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How propaganda in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum helped to shape the cause for an independent Scotland

Abstract

The article follows the key propaganda battle between the pro- and anti-Scottish independence camps in the three-year period before the Scottish independence referendum was held on 18 September 2014. By focusing on the narrative of the major pro-independence proponents, first of all Alex Salmond, at the time the First Minister of Scotland, the article points towards a changed shift in defining the reasons for independence – from a more traditional nationalistic rhetoric, towards insisting on a false dichotomy between Scotland and Westminster. At the same time, the article explains the major pitfall of the anti-independence propaganda, namely its negativity and insisting on fearmongering and warnings of possible economic hardships in case Scotland became independent. Eventually, it was the intervention of Gordon Brown, former British Labour Prime Minister from Scotland (2007-10), just days before the referendum, which crucially gave the anti-independence camp a fresh lease of energy, by reminding the Scots that there was nothing wrong in voting for the Union, as patriotism is not an exclusive domain of nationalists.

Keywords

Scotland, United Kingdom, Scottish independence, 2014 Scottish referendum, propaganda, nationalism, Alex Salmond, Alistair Darling, Gordon Brown.

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The date of the Scottish independence referendum was agreed between the British Prime Minister David Cameron and his Scottish counterpart and the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) Alex Salmond in October 2012 and was set for 18 September 2014 (Black, "Cameron and Salmond strike referendum deal"). The Scots had already had two devolution referenda in the recent past; the first, held in 1979, on the setting of the Scottish Assembly, failed due to a lower turnout of the electorate then required. The second one in 1997, to decide again whether there was enough support for the Scottish Parliament and government with limited powers, was successful. The setting up of the parliament, sitting in Holyrood in Edinburgh, just before the turn of the century thus announced that there was a new role the SNP, until then one of smaller parties in British politics, would play in the political life of Scotland in the 21st century. Upon winning a majority in Scottish elections in 2011, Salmond confirmed his commitment to hold a referendum for full Scottish independence. Cameron's government in London would not oppose this, and throughout 2012 the two governments worked towards agreeing the technical details of the agreement, which was finally signed in October that year. When the Scottish Parliament voted for the Referendum Bill in June 2013, everything was set for the big showdown. The most important campaign group for independence, named Yes Scotland, included the SNP, Scottish Greens and Socialists. Their main rivals, headed by Alistair Darling, former Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister in the British Government) in Gordon Brown's Labour Government of the United Kingdom in 2007-10, called themselves Better together (aka No), uniting Scotland's branches of the three largest London-based national parties, Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. Various political organisations, think tanks, grassroots movements, minor parties and individuals gave their support to one of these two main campaign groups, while some acted on their own.

The two camps and their propaganda: The nationalism of the Yes Scotland campaign could rather be described as civic nationalism, emphasising the positive themes of equality, tolerance and citizenship across all levels of Scottish society, rather than embedded in topics such as nationality or Anglophobia (McAnulla and Crines: 2017, 479). So, there were no allusions on the movie *Braveheart* in campaign speeches, no blue-painted faces, or people dressed wearing kilts at rallies. However, a patriotic appeal to the Scots was for most of the campaign always there, if not directly spoken, then hidden in the background of Salmond's political rhetoric. In an interview for *The Economist* in January 2012, he stated that "people should reclaim their flag, and do it as quickly as possible" (*The Economist*, "Interviewing Alex Salmond"). At the SNP conference in October 2013, he made sure to emphasise that "independence would boost the morale of the nation", a message deliberately left for the end of the 45-minute talk (Sparrow, "SNP Conference – Alex Salmond's Speech"). In April 2014, in a speech at Glasgow Caledonian University, Salmond assured the audience that "this referendum isn't about politicians… it's about the people of Scotland." (McAnulla and Crines, 2017: 480). It would be hard to call it a play on patriotism, but it was a form of flag-waving, as it still aimed to trigger a sense of national pride on an emotional, rather than a rational level. On the contrary, the Better Together campaign chose the opposite, appealing to people's reason and playing on the card of aggressive warnings against the risks, focusing their narrative on the period of insecurity which independence would inevitably bring in the first phase after the potential separation. The campaign was mainly described by its opponents as a typical example of fearmongering and was nicknamed 'Project Fear', a catchy slogan which stuck to the No camp not only for the Scottish independence referendum, but also to the Remain campaign two years later, during the Brexit referendum (Jack, "'Project Fear' started as a silly private joke"). The moment which provided the fulcrum for their strategy was clarification by George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in February 2014, that an independent Scotland would not be able to continue using the pound sterling – although Osborne, as a British minister, was not part of any anti-independence camp. He thus landed a heavy blow to the idea of a currency union, which was the crux of Salmond's financial programme, and prompted the latter to accuse London of bullying Scottish voters ahead of the referendum (Black and James, "'Yes' vote means leaving pound, says Osborne").

Scotland and the Scots before the referendum: In early 2013, approximately one third of Scots supported the idea of an independent country, half of them opposed it, and the rest had no opinion on the matter, or were uninterested (Curtis, "What have the polls been saying"). These numbers remained more or less stabile throughout the following year and a half or so, until mid-August 2014, five to six weeks before the referendum day, when according to the former YouGov president Pe-

ter Kellner, "the support for the Union has drained away at astonishing rate." (Kellner, "'Yes' blitzkrieg wipes out 'No' lead"). But for most of the time since the date of the referendum had been set in October 2012, Yes Scotland trailed behind in the polls. It seemed as if Alex Salmond and his SNP colleagues had too facilely put an equal sign between the vote for their party at the Scottish elections in 2011 and support for an independent Scotland. Pro-independence voters were in the minority and the success of the independence campaign depended on persuading others, namely the undecided. Independence for the sake of being merely independent from London was too one-dimensional approach. More importantly, Yes Scotland needed to explain coherently the economic logic behind the idea of independence, at a time when the Scottish economy was doing seemingly better than the rest of the United Kingdom (with the exception of London): in 2012, Scottish GDP per capita was £28,100 compared to £24,600 for the country as a whole; it had higher annual economic growth rate (1.4%) in the period 1999-2012 than the UK overall (1.2%); Scotland's net fiscal deficit was slightly lower than the UK's; and a higher proportion of its working age population held higher education qualifications than in other parts of the UK. On top of that, university education was free for residents of Scotland, unlike in England and Wales (Liddell et all., 2014: 4-6). At the same time, using the so-called Barnett formula – the way in which money is shared between the four countries which constitute the UK – the government in London had regularly transferred block payments for public spending (health, education, social services) to devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1978, a scheme which had often been criticised in England for the privileged position it allegedly gave to Scotland. In essence, Yes Scotland needed to overcome fears that this relatively favourable economic balance within the UK would not be jeopardised if Scotland became independent.

'Yes' campaign and its propaganda: This was achieved by combining a civic version of nationalism with the social problems. To this end, the Yes camp played on anti-Conservative sentiment in Scotland, emphasising the paradox of a nation (Scotland) ruled by the government elected mainly by votes in other parts of Britain (England and Wales). The tool used for this purpose was the narrative which created a false dichotomy of Scotland versus Westminster, rather than versus England, or Great Britain, playing on the dislike of a London political elite, apparently out of touch with the needs of ordinary people. Which at that time (and later) was not too hard, bearing in mind that throughout the country, including vast swathes of England, there were unpopular austerity measures and questionable social reforms imposed by Cameron's government (in office since 2010). In this way, Westminster (as a metonym for the British political elite) became a suitable scapegoat for any political, economic or social problem in Scotland. At a pro-independence rally in Edinburgh in September 2013, Blair Jenkins, the director of the

Yes Scotland campaign said: "Well, we would lose nuclear weapons, the bedroom tax, Tory governments we have never voted for, and what's not to love about that?" (The Guardian, "Alex Salmond tells Scotland has natural majority for independence"). In an article for the New Statesman in March 2014, Salmond wrote: "[…] Scotland is part of an increasingly imbalanced UK – with high social inequalities, growing regional disparities, and more often than not, governments we didn't vote for" (Salmond, "Alex Salmond's New Statesman lecture"). At a pro-independence rally in Aberdeen in April 2014, Salmond spoke of "poverty-creating policies from Westminster" (Carell, Alex Salmond brands anti-Scottish independence campaign miserable").

But this is a good example of a false dichotomy, as neither the Yes camp, nor Scottish society, were a monolithic block firmly united in opposition to, or against Westminster. Quite apart from those Scots who actually supported the Union, there were pro-independence Scots who resented the charismatic, but divisive personality of Alex Salmond and disliked him as their first choice for the First Minister of an independent Scotland; just like there were others who disagreed that SNP had a monopoly on Scottish independence (Thiec: 2014, 4-5). More importantly, in peripheral parts of Scotland, such as the islands around the North Sea oil depots and the coastal regions dependent on fishing, scapegoating Westminster was unconvincing, as it was the London government which had successfully defended their fishing rights in Brussels (Taylor, "Independence best for fishing sector, says Sturgeon"). The idea of replacing Westminster with Holyrood, with the mere excuse that it would now mean that Scots decided on Scotland, or that it would bring new and improved forms of public participation in politics, did not turn out to be of popular appeal if it meant economic uncertainty (Cairney, "Scottish Independence: a rejection of Westminster politics?").

Despite these difficulties with explaining the reasons for a Yes vote in outlying regions and in sections of society which depended on specific industries, Yes Scotland started to rapidly gain ground from mid-August 2014 and in only three weeks support for independence surged, reaching a majority in polls with 51 percent for the first time ever on 6 September (Dahlgreen, "'Yes' campaign lead 2 in Scottish referendum"). Salmond and his Yes Scotland suddenly broke the deadlock in almost every political, social and age category of Scottish voters, except the Conservative Party voters, significantly rising its support among young voters, Labour voters, women and working-class people (Kellner, "Scotland: 'Yes' blitzkrieg wiped out 'No' lead"). One of the key events in this turning of the tables was the second television debate between the leaders of the two camps, Darling and Salmond, on 25 August 2014 and it deserves a more detailed analysis.

Salmond versus Darling: The first debate between the two politicians took place on 5 August and according to the first polls immediately after it ended, Darling had won it 56%:44%, mainly thanks to successful-

ly grilling his opponent on the question of the future Scottish currency in the event of independence. However, deeper analysis showed that both participants overall received a more negative than positive reception (*The Herald*, "Debate: snap poll declares Darling winner"). Yet, as the main purpose of the televised debates is not to come out victorious from a TV duel, but to significantly attract the undecided or voters from the other camp, this particular debate did not change much, as opinion polls in the following days did not show a significant shift in voting intentions (Curtis, "Who won the leader's debate?").

The second debate in Glasgow was held in the same format as the first, in front of an audience and broadcasted live on the BBC. Salmond opened it with the statement: "In 1979, we didn't get the Parliament we voted for, and instead we got 18 years of Tory government". This is a good example of a misleading claim, as the Tory governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major in the period 1979-1997, were hardly the result of the outcome of the 1979 Scottish referendum. [Instead, in the aftermath of the referendum, the SNP members of the British parliament voted for the Conservative motion of no confidence in James Callaghan's Labour government, thus helping to trigger the general election. This is where any link between the two events stops, as the core reason for Labour losing the ensuing elections were the long-term economic difficulties the UK was experiencing]. Speaking about the North Sea oil extraction, Darling presented estimates which allegedly reflected a doubtful value for the oil reserves (Macalister, "Questions over value of Scotland's oil"), as suited his cause, which is an example of the so-called cherry-picking propaganda technique, as there were other analysis pointing to the contrary. Continuing on the issue of an independent Scotland's currency, Darling again played the card of sparkling fears of risks for Scottish finances in case of the continued use of the pound sterling, "because our budget would have to be decided and approved not by us, but by the foreign country [i.e., the rest of the UK]". Asked by Darling what his plan B would be in case London refused to allow further use of the pound sterling in independent Scotland, Salmond instead asked his opponent if he would accept the sovereign will of the Scottish people if Yes Scotland won the referendum, successfully changing the focus, and received enthusiastic applause from the audience. This was an expected tactic, bearing in mind that Salmond lost the first debate primarily on the currency question; moving away from it as quickly as possible was the best he could hope for.

It was then his turn to spark fears about the future of the National Health Service (NHS). Albeit admitting that Edinburgh could not be forced to privatise its healthcare, Salmond warned "[The danger for Scotland is] if England goes down the road of privatisation and charging [for health services], and general cuts to public spending, then it's not because they can force us to privatise the health care of Scotland, because they can't; it's the financial pressure [which] makes things extremely dif

ficult for the health care in Scotland. And that is why to have a health service we can all trust and rely on, we've got to have a health service where we have financial control, as well as policy control …". Basically, Salmond here manipulated with fears that London would deliberately financially choke the Scottish health system, unless Scotland became independent. A few moments later, he warned that "general cutbacks in England are moving towards privatisation and charging…", when in reality nothing off the scale has happened in the UK. Questioned about the potential privatisation of the health service and accused of personal links with private medical companies, Darling avoided giving a direct answer and repeating that all he wanted was to keep the NHS safe from the uncertainty the independence would bring. He then continued scaremongering about the potential loss of jobs in shipbuilding and military manufacturing industries in the event of independence. Moving onto the theme of social policy, Salmond did not miss the opportunity to make a scapegoat of the government in London, accusing it of responsibility for the plight of 100,000 Scots with disabilities, allegedly victims of Conservative government welfare reforms. Questioned by Darling about the six-billion-pound budget deficit if Scotland went independent, Salmond made a false claim, saying: "Alister, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies said that Scotland would be a prosperous economy [if independent]". However, the November 2013 IFS report clearly stated:

"Despite the considerable uncertainty surrounding the future path of borrowing and debt in Scotland, the main conclusion of our analysis is that a significant further fiscal tightening would be required in Scotland, on top of that already announced by the UK government, in order to put Scotland's long-term public finances onto a sustainable footing" (Amior, Crawford i Tetlow, "Fiscal sustainability of an independent Scotland").

Then, for the first time visibly annoyed, he continued: "Alister, you had a deficit of 150 billion pounds when you were Chancellor of the Exchequer! I will not take lectures from the man who undermined the entire economy". Pinned by Salmond with the loaded question about his knowledge of living conditions of the poorest in Scotland, Darling replied with laughable generalities: "Salmond: Do you know how many children it is estimated will be moving to poverty in Scotland by 2020 with the welfare reforms by the Westminster government? Darling: Too many children will be moving to poverty".

On the question of the British Trident nuclear programme, based at Clyde Naval Base in western Scotland, both politicians showed haw one potentially divisive issue could be manipulated in different contradictory contexts. Darling spread fears of the loss of over eight thousand jobs created by the military base, if it was forced to relocate from Scotland; while Salmond spread fears of Trident as a nuclear weapon which makes Scotland a legitimate enemy target in case of war. Using his final eight minutes to cross-examine Darling, Salmond skilfully profited using the technique of guilt by association: "It's all very well of you to say you are

a Labour politician Alistair, so why are you standing here defending Conservative policies on a joint platform with the Conservative party!?" The first polls immediately after the debate gave Salmond an overwhelming victory of 71%:29% (Carrell and Brooks, "Salmond scores victory over Darling in fractious debate").

Intervention from London: Partly as a result of this debate, according to Kellner's words, "the Yes campaign has not only invaded No territory; it has launched a Blitzkrieg" (Kellner, "Scotland: 'Yes' blitzkrieg wiped out 'No' lead"). When YouGov announced its first ever poll which gave Yes a lead on 6 September, only 12 days before the referendum, panic overtook every pro-Unionist in the UK and pointed to how compliant they were by taking hitherto favourable polls for granted for far too long. Cameron, who had for two years insisted that London politicians would not interfere in campaigning, leaving the debate instead to Scottish politicians, suddenly got cold feet and according to some insiders, personally urged the leaders of the biggest businesses in Britain to assist publicly (Rigby, Felsted and Thomas, "Business finds its voice on independence"). A string of the most important companies, mainly from the service sector, willingly jumped onto the scaremongering campaign, with consistent warnings of increased costs of travelling, borrowing and insurance in Scotland if Yes won; or that they would simply relocate their offices south of the English-Scottish border. These included some serious business heavyweights, such as British Petroleum, insurance company Aviva, investment fund Blackrock, investment company Standard Life, energy company SSE, Royal Bank of Scotland, travel and tourist giant Thomas Cook, to mention the biggest (*BBC*, "RBS confirms London HQ if Scotland votes independence"; Jordanova, "Insurer voices concerns over independent Scotland"; Chu, "Corporate giants Standard Life and BP issue Yes vote warning"; Macalister i Kollewe, "BP urges Scotland to vote against independence"). By throwing their support to the No camp in such a dramatic fashion only days before the referendum, these corporations, which combined provided jobs for tens of thousands of Scots, basically justified the nickname 'Project Fear'.

At the same time, the leaders of the three national parties, Prime Minister Cameron, the opposition Labour leader Ed Miliband and the Liberal Democratic Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, promptly arrived in Scotland on 10 September to urge voters to reject independence. Speaking emotionally at a rally in Edinburgh, Cameron said: "I would be heartbroken if this family of nations that we've put together – and we've done such amazing things together – if this family of nations was torn apart." (BBC, "Cameron, Clegg and Miliband make Scotland 'No' vote plea"). This chain of events gave Salmond even more ammunition for turning Westminster into the common foe of every Scotsman and woman. On the day when Cameron, Miliband and Clegg arrived in Scotland, he nicknamed them 'Team Westminster' by saying: "Today what we have got is an example of Team Scotland against Team Westminster" (BBC,

"Alex Salmond attacks 'Team Westminster'"). In his final appeal to Scottish voters, the night before the referendum, Salmond compared the Yes campaign to an underdog, saying: "We know that Westminster will throw the kitchen sink at us… The reaction of the Westminster establishment to this demonstration of people power is the reaction of the powerful few who believe they always know what's best for the many, that power should be in their hands… Tomorrow, we can deliver for Scotland real power; the power to choose hope over fear, opportunity over despair" (YouTube, "Alex Salmond's final push for votes").

Brown comes to the fore: An important moment in turning the tide back in favour of the No campaign happened on 8 September, two days after YouGov published their above-mentioned first ever poll in favour of independence, when the forceful personality of the former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown stepped in and took over the shambolic No campaign from the hands of Darling in the final week. In a couple of rallies, he first offered a carrot to the Scottish people, announcing the new devolution plan which would grant more powers to the government in Edinburgh in deciding on taxes and welfare issues if Scotland voted against the independence. His promise was immediately backed by the leaders of three biggest national parties (Morris and Green, "Gordon Brown steps into the breach as Tories duck fight for Union"). Then, he finally broke away from the confusing and damaging fearmongering rhetoric of his predecessor, and began to talk more positively and passionately. With his loud voice and at times almost angry look, Brown was a sharp contrast to the unconvincing personality of Alistair Darling. Speaking in Glasgow on 17 September, at the final rally before referendum day, he thundered:

"Let us tell also those people who have been told unfairly by the nationalists that, if you vote No, you are a less than patriotic Scot. Tell them this is our Scotland. Tell them that Scotland does not belong to the SNP. Scotland does not belong to the Yes campaign. Scotland does not belong to any politician – Mr Salmond, Mr Swinney, me, or any other politician – Scotland belongs to all of us. And let us tell the nationalists this is not their flag, their country, their culture, their streets. This is everyone's flag, everyone's country, everyone's street" (O'Neill, "Gordon Brown's passionate speech in defence of the Union").

This is what many among the Scottish proponents of the Union had wanted to hear for months – that there was nothing wrong with being both Scottish and British, that being for Britain was not automatically being against Scotland, and that nationalists did not have the copyright on patriotism. After two years of campaigning against independence, only in the final week were the Scottish people reminded of all the positive things the Union had brought over the past three centuries, equally for Scotland and England.

Scotland voted No, but lessons were not learned: The result of the referendum in the end was nowhere near as close as it had seemed just a few days beforehand. A comfortable majority of 55% voted against

independence and Alex Salmond resigned both as the SNP leader and Scottish Premier (*BBC*, "Salmond to quit after Scots vote No"). Two years later, there was a copycat situation at the Brexit referendum, with the Leave [the EU] campaign using similar propaganda techniques as Yes Scotland had, by waving their Union Jack flags, playing the card of a false dichotomy between British people and Brussels (as a metonym for the EU) and scapegoating the EU administration for most of their country's ills. The Remain campaign totally echoed Better Together in fearmongering, playing the card of risks for the economy and people's living standards if Britain left the EU. As we know, this time the Leave block prevailed, winning the referendum with 52%:48%. So why was the outcome in the two similar situations different?

As a matter of fact, Salmond achieved a similar success in convincing many more people than initially expected, as did the anti-EU campaigners, mainly among the English electorate south of the border river Tweed in 2016. Let us not forget that support for independence in Scotland rose by 10-12% over the course of the Scottish independence campaign, 2012-14. Salmond's heritage is a very solid starting position for any of his successors from the SNP who would next call for a new referendum. And six years later, on 12 August 2020, support for independence was 53 per cent – 20 per cent up from when he began the campaign in 2012 (Webster, "Yes support in 53% in YouGov poll"). In a future referendum, as things now stand, the Unionists will be the underdogs. Salmond's most important contribution was that by using skilful propaganda, he crystallised the main reason for Scottish independence.

Scotland versus Westminster: Firstly, there were always some vague ideas in Scotland about an alleged British or English exploitation of the country. *The Economist*'s reporter on the way to interviewing Salmond in early 2012 was shouted at in Stirling that "Scotland was sick of paying for Britain" (*The Economist*, "Interviewing Alex Salmond, the man who wants to break up Britain"). This was a largely unfounded construction, as in reality, more or less, Scotland gives approximately as much as it takes from the joint British kitty (Worrall, "Has Scotland subsidised the rest of the UK"). Secondly, there were now and then allusions about Scotland being oppressed; for example, a famous reference from the movie *Trainspotting*: "It's shite to be Scottish! We're the lowest of the low, the scum of the fucking Earth, the most wretched, miserable, servile, pathetic trash that was ever shat into civilization. Some people hate the English, I don't. They're just wankers. We on the other hand are colonised by wankers. Can't even find a decent culture to be colonized by" (YouTube, "Trainspotting – Going for a Walk"). However, Scotland was never forced to join the union with England (and Wales) as a conquered or oppressed nation, as was the case of Ireland. Upon the death of Queen Elisabeth I, there was a union of crowns, when in 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England. Then, in 1707 there was a voluntary union of parliaments, when both Scotland and England formed

Great Britain and became one political nation. And thirdly, there is a sense of national pride, as the Scots are proud people with great history; so, why use the Union Jack when they could use their St Andrew's Cross? This is where identity issues come to the fore: how did the sense of being Sottish integrate with also being British. However, apart from being on their own for the sake of being on their own, in the minds of the majority in 2012 there was little economic reason for becoming independent from a union in which Scotland was neither exploited nor oppressed, and which it voluntarily joined 300 years ago.

To overcome this deficiency of the independence platform, Salmond had to move away from the standard nationalist themes revolving around a play on patriotism, and offer something that would resonate, that could reach and appeal to the widest possible strata of the Scottish population, regardless of their emotional attitude towards an independent Scotland, a united Britain, or the relationship with England. For this reason, especially in the final stages of the campaign, the rhetoric of Yes Scotland focused entirely on exploiting this binary opposition of Scotland versus Westminster – pointing to allegedly the insurmountable rift between the Scottish people on the periphery and the decision-making class in a distant capital, alienated from ordinary people and their worries. Some might say that despite shedding outdated ethnic nationalism and being careful to avoid references to Anglophobia, Salmond's rhetoric still ended being negative; and whether he wanted it or not, by pointing a finger at Westminster in such a passionate way, he did suggest that England and Scotland did not share same values, or that they were too different from each other to share political institutions (McDougall, "Scottish nationalists don't have a monopoly on Scottishness").

Of course, dissatisfaction with Westminster as a symbol of class division, its ruling elite and its style of doing politics, had already existed before Alex Salmond; and was probably even stronger across northern England, or places like Liverpool, than in Scotland. But what Salmond did was to articulate this feeling of dissatisfaction into a proper political platform and use it in his propaganda rhetoric in which people were led to believe that every possible vile decision against Scotland could be expected of the heartless Westminster politicians. Once this barrier in people's minds was overcome, the shallow and one-dimensional scaremongering campaign of the No camp actually started to play into the hands of Salmond, making their proponents look like London proxies in Scotland. Brown's intervention was eventually important, because it turned a negative campaign, based on fear, into a positive one, with an emotional reminder of how successful the Union has been for all its people, Scottish and English alike. Still, Salmond paved the way, demonstrated how it should be done and crated a solid platform for his successors to move forward; at this moment, it seems possible that a future referendum could result with an independent Scotland. Unless pro-Union politicians in both London and Edinburgh learn the most important

lesson from the 2014 referendum campaign: that positive propaganda is always a better tool than fearmongering. Judging by the mistakes made in the 2016 Brexit referendum by another No (to leaving the EU) camp – they did not learn much.

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