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Greene, Z. and McMillan, F. (2020) 'Party competition and dual accountability in multi-level systems' the independence echo: the rise of the constitutional question in Scottish election manifestos and voter behaviour. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 30(3), pp. 317-338.

(doi: [10.1080/17457289.2020.1727486](https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2020.1727486))

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Deposited on: 16 January 2020



'Special Issue 2020: Party competition and dual accountability in multi-level systems'

The Independence Echo: the rise of the constitutional question in Scottish election manifestos and voter behaviour

Journal:	<i>Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties</i>
Manuscript ID	JEPOP-2018-0144.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	issue emergence, issue competition, party competition, Scottish independence, Structural Topic Model

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Introduction

Voter and political party priorities dynamically interact throughout the representation process. Scholars show that while parties and governments respond to voter opinion shifts (Klüver and Spoon 2016), voters respond by assuming conflicting positions (Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Although many studies move beyond the competing expectations that parties dogmatically follow public opinion - or the position espoused by Key (1966) that “the voice of the people is but an echo” of elite preferences - the nature of the relationship between party and voter preferences is misunderstood. The relationship between issue priorities and positions on issues remains unexplained. Appeals on prominent issues such as the independence movement in Scotland likely not only reflect parties’ strategic appeals to attract and mobilize core voters, but also engender a response from voters that previously had only weakly formed or latent preferences over devolution and independence.

In this paper, we connect research on issue competition and governmental responsiveness to explore the relationship between party and voter preferences and priorities. We propose that parties’ appeals on issues like independence reflect a diffusion process that works through public opinion; the electoral success of issue entrepreneurs like the Scottish National Party (SNP) affect the strategies of other parties as they respond to public opinion. We contend that by emphasizing the issue, the SNP increased the public salience of the issue. This, in turn, led rival parties campaign on the publicly salient Scottish constitutional issue (CI). This process created a dynamic cycle wherein increased partisan attention lead voters to adopt firmer positions on the issue, prompting further shifts in party position and emphasis.

We evaluate hypotheses by focusing on the issue of Scottish independence, which rose to prominence after the 1999 opening of the Scottish Parliament (SP). Ironically, the transfer of power to Edinburgh had been expected to quell calls for independence, an idea which had rarely attracted the support of more than a third of voters (Scottish Social Attitudes). Yet, the SNP, primarily focused on attaining independence, entered government before the new institutions were even a decade old after narrowly winning the 2007 election. In a surprise upset, the SNP then won a majority of seats in 2011, using this position to hold an independence referendum in 2014.

Though the referendum failed, a slim majority against independence emerged as the new status quo in public opinion. Public polarisation on the issue has had significant ripple effects at Holyrood and Westminster elections. The increased salience of the constitutional question reshaped Scottish politics, affected UK-wide elections and government formation, and complicated the UK’s exit from the EU. The issue has become the defining axis of Scottish party competition and now acts as a conditioning factor in public opinion formation. This is the context in which we explore our expectations of elite-driven issue entrepreneurship.

We combine data from the British Election Study (BES) from 2007, 2011 and 2016 with evidence from 25 party election manifestos since the formation of the Parliament. To isolate change in parties’ priorities on CIs, we perform unsupervised

content analysis of Scottish party manifestos to identify the attention, framing and timing of emphasis each party gives these issues (Roberts et al. 2013). Pairing estimates with voters' issue priorities in the BES, we find that the increased importance of independence to the SNP coincided with party identifiers evaluating the issue as salient. Yet, parties' positions on independence shape how their appeals influence voter priorities. Appeals by parties prioritising the union or devolution had the opposite effect. As the language used to identify with the issue has positional consequences, voters identifying with these parties experienced a decreased likelihood of perceiving independence as a top priority.

A priority is to explore the content of Scottish manifestos using unsupervised automated content analysis. The 25 manifestos include 16,382 sentences, limiting any individual's ability to hand code these documents. Therefore, manifestos present a good test case to apply topic models on Scottish political texts. Studies of the representation process following a similar approach have used scaling or topic models to evaluate political texts (Ceron 2012; Genovese 2015; Greene and Haber 2016; Schumacher et al. 2016; Boussalis et al. 2018; Ceron and Greene 2019). We follow a topic modelling approach to map attention to independence and how issues related to devolution evolved. To this end, we present evidence that unsupervised learning models can be applied to the case of Scottish manifestos and that these tools can distinguish the language of post-devolution politics.

The results provide evidence consistent with a dynamic theory of voter and party responsiveness (de Sio and Weber 2014; Neundorff and Adams 2018). Parties face few incentives to adopt issues less salient to voters, but an increase in an issue's salience to a key constituency likely encourages parties to address them. Likewise, voters may hold ambiguous positions on issues they place little value on, but when parties bring the issue to the forefront, voters respond by considering the issue more important. Our analysis focuses on issues' salience to parties and voters, but topic model results reveal that the framing of important issues creates a pathway through which parties and voters take distinct positions. Ultimately, cross-national studies of issue competition will enable more conclusive tests of the precise causal pathway.

The Scottish Political Context

Independence was a niche concern before devolution. The SNP had enjoyed few electoral successes, with the unionist Scottish Labour dominant for decades. Following the experience of Thatcherism, which highlighted the UK's "democratic deficit" to Scottish voters (McGarvey and Cairney, 2013), reluctant unionist elites warmed to devolution as a means to contain nationalism. As then-MP Lord Robertson proclaimed in 1995, devolution would "kill nationalism stone-dead" (Arnott and Ozna 2010). From this perspective, Scotland is an unlikely case for elite-driven issue entrepreneurship.

Rather than quell support for independence, however, devolution catalysed it. In 2007, at the third devolved election, the SNP won a plurality of seats. Four years later, the party unexpectedly won a majority and held an independence referendum in 2014 with UK government agreement. Though the "Yes Scotland" campaign was unsuccessful, losing by a closer-than-expected 45-55 margin

(Renwick, 2014), Scotland had reached the brink of independence less than two decades after Robertson’s prediction. The issue now dominates Scottish politics.

According to Johns and Mitchell (2016), one third of anti-independence voters chose the SNP in 2011. This became unimaginable after the referendum; SNP-voting unionists virtually disappeared. Meanwhile, Scottish Conservatives, for generations a “toxic” electoral prospect (Cairney and McGarvey 2013), positioned themselves as defenders of unionism. This strategy fuelled a reversal in electoral fortunes in 2016 as the party became the second-largest and recorded their best Scottish Westminster performance in a generation the following year.

These electoral earthquakes illustrate the extent to which the Scottish political system has crystallised around the constitutional cleavage. As Lundberg argues, new institutions strengthened separatist sentiments by activating the “centre-periphery cleavage” (2013). We argue that explicit elite appeals were central to activation. We draw on party competition and voter responsiveness literature to propose an elite-driven theory of issue diffusion.

Party Competition and Issue Salience

Despite substantial scholarly attention, the relationship between public issue salience, party issue emphasis and issue positions in the context of issue emergence remains murky. We incorporate insights from literatures on positional and issue competition to propose a perspective on how issues emerge and diffuse, accounting for ways newly prominent issues motivate voter and party behaviour.

Historically, scholars emphasize the importance of party and voter *positions* and *salience*. Research on party positions and issue competition developed in relative isolation, offering little perspective on how they jointly influence party and voter goals.¹ In spatial conceptions of party competition, parties adopt positions within a policy space and voters calculate the expected utility of competing options, voting for the closest party. Parties adopt vote-maximising positions on the most important dimension of conflict and shift in response to competitors, public opinion and the economy (Adams 2012). However, these perspectives rarely assume more than one dimension of conflict or account for the importance of the issues on which positions are taken, implying that issue salience is disconnected from positional competition. Yet, position and salience present two dimensions of policy orientations: the direction and intensity of preferences on an issue (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1987).

Alternatively, issue competition theories emphasize electoral constituencies, electoral loss, governmental experience, and the scope of conflict to explain issue salience (Greene 2016, 2018). Parties adopt issues important to historical

¹ Although distinct concepts, issue salience and position relate. A party ignoring an issue (zero salience) has an unclear position on it. Taking up issues necessitates taking positions. Voters may infer parties’ positions on latent issues, but ultimately parties choose whether and how to address them, even those they deem unimportant. Most measures of issue position from textual sources exacerbate the problem as position is a count of opposing issue statements and salience is the count of total statements.

constituencies (Hibbs 1977) while seeking out issues that resonate with voters. Those issues which do not increase parties' electoral success.

Issue ownership theories also focus on the battle to define prominent campaign issues. Through a similar conception, parties emphasize issues on which they have so strong a positive reputation that they "own" the issue (Petrocik, 1996). Parties foster reputations by repeatedly emphasizing issues in campaigns and enacting policies in office. The yield an issue provides in terms of partisan and voter support further structure parties' likelihood of emphasizing issues (de Sio and Weber 2014).

Voters, in response, support parties when elections are contested over their issues, as citizens evaluate them more positively (Egan 2013). Issue competition theories find contested ownership, however. Bélanger and Meguid (2008) show that voters only respond to parties' appeals on issues salient to those voters. The perceived distance to a party's position further bias voters' perceptions, while partisanship predicts competence evaluations (van der Bruge 2004; Vegetti 2014). The economy and perceptions of unity also constrain policy reputations (Green and Jennings 2012; Greene and Haber 2015).

Finally, theories of issue emergence predict that issues arise when parties negatively associate with previously salient issues. Evidence from Europe shows that parties address new issues or make novel appeals on non-economic dimensions when voters negatively evaluate their positions on the left-right dimension (Hobolt and de Vries 2015). Large parties take distinct positions in response to new issues and parties (Meguid 2005). This discussion holds implications for the rise of the independence issue.

The Rise of the Scottish Constitutional Question

The SNP always supported independence. However, the issue remained cordoned off until the party experienced electoral success. Public opinion on independence remained static for generations. The SNP legislated for the 2014 referendum *despite* little chance of victory. Although they failed to achieve independence, the separatists' campaign changed public opinion so significantly that "the winners lost and the losers won" (McCrone 2019).

We propose that an elite-level political organisation dedicated to advancing independence was necessary for independence to dominate Scottish politics. The SNP's position helped it obtain power which it wielded to place the issue firmly on the agenda, leading other parties to respond. The increased salience in public opinion (and presence of displaced former SNP-unionists) created incentives for other parties to compete on the issue by taking contrasting positions.

The SNP's pro-independence stance facilitated their electoral success. The party's success in 2007 and 2011 Holyrood (SP) elections was widely ascribed to valence considerations. There has historically been little difference between the SNP and Labour on a left-right dimension² and the parties historically attracted similar

² We present parties' left-right positions, measured by the RMP, in the Appendix (Figure A2 and A3).

voters (Paterson et al. 2001). As Johns et al. state (2009, p. 209), the SNP is “distinct only in terms of nationalist ideology and constitutional preferences”.

Valence, however, relates to more than perceived policy performance, as “valence” in a devolved Scottish context relates to whether a party is seen to “promote Scotland’s interests” (Paterson et al. 2001, p.44). On one metric, the Lib-Lab coalitions delivered in government, with both parties fulfilling most of their campaign promises (McMillan, 2019). Yet, even at the first Holyrood election, this dynamic cost Labour votes relative to its Westminster performance. The SNP’s entrepreneurship on the independence issue positioned it to benefit from Labour’s poor valence evaluations resulting from Labour’s incumbent Westminster counterpart (Johns et al. 2009). Though the SNP relied on committed independence supporters, their image of competence in standing up for Scotland attracted enough independence-sceptical citizens to secure electoral success (Johns and Mitchell 2016).

Negative valence evaluations of Westminster parties provided grounds for independence to emerge and dominate politics. This did not happen automatically. Small parties with distinct issue profiles give more prominence to core issues at elections (Klüver and Spoon 2016). The SNP exemplified this dynamic by emphasising independence (Wagner 2012). Following this logic, we would expect independence to be most prominent in SNP appeals before 2007. We anticipate that the SNP’s electoral success signalled to competitors that a strong independence stance was necessary. Like studies of issue competition (Meguid 2005), we argue that competing parties felt they could attract voters by emphasizing the issue (salience) to distinguish (position) themselves from the SNP’s clear, vote-winning position.

Therefore, we predict that CIs diffused to the Scottish parties following the SNP’s success while making explicit appeals on them. The effect will be strongest for the Conservatives, since their location opposite the SNP on both left-right and constitutional cleavages meant they had little to lose by doing so. We expect Labour and the Liberal Democrats (LD), meanwhile, to exhibit greater caution due to their proximity to the SNP on left-right issues.

H1: Scottish parties increased their attention to constitutional issues following the SNP’s 2007 electoral success.

How should we expect voters to respond? Before the SNP entered government, independence was relatively unpopular. Theories of issue competition offer insights into the emergence of new issues and their impact on voter perceptions. Despite some preliminary evidence that positions and salience are linked (Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Meyer and Wagner 2017), scholars often treat the concepts as unrelated. We turn to studies of political responsiveness to consider voter reactions to newly salient issues.

The Party-Voter Link - Independence and Responsiveness

The literature on governmental responsiveness and representation demonstrates that policy responds to changing demands of public opinion (Stimson et al. 1995; Ezrow et al. 2011). In addition to substantive congruence, the government agenda has also been shown to respond to fluctuating issue salience (Klüver and Spoon 2016; Reher 2016). Completing this dynamic cycle, policy outcomes reshape voter preferences (Soroka and Wlezien 2010).

Questions remain as to how specific issues disrupt party competition and voting behaviour (Green-Pedersen 2007). As theories of party strategy imply, political “losers” are more likely to act as issue entrepreneurs; parties often attempt to reverse their fortunes by adopting overlooked issues (Hobolt and de Vries 2015). The Scottish case defies this tendency.

We outline a process wherein the SNP’s electoral success prompted other parties to evaluate the importance of independence to voters. Voters’ attitudes towards issues derive from diverse factors, including elite cues. However, opposed party positions on polarising issues like independence lead partisans to respond differently. Building on a theory of voter responsiveness to elite appeals, we argue that Scottish parties’ distinct positions exhibited towards independence influenced the issue’s salience among supporters.

Scholars contend that long-held values and information about political context determine voters’ attitudes. Voters’ political socialisation and long-term identities correlate with their attitudes (Converse et al. 1980). Factors like economic conditions influence the issues voters perceive as important (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). Yet, the distinctiveness of parties’ offerings plays a key role in forming voters’ preferences and perceiving issues as important. Clearer party alternatives improve voters’ ability to express values as political attitudes (Freire 2008).

Voters’ underlying preferences rely on more stable values and identities. They evaluate important contemporary issues by using information about their political environment. Voters use information derived from traditional and social media to prioritise issues (Ansolébehere and Iyengar 1994; McCombs and Reynolds 2009).

However, voters face challenges and costs to remain informed. Due to these costs, they rely on heuristics to make informed decisions. For example, voters use partisan labels to select candidates (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Pyeatt and Yanus (2016) show that voters use candidate and party leader characteristics like gender to provide information that competes with partisan heuristics to assess party ideology. Ultimately, reliance on heuristics creates opportunities for party effects on voter salience.

Literature on heuristics and cue-taking implies that issue salience to voters depends on the issues parties address. Indeed, empirical studies suggest voters take cues from preferred parties on which issues to prioritise. Issues therefore change in salience depending on their prominence in party platforms (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Goren et al. 2009). Even if voters largely ignore parties’ campaigns, the SNP’s clear ownership and prioritisation of the independence issue meant their surprise electoral success highlighted its importance to voters.

Furthermore, independence is naturally polarizing. Divisive wedge issues of this kind cause voters to find the issue more salient (Hillygus and Shields 2008). Spoon and Klüver (2015) add that this dynamic incentivises parties to prioritise such

issues. This perspective is consistent with ‘directional theory’ which portrays issues as a choice between two distinct solutions (Listhaug et al. 1990). Parties take opposing sides on an issue, appealing to different sides of the electorate. Scotland exhibits this dynamic; all mainstream parties display clear pro- or anti-independence positions. As preferences over independence polarized, the effect of parties’ positions on voter perceptions on these issues likely also increased (Druckman et al. 2013). The increased attention, we predict, leads each party’s supporters to adopt distinctive positions.

This discussion implies that voters respond to increased partisan appeals by evaluating the issue as more important. Multiple perspectives suggest that by emphasizing independence, parties primed voters to adopt clearer positions (Freire 2008; Jacobson 2015). This had the individual effect of mobilizing supporters on an issue by convincing them it was important and, therefore, set the system agenda by changing public opinion (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2003). The logic follows that parties respond to electorally successful competitors’ appeals by emphasising the issue more. This dynamic characterises a cyclical, reinforcing party-voter relationship. If a party increases an issue’s salience by priming voters, others react to public opinion by emphasising it more to appear responsive (Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). Strong partisans take cues about which issues are important from party campaigns (Greene et al. 2018). Applying this logic to Scotland, we expect the SNP’s success increased the salience of independence among potential independence supporters, particularly those that identified with the SNP. This perspective leads us to the following hypotheses.

H2: SNP identifiers are more likely to identify independence as an issue priority when the party places more emphasis on CIs in its manifesto.

We expect other parties to respond to this by increasing their attention to CIs. How might their supporters react? In contrast to SNP identifiers, we expect the salience of independence among identifiers of anti-independence parties to *reduce* in response to increased emphasis. We propose two reasons for decreased partisan emphasis. First, unionist parties frequently link their anti-independence appeals to valence considerations, portraying independence as a distraction from other issues³ - “get on with the day job” has been a common refrain since the SNP came to power. As such, even as unionist parties emphasise constitutional concerns, they prime supporters to prioritise other issues. Second, unlike valence issues (e.g. “education”, “crime”) the issue is a polarised one which lacks a neutral descriptor that both sides use (e.g. “welfare” or “Brexit”). Pro-independence voters who prioritise the issue simply refer to it as “independence”. However, it would make little sense for anti-independence voters to refer to “independence” as a priority. They may refer to “staying in the UK”, “the union”, “preventing independence” or other formulations; lack of a common label makes these voters less likely to identify it as a priority the

³ Examples of this rhetoric from Conservative and Lib Dem manifestos can be found in the qualitative STM discussion in the Appendix.

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3 more prominent and polarised it becomes in public debate. In combination, we
4 expect these factors to result in the following hypothesis.
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7 H3: Non-SNP party identifiers are less likely to identify independence as an
8 issue priority when their respective party places more emphasis on
9 constitutional issues in its manifesto.
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12 Overall, we posit that the emergence of the independence issue is an exemplar
13 of elite-driven issue entrepreneurship. Placed in a non-majoritarian institutional
14 setting and centre-periphery context, the SNP's emphasis on CIs created a feedback
15 loop of increasing party attention and public salience and polarisation.
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Research Design

To evaluate these hypotheses, we examine the rise of CIs in Scotland. We believe that this case presents a difficult test of elite-led issue emergence and diffusion. Foremost, Scottish parties’ known positions and the static state of public opinion over independence left scant room for campaigns to change public opinion. Scottish parties had well-known positions on independence, but the issue only achieved public importance after 2011. Further, the multi-level party structure (UK versus Scottish parties) and electoral systems (Scottish mixed-member versus UK single-member districts) likely limit the scope for one party’s appeals to diffuse to others. Indeed, despite the constitution’s current importance, the Parliament cannot unilaterally change relationships with the UK.

We first undertake automated content analysis on the 25 Scottish election manifestos from five parties with consistent parliamentary representation since 1999. Although the SNP have controlled the executive since 2007, the Labour Party was initially the strongest party and governed in coalition with the LDs. We expect that the SNP’s surprise victories influenced other parties’ emphases on CIs.

To evaluate the rise of CIs, we use the Structural Topic Model (STM; Roberts et al. 2013). The STM uses a pre-defined number of topics to evaluate latent topics contained in a corpus of texts. The STM incorporates content covariates that predict topic prevalence across texts. In the analysis, we pool manifestos and include party-year dummy variables as structural covariates to estimate yearly expected topic proportions for each party.

Although the number of manifestos is small, the large number of sentences (16,382) limits our ability to hand code the corpus. Furthermore, STM enables us to examine the different framings a complex issue like this can take within documents and even sentences. A hand-coded framework like the Regional Manifesto Project (RMP) would not easily facilitate this analysis without multiple issue codes per statement.

We test voter-level hypotheses by combining STM estimates with the BES Scottish subset in 2007, 2011, and 2016. We use a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent considers independence, the constitutional question, devolution or union as the country’s most important issue. We perform subsample analyses on party identifiers given our interest in the effect of parties’ issue strategies on those likeliest to pay attention to the parties’ emphases, their supporters. We include measures for each party’s salience on topics related to independence. We expect that voters attached to a party respond to their campaigns.

We also include a number of individual level controls. We account for respondents’ age (logged), education (year finished primary education), gender and household income.⁴ Young, male, low education and income respondents will be more supportive of Scottish independence (Park et al. 2012; Liñeira and Henderson 2019). We present logistic regression estimates with robust standard errors.

⁴ We are limited in potential controls as variables across waves of the Scottish Election Study are inconsistent.

Analysis

Measuring Manifesto Attention to Independence

We first report descriptive trends in word usage in election manifestos to illustrate the issue's rise in salience. Figure 1 graphs the frequency of four word features relating to independence. We present these features as the frequency of occurrences in each manifesto.⁵

The descriptive overview lends provisional support to our expectations. Foremost, we expect that the SNP will pay greater attention to independence and that other parties will increase their attention following SNP successes in 2007 and 2011. Regarding the term "independence", the SNP referenced it more frequently than other parties at every election until 2016. After the referendum, though, they substantially reduced emphasis. All other parties did the opposite by increasing references, perhaps perceiving that voters' perceptions of the issue (and parties' relative valence) had changed. Taking opposing positions on the issue, both Scottish Conservative and Green parties placed greater emphasis on independence in 2016.

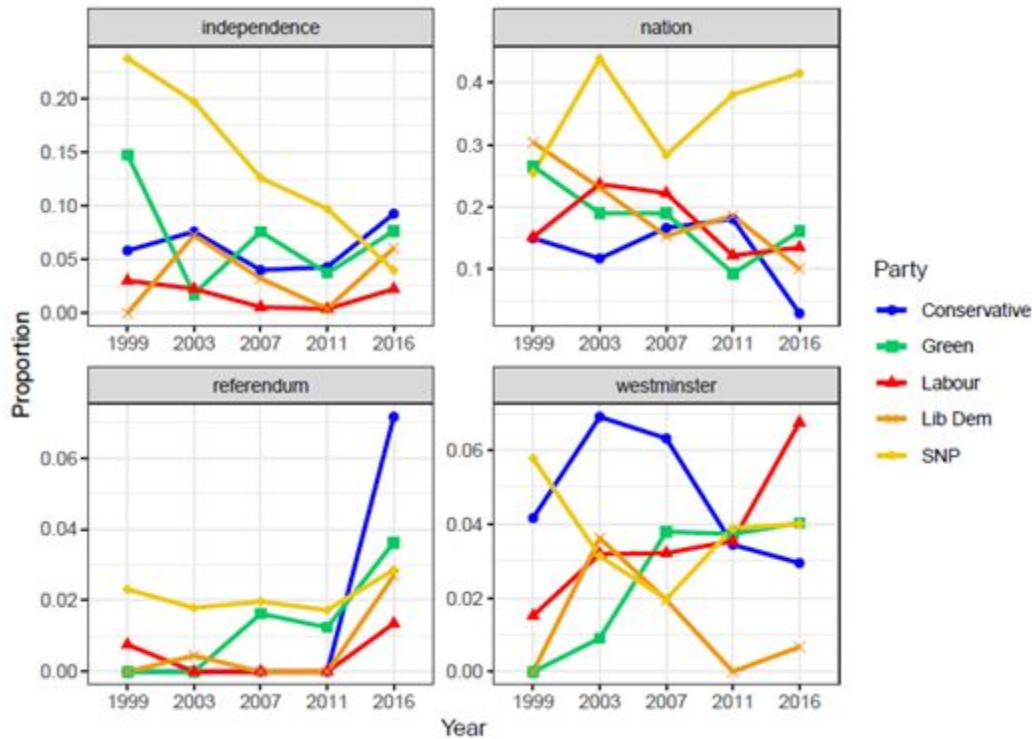
References to the term "referendum" tell a similar story. Having not mentioned the word once in their 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 manifestos, Conservatives referenced it 17 times in 2016, more than any other manifesto in the dataset. This massive increase in attention suggests that they sought to increase their vote share by emphasising the topic. The Conservatives' subsequent electoral success indicates that the approach paid off⁶. All other parties also increased references to this term in 2016, with the exception of the SNP themselves, presumably in tacit recognition of the referendum's failure.

Figure 1. Independence Term Frequencies

⁵ We selected terms on face validity, based on a preliminary reading of the manifestos and observation of Scottish campaigns. We measure feature occurrences using Quanteda in R and include wildcards to capture variants on word stems e.g. "nation" ("national", "nations").

⁶ We searched the 2016 Conservative manifesto for "referendum" to ensure mentions referenced independence. 16 of 17 instances do so.

Feature	Terms
independence	“independen*”
referendum	“referendum”
nation	“nation*”
westminster	“downing”, “westminster”, “union”, “commons”



Additional features highlighted in Figure 1 reveal a dynamic related to incumbency and multi-level governance more than independence. We find the smallest counts for “Westminster”, though patterns reflect real-world events. For example, the LDs virtually eliminated references to Westminster in 2011. This scarcity likely reflects the party’s recognition that participation in a Conservative-led coalition at UK level was unpopular with Scottish voters. The SNP substantially increased attention to the topic in 2011, perhaps deflecting blame to the UK government after their own first session in office or demanding increased devolved powers for Scotland.

Finally, the term “nation” accrues the largest number of mentions. Incumbents mention this feature noticeably more than opposition parties, presumably in defence of their governmental record, although the SNP started from a higher baseline than Labour and the LDs⁷. Those two parties greatly decreased the number of mentions in 2011 having entered opposition in 2007, while the SNP greatly increased their mentions.

⁷ SNP manifestos were checked to ensure that “nation” reflected more than mentions to the party’s full name, which is indeed used sparingly.

In summary, these simple figures provide some preliminary clues as to the rise of CIs. Most obviously, the Conservative Party leaned heavily on opposition to independence in 2016, while the SNP seemed to decrease their attention to the topic. It is also clear that the independence issue rose in prominence after the 2014 referendum.

A Structural Topic Model of Scottish Manifestos

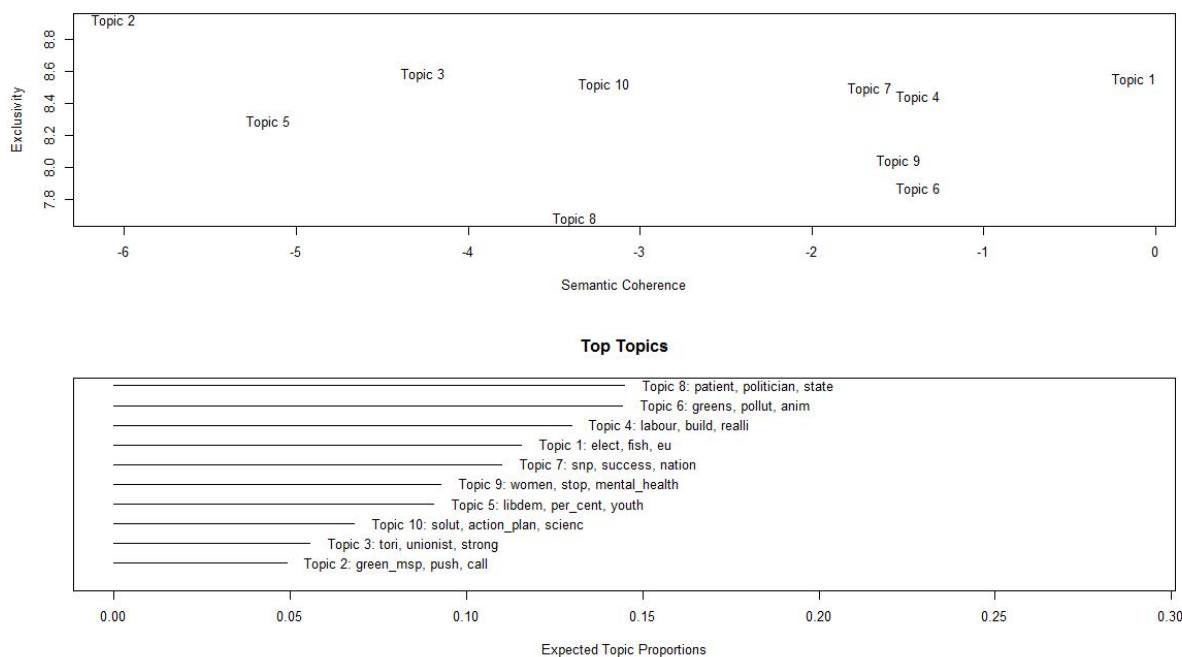
To show a more detailed picture of the party manifestos we present the STM results. In the main analysis, we present the results of a 10 topic model based on 25 manifestos (4,719 features)⁸, however, we find evidence of an independence dimension with nearly every specification of k ⁹. As the descriptive evidence shows, independence is an important issue in Scottish politics.

We present the basic topic proportions from the 10 topic STM in Figure 2. To ease the substantive interpretation of the results, we created a thesaurus of words and phrases that the model interpreted as independence or “indyref” related such as “scottish independence”, “independence referendum” and “devolution”. We create a separate thesaurus for unionist words and phrases. The results show three topics that include words related to devolution and Scottish powers. See Table 1 in the Appendix for a list of highest probability words and most frequent/exclusive words for each topic.

Figure 2. Topic Quality and Prevalence from the STM

⁸ We followed common pre-processing techniques, including converting all words to lower case, reducing words to stems and removing stop words, punctuation, symbols and numbers. We also removed words that did not occur in at least two manifestos and removed a large number of additional terms that did not have obvious substantive meaning. We created a list of collocations (multiple word pairs) which frequently co-occurred within the texts to aid substantive interpretation of the results (e.g. “Scottish Independence”).

⁹ Topic models require the researcher select k , the number of topics. Few substantive guidelines direct this choice as most approaches measure how quickly the computer estimates the model or the coherence/exclusivity of topics. Models including more topics tend to estimate finer grained results but may miss substantively connected issues, while those containing only a small number of topics may unnecessarily conflate issues using similar words. We find that models using smaller and larger numbers of topics lead to substantively similar results. We present the results of a 10 topic model which succinctly captures three frames used to discuss CIs.



Each of the three topics containing references to independence reveal different frames used to discuss CIs. Topic 1 includes words closely related to Scottish Parliament jurisdiction and issues considered important at Scottish level e.g. tension over EU fishing rights.¹⁰ Topic 3 includes references to both independence and unionist positions as well as discussion of the Scottish school system, communities and taxation powers. This topic likely reflects debate over demands for greater devolution and, perhaps, the linkage of independence positions to valence issues. Finally, Topic 7 includes terms linked to policy initiatives undertaken at the Scottish level and the role of the Parliament in funding and investing in these policies. Other topics include references to specific parties' policy demands, but these are not explicitly or closely linked to terms focused on independence.

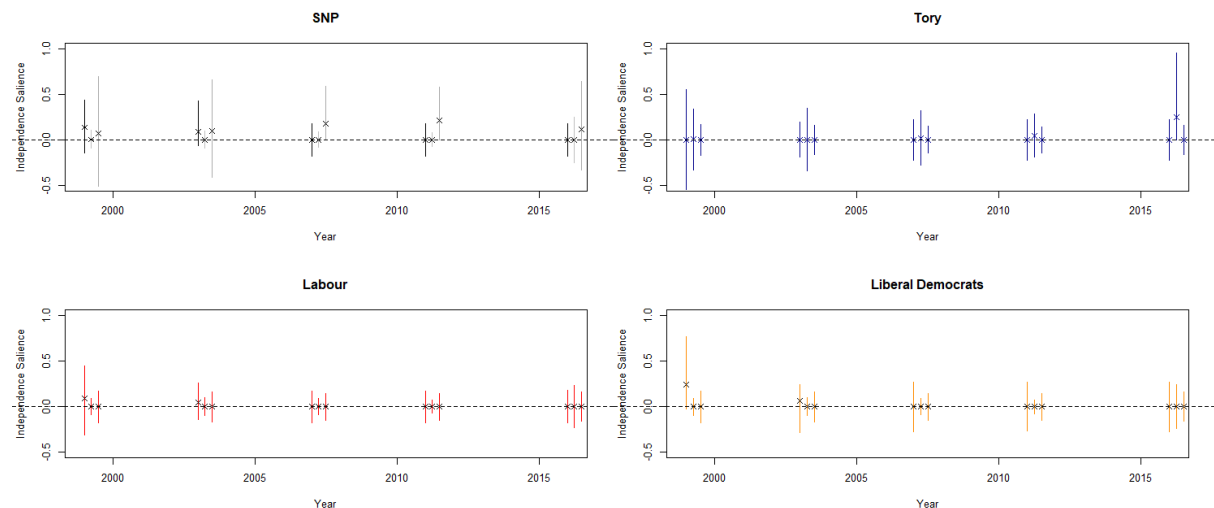
Figure 2 presents the prevalence or proportion of the manifestos for each topic and a plot showing the topic quality. The top cell of Figure 2 illustrates the relative coherence and exclusivity of each topic.¹¹ Topics with greater exclusivity and coherence (higher values in each case) are substantively easier to interpret as they avoid conflating multiple terms and include less overlap with others. The three independence topics (1, 3 and 7) score well on exclusivity and topics 1 and 7 rank well in overall coherence. Topic 3 performs slightly poorer in terms of coherence, likely reflecting the combination of all territorial issues, including devolution, in a single topic. The bottom half of Figure 2 shows that topic 1 and 7 also represent substantial attention, whereas topic 3 is the second from the bottom in terms of prevalence. A comparison of these results from an automated approach positively

¹⁰ For additional qualitative validation of these topics, see the Appendix.

¹¹ "Exclusivity" measures the extent to which top words in a topic do not appear as top words in any other topic, whereas "coherence" refers to the co-occurrence of top words in the same documents.

correlate with related measures derived from human coded manifestos from the RMP.¹²

Figure 3. Expected Salience on Independence Related Topics from the Structural Topic Model



Based on these topics, we use party-year dummy variables to predict the expected prevalence. We present the results for the four largest parties in Figure 3 where the x marks the predicted salience in a year with bars denoting 95% confidence intervals. For each year, we present the expected proportion of attention for topic 1, 3 and 7 consecutively.

Given the procedural nature of Topic 1, it is perhaps unsurprising the SNP, Labour and LDs give it the greatest attention at the first election. The Conservatives barely reference this topic. Other parties focus on these issues to some extent up to the 2007 election. In the case of the SNP, this attention is replaced by an alternate frame, Topic 7.

Independence is primarily captured through Topic 3 and 7. The SNP eventually adopts an independence frame exemplified by Topic 7 linking independence to specific devolved Scottish powers. The party's attention increased from a low level in 1999 and peaked in 2007. The attention decreases slightly in 2011 and 2016. In contrast to our first hypothesis, there is not much of a reaction to this attention by the other parties using this frame.

Despite the limited reaction to the rise of attention to Topic 7 by Labour and the LDs after the 2007 and 2011 elections, there is a strong increase in the attention that the Conservatives give to Topic 3 in 2016. Somewhat consistent with our first hypothesis, this attention could be interpreted as a strategic attempt to describe

¹² Topic 1 positively correlates with the salience of the RMP centre-periphery dimension (SNP, 0.63, Con, 0.341. Lab, 0.97), but other topics correlate less so (except the Tories, Topic 3: 0.51). The RMP Independence scale correlates less consistently (SNP .05, Con .51, and Labour .97) suggesting that the RMP's single issue coding scheme cannot easily account for diverse framing of issues using an independence framework (Gómez et al. 2018).

independence in a negative light by highlighting the challenges faced by the SNP government. Conservatives likely perceived independence positions as a negative liability for the SNP and therefore strongly emphasized it to undermine the SNP’s position and cement a reputation as unapologetic defenders of the union.

Issue Salience and Voter Priorities

In a final analysis, we predict the likelihood that voters perceive independence as the most important issue. Using the BES in 2007, 2011 and 2016, we find that this conservative, open-ended measure of voter attention or salience ranges from 8% of voters to almost 14% across years.¹³ Our primary independent variable is the sum of attention on CIs for each party based on the topic model results. We present the logistic regression results in Table 1.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Identifiers’ MII

	SNP	Tory	Labour	Lib Dems
Independence	18.384***	-9.591***	-525.272***	-1814.918***
Issue Salience	(1.765)	(1.703)	(91.798)	(437.749)
Household	0.150	-0.056	-0.078	0.613
Income	(0.146)	(0.275)	(0.225)	(0.517)
Education	0.085	0.159	0.167 ⁺	0.550*
	(0.057)	(0.107)	(0.094)	(0.238)
ln(Age)	0.169	-0.154	0.398	1.203 ⁺
	(0.260)	(0.457)	(0.469)	(0.665)
Gender	-0.656***	-0.336	-0.386	-0.783 ⁺
	(0.171)	(0.289)	(0.280)	(0.472)
Constant	-5.175***	-1.043	-2.570	-7.366*
	(1.257)	(2.098)	(2.025)	(3.321)
Log Likelihood	-550.860	-190.457	-227.622	-71.341
Chi-Sqr	133.728	38.527	43.847	37.197
N	1547	865	1251	375

Note: Table 1 presents logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood that partisan identifiers hold Scottish Independence as the most important issue in an election. Huber-White Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed: ⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Our second hypothesis predicts that SNP party supporters will be more likely to respond that independence is the most important issue when the party increases attention to these issues. Hypothesis 3 predicts the inverse relationship for the unionist parties. The results in Table 1 provide suggestive evidence for this perspective.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the coefficient for independence salience in the SNP identifier model is positive and statistically significant at conventional levels.

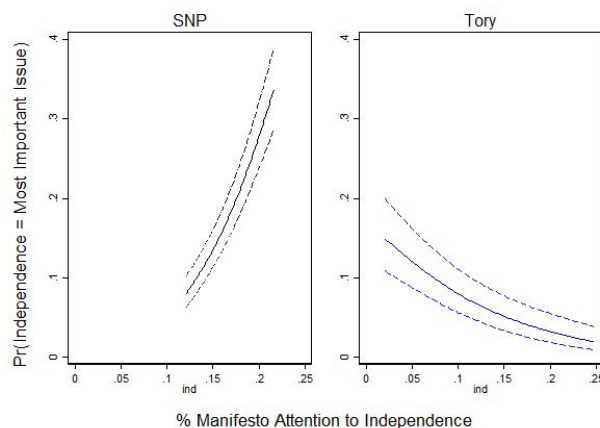
¹³ For a breakdown of voter perceptions by partisan identifiers, see Figure A4 in the Appendix.

This result indicates that the years that the SNP gave greater attention to independence also saw an increased likelihood that those identifying with the SNP consider independence to be the most important issue. This evidence suggests that the limited attention to CIs in 2016 may have also played a role in reducing the issue's prominence.

Table 1 also provides evidence consistent with our third hypothesis. In particular, the coefficient for each unionist party's attention is negative and statistically significant across models. In the years that each party placed greater attention to their positions on CIs, the coefficients show that unionist party identifiers were less likely to consider independence as the most important issue. The effects are quite large in each case, although the limited attention to independence by Labour and LDs offers us little confidence in these coefficients. These results are consistent with the perspective that the parties' attention to CIs encouraged voters to focus on other pressing issues.

We present predicted effects from the estimates in Table 1 for two parties with the clearest effect in Figure 4. The figure demonstrates a strong positive increase in the likelihood of holding an issue important for SNP identifiers when it includes greater manifesto attention to independence. Figure 4 also demonstrates the reverse effect for the Conservatives. In years that Conservatives barely discussed independence, Tory identifiers held similar levels of support to other voters. However, Conservative identifiers displayed a strong decrease in likelihood when the party campaigned on a unionist position.

Figure 4. Predicted Likelihood of holding Independence as MII¹⁴



Control variables in Table 1 provide suggestive evidence as well. For both SNP and Conservative party identifiers, the coefficient for gender indicates that women are less likely to list independence as the most important issue. Older respondents and those who finished full time education at an older age are more likely to report independence as the most important issue among Conservative

¹⁴ 95% confidence intervals are estimated from 1000 draws of the variance-covariance matrix in Table 1, models 1 and 2.

identifiers and to a lesser extent, LD supporters. Income does not play a consistent role among any of the parties’ supporters.

Discussion

We argue that the electoral success of a single party focused on a divisive issue can lead other parties and voters to form more specific and salient positions on that issue. From an elite perspective, therefore, the rise of Scottish independence largely owes to the SNP’s 2007 surprise success. Although it was a surprisingly close contest, the failure of the independence referendum in 2014 created the context for the Conservatives to adopt a clearer oppositional frame on independence.

We find evidence consistent with our perspective based on a STM predicting parties’ attention to CIs and logistic regression of party identifiers’ attitudes towards independence. The rise of CIs within the SNP’s manifestos coincides with the timing of the SNP’s success. The Conservative Party’s challenge to the SNP’s framing, therefore, provided the party with a means of attracting voters that may have otherwise felt unrepresented on an issue they deeply distrust. We further find evidence that the SNP’s attention to independence increases the likelihood that the party’s supporters consider independence to be the most important issue whereas other parties’ attention is associated with decreases in the issue’s salience with voters. As one would expect, what we find suggests that as the party political options on a polarised issue become more obvious, voters find it easier to sort in a partisan way along the relevant dimension. These results are consistent with Bisgaard and Slothuus (2018) who find that elite cues are influential for partisan perceptual gaps.

These results have implications for the study of emergent nationalist movements in countries with strong regional movements such as Catalonia in Spain or Quebec in Canada. The rise of a local political organization can impact the broader debate in a country. Although few took the SNP’s stance on independence seriously before 2007, the party’s electoral success resulted in the near-realisation of the policy. Other parties likely made the issue more prominent and consequential through their pursuant appeals.

Viewed in the context of issue competition, Scottish independence exemplifies a wedge issue. After its rise in salience due to the referendum, a second party successfully staked a claim to ownership of the issue by emphasising its *opposition* to the traditional owner’s position. Further study of the issue ownership dynamics surrounding Scottish independence could be fruitful, especially with regard to “associative” and “competence” dimensions (Walgrave et al., 2014). Our perspective would predict that Scottish voters overwhelmingly associate the SNP as the party of independence, but competence assessments depend on individuals’ constitutional preferences.

More generally, these findings speak to the multi-layered relationship between position- and emphasis-based competition. Rather, our findings suggest that different modes of party competition work in tandem; an increase in public salience and party emphasis turned it into a locus of direct confrontation.

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3 As Key (1966) once described, mass opinion is but an echo of elite preferences;
4 the diffusion of ideas amongst elites likely follows a similar process in response to
5 electoral success. Voters' roles are thus more significant than Key once suggested.
6 Through voting, citizens can give life to new (or old) issues alike.
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Appendix

In this Appendix, we provide additional information evidence on attitudes towards Scottish independence and evidence to support the topic model evaluations. IN the first section, I discuss evidence to support the main argument. I then go on to discuss additional validation of the STM results comparing qualitative evidence, topic correlations and estimates from a hierarchical topic model.

Background information on Scottish Politics

Foremost, Figure A1 shows the broad support for independence from the Scottish Social Attitudes survey since the foundation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. As can be seen, attitudes remained fairly stable prior to 2011 among party supporters, except for a slight increase in 2004 that reverted to more unionist positions following the election. The bigger change occurs following the 2011 election leading up to the independence referendum in 2014 among SNP supporters and the public more broadly. The results are largely consistent with the analysis of party identifiers in Table 1 in the main analysis.

Figure A2 provides additional background on the parties' relative positions. As discussed in the main text, Labour and the SNP held relatively close positions on the left-right dimension whereas the Conservative Party hold more distant preferences. The biggest issue separating Labour and the SNP is over their Scottish Independence priorities as shown in Figure 3.

Figure A3 shows the change in salience of the centre-periphery dimension as measured by the Regional Manifesto Project. As discussed in the main text, the SNP far prefers powers to the periphery relative to the other parties. These hand-coded estimates from the RMP capture a related, but slightly different dynamic, although the correlate strongly with the estimated positions from the STM.

Figure A4 presents the proportion of respondents listing independence as the most important issue in the open-ended questions from the BES for partisan identifiers and independents. Clearly, the SNP identifiers hold the issue as more important than other parties' identifiers, as predicted. Consistent with the main argument, the overall attention decreases in 2016 after the 2014 referendum as the SNP's emphasis on the issue decreases in the elections that year. In most years, economic issues and the EU (in 2016) otherwise dominate public opinion.

Validating the STM

Table A1, provides an overview of the most frequent and exclusive (FREX) words for each of the estimated topics presented in the main analysis. Following Roberts et al. (2013), these words can be used to evaluate the content of the estimated topics. FREX words are those that are most frequent in the dataset, but that are most exclusive to the topic; they do not occur regularly in other topics. The three topics linked to the constitutional question are topics 1, 3 and 7. As is highlighted in Table A1, the references to these terms pull out different frames for describing independence.

Table A2 presents a set of qualitative examples of quotes from SNP and Conservative manifestos which exemplify the key constitutional issue topics

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identified by the STM. These statements not only provide further validation for the model, but clearly illustrate the dynamics it is detecting. These quotes also demonstrate the multifaceted nature of independence-related appeals. The issue is clearly linked to outcomes (whether positive or negative), couched in emotive language and explicitly linked to other issues.

As the qualitative assessment suggests, the independence topics relate to multiple ways or frames for discussing the issue. Figure A5 demonstrates further evidence of how the topics correlate. Topic 1 is mostly closely connected to the underlying independence concept, but is discussed in isolation from other domestic politics issues. This contrasts Topic 7, which more directly relates to other topics emphasizing domestic, devolved powers including education and health care. On the other hand, Topic 3 more closely links to economic policies, likely reflect the Tory’ framing of independence as negative for the Scottish economy.

Finally, Figure A6 presents the results of a hierarchical topic model. As the number of splits between the programme and the other Tory platforms show, the dendogram illustrates that the Conservative 2016 manifesto reflects a categorically different type of manifesto. On the other hand, the 2011 and 2016 SNP manifestos reflect the changing language of independence as they focused on the lead up to and the fall out from the 2014 referendum. In both cases, the dendogram suggests that those manifestos written following the SNP’s 2007 surprise victory reflect a different language than those manifestos that preceded them.

Figure A1. Voter Support for Independence from Scottish Social Attitudes.

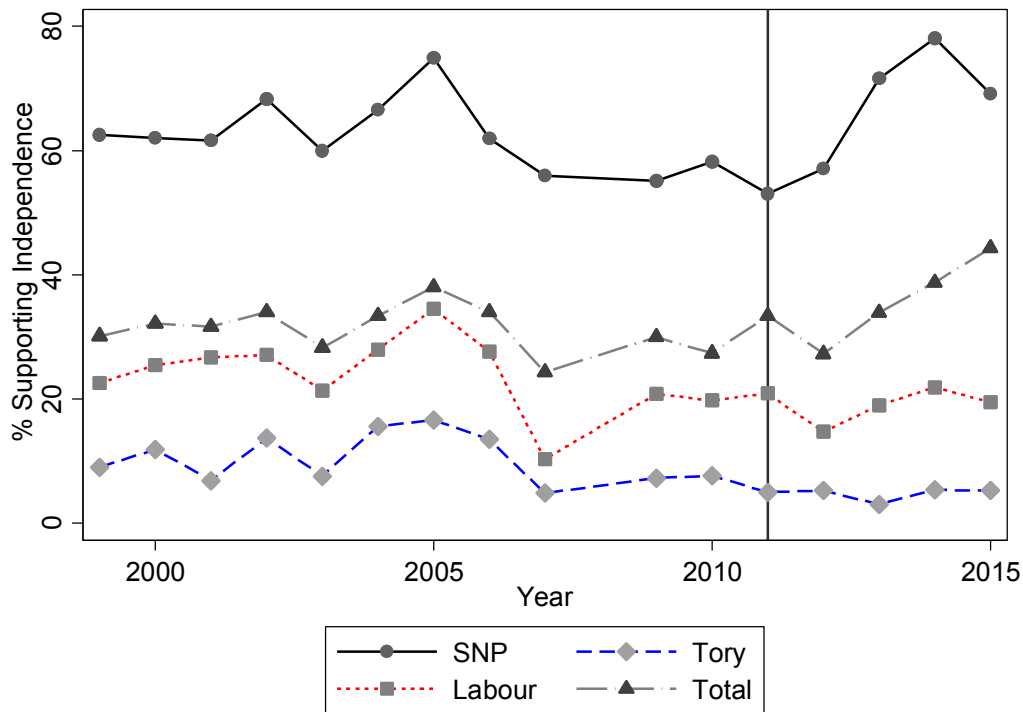


Figure A2. Left-Right Positions from the Regional Manifestos Project.

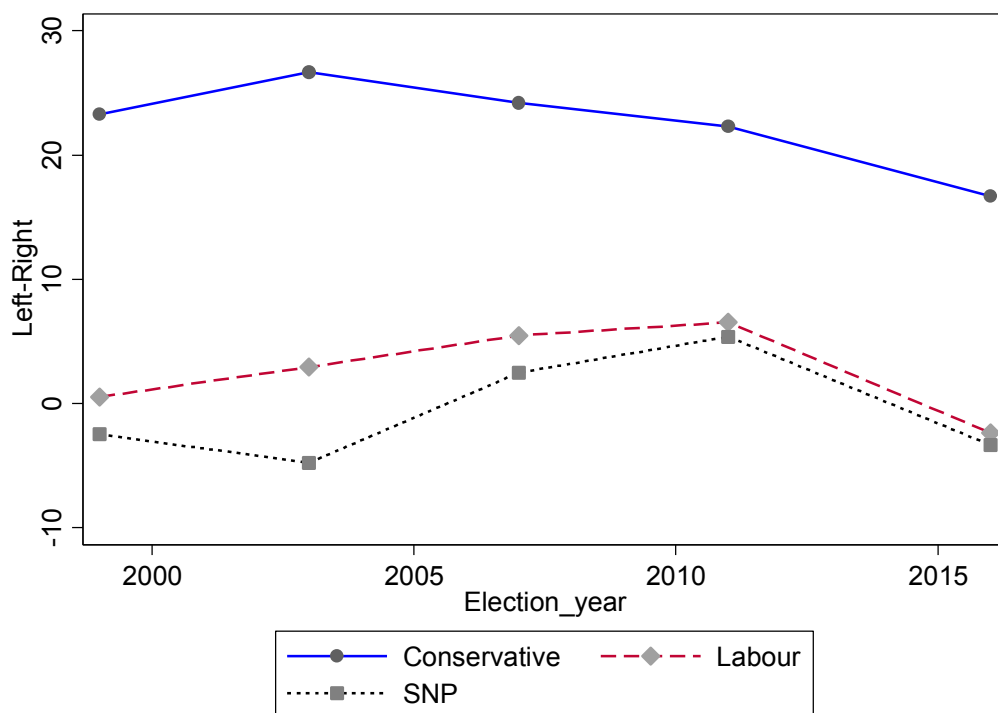


Figure A3. Salience of the Centre-Periphery dimension from the Regional Manifestos Project.

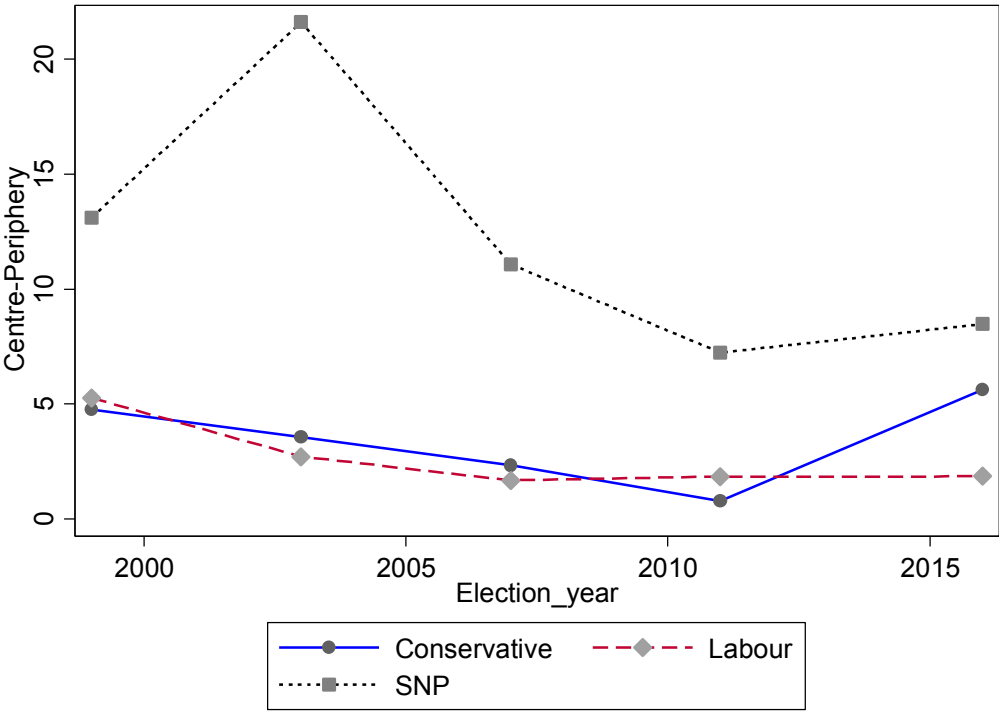


Figure A4. Percentage of party identifiers reporting Independence as MII

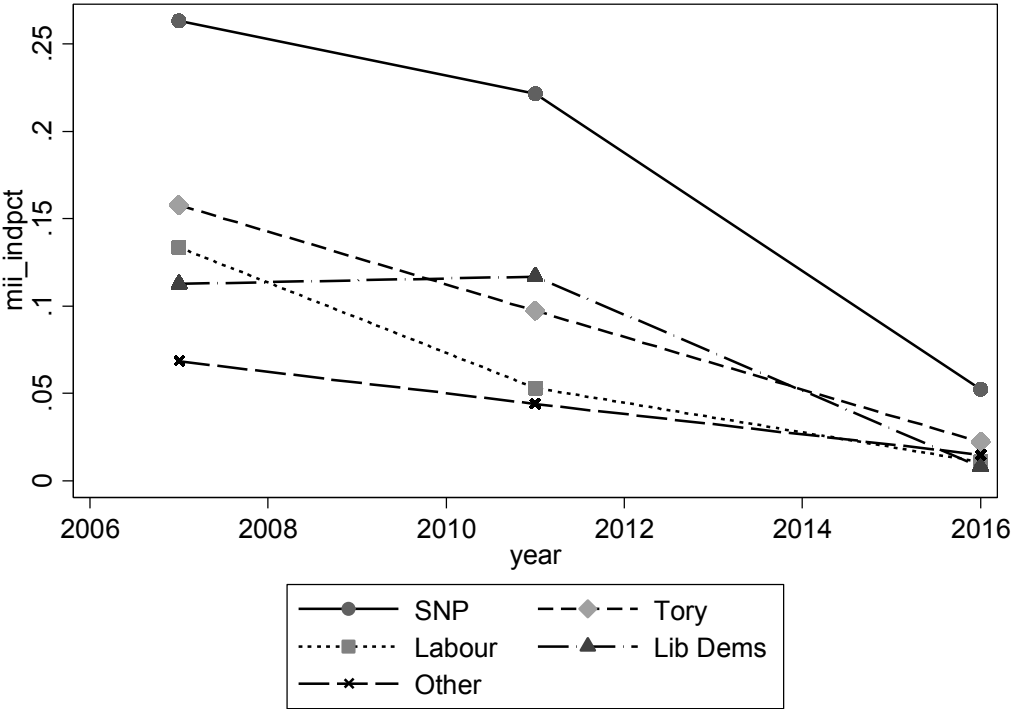


Figure A5. Topic Correlations from 10 topic model

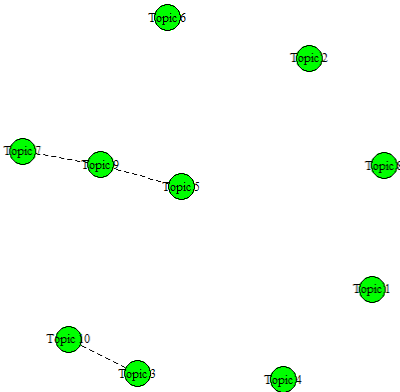


Figure A6. Hierarchical Clustering

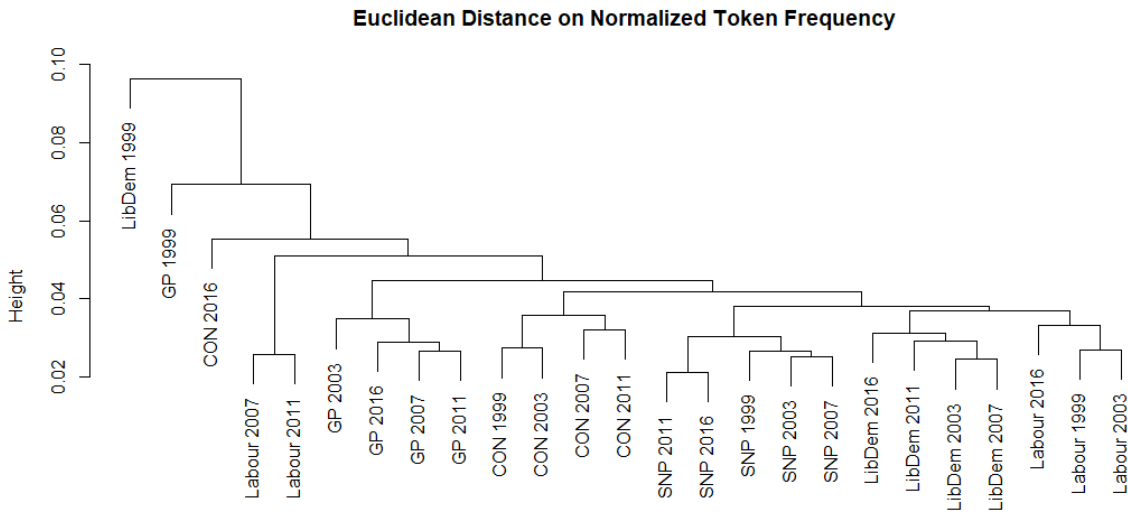


Figure A7. Predicted Party Attention to Constitutional Issues over Time

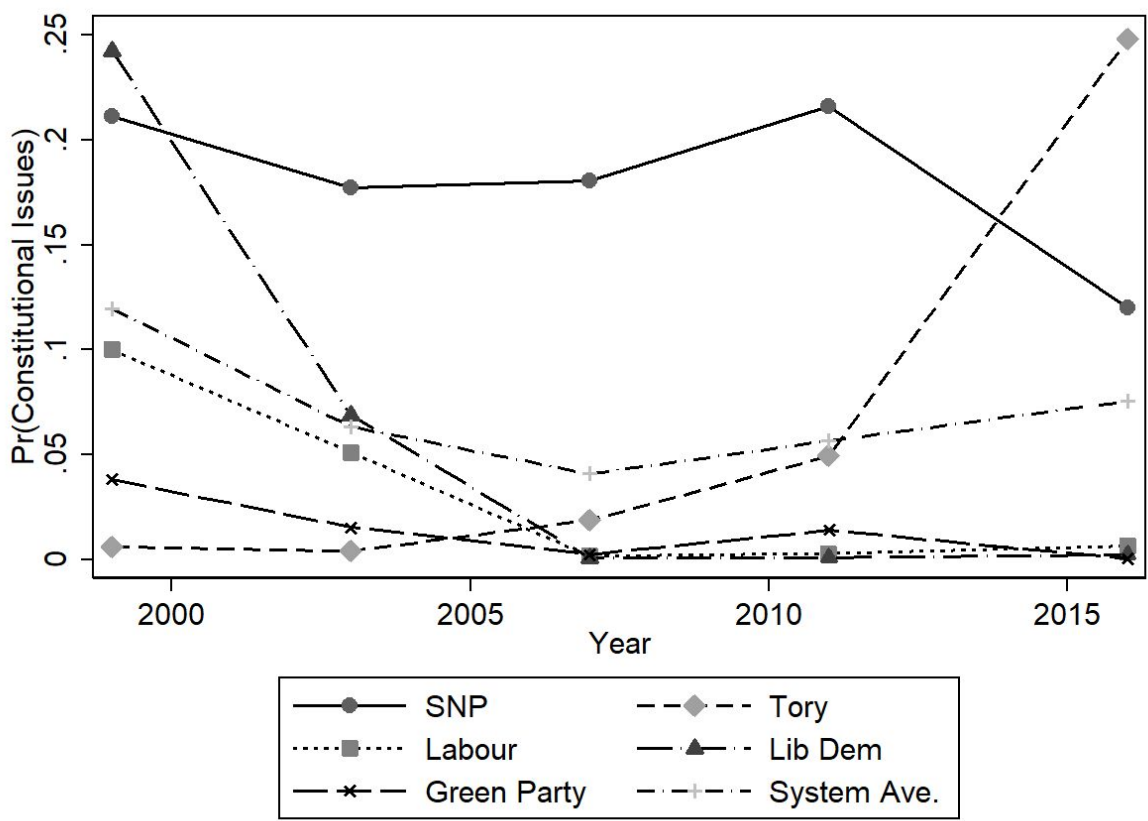


Table A1. Structural Topic Model, Topic Content

Topic 1 Top Words:

Highest Prob: develop, nation, educ, parliament, eu, peopl, govern, hous, polici, scots_gov, standard, communiti, resourc, school, public_servic, elect, promot, public, servic, area

FREX: elect, fish, eu, parliament, lifelong, public_servic, deal, key, administr, indyref, assist, modern, water, differ, voluntari, polici, resourc, bed, abolish, three

Topic 2 Top Words:

Highest Prob: greens, green_msp, peopl, communiti, scots_gov, public, local, land, energi, right, campaign, access, equal, care, fund, hous, power, educ, tax, protect

FREX: green_msp, push, call, greens, campaign, gender, equal, land, democraci, rent, women, citizen, inequ, fight, divers, properti, carer, transit, human, candid

Topic 3 Top Words:

Highest Prob: tori, unionist, snp, strong, tax, scots_gov, govern, school, communiti, fund, addit, busi, continu, parliament, develop, time, well, invest, everi, hous

FREX: tori, unionist, strong, addit, snp, decid, cooper, hold, alway, properti, last, business_r, focus, well, afford, scottish_govern, result, devolution, competit, exampl

Topic 4 Top Words:

Highest Prob: labour, communiti, build, school, peopl, continu, children, develop, invest, opportun, take, busi, time, famili, nation, introduc, skill, servic, commit, improv

FREX: labour, build, realli, famili, matter, learn, music, young, behaviour, prosper, excel, fight, improv, victim, children, expand, skill, believ, step, talent

Topic 5 Top Words:

Highest Prob: communiti, libdem, peopl, school, local, develop, reduc, energi, health, busi, fund, children, time, includ, young_peopl, plan, invest, servic, power, govern

FREX: libdem, per_cent, youth, young_peopl, facil, wait, involv, reduc, major, primari, rang, train, sport, offend, pilot, cycl, import, think, crime, centr

Topic 6 Top Words:

Highest Prob: greens, communiti, develop, energi, local, peopl, scots_gov, power, public, includ, reduc, educ, food, social, renew, chang, fund, transport, build, environ

FREX: greens, pollut, anim, wast, organ, section, environment, emiss, space, oppos, nuclear, recycl, food, imag, public_transport, traffic, reduct, climat, trade, credit

Topic 7 Top Words:

Highest Prob: snp, communiti, nation, continu, fund, take, develop, includ, invest, build, govern, part, school, energi, plan, protect, futur, access, improv, local

FREX: snp, success, nation, alreadi, take, part, continu, wider, indyref, made, drink, creation, ahead, creativ, public_sector, project, includ, examin, import, fisheri

Topic 8 Top Words:

Highest Prob: school, local, labour, crime, tori, peopl, communiti, patient, time, govern, tax, council, drug, give, fund, nhs, reduc, mani, rural, busi

FREX: patient, politician, state, bureaucraci, run, far, sentenc, rehabilit, money, drug, scottish_execut, fishermen, choic, crimin, farmer, tourist, head, burden, crime, neighbourhood

Topic 9 Top words:

Highest Prob: invest, peopl, labour, communiti, develop, power, children, futur, tax, educ, cut, protect, servic, fund, school, right, continu, care, govern, public

FREX: women, stop, mental_health, fair, cancer, fairer, human, inequ, labour, workforc, abus, wage, cut, invest, disabl, workplac, futur, colleg, gap, transform

Topic 10 Top words:

Highest Prob: busi, develop, communiti, local, job, fund, give, reform, solut, servic, encourag, creat, invest, educ, opportun, school, economi, peopl, care, nation

FREX: solut, action_plan, scienc, bank, busi, export, region, alcohol, grow, scope, innov, reform, revolut, colleg, intervent, keep, public_sector, procur, group, help

Table A2. Qualitative validation of STM estimates

Topic 1
<p>"The only way to determine Scotland's constitutional future is by <u>referendum</u>, because only a <u>referendum</u> allows a clear choice on a constitutional matter that often crosses party divides. In any <u>referendum</u> the Scottish Green Party will campaign for the <u>Scottish Parliament</u> to have the same powers as any other member state in an increasingly interdependent <u>European Union</u>. However, we do not wish to see the replacement of one centralised state with another. Greater power needs to be shifted to <u>communities</u>, to ensure that decisions are taken at the level closest to those affected by them." (Green 2007)</p>
<p>"The major new powers of the Scottish <u>Parliament</u> mean we can make different decisions, and act in the best interest of the people of Scotland by rejecting further cuts to <u>public services</u>. We rule out another <u>referendum</u> on <u>independence</u> during the lifetime of the next <u>Parliament</u>. We believe the UK remaining part of the <u>European Union</u> is the best way to protect jobs and rights for workers in Scotland. We will campaign for a 'remain' vote in the EU <u>referendum</u> on 23 June 2016." (Labour 2016)</p>
<p>"To be the best again we need a strong economy, fair tax and good <u>public services</u>. That's why we support continued membership of the <u>European Union</u>, a reformed tax system that makes work pay and investment in good <u>public services</u>. And finally, to be the best again, we will move on from the <u>independence</u> debate to bring unity, healing the divisions of the <u>referendum</u>. I am a strong supporter of the UK, and always will be" (Lib Dem 2016)</p>
<p>"With the use of our own <u>resources</u>, Scotland could be the 7th most prosperous <u>nation</u> in the world a <u>nation</u> that can use its wealth for its own priorities." (SNP 1999)</p>
<p>"A country that looks after its <u>public services</u> looks after its <u>people</u>. After all, what is more important than the health and <u>education</u> of our population and a justice system that is fair and equal? The SNP want high quality <u>public services</u> that Scotland can be proud of... Our <u>public services</u> are vital and a benchmark for any <u>developed</u> country." (SNP 2003)</p>
<p>"With <u>Independence</u> we can once again take our full and rightful place in the international <u>community</u>. Even under the limited powers of the current <u>Parliament</u> we will press for a greater say in external relations, and make as full a contribution as possible to the international <u>community</u> of <u>nations</u>." (SNP 2003)</p>
<p>"We believe that the Scottish <u>Parliament</u> should have the right to hold another <u>referendum</u> if there is clear and sustained evidence that <u>independence</u> has become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish <u>people</u> – or if there is</p>

a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will.” (SNP 2016)

Topic 3

“One reason why the government has been allowed to waste money on such a grand scale is that there is a lack of accountability and responsibility over the funding it receives. Conservatives acknowledge that there is a debate to be had about the powers of the Scottish Parliament. We believe that devolution is a process, not an event, and so we would welcome this debate.” (Conservative 2007)

“The Business Rates Reform Bill will not increase the burden of business rates, and will prohibit sector specific supplements such as the tax on retail jobs recently proposed by the SNP, and stopped by the Scottish Conservatives. We will extend the scope of the small business rates relief scheme over the life of the Parliament as the public finances allow.” (Conservative 2011)

“We will oppose any attempt by the SNP to hold a 2nd referendum during this parliament – no matter the result of the EU referendum this June. We will support a fresh, positive drive to promote the benefits of the Union. In our view, this should not focus on the downsides of independence - though there are many - but on the strength and values of the Union.” (Conservative 2016)

“We support devolving more responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament, including capital borrowing powers and new tax powers, such as stamp duty on property and landfill tax. We also support responsibility for setting the drink-drive limit and the speed limit in Scotland being devolved to the Scottish Parliament” (Labour 2011)

“Our commitment to remain in both the UK and European Unions, which are so important for our economy, provides the certainty business needs. We must move on from the arguments of the past to provide business with stability for the future.” (Labour 2016)

“The Steel Commission is right to call for a second constitutional convention to consider the best ways to devolve new powers, including taxation powers, to the Scottish Parliament.” (Lib Dem 2007)

“Standing up for Scotland is what we do. We never shy away from an opportunity to make this country even stronger. The SNP government stepped in to save Scottish steel, Prestwick Airport, and the Ferguson shipyard. And when the Tories tried to cut Scotland’s budget by £7 billion, we saw them off.” (SNP 2016)

Topic 7

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“This is a clear breach of the Edinburgh Agreement, which tied both sides in the referendum to “respect” the result. Worse, it will create further uncertainty in Scotland and will prevent better government. The Scottish Government should focus on the issues that affect us every day – improving our health service, creating better schools, and building a more secure country for us all. Instead, reading standards have declined, our farming communities have suffered from the SNP’s IT fiasco, and the move to a centralised police force hasn’t worked.” (Conservative 2016)

“We support calls for Scottish independence, not out of nationalistic fervour, but as a means to create a more locally-based, sustainable, and democratic society.” (Green 2007)

“Swapping a centralised UK Government for a centralised Scottish Government isn’t the radical change that many wanted. Local community empowerment is an agenda Holyrood must embrace instead of seeing it as a threat. We’ll argue for a multi-option referendum with choices including the status quo, a stronger Scottish Parliament with powers defined through a participative process, and full independence based on a written constitution, and we will back this third option. We’ll also put the case for the decentralisation of power from Holyrood and local authorities.” (Green 2011)

“Labour's London government has not scrapped tuition fees or introduced free personal care. The SNP will put independence as a priority before schools and hospitals. The Conservatives only propose to cut services to pay for tax cuts.” (Lib Dem 2003)

“Our five years will be focused on making Scotland the best again, transforming opportunity for children, and our economy, by additional investment in education, skills and mental health. We will not support a second referendum on independence in the next parliamentary term. Full stop.” (Lib Dem 2016)

“Independence is the natural state for nations like our own. Scotland has the people, the talent and potential to become one of the big success stories of the 21st century. We can match the success of independent Norway – according to the UN the best place in the world to live. We can do as well as independent Ireland, now the fourth most prosperous nation on the planet. With independence Scotland will be free to flourish and grow. We can give our nation a competitive edge.” (SNP 2007)

“We want to see Scotland have responsibility for its own destiny and take its rightful place among small, successful independent countries. There is so much more we could do with the powers of any other nation.” (SNP 2011)

“We want our rural communities to prosper and be well supported by high quality public services. We want more young people to have the opportunity to build careers and successful futures in the areas where they grow up. We want to build rural Scotland’s future, investing in homes, infrastructure and connectivity.” (SNP 2016)

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