy, and in that sense gave more information about the party and new aspects to the party image in the newspaper.

The economic policy of the SNP was branded as ludicrous in *The Scotsman*. *The Times* only referred to the economic policy as ‘No cuts for Scotland’, although Salmond had the opportunity to mention the party’s plans for an economic boost. The campaign was not discussed in more detail in either of the newspapers. Because of considerably more coverage in *The Scotsman*, the SNP was able to endorse its left-wing values in relation to its economic campaign. The SNP’s core ideology of independence was curiously absent from their campaign.

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3.3 Progressive Alliance Sidelined – Presenting Scotland and Scottish Issues

In *The Times*, 11 out of 21 articles mentioning the SNP were dealing with the coalition talks after the election. In its editorial on 11 May, *The Times* condemned the Liberal Democrats for even considering a coalition with Labour with a help of “a rickety coalition of every conceivable nationalist, and independent Unionist and a Green.”[^325] *The Times* had endorsed its support for the Conservatives before the election on 1 May, and wanted to see the Lib Dems forming a coalition with them.[^326] Clearly, their opinion on the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists as part of a coalition with Labour and the Lib Dems was not a favourable one.

It is perhaps no wonder then that none of the articles written by *The Times* journalists endorsed these coalition talks which could have included the SNP.[^327] The SNP’s own view of the situation was expressed by the leader of the SNP at Westminster, Angus Robertson, in *The Times* when he said the SNP was “ready to work with other parties in an arrangement that will deliver a functioning Parliament.”[^328] The article was concluded with the Conservatives dismissing such coalition talks and pointing out to the slim majority Labour and Lib Dems would hold over the Conservatives.[^329] Alex Salmond had the opportunity to express the side of the SNP about the coalition talks in a comment where he emphasised the missed potential of a “progressive alliance” including the SNP:

> Unfortunately, the Lib Dems preferred a regressive alliance with the Conservatives, and Labour preferred to inflict a Tory government on the

[^326]: "Vote of Confidence" (editorial). *The Times* 1.5.2010.
[^329]: Ibid.
majority of voters who rejected such an administration. The SNP takes its marching orders from the people of Scotland – and about 85 per cent of them voted against a Tory government.

This was a great opportunity for Salmond to stress the SNP’s role as the champions of Scotland. He also summarised what ‘progressive’ would have meant from the SNP’s perspective: “real electoral reform, renewed politics, respect for all the nations of these island and agreed action to boost economic recovery”. Despite these two mentions from the SNP’s own perspective, from Salmond and Robertson, the dominant attitude was against the idea of a “rickety coalition” in The Times.

In The Scotsman’s editorial on 8 May, the paper endorsed a coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats without speculating on coalition deals between Labour and the Lib Dems with the support of minor parties. A cartoon depicting the coalition talks between the main parties was published in the same issue: Alex Salmond was sidelined from the dance between David Cameron, Nick Clegg and desperate Gordon Brown looking for a coalition partner in ‘coalition disco’. This portrayed the overall dismissal of Salmond’s propositions for a progressive alliance.

The Scotsman reported on the coalition talks from the SNP’s perspective as well. Alex Salmond’s claimed that the best option for Scotland would be a Labour–Liberal Democrat coalition:

> Mr Salmond said that if other parties supported the coalition, over a period of time “we could make great gains for the country”. He added: “I believe that would be able to do more if there was an alternative position put forward, if there was a Liberal-Labour coalition.”

In another article the following day, the SNP’s and other minor parties’ stance on the coalition were further defined as a wish for a “progressive alliance” where they would offer their support for the government in a vote-by-vote basis. In the article, Angus

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330 Alex Salmond, “A missed opportunity to govern for the whole of these islands” (opinion). The Times 12.5.2010.
331 Ibid.
332 “Tory pact with Lib Dems may be the ideal Scottish solution” (editorial). The Scotsman 8.5.2010.
333 Appendix 7.
Robertson from the SNP emphasised the division between the party and the Conservatives:

“From the outset, the SNP have made it clear that we believe a progressive alliance can deliver the best result for the people of Scotland – rather than a Tory government, which was resoundingly rejected by the people of Scotland last week, with the Tories in fourth place north of the Border.”

Both of these news articles provided the space for the SNP to showcase their concern for Scotland and bring forward a claim for ‘progressiveness’. This also seemed to emphasise the division between south and north of the Border, as the Conservatives had won the most seats in England but only kept their one seat in Scotland.

Bill Jamieson, rejected this idea of progressiveness in his analysis of the coalition propositions:

There was nothing “progressive” or fair-minded about it. The first concern of the SNP, Plaid Cymru and Ulster MPs taking part was to gain more money for their nations and regions at the expense of England (which deserved to be punished for voting Conservative).

Once again, this was very divisive language which presented the other side of the coin. While the SNP sought to emphasise their support for Scotland, and opposition to spending cuts in Scotland, this had to be defined against something, and that something was England.

Jamieson even went on to argue that a deal between Gordon Brown and Alex Salmond would have been “the nearest thing Scottish politics has come to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”, since Labour and the SNP were known for their “mutual loathing” in the Scottish parliament. The choice of words here was quite radical because it implied that there was something dishonest in Alex Salmond’s pursuits for a progressive alliance. The comparison to the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in

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335 Gareth Rose, “Salmond eyes levers of power should Tories be pushed aside” (news). The Scotsman 11.5.2010.
337 Bill Jamieson, “We’ve gone from malice in bunkerland to Alice in Wonderland” (opinion). The Scotsman 12.5.2010.
338 Ibid.
1939 was very provocative and highlighted the previous disagreements between Labour and the SNP.

One hot topic in The Scotsman, was curiously absent from The Times. It was the exclusion of Alex Salmond and the SNP from the televised leaders’ debates which saw the three main party leaders, Cameron, Brown and Clegg, debating on the current political issues. The SNP thought that as the leading party in Scotland it should be included in the leader’s debates, and the issue was taken to court when the party was not accepted in any of the BBC’s three debates.339 The article on 29 April explained the case:

In court, the SNP argued that it was “inherently unfair” to exclude the party and was contrary to the BBC’s requirement under its charter to show “due impartiality” in election coverage.340

The judge ruled that the decision to contest Salmond’s exclusion had been left too late since two of the debates had already been held. The SNP’s opponents saw the whole court case as a media stunt from Alex Salmond. Labour’s Iain Gray attacked Salmond over the issue: “He must be the only person in Britain who thinks this election is about how many times he appears on television. It is about jobs and the economy.”341

Naturally, this exclusion from the national debates gave validation for the SNP’s anti-London rhetoric. In the article “Salmond rages against the BBC machine”, Alex Salmond blamed the exclusion for the party’s “anonymous election campaign” and sought to turn the situation around. He was quoted in the article:

“We feel if we can ride the wave of rage against the machine, rage against the BBC machine and the Westminster machine, then I think it might carry us a very, very long way in this election campaign.”342

This was the perfect opportunity for Salmond to endorse their campaign as an alternative to the London parties. The party’s own self-image was emphasised in opposition to the ‘Westminster machine’.

339 Harrison 2010, 267.
340 Tom Peterkin and John Robertson, “‘Too late’ Alex loses battle with Auntie” (news). The Scotsman 29.4.2010.
341 Ibid.
342 “Salmond rages against the BBC machine” (news). The Scotsman 3.5.2010.
The Scotsman took the side of the SNP in the discussion about the leader’s debates in two of its editorials. The editorial on 29 April was critical of the presidential style of the election campaign, which was partly due to the influence of the televised leader’s debates. While the editorial agreed with the overall verdict of the judge, it pointed out that “the SNP did have a reasonable case that in a devolved nation a major party had been unfairly sidelined”.

The editorial on 5 May condemned the television debates for putting too much emphasis on electing a national leader rather than a local representative. Furthermore, the SNP’s exclusion of these debates was seen as a democratic problem:

The SNP anger at being shut out of the television events is but one symptom of a constitutional problem created by the debates. Whether Alex Salmond was standing for the Westminster parliament or not, or whether an SNP leader could be a prime minister, misses the point – in a Scottish and Welsh context, a major player was excluded from a process which has dictated the entire campaign. That cannot be right.

This was a welcomed support for the SNP in one of its main election issues. The editorial seemed to validate the SNP notion of being mistreated in the process.

A source within the SNP thought that the party had focused even too much on the leader’s debate in their campaign. “Our campaign was a complaint about not being involved in the leaders’ debate and then a claim that we can be taken out of the cuts,” he said in an interview for The Scotsman. Journalist David Torrance came to the same conclusion in his analysis of the pitfalls in the SNP’s campaign:

So where did it all go wrong? Before the campaign was over Salmond attempted to pin the blame on his party’s exclusion from the three televised leaders’ debates, but that tells only part of the story. True, such a platform would probably have boosted the SNP’s profile, but it does not explain a lacklustre campaign and an untypically poor performance from MR Salmond himself.

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344 “Vote for a new era” (editorial). The Scotsman 3.5.2010.
346 David Torrance, “Salmond tries to spin himself a win” (opinion). The Scotsman 8.5.2010.
This perhaps summarises the themes that seemed to be dominant in the coverage of the SNP close to the election. The case of the televised debates was presented as an unfair dealing for the SNP, but at the same time, a too strong focus on that was seen as unfavourable. The fact that The Times did not even mention the SNP’s argument with the BBC about the leaders’ debates, gives an indication of what was deemed to be of ‘national interest’ from the newspaper’s point of view and also the type of national interest the newspaper was perhaps pursuing.

The Times was against a progressive coalition alliance including the SNP, and The Scotsman endorsed a Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition as well. The SNP was able to bring the party forward as a progressive alternative to the ‘Westminster consensus’, but their focus on highlighting the difference and separation from the Conservatives came through as divisive rhetoric on England and Scotland.

The Scotsman supported the SNP’s claims for being mistreated in their exclusion from the leaders’ debates, but did not see it as a relevant excuse for an apathetic campaign. Interestingly, The Times did not mention the SNP’s exclusion from the TV debates at all.

Summary

The image of the SNP in The Times remained relatively unchanged from 1997. The party coverage did not have much substance, and the party image was inevitably superficial. Despite the SNP’s position as the party of government in Scotland, the party was still a marginal player in the coverage of The Times. The paper’s open support for the Conservatives was an indication of a strong Unionist support and opposition to Scottish independence. The Times secluded the SNP from any serious discussion on the British Parliament with the marginalisation of the party. The SNP’s exclusion from the leaders’ debates was not even discussed in The Times, which also implied the paper’s preference for the status quo. The durability of the SNP’s image as a minority party in British terms in The Times, could be explained by the continuity of the paper’s editorial line and the stability of the institution which seems to rely on its long traditions of news reporting.
Compared to *The Scotsman*, *The Times* had seen eight different editors since 1970 against *The Scotsman*’s 14 editors during the same period.347

*The Scotsman* gave considerable space to the SNP in the newspaper, and the large amount of party coverage seemed to reflect the SNP’s strong position in Scottish politics. In the British political arena, however, the SNP was not presented as a serious contender by *The Scotsman*. The paper clearly sought to undermine the SNP’s economic policy and election campaign. The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, was also presented mostly in a critical light. *The Scotsman* created an image of a vocal but ineffective party that had no real place in the general election. The SNP’s unsuccessful campaign and economic policy were foregrounded in the party coverage to support this image. The paper’s distinctively more critical stance might be explained with the Editor John McLellan’s Conservative preferences and strong support for the Union.

The SNP maintained its strong opposition to the ‘London parties’ and introduced itself as an antidote to harmful Conservative policies in Scotland. The party was increasingly identifying itself in opposition to the Conservative Party, whereas in 1997 the contrast had been made against Labour. The scarcity of proper election coverage or analysis from Scotland in *The Times* seemed to imply that Scottish political news were not of great ‘national interest’. The SNP was therefore, not only fighting for a peripheral region from *The Times*’ perspective, but it was also seen as fighting with peripheral policies for peripheral interests in *The Scotsman*.

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Conclusion

In the 1970 election coverage, the Scottish National Party was represented as a marginal minority party in *The Times*. Despite its minority status, *The Scotsman* gave considerably more coverage for the party and took an openly positive stance towards its policy of defending Scottish interest in the United Kingdom. *The Scotsman* did not endorse Scottish independence but argued for a federalist form of government.

The candidates were given a neutral treatment in *The Times*, but they did not receive many mentions in the newspaper. *The Scotsman* celebrated the victory of Donald Stewart from the SNP, and saw potential in a few SNP candidates before the election. They reported that The SNP emerged as the third most popular party in Scotland, although the Liberal Party gained more seats. This kind of recognition was absent from *The Times*.

The SNP had the opportunity to formulate its social democratic ideology alongside its independence message in *The Scotsman* in 1970. The party was firstly an independence party but importantly, also a Social Democratic party. *The Times* simply referred to the SNP as the ‘Nationalists’ and did not give any descriptions on the SNP’s ideology and policies.

The discussion on issues relating to Scotland from the SNP’s perspective were completely absent from *The Times*. Scotland as a country was represented as a rural and peripheral region in those few articles that focused on the region. As a unionist newspaper *The Times* kept a distance from commenting widely on independence. Because of the shared ideals for the defence of Scottish interest, *The Scotsman* gave credibility to the SNP’s pursuits for Scotland. The way in which Scotland was presented in *The Times* was a good example of the positioning of Scotland and Scottish politics as political periphery from the centre of London. The SNP’s clear minority status in *The Times* was an indication of the party’s role on the political fringe, or periphery of popular politics, as well. *The Scotsman* was notably different in its stance towards the SNP in 1970.

In 1997, the SNP was already a bigger, more professional party than in its early days in the Westminster Parliament in the 1970s. After the election, it was still labelled as a minority party, without too much influence in the parliament. *The Scotsman* seemed to be willing to credit the party with the title of official opposition in Scotland, since its share of the vote was the biggest after Labour in Scotland.
The SNP’s hopeful predictions of rising support for independence among the youth were mainly dismissed by *The Scotsman*, although the SNP was able to bring its own view forward as well. Overall, the image of the SNP as a party attracting youthful support was challenged.

The party ideology was strongly emphasised as being left-wing and, importantly, left of Labour. *The Times* presented the pro-European SNP as a threat to British independence, alongside the Liberal Democrats. *The Scotsman* saw the SNP as too left-wing for safeguarding Scotland’s economic interest.

The SNP successfully aligned itself left of Labour but also increasingly in opposition to Labour and Tony Blair in particular. This tendency was visible in both newspapers, but considerably more in *The Scotsman*. The SNP reinforced its anti-London rhetoric, which had already been visible in 1970 as well. Neither of the newspapers supported Scottish independence, and they wanted to see the SNP cooperating in the devolution plans, so that a nationalist backlash could be avoided. Independence was presented as a threat.

By 2010, the SNP had emerged as the biggest party in the Scottish Parliament, and the SNP leader, Alex Salmond, was the First Minister of Scotland. This was seen as an increase in the party coverage in *The Scotsman* especially. The SNP election results were not deemed of great national interest in *The Times* and were not discussed in any detail. *The Scotsman* offered pessimistic evaluations of the SNP electoral success before the general election.

Alex Salmond was very much the focus of the attention in *The Scotsman*, but *The Times* did not pay much attention to his dealings during the election. Although a skilful politician, the dominating image of Alex Salmond in *The Scotsman* was one of an attention-seeking populist, searching for individual gains in politics. The absorption of Salmond’s persona into the party image seemed to result in negative attacks against him as a leader.

The SNP sought to present its economic policy in line with its left-wing, social democratic ideology in *The Scotsman*. The campaign message of “More Nats Less Cuts” was reduced to a simple opposition to any cuts in public expenditure in Scotland, and the policy was not developed or discussed in detail. *The Scotsman* branded the whole SNP campaign as ridiculous, and did not even seem to take the party seriously in the election campaign.
The absence of the Nationalists’ core message of independence in the election campaign was seen as suspicious and a mistake.

Neither *The Times* nor *The Scotsman* supported a progressive alliance of Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the minor parties. The emphasis of the SNP as an alternative to the London parties was stressed by the party in *The Scotsman*, but the message appeared to divide the nation because of its strong opposition to the Conservatives who had won the election in England. *The Scotsman* voiced its concerns on behalf of the SNP for being excluded from the national leaders’ debates organised by the BBC. Any discussion about this type of democratic deficit was completely absent from *The Times*.

The amount of news coverage mentioning the SNP stayed almost the same in *The Times* in 1970 and 1997, but there were three days missing from the 1970 data. In 2010, the articles mentioning the SNP almost doubled from 1997. The content of the articles, however, was less substantial than in 1970 and 1997. The number of relevant articles doubled from 1970 to 1997 in *The Scotsman*, and a considerable increase was again visible in 2010 as well. This went in line with the party’s progression from a minority protest movement to the party of government in Scotland.

The image of the Scottish National Party in *The Times* progressed from slightly more neutral perspective to perhaps a little more critical, but still a very marginal, position. The coverage did not really increase in line with the success and professionalization of the party. Throughout the time period, *The Times* maintained a considerable distance to the party and did not offer a lot of space for the party’s own formulation of their policies and ideology in the newspaper. This was explained by the relatively stable editorial line of the newspaper which relied on strong support for the existing establishment and the Union of Great Britain.

*The Scotsman’s* stance towards the SNP changed clearly from 1970 to 1997 and 2010. In 1970 it was a modest supporter of the party, although it did not endorse its core policy of independence. By 1997 the paper was more critical of the party and saw it still as a minority party with policies that were too left-wing. In 2010, *The Scotsman* was very vocal against the SNP’s economic campaign, and the party was not presented as a serious player in the general election. This created a rather negative but shallow image of the party without no real substance in the debate. The party leadership came under attack as well, and the combination of Alex Salmond’s characters into the party image gave a more
hostile impression of the stance towards the party in general. The change in The Scotsman’s image of the SNP was a clear indication of the change in its editorial stance towards pro-establishment credentials that were in stark contrast with its critical stance from 1970.

No previous comprehensive research has been done on media representations of the SNP, so this research has hopefully provided an introduction to the possibilities of this type of research and a little more understanding of the ways in which a party image can be constructed in the newspapers. A lot more could still be explained and investigated about the image of the Scottish National Party in these newspapers. By collecting more data and applying more quantitative and content analysis, a more thorough and in-depth analysis into the image of the SNP could be constructed. The 2015 General Election coverage in the British media will be a fruitful resource for researchers after the election.
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Appendix

The images are not available online due to copyright restrictions.


**Appendix 2.** Ben Macintyre, ”Decent folk don’t talk politics”. The Times 26.4.1997.

**Appendix 3.** Brian Adcock, “Tax Rises and Cost Cutting”. The Scotsman 6.5.2010

**Appendix 4.** Iain Green, “No cuts! Get back!”. The Scotsman 30.4.2010

**Appendix 5.** Iain Green, “Anyway the wind blows”. The Scotsman 5.5.2010.

**Appendix 6.** Iain Green, “Votes best of a bad choice”. The Scotsman 6.5.2010.

**Appendix 7.** Brian Adcock, “Coalition disco”. The Scotsman 8.5.2010.