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# The Scottish Parliament election of May 2011: internal factors in the SNP's victory

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**Nathalie Duclos**

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## Introduction

- 1 On 5 May 2011, the Scottish National Party (SNP) won the fourth Scottish Parliament election, and its second Scottish election in a row. It also became the first party to win an overall majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament since the Parliament's creation twelve years before, in 1999. The SNP won around 45% of the vote on both the constituency vote and the regional vote<sup>1</sup>, and a total of 69 seats, that is, four more than the number of seats needed for an overall ma-

majority. How did the party manage such a feat in spite of a mixed electoral system (two-thirds majoritarian and one-third proportional)? A mixed system had been chosen for the Scottish Parliament first and foremost because it had been the result of a compromise between two parties, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, one of which had supported the First Past the Post System (used for elections to the British House of Commons) while the other had wished for a proportional system. However, the electoral system had also been specifically designed to make it very difficult for any party, and more particularly the pro-independence Scottish National Party, to win an overall majority of seats. Yet the SNP was precisely the first party to demonstrate that it was possible to do so. Both external factors and internal factors played a role in the SNP's victory. External factors included Labour's ill-judged electoral campaign, and the fact that the Liberal Democrats were severely punished for participating in the British coalition government.<sup>2</sup> However, this paper will concentrate on the internal factors which, combined with the poor performance of the other Scottish parties, allowed the SNP to win what was described as a historic, ground-breaking victory. Much has been made of the role played by SNP leader Alex Salmond's charisma and popularity in his party's victory. Yet, media focus on Salmond has obscured the part played by other internal factors in the 2011 result. It is undeniable that Salmond was and remains a key asset for the party; this paper will thus start by explaining how the SNP used that asset during its 2011 electoral campaign. Nevertheless, to understand the scale of the SNP's victory, we need to look at other factors, such as the party's 2004 organisational reform, the state of the party finances, and of course the party's general strategy, its regional-vote strategy, its campaigning tactics and its use of modern technologies for campaigning ends.

## **1. Alex Salmond as key asset for the SNP**

- 2 In the weeks leading to the election in Scotland, one could often hear or read that the SNP was leading a 'presidential campaign'. Peter Mandelson, for instance, was said to have identified "the 'presidential' nature of the campaign as one that played to First Minister Alex Sal-

mond's 'showmanship' and that it was in this area that Mr Gray [Scottish Labour leader] could not match his chief rival." (*Herald*, 7 May 2011) Undeniably, of the four major party leaders in Scotland, Alex Salmond was, by far, the most popular and the best-known, as each poll confirmed throughout the campaign. Unsurprisingly, the SNP decided early on that it would capitalise on its leader's popularity. It mainly did this through what can be described as its 'second-vote strategy'. In Scottish Parliament elections, people have two votes: one for a constituency candidate, and one for a regional party list or an independent regional candidate. During the 2011 electoral campaign, instead of simply telling people to vote SNP twice, the SNP devised a specific second-vote strategy. Scottish people were told that while the first vote was to elect their local representative, the second vote was to be used to elect the party which they wanted to form the Scottish Government, and thereby to elect the party leader who they wanted to become the Scottish First Minister.

- 3 This strategy was deployed in several ways. First, the SNP used two, parallel campaign slogans: the first slogan, "Re-elect a Scottish Government Working for Scotland", was also the title of the party's election manifesto, and the second one, "Re-elect Alex Salmond as First Minister", for instance appeared at the top of a list made public a few days before the election and showing the names of 200 businessmen who had agreed to support the "Re-election of Alex Salmond as First Minister".<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the SNP used the slogan "Alex Salmond for First Minister" on its regional ballot papers, as it had done in the previous Scottish parliamentary election even though it had thereafter been criticised for it. In a context when the 2007 Scottish Parliament election was thought to have been an organisational fiasco, with around 140,000 votes being spoiled, the SNP had been blamed for the fact that in some places, the words 'Scottish National Party' had not appeared on the ballot papers at all (although the initials SNP had). The *Independent Review of the Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government Elections of 3 May 2007*, better-known as the Gould report, had identified many factors that had led to this state of affairs. Among them was what it had called the "slogansisation" of party names (2007: 45 & 56), or the "naming strategies employed by some parties and candidates on the parliamentary ballot papers" (2007: 44), which could have been a source of confusion for some voters. The report

had given an example of a way in which voters might have been confused by such strategies:

[V]oters seeing 'Alex Salmond for First Minister' at the top of the regional ballot paper and wishing to vote for the high-profile SNP leader, may have marked their single cross against this option, leaving the constituency ballot paper unmarked. (Gould 2007: 51)

- 4 The Gould report had therefore recommended that "legislation be amended to require that registered political party names always be listed first" on ballot papers and that "a party description could then be printed below the party name" (2007: 60). But this recommendation had meant that the SNP could still use the slogan "Alex Salmond for First Minister" as long as the party name also appeared on the ballot papers, which is what the SNP went for in 2011.<sup>4</sup> Finally, another, more humorous part of the SNP's second-vote strategy, a strategy closely aligned to Salmond, was to joke that the regional ballot papers were "salmon(d)-coloured", when other parties called them peach-coloured. Two examples of the adjective "salmon-coloured" being applied to the regional ballot paper can be given. Alex Salmond used it in an article for the *Scottish Sun* published on the day of the election:

When you go to your polling station you will get two ballot papers for the Scottish Parliament election. On the salmon-coloured paper you can re-elect me as First Minister by putting one cross next to Alex Salmond. On the lavender-coloured paper you can vote for your local SNP candidate by putting one cross next to the SNP symbol. (*Scottish Sun*, 5 May 2011)

- 5 SNP supporter and actress Elaine C. Smith also used the adjective "salmon-coloured" in an SNP promotional video which can be viewed on the YouTube website since the election campaign (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ5h5hzLioE>).
- 6 For its part, Labour, which is the SNP's main rival in elections to the Scottish Parliament, completely lacked a regional strategy in 2011. One could even argue that Labour has never devised a specific, second-vote strategy since the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. What's more, in 2011 more than in previous Scottish elections, the party suffered from a self-imposed rule that constituency candid-

ates would not be on the regional party lists. There were some exceptions to this rule in 2011, the most prominent one perhaps being former minister Sarah Boyack, who was beaten by the SNP candidate in her Edinburgh Central constituency, but was returned to the Scottish Parliament on the Labour list for Lothians. But where it was applied, this rule led to many senior members of Scottish Labour such as Tom McCabe or Andy Kerr not being returned to Parliament. And yet, already in 2004, one political commentator had warned that Labour needed to “address its system for prioritising its regional list candidates” and to revisit this self-imposed rule (Fraser, 2004, 143). After specifying that there were several exceptions to the rule in 2003, he had forewarned that Labour “may come to regret applying the rule elsewhere if it unnecessarily loses them one of the party’s most senior figures” (Fraser, 143). Yet, two elections later, the rule was still in place, which led Scottish Labour to lose not just one, but many of its figureheads.

7 The SNP, on the contrary, strongly believed in its second-vote strategy, which allowed it to make the most of its leader’s charisma, to the point that it was accused of turning the campaign into a personality contest between a ‘statesmanlike’ Alex Salmond and his rather ‘grey’ opponent Iain Gray.<sup>5</sup> This was particularly obvious during the television debates between the party leaders, when Salmond was careful to adopt a statesman pose, always remaining calm and seemingly above the fray, while Iain Gray was seen to be aggressive and uncomfortable. The realisation that this was how he was viewed during the television debates led Iain Gray to protest that “it’s a battle of ideas, not a personality contest”. (*Scotsman*, 5 April 2011) The seemingly presidential nature of the SNP’s campaign was also railed by David Cameron, who was quoted in the *Daily Record* saying: “Alex Salmond is encouraging people to vote for a First Minister, as if it’s a presidential election. This is not a presidential system. Last time I looked it was a parliamentary system. El Presidente Salmondo needs to think again.” (*Daily Record*, 25 April 2011)

8 However, such accusations are part of the political game, and at a time when very few people are party members and when most people pay more attention to leaders than to party programmes, it is unsurprising that the SNP should capitalise on their leader’s popularity. Moreover, Salmond's strong leadership does not just originate in his

personal qualities as a politician, but also in the internal reforms adopted by the party in 2004 under its previous leader, John Swinney. Three of the internal reforms adopted are particularly important to understand Salmond's strong leadership. The first is the introduction of the 'one member one vote' system for the election of the party leader (as well as the selection of parliamentary candidates in the constituencies). Instead of being elected by branch representatives, as was the case until 2004, the leader is now elected by the whole SNP membership, which has strengthened the position of party leader. Secondly, it has become more difficult to challenge the party leader, as candidates for that position must now have the nominations of at least 100 SNP members, who must be drawn from at least 20 different branches, whereas challengers in the past only needed a single branch nomination. Thirdly, and more symbolically, the title of party leader was changed from 'National Chairman' to 'Leader'.

- 9 After examining the SNP's specific second-vote strategy, this article will now consider the SNP's general strategy during the election campaign.

## **2. The SNP's general strategy and campaign**

- 10 The SNP's general strategy was dual in 2011. On the one hand, the SNP tried to present itself, if not as a catch-all party, then at least as a party that could appeal to a very diverse spectrum of voters. Instead of presenting itself, for instance, as an anti-cuts party, which would clearly have associated it with the left, the SNP chose as its central message the idea that it was the party of hope and positivity, and the only party that offered a clear vision for Scotland's future. On the other hand, the SNP's sophisticated voter identification system also allowed it to specifically target traditional Liberal Democrat voters who were disappointed by their preferred party's participation in the British coalition government. This article will now analyse each of these strategies in turn.

## 2.1. A “positive” campaign

- 11 The received wisdom in Scotland after the election was that the SNP had won because its campaign had been ‘positive’, and that Labour had lost because its campaign had been too ‘negative’ and oppositional. Such a point of view was developed in most post-election press articles and by both SNP and Labour politicians. In an article published in the *Scottish Sun* on the day of the election, Alex Salmond for instance claimed:

We have run a positive campaign over the last few weeks and we know *Scottish Sun* readers like that. Who wants gloom and doom all the time? Other parties, especially the Labour Party, will pay the price for being narky and negative. (*Scottish Sun*, 5 May 2011)

- 12 The day after, he was quoted in another newspaper as saying: “The key aspect of the campaign is optimism against pessimism, negativity against positivity, and I hope people vote positively for a better future for Scotland.” (*Herald*, 6 May 2011) This theme was taken up by all newspapers as well as by SNP opponents. A *Herald* editorial noted for instance that the SNP’s “relentlessly positive campaign chimed with the public”. (*Herald*, 7 May 2011) The *Scottish Sun* warned Labour that it needed “to regroup and start giving people a positive reason to vote Labour – instead of the endless, negative reasons for not voting SNP.” (*Scottish Sun*, 6 May 2011) Even Henry McLeish, a senior Scottish Labour politician and a former Scottish First Minister, said of his own party’s campaign: “There is no doubt in my mind that the campaign was very negative. Whether you support the SNP or not, they had something on offer.” (*Scottish Sun*, 7 May 2011)
- 13 Undeniably, Labour's main tactic was to oppose, first the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in London, and then, little more than a week before the election, the SNP. During both phases, Labour used what could be described as ‘scare tactics’, first raising the spectre of Thatcherism, and then insisting that a vote for the SNP meant a vote for independence, or rather ‘separation’. On 14 April 2011, the day when the SNP launched its election manifesto, Labour’s key message was as put by John Park, Labour’s election co-ordinator: “now the Tories are back Scotland needs a party that will stand up for

Scotland and only Labour can stand up to these Tory cuts". (*Herald*, 14 April 2011) On the following day, Labour leader Ed Miliband told a Scottish newspaper during a visit to Scotland that "a Labour administration in Holyrood would be best at standing up against the Tory-led government at Westminster". (*Scotsman*, 16 April 2011) In the same week, Scottish Labour deputy leader Johann Lamont similarly declared: "now the Tories are back, Labour will fight up until the wire for what really matters". (*Scotland on Sunday*, 17 April 2011) A Labour leaflet which was circulated at the time showed "a chortling and red-faced Cameron wearing an SNP rosette, with the headline 'The Tories would much prefer it if the SNP beat Labour on 5 May.'" (*Herald*, 20 April 2011) Labour's campaign was only re-launched on 25 April, after the publication of an Ipsos Mori poll putting the SNP way ahead of Labour in terms of both votes and seats, and within reach of an overall majority of seats (*Scotsman*, 21 April 2011 and *Herald*, 21 April 2011); only then did Labour fully concentrate on attacking the SNP.

- 14 The SNP, for its part, did not focus its campaign on its opposition to the London government's planned cuts in public spending, or on its opposition to Scottish Labour's key manifesto proposals such as the fight against knife crime. Instead, it insisted that it was the only party to offer hope and an uplifting vision for Scotland's future, for instance in the form of its ambitious pledge that an SNP government would aim to secure all of Scotland's energy needs from renewable sources by 2020. It can be argued that if the SNP chose to hammer home the message that it was the party of hope and optimism and the party of the future, it was at least partly to avoid being associated with specifically left-wing or right-wing policies so as to make the most of partisan dealignment and decline in party loyalty. Political journalist Peter Jones argued in the *Scotsman* on 3 May 2011 that the SNP had a triangulation strategy, as testified by its policy platform, which featured policies which were "decidedly left-wing" and others which were "decidedly right-wing". On the "decidedly left-wing" side, Jones mentioned the SNP's anti-nuclear weaponry stance, as well as its opposition to private sector involvement in public services. Two examples of such policies are the SNP's promise to keep Scottish Water in public ownership ("We will keep Scottish Water in public hands and will oppose attempts by other parties to privatise or mutualise

it"; SNP manifesto, 2011: 13), as well as its commitment to reject NHS reforms planned in England:

We will continue to reject the Tories and Liberals' privatisation agenda south of the border. We have ended Labour's privatisation experiment by bringing Stracathro Hospital back into the NHS. The SNP remains 100% committed to the Scottish NHS as a publicly funded and publicly-delivered service. (SNP manifesto, 2011: 15).

- 15 On the “decidedly right-wing” side, Jones quoted the SNP's promise to freeze the council tax for the whole duration of the Scottish parliamentary term. This promise was given a very high profile during the campaign, and it came first in the list of ten key commitments included by the SNP at the beginning of its election manifesto, a list in which one could also read the promise that “[w]e will keep university education free so that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay” (SNP manifesto, 2011: first page, not numbered). It could therefore be argued that, by adopting high-profile policies, some of which could be interpreted as typically left-wing and others as typically right-wing, the SNP aimed at appealing to people of different political hues. The SNP's insistence on the fact that it offered a vision for the future, for instance through the promise of the development of renewable energies or of the creation of a Scottish Futures Fund<sup>6</sup> (promises which were both part of the list of ten key commitments and both given a high profile during the campaign), could be thought of as being part of the same strategy.
- 16 Yet, it should also be noted that the 2011 election was not the first Scottish Parliament election during which the SNP insisted that it was the only party to offer a positive vision for Scotland's future. It could be argued that this has been the SNP's key message in all Scottish elections since 1999. During the first Scottish parliamentary campaign in 1999, at a time when all newspapers were fiercely opposed to the SNP, the latter had felt the need to publish its own daily newspaper, called *Scotland's Voice*, in the eight days which had led to the election. The first issue, published on 29 April 1999, had included an article by Alex Salmond in which he had written:

What message have you been getting from the other parties in this election? It's been all about what Scotland CAN'T DO! The SNP is

about what Scotland CAN DO. (...) For the next week Scotland's Voice is (...) going to be confident and positive, and bring out the best in Scotland. (*Scotland's Voice*, 29 April 1999)

- 17 The issue published the following day had claimed that “Labour is in a panic, running the most negative campaign in electoral history” and that “Labour is falling away, as voters see the negative, ‘can’t do’ attitude that they have to Scotland” (*Scotland's Voice*, 30 April 1999). One could also read that:

[L]ast week Alex Salmond called on his party to ‘get their jackets off’ and put the SNP’s message of hope and confidence straight to the Scottish people. This tactic seems to have paid off, with Scotland’s Party gathering more and more support. (*Scotland's Voice*, 1 May 1999)

- 18 This message had been taken up in subsequent issues of the newspaper both by senior nationalist Winnie Ewing<sup>7</sup> and by Sean Connery, the most internationally famous SNP supporter. During the campaign which had preceded the second Scottish Parliament election in 2003, the SNP had focussed on three issues (health, education and crime) and insisted on the feeling of disappointment in devolution felt at the time by many people in Scotland, promising that contrary to the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition then in power in Edinburgh, an SNP Government would have a “positive public service agenda” as well as “focus, drive and vision for the people of this country”, as claimed by Nicola Sturgeon, then the SNP’s campaign co-ordinator. In other words, the SNP’s key message in 2003 had been the following: “It’s time to translate disappointment and frustration into a positive vote for the SNP and our progressive agenda for public services in Scotland.” (SNP media centre, 2003) When introducing the SNP’s slogan for the 2003 election, “Release our Potential”, John Swinney, the then party leader, had also associated the SNP and its key objective, Scottish independence, with positivity, declaring:

It [the slogan] enables the SNP to reclaim Independence from those who, in 1999, tried to label it as negative, and provides the platform we need to persuade the Scottish people of the positive benefits of Independence. (SNP media centre, 2002)

19 Sturgeon had similarly declared that:

Release our potential is positive, ambitious and aspirational. All of our publicity materials, campaign leaflets and pamphlets during the campaign will build on that. We want to speak about solutions not problems, the future not the past, and of Scotland's potential not its shortcomings. (SNP media centre, 2002)

20 The same can be said about the campaign which had preceded the third Scottish Parliament election in 2007, the first one that was won by the SNP. SNP campaign director Angus Robertson had noted in the early weeks of the campaign:

The SNP are committed to running a positive campaign which embraces new technology to reach out to voters across Scotland. (...) Scots voters want politicians to present their positive vision for a successful Scotland, rather than engaging in the mudslinging and scaremongering that our opponents are increasingly obsessed with." (SNP media centre, 4 February 2007)

21 Two months before the 2007 election, Alex Salmond had similarly claimed that "[t]he SNP are leading the policy debate with our positive campaign, showing how we can make Scotland a wealthier, healthier, and safer society", adding that "the SNP will spend the next two months campaigning positively" and gleefully quoting Scottish Labour politician Henry McLeish, who had described his own party's campaign as "negative, 'extreme' and 'London-based'" in the *Sunday Herald* edition of 28 January 2007. (SNP media centre, 3 March 2007)

## 2.2. The SNP's use of information technology and social media

22 This article will now analyse the party's use of information technology and social media during the campaign, which had two aims: both to open up the party to ordinary citizens and encourage participative politics, and to better target potential voters, especially traditional Liberal Democrat voters, and thus increase the effectiveness of party campaigning. The SNP's 2011 campaign was historic in its use of new technologies and was said to have been inspired by US candidate

Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, which is often believed to have set the standard of online campaigning. Two examples of how the SNP made the most of the latest information technology and social media will be considered.

- 23 'Activate' is a data management system designed to identify voters and analyse voting intentions. It is essentially a computerised voter database of all 4 million Scottish voters, which the party uses for campaigning ends. It allows activists to make phone calls to identify and collect information on potential voters, especially in target seats, information which on-the-ground activists then use to better target their door-to-door campaigning and their leafleting. The party also made good use of its Activate iPhone application, which "told activists on the ground the nearest doors to knock on, then let them feed their canvass returns back instantaneously, updating Activate". (*Herald*, 7 May 2011) One can easily see how the use of such technology enhances the effectiveness of party campaigning. Once the SNP had adopted its strategy of targeting disappointed Liberal Democrat voters, Activate allowed the SNP to identify these voters, so that on-the-ground activists could then try and convince them to vote for the SNP. Possible switcher voters were targeted until the very last days of the campaign, when all undecided voters, identified by the Activate system, received a letter from Alex Salmond. The Activate database also allowed the party to make much better voter predictions than those given by the polls. In the months before the election, "while the polls fluctuated wildly, Activate showed a steady rise in SNP support, from 35% last September, to 40% at Christmas, to 46%" in the first days of May. (*Herald*, 7 May 2011) In the end, the SNP got around 44%-45% of the vote on the two Scottish Parliament types of votes, which is very close to the SNP's final prediction of 46%. Through this system, the SNP was able to combine traditional campaigning methods with the use of technology during both the 2007 and the 2011 Scottish Parliament elections, something which played a key part in both of these SNP victories.
- 24 The other innovative technology that contributed to the SNP's 2011 victory was the 'NationBuilder' system, a computer package that enabled the party to integrate social media Facebook and Twitter within its renewed party website. This allowed the SNP web team to "identify, instantaneously, every social media user who typed the let-

ters SNP into Twitter, or discussed a candidate or an issue relevant to the election campaign. Party activists interacted online, reeling in their potential supporters to the party website". (*Times*, 7 May 2011) The party also created 'mini-manifestos' on different policy subjects that could be downloaded from its website, as well as nine-word messages for Facebook pages on these subjects, all starting with "Both votes SNP to..." (such as "Both votes SNP to protect 1,000 extra police", "Both votes SNP to deliver council tax freeze", or "Both votes SNP to protect NHS"). Another example of the SNP's use of new technologies for campaigning ends was the inclusion on campaign materials of 'QR Codes', which could be scanned by smartphone owners to "display text to the user, to open a web site or to compose a text message or email." (*Saltire*, Spring 2011) The SNP's 2011 campaign was therefore the first Scottish social-media fuelled campaign.

### 3. The SNP's finances

25 One final, internal factor which played a significant part in the SNP's victory was the good state of the party finances. Traditionally, one of the SNP's main sources of campaigning income is the "Challenge for Independence" appeal, with members being asked to contribute regularly what they can afford. Added to this, in February 2011, the "Double your Donation" appeal was launched. This followed a pledge by Scottish millionaire Brian Souter (the founder of the Stagecoach Group)<sup>8</sup> that he would match each pound donated to this appeal by 30 March 2011 up to a total of half a million pounds, in an attempt to secure a £1 million election fund for the SNP. In the end, this fund was easily secured; it can be noted that Brian Souter's £500,000 donation was by far the biggest individual donation to a British political party in the first quarter of 2011, according to official figures published by the Electoral Commission (2011: table 6).

### Conclusion

26 The SNP's landslide victory in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election is a conjunction of several factors, but as this article has aimed at demonstrating, many of those are internal factors which are evidence that the SNP has become a very effective campaigning machine. It chose a better general strategy and a better second-vote strategy

than its main opponent, Labour. It made the most of its leader's charisma and of the internal reforms that it had adopted in 2004, as well as of information technology and social media. Finally, it secured a huge electoral war chest, thanks to Brian Souter's donation and to other individual donations, as well as to its strategy of partly sacrificing the British general election of 2010 to save resources for the Scottish Parliament election of 2011. For all these reasons, one should not see the SNP's victory as solely, or even primarily, the result of an anti-Labour vote.

## Annexes

- 27 The SNP's electoral results in Scottish Parliament elections: % vote and number of seats

| Year | 1 <sup>st</sup> vote (% vote) | 1 <sup>st</sup> vote (number of seats, out of 73) | 2 <sup>nd</sup> vote (% vote) | 2 <sup>nd</sup> vote (number of seats, out of 56) | Total seats (out of 129) |
|------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1999 | 28.7%                         | 7   | 27.3%                         | 28  | 35                       |
| 2003 | 23.8%                         | 9   | 21.6%                         | 18  | 27                       |
| 2007 | 32.9%                         | 21  | 31.0%                         | 26  | 47                       |
| 2011 | 45.4%                         | 53  | 44.0%                         | 16  | 69                       |

- 28 2011 Scottish Parliament election results, number of seats (seats gained or lost compared to 2007) and % vote (% vote gained or lost compared to 2007)

|                                | SNP            | Labour        | Cons          | Lib Dem      | Others        |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Total seats                    | 69 (+23)       | 37 (-7)       | 15 (-5)       | 5 (-12)      | 3 (+1)        |
| Constituency seats (out of 73) | 53 (+32)       | 15 (-20)      | 3 (-3)        | 2 (-9)       | 0 (0)         |
| Regional seats (out of 56)     | 16 (-9)        | 22 (+13)      | 12 (-2)       | 3 (-3)       | 3 (+1)        |
| Constituency votes             | 45.4% (+12.5%) | 31.7% (-0.5%) | 13.9% (-2.7%) | 7.9% (-8.2%) | 1.1% (-1.1%)  |
| Regional votes                 | 44.0% (+13.0%) | 26.3% (-2.9%) | 12.4% (-1.6%) | 5.2% (-6.1%) | 12.1% (-2.5%) |

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1 In Scottish Parliament elections, 129 MSPs are elected: 73 'constituency MSPs', elected through the First Past the Post electoral system, represent a local constituency and 56 'regional MSPs' (or 'list MSPs'), elected through a proportional, list system, represent a region.

2 Another possible external factor was the massive switch in newspaper backing for the SNP, but it is very difficult to assess the influence the press has on voting behaviour. The SNP was backed by many major Scottish dailies and Sunday papers, i.e. the *Scottish Sun*, *News of the World*, the *Sunday Herald*, *Scotland on Sunday*, as well as *the Scotsman* (the latter favouring a minority SNP government checked by the Conservative Party). In fact, the only major exceptions were the *Daily Record*, which remained faithful to Labour, and the *Herald*, which called on people to vote, but refused to recommend voting for one particular party. The most striking switch of allegiances came from the *Scottish Sun*, which in 2007 had fam-

ously featured a noose in the shape of an SNP symbol on the day of the election.

3 The most prominent names on the list were Brian Souter, from Stagecoach, Sir Tom Farmer, the founder of the Kwik-Fit car maintenance chain, Audrey Baxter, a food tycoon, or Jim McColl, from engineering company Clyde Bowers.

4 Unsurprisingly, the SNP denied that the use of the slogan was a problem in 2007, blaming instead the fact that there was a single ballot paper for two votes, the fact that some electronic counting machines did not work properly, and the fact that the Scottish Parliament election was held the same day as the council elections.

5 Nevertheless, just like Salmond isn't the only or even the main reason for the SNP's massive victory in 2011, Gray is not the main reason for Labour's long-term decline in Scotland.

6 A "Scottish Futures Fund" was to be made available by using the £250 million savings realised from the Forth Replacement Crossing, the new bridge set to be built over the Firth of Forth.

7 Winifred Ewing, better known as Winnie Ewing, was the second ever SNP Member of Parliament, first elected to the British Parliament in 1967. She was also an SNP Member of the European Parliament, and more recently an SNP Member of the Scottish Parliament. She was Party President from 1987 to 2005.

8 Brian Souter is a Scottish businessman and the co-founder (with his sister) of the Stagecoach Group, which runs bus services in the UK and internationally. Apart from his financial donations to the SNP, Souter was also politically involved in Scotland in 2000 when he funded the "Keep the Clause Campaign", whose aim was to prevent the Scottish Parliament from repealing a clause in the Local Government Act 1988 which banned local authorities from "intentionally promoting" homosexuality. On that occasion, Souter funded a Scotland-wide private poll.

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## English

This article analyses the internal factors which explain the SNP's victory at the Scottish Parliament election of 5 May 2011, its second victory in a row in Edinburgh. The first party to get an overall majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP has become an effective electoral machine which has

benefitted from a charismatic leader, from huge private donations, and from the internal reforms that it adopted in 2004. Most of all, in 2011, the SNP chose a better electoral strategy than its opponents, by leading a campaign that was perceived as positive and not oppositional, by devising different strategies for the first “constituency” vote and for the second “regional” or “list” vote, by targeting disappointed Liberal Democrat voters, and by making the most of the new campaigning possibilities offered by social media and information technology.

### **Français**

Le présent article analyse les facteurs internes qui expliquent la victoire du *Scottish National Party* aux élections législatives écossaises du 5 mai 2011, sa deuxième victoire d'affilée à Édimbourg. Premier parti à avoir obtenu une majorité absolue de sièges au Parlement écossais, le S.N.P. est devenu une machine électorale performante, bénéficiant d'un dirigeant charismatique, de dons privés très élevés, et des réformes internes qu'il a adoptées en 2004. En 2011, le S.N.P. a surtout choisi une meilleure stratégie électorale que ses adversaires, en menant une campagne perçue comme étant positive et non d'opposition, en proposant des stratégies différentes pour le premier vote dit « de circonscription » et le deuxième vote dit « régional » ou « de liste, en ciblant les électeurs déçus du parti libéral-démocrate, et en tirant profit des nouvelles possibilités de campagne offertes par les réseaux sociaux et les technologies de l'information.

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### **Mots-clés**

Scottish National Party, élections législatives, Écosse, 5 mai 2011

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