DETERMINATION

how Scotland can become independent by 2021

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Introduction

I rather hoped I could avoid writing this book. I had hoped that, after the referendum, the independence movement would stay connected and coherent enough that we would have a structure and a mechanism which would have allowed us to discuss the way forward. I'd hoped that I could feed my thoughts and ideas into that process. I have no desire to be publicly critical of the campaign we had or the position we have reached today. Nor do I want the future of the movement to be about one person's thoughts or ideas.

For political, cultural, social, economic and democratic reasons, I remain a strong supporter of Scottish independence. As with many other people, I am impatient. I fear drifting into 'if only' territory, that very Scottish mindset which dwells on what might have been if only a historical battle, refereeing decision or vote had gone the other way. It is a comfortable place to be, 'if only'; a place where we can feel sentimental about failure. For Scotland it is and has been a mindset which allows us to gain comfort in the face of defeat and provides an excuse for inaction and lack of progress.

It has an equally Scottish antidote – determination. I use determination to mean both the act of taking control (self-determination, to determine our way forward) and a thrawn, stubborn mindset which refuses to give up. It requires both meanings because we will require both attributes. We need a way forward which places the future in our hands and we need to recognise that we're not going to get there by waiting and hoping.

I have worked in the field of professional political strategy for over 20 years now. In my judgement independence supporters have reached a critical point, one where we will either develop a plan and move purposely forward or we will allow our commitment to transforming Scotland to become a cultural signifier of our Scottishness like a tea towel printed with a list of our national inventors or a reproduction of an oil painting of a romantic reimagining of the Jacobite rebellion which we can hang on our walls. And just now I cannot see a plan.

So despite my hesitance, I decided to block out my diary for four days in May 2016, switch of phones and email and set out what I think constitutes the outline of a plan for a way forward. My opinions are very clearly not the last word on any of this. It is likely that you will find things in these pages with which you don't entirely agree. You may find yourself agreeing in principle with parts of it but believing there may be a better way. It is simply an attempt to show that it is possible to see ways forward which take Scotland's future out of the hands of fate and places them into our own hands. It is a book which aims to stimulate discussion and provoke other people's ideas. I hope it can achieve that.

And I hope I can be forgiven for being a little critical at times – finger-pointing and blaming will get us nowhere, but we do need to be able to be calmly analytical about what worked and what didn't work. It is certainly not meant to talk down the incredible efforts so many people have put in to getting us here.

I shall argue that we need to understand why our strategy didn't quite work. I'll argue that we need to look more intelligently at who is likely to be the No voters who can be won over to create a strong Yes majority (and spoiler alert – they are neither rich nor Tories and won't be reached via right-of-centre dog whistles). I'll argue that we must dispense of the opinion which seems to have settled around us that somehow you win referendums during referendums. I'll suggest instead that a process of building up confidence in the case through diligent work and preparation is the key, and that we must get people used to change by setting a creative and imaginative domestic agenda. And I'll propose that we must get everyone to look to their own skills so that we can be the best fighting machine possible when that next referendum comes.

Because at the heart of the book I will warn against the idea that an independent Scotland will be delivered by 'triggers', external events outwith our control which will fall in our lap and somehow make everything OK, deliver us a referendum and then win that referendum for us. It's possible that will happen. To me, it just seems both unlikely and an awfully shoogly peg on which to hang our hopes. We have to have a way of creating our own trigger, our own mechanism for ensuring a referendum. For me, by far the best opportunity is the 2021 Scottish Election. That can provide a solid, unequivocal mandate for a referendum. And if we work between now and then to be ready, to win over people, we can hold that referendum quickly. We can have voted to be an independent nation by Christmas 2021. But we need to be sure, to do this right. As everyone knows, we cannot fail again or we really do fail for a generation.

One brief note if you are reading this and are a unionist. You're probably not going to agree with an awful lot of this. In the end, I absolutely respect your view. I perfectly well understand your political, cultural and social

reasons for identifying with Britain. I am a believer in pluralism – it would be a dull world if we agreed on everything. It is a shame that, in the end, one of us must lose. Of course, I hope it is you – but only so we can show you through the way we carry ourselves as a new nation in the world that you have nothing to fear and much to gain. I hope that you can recognise among the many things in these pages you don't agree with that at least it is a constructive and even idealistic plan. It is not about tricking, scaring or bribing people into supporting independence, it is a call for supporters of independence to get their house in order and present a prospectus for an independent Scotland that deserves serious consideration and which makes a credible attempt to answer important questions.

So I may not particularly have wanted to write this book, but now that I have I hope that it can stimulate the debate I believe the Scottish independence movement needs to have if we are to move forward. But the debate must be inclusive and rapid. Time is running out if we want to have a second chance at persuading Scots to vote Yes in the near future. We do not have weeks or months to squander.

The 'Scottish question' remains unanswered. Everyone knows that, whether they pretend that this has been resolved for a generation or not. It will not answer itself. If you believe in independence, now would be a good time to start answering the big questions of what Scotland is and what it will be. Crossed fingers are neither a tool nor a weapon. It will take determination – or our future will be determined for us.

One: An autopsy on the living

Something fairly unusual happened after the independence referendum – the losers became stronger, not weaker. It is not unheard of for those who have failed in a contest to emerge stronger because of that failure – it became pretty clear pretty soon after the 1992 General Election that there was a general public feeling that reelecting Tories for another five years had been a mistake. It took very little time to realise that Labour were heading for a landslide whenever the next election was held. But even that offered Labour a five-year timescale for getting over loss and preparing for victory.

In Scotland the loss of the referendum was, within months, followed by a General Election. The timescales for supporters of independence to get over their pain and get back on with the fight was measured in days and weeks, not years. Again, that in itself is not entirely unusual since many losing campaigns face some kind of electoral test rapidly after a serious setback (Scottish Labour has had to drag itself from a catastrophic General Election result into a potentially existential Scottish Election in under a year, spending a chunk of that time electing a new leader).

What is unusual is that the independence movement went from such a disheartening setback to such a resounding victory in such a short period of time. The stirring General Election victory by the SNP was seen by the movement as a collective win. In addition, the incredibly effective grassroots campaign did not dissipate but if anything grew more committed in the months after defeat on 18 September. The widespread awareness that no-one was giving up or behaving as if they were defeated gave a sense of strength to defeated people. It is not entirely unreasonable to argue that the independence campaign was never more alive than after its loss.

There is no question that, for our collective wellbeing, this sense of a kind of victory in defeat was a very great help. This had been a campaign which had pulled in many, many people who hadn't been campaigners before. I'd been involved in politics for a long time and was very much used to losing. Others hadn't. The impact of a final sense of defeat on some who

were new to campaigning would have been damaging – to them personally and certainly to the movement. So our ability to come together and feel strength in defeat was a very great gift.

But there was also more than an element of curse in it as well. It is an evolutionary principle that we must learn from our mistakes, from our failures. If we do not, we will make those mistakes again. Those who do not learn from error can, in the future, expect to be defeated by those who do. People sometimes talk of introspection after defeat as if it is a harmful or self-indulgent practice. It isn't. It's crucial. It is how we learn to win.

This is a process of learning we have not been able to go through. To reverse the old quip, the operation was a failure but the patient emerged in good health. And there is no medical procedure more difficult than an autopsy on the living.

So very little critical discussion (let alone criticism) took place between 19 September and the General Election. There was much discussion, much debate, much questioning of 'where now'. But it was highly respectful, extremely collegiate and very much focussed on 'OK, no recriminations, but how do we move forward?'. Which was great for morale and for preventing any splintering of the movement as elections approached, but not so good for illuminating the path ahead.

And after the General Election? Well, at that point it becomes increasingly difficult to talk convincingly of either a campaign or a movement. The SNP, in part necessarily, quickly returned to being a government and a political party. So too did opposition political parties. Many individuals were simply exhausted – the campaign, followed by a heroic post-campaign effort to keep the movement alive (achieved by the grassroots, not the parties), followed by election campaigning proved to be some of the most intensive times many people had been through. By June 2015, many people were in need of personal recovery.

But just as significantly, those who wanted to keep going had lost a focal point. There was no shared idea about what should happen next. The population as a whole needed to move on, to stop fighting the same fight that had been fought for three years. And on top of this there was no leadership. Many good things can be said about the way the SNP behaved in the year after the referendum, but claiming that they offered a strong, coherent leadership to the Yes movement, providing them with direction and hope and guidance and vision, is not one of those things. Which is understandable – strategists will have concluded that the party must not be seen to be constantly fighting old fights. Nevertheless, talking about independence was not at the top of the SNP agenda.

And of course, it is only a blink of an eye from that 'summer of recovery' to the unofficial start of the campaign for Holyrood 2016 during the party conference season in the Autumn. Elections are, by definition,

partisan affairs, requiring parties to contest each other and to seek each other's voters. It causes pro-independence parties to be continually critical of each other and encourages them to downplay issues like independence in favour of trying to gather up non-independence supporting voters.

And so we find ourselves in a post-election period. It will soon be two years since the referendum was lost. It is difficult to make a realistic case to argue that we have moved forward in any substantial way in those two years. Some will argue that, by default, success for the SNP is success for independence. It is not. It is perfectly possible for the SNP to mess it up. I'm not suggesting they have or that they will, I'm suggesting that it is perfectly possible. To say 'hey, that's the SNP in complete charge of Scotland for the next five years and so all we need to do now is wait' is a very risky strategy.

It is not my intention to undertake an autopsy on the living in this book. But here and in Chapter Six I want to raise a couple of the more uncomfortable truths about the reasons the Yes campaign didn't win. And perhaps the most controversial claim I will make is that the SNP on its own was not only incapable of winning the 2014 referendum but would have been likely to lose badly enough to have left independence off the agenda for a generation.

As a kind of personal, anecdotal research project I've asked people how many percentage points out of the 45 secured would not have been secured if it wasn't for National Collective, Radical Independence Campaign, Scottish CND, Women for Independence, Common Weal, NHS Yes and all the rest (not to mention the Greens, SSP and Solidarity). So far, no-one has suggested a number less than five.

If that is right, independence would have been defeated 60 – 40 in 2014. That is a 20 point margin and almost certainly enough to have made concrete the No campaign's demand that this was an end to the matter. The original SNP pitch (which was more or less precisely the same pitch as Yes Scotland) was to talk not about visions for a different Scotland through independence but to reassure that Scotland would be much the same after independence. From that point onwards Scots could choose a different Scotland if they wanted.

It was a twin-track strategy. The first part involved a lot of attempts to use accountancy practice to suggest Scotland would not be worse off and the retention of key British institutions (Sterling, the Queen, NATO membership and so on) to suggest that things wouldn't feel any different. The second part was an abstract concept, the democratic message of 'who is best to make the decisions for the people who live in Scotland?'.

There were three problems with this. The first was that basing the campaign on continuity offered endless opportunities for derailment. The case study was currency. I always believed that Scotland would have been granted access to Sterling and the Bank of England if it had voted for

independence (though personally I didn't consider it to be the best option and I feared that the terms negotiated for that access would very possibly have been against Scotland's interests). But it was always clear that it was just too easy to dispute that promise of continuity.

What is difficult about offering continuity is that it is predicating the case on lack of doubt. If you are reassuring people about something they fear (which was the aim), you are involved in an asymmetric battle in which you have to prove certainty but they only have to prove doubt. As we saw, when the big institutions of the British establishment are against you it is pretty easy to sow sufficient doubt to undermine certainty. There is absolutely nothing the SNP or the Yes campaign could have done to prove certainty of continuity in this circumstance. It can do things to reassure or create a 'balance of probabilities' argument. But that's not enough, not nearly enough, if your aim is to reassure the doubt out of the doubters.

The second problem was the abstract pitch. I can see precisely how this would have come about. Some people involved in advising the SNP would have been personally sceptical about the leftwards, transformational pitch that in the end did most to attract converts. I can see how they would favour an apolitical campaign, one based on abstract concepts of sovereignty and democracy.

And I can see how this would have focus-grouped well. To ask 'who should make decisions for you' is a perfectly reasonable question. It is almost certain to 'test' positively. But that's partly because it's a loaded question. And even more importantly, there is a big difference between agreeing with an abstract concept and letting it shape your decision. To demonstrate this, consider another abstract question – do you feel safer in a hardhat? I certainly do when I've got one on. Then another – do you want to feel safe? I certainly want to feel safe. So these two questions will 'test' positively in a focus group. And yet I don't wear a hardhat. Which is the problem with abstraction in political strategy – there is always a big gap between abstract feelings and practical actions.

Which leads to the third problem, which was the 'jumping into a dark hole' problem. A vote for independence was a gateway to a different, better Scotland. Or to a dreadful, horrendous Scotland. The point is that the future is unknown, which has to be paired with the fact that humans are inherently risk-averse. Key to human survival is the evolutionary principle that we are more afraid of potential loss than we are attracted to potential gain. This has been shown over and over again in psychology – if you're offered the choice of losing half your salary or gaining half as much again, all at the flip of a coin, you will not take the chance. In fact, in some cases you need to be offered the chance to gain many multiples of what you will lose if you are to agree to take a chance.

When paired with the inability to eradicate doubt, this meant that

asking people to vote Yes was asking them to take a chance that the future would be better than the present. And since the possibility of a worse future could not be ruled out, the ability to believe in a better future had to be stronger. That cannot be achieved through partial reassurance and abstract concepts of democracy.

Because another rule of human decision-making is that we make our decisions subconsciously much more than we make them consciously. It is our deepest hopes and fears and a lifetime of experiences of risk and reward which guide how we decide, not a rational profit and loss account in the rational mind. So you may well have done all the research in the world on the new product you are considering buying (processor speed of that shiny Apple computer; the fuel efficiency of that cool new car; the likely number of uses of that new item of clothing). But this is nothing more than you giving yourself permission to enact a decision your subconscious has already made.

To make someone jump into a dark hole on the promise of something else at the other side, they have to want to jump. To make them want to jump, they must have some vision of what life will be like on the other side. And that vision will need to be substantially more attractive than their fear of what a bad outcome could look like. And that will need to be a vision which is as concrete as possible, as not-abstract as can be achieved.

This is where another Yes campaign difficulty came about – it based its initial strategy on the established political practices of a general election. With less than 18 months to go, strategists were still claiming that the campaign would be won or lost on the basis of the 'aspirational middle classes' (this is verbatim what I was told at the time). This was based on assumptions such as 'the poor don't vote', 'elections are won in the centre ground' and 'people vote out of pure self-interest'.

Thankfully, all this turned out not to be true. The poor voted in numbers unseen in a British election for generations. The narrative which achieved this was heavily influenced by the progressive, creative campaign which emerged. And this narrative was enough to get people past their sense of self-interest (or at least persuaded a lot of people that the status quo was not in their self-interest).

I know that some people will contest this analysis, not least because I come from the political left, and there will I'm sure be charges of 'seeing what I want to see'. But in the end, I thought then and continue to think now that the numbers strongly stack up in favour of this argument. The 'aspirational middle classes' (which is shorthand for 'Tory-New Labour switchers') showed very little propensity to switch while those on lower incomes turned out in big numbers.

I've heard it argued that the reason for this is that the nature of the campaign 'scared away' New Labour-Tory switchers and that's why we lost.

I've even heard it said that now that we've 'got' the poor on side we should move to the right to pick up the Tories. Now that really is a case of 'seeing what you want to see' – it was poorer pensioners that lost us the vote much more than middle-aged Tories.

In fact, it has become a knee-jerk trope from some that what we need to do now is just 'bank' all those working class voters by ignoring them and go after the 'middle class voters we need to win over to get independence'. I hear these comments with a degree of astonishment. Because here 'middle class' seems to be defined as those with an income over £40,000 or so a year (apparently 'middle class' people pay upper rate income tax). Except that only applies to less than 15 per cent of the population.

I simply cannot understand what people mean when they say this. Is the strategy to win 100 per cent support for independence? As an aspiration it's highly unrealistic. As a strategy it's nuts. We need 60 per cent, 70 if we can get it. So if you really believe that the future of independence relies on upper-rate taxpayers, could you please supply some verifiable data to support your claim? Because everything I've seen – literally everything – suggests that the very last group of people in Scotland who will vote for independence are high-income, Daily Mail-reading Tories or Tory-New Labour switchers.

About four out of five working-age voters live on less than £35,000 a year. All the data I have ever seen makes it clear that it is them who are by far the most likely people to switch from a No vote to a Yes vote. There are more than enough people who do not respond to low tax dog whistles in Scotland to give us an overwhelming victory. (And let's be clear, plenty of people with incomes over £35,000 voted yes – but they're neither Tories nor Tory-New Labour switchers and they, like everyone else, are voting Yes because they're sick of Westminster's anti-social democracy). I can't count the number of times commentators, who are basically Tory sympathisers, inform readers that only Tory-lite can win elections. I then watch as time and time again, people who play Tory-lite politics in Scotland are punished, from the Tories to New Labour – to the 2003 SNP which tacked to the right and was soundly defeated for it.

There are few myths more resilient but less well-founded than the 'Scottish middle-class-upper-income voters are the ones that decide things'. There is almost literally not a shred of evidence to support this. It was only when this misplaced opinion was ignored by campaigners in the last referendum that we turned the corner. I remember people telling us that RIC's 'Britain is for the Rich' leaflet was a mistake, that the 'schemes' didn't matter and we needed to focus on Edinburgh's New Town. Thank your lucky stars we didn't listen. And express hopes that no one will listen this time. Scottish independence is not a centre right cause and never will be (or not in any foreseeable timescale). We won't win 100 per cent, and the 30 per cent we need to accept will not come over are precisely the 30 per cent who will

say things like 'tax is the state taking my hard earned money' and 'why can't the poor get off their arses and work'. Let's stop making eyes at them and instead focus on people who might actually want to vote for independence.

As I shall discuss in Chapter Three, much more important than whether Tories were 'wooed' is whether a sufficient sense of security and confidence was given to people who felt vulnerable or who were sympathetic but worried. It is confidence and not 'triangulation' which in the end was the campaign's problem (triangulation is the process of trying to be everything to everyone by sounding both rightwing and leftwing at the same time).

A large chunk of this book will focus on how to create that sense of confidence, the sense that the leap of faith is sufficiently safe to be worth it. But it is worth exploring very briefly why that wasn't achieved. And the simple answer to that was the lack of opportunity to prepare.

Here I want to defend the SNP and the Scottish Government. Prior to the 2011 Scottish Elections, no-one was anticipating an imminent referendum. While there had been some cross-party pro-independence forums they had not been planning for the reality of independence in a timescale of a couple of years. So a lot of the basic preparation and research had not been done.

When the Scottish Government was re-elected, this time as a majority government, it had the difficult task of securing a referendum. That took some time. And then, once this happened, we were virtually into the campaign. This meant that big, crucial questions such as currency and pensions were unresolved by the time the campaign was just round the corner. I most certainly do not blame the Scottish Government for what it did as a result. It had no option but to 'piece together' answers to these questions quickly and basically in private. There was absolutely no opportunity for a proper debate about how to answer these questions – it would have taken much more time than was available and would have required much more disagreement and resolution than is feasible in the face of an election. (As I shall discuss in Chapter Four, the Fiscal Commission was much more PR than serious policy.)

So the Scottish Government did what it could do and patched up semi-policies, semi-soundbites as a solution. That was all it could do. In some cases I think it got it slightly wrong, in some cases it couldn't do more than it did even if what it did was insufficient – but overall it did a not unreasonable job.

But if anyone told you that the White Paper was a really serious response to really big questions (like how to put in place a brand new pensions system in an independent Scotland), they were pushing their luck. It was a pitch, not a plan. All that could be done but not enough.

I raise these issues (and others in Chapter Seven where I'll look a little at the technical elements of the campaign) not to be divisive but to tease out issues that we are going to have to address. We, between us, will need

to develop a strategy based not on what is 'normal' but on what is needed to win something which is 'not normal' – a comparatively affluent country voting for major uncertainty and possible risk in the hope that it's worth it. And we will absolutely need to make sure that the next time we face a referendum, we do so properly prepared. On this last point we can afford to give ourselves no comfort whatsoever. Put simply, if we don't fix the position on currency, fiscal balance, pensions, defence and Europe, we will have no-one to blame but ourselves if we fail next time.

So I put the question simply – whom have you met who does not believe this work needs to be done? And in the almost two years since we lost, how much of that work actually has been done? These are questions we would have been faced with if we'd had that autopsy. We haven't and we certainly can't afford to tear ourselves apart having one now. But letting ourselves off the hook for things we didn't do well enough is not an option either.

We must get past the strategic mistakes of last time and recognise what worked and what didn't. We need to be honest about why people were unconvinced by the case – or not sufficiently convinced to take that leap. We must face up to that failure to convince not by shouting at people who didn't believe us and not by shouting down people who point out that we were insufficiently convincing, but by being tough on ourselves and doing the substantial work required to be convincing next time.

Some people believe that 'a bit more of the same, just one more push, all we need is another go at it' is enough. They might be right. They're probably not. I for one don't want to take that chance.

Two: Self Determination

The biggest threat to Scottish independence, which it is in our hands to fix, is a mistaken belief that too many of us carry around in our heads. People have absorbed the idea that you win referendums during referendums. And so perhaps the single most important point I'd like to make in this book is to refute this idea as strongly as possible.

You do not win referendums during referendums. Or at least you should try very hard to not be in that position. You want to go into a referendum having already won. That should be the aim. You don't walk into a pub, pick out 11 people at random and try to win a serious football match. You train; get fit; devise and practice strategies; train more. You don't invite people round for dinner having never switched on a cooker before and then try to cook them all soufflés. You would generally practice a bit; start with scrambled eggs; get better; learn.

So why do we behave like we're going to get anywhere by sitting around, talking among ourselves, proving our loyalty, believing really, really hard? Think of your line of work. If you had put as much time and effort into a project as big as Scottish independence and that project failed, a project which is crucial to you and your work which you are determined to see realised, how would you approach it (assuming you're not an investment banker already expecting to be bailed out...)? Would you plan to wait around hoping the opportunity comes round again and then when it does come round again, do exactly the same thing you did last time but slightly more manically?

I suspect that whether you are a nurse or an accountant or a cleaner or a taxi driver, you are thinking about how you'd prepare better for next time, work out what didn't work and get started now fixing things that you believe will better enable you to get it right next time.

In the case of electoral politics, that would mean that you'd want to start right now, shifting more and more people towards the voting outcome you want to achieve. You'd want to look carefully at what didn't work so well

last time and you'd try to find out what it was that you did or didn't do that made it not work so well. You'd then try to identify ways you could address what it was that you did or didn't do so that next time it is different. And you wouldn't be waiting until next time was right upon you to do these things.

Almost every independence activist I've ever met is acutely aware that we failed to secure sufficient votes among those aged over 60 who are either reliant on a state pension or who are likely to be in the near future. Some in that age category are the post-war generation and feel strongly British as a cultural identity. Some are that generation of retirees who have become very wealthy out of the British management of the economy (and in particular the unsustainable way the housing market has made them wealthy). They probably will never vote Yes.

But what of the rest, the many, many pensioners who face life on one of the lowest state pensions in Europe with some of the highest housing costs in Europe, the ones whose insecurity about their financial future led them to vote No? We know, all of us, that failing to secure their vote was almost in itself enough to explain our failure to win. So we've analysed what went wrong and we're taking substantial steps to make sure that problem does not arise again? We've begun work to ensure that there is a really solid and defensible plan in place to secure pensions for generations to come?

Nope. Actually, we've done nothing at all. I've heard some people on the small-c conservative side of the independence movement (many of whom are in influential positions) argue that this is precisely why the SNP must be a small-c conservative government, tacking to the centre to reassure those pensioners that they're in 'safe hands'. But is this not just a kind of projected self-interest? Is this not giving the impression that a small-c conservative future under the current political leadership is all that pensioners or anyone else can expect from independence?

And worse still (as I shall discuss at more length in Chapter Five), is this not precisely reassuring them that Britain is the safest option? If we ourselves adopt the view that being as much like Britain as possible is the best way to make people feel safe, are we ourselves not reinforcing the idea that continuity, that Britain, is the definition of safety? How does that help the independence case?

So what have we done to address this substantial hole in our hopes for independence? Cross our fingers? Is that sufficient? Do we really believe that if only we can get that 'one more shot at it', this time they'll 'see sense'? Are we happy to go into the campaign with them not believing us but infused with the belief that if we just knock their door one more time, then they're bound to believe us?

I would suggest that is risky. In fact, I would suggest that such a view is foolhardy verging on reckless. Often it takes people time to change their minds, sometimes quite a lot of time. And it can also take material change,

a real-world shift that in turn shifts them. There are products I won't buy because they're unethical and I can't bring myself to turn a blind eye. Their manufacturers can come back with all the rebranding they want, saturate me in as much advertising as they want, if they're still unethical, if they still make me feel bad when I think about them, I still won't buy them. Sometimes you have to accept that the barrier is not about how smooth you were with your sales pitch; the barrier is what you were trying to sell. That is not something you can fix during the sales pitch. You need to work in advance.

For me, the biggest irony in all of this is that we are a movement for self determination which seems a little too happy to leave our fate in the hands of others. I've heard far too much talk along the lines of 'the Tories will do our job for us' by being unpopular (or the Brexiters will; or TTIP will). It is of course possible this is true. It is of course entirely plausible that someone, somewhere else will do stupid things which deliver us exactly what we want. Then again, it is just about plausible that a really brilliant government will come along in Westminster and be so damned good that we won't even want independence any more. Do you want to pin all your hopes on it though?

I heard it said too many times during the referendum. Senior figures I admire and who I thought should have known better told me things like 'when UKIP wins the European Elections in England but no UKIPers are elected in Scotland, that'll be the tipping point which gets us a majority'. That's the problem with relying on external factors to deliver what you want – they're damnably unreliable. As soon as you find yourself saying 'the key to us winning is not what we do but what they do', you have immediately created a strategy based on weakness. And strategies based on weakness seldom work out well.

We need strategies based on strength, based on our own agency, our own ability to make things happen. Before we can have self-determination for Scotland, we need an attitude of self-determination in the independence movement. I suggest that the way to achieve that is to plan as if the outside world was neutral and then consider in depth how we should respond when things go better or worse than neutral.

This approach forces you to come up with a way that gets you from here to there relying first of all only on what we ourselves do. Let's say all the possible beneficial external circumstances we've got our fingers crossed for (Tory unpopularity; oil price recovery; Brexit with a Scottish In vote; another financial crisis; etc.) fail to happen. What then? What is it that gets us to a victory? That question must be answered in some detail – replying 'keep voting SNP and wait' isn't a strategy but a conviction of faith. What should the SNP do with its electoral power which can be expected to make pensioners feel comfortable with their wellbeing in an independent

Scotland? The working class voters who were sympathetic to independence but somehow felt that it was too risky, what do we do to get them to vote Yes? Can the famous 'aspirational middle classes' ever be persuaded to shift and if so, what credible way can that happen?

If nothing else happens, how do we achieve these things on our own? That would be self-determination. Of course the outside world will not stay the same, but predicting in advance exactly what will happen is a foolish pursuit. Being prepared to deal with and use constructively all the possible external events we can think of is essential, but relying on them is dangerous.

Perhaps the most visible sign of our weakness, of our lack of self-determination, is our constant talk of 'triggers'. We have speculated to an unhealthy degree about which external event will give us what is effectively an excuse to return to the battle we didn't win. So desperate are we to believe that we can win the next referendum over the course of the next referendum that we are at risk of grasping at straws when we try to come up with a way to achieve that next referendum. It is this that has led us to use the word 'trigger' – the work of the good fairies who will sprinkle magic dust on us if only there is a...

So we'll 'just get' another referendum if there's a Brexit. But will we really? If Britain is ripped out of the European Union it will be financially very vulnerable with global markets considering the country to be an increased risk. You think the powers that be in the City of London will want that risk exacerbated by losing Scotland at the same time? Why does a slightly different vote on either side of the border compel anyone in Westminster to do anything at all to help us in our goal? What happens if there isn't a Brexit?

There is no bigger sign of weakness when you predicate your whole purpose in life on the actions of an external, hostile entity based on an event which may or may not happen and which even if it does happen has no constitutional or conceptual link to the staging of a second referendum. In fact, hoping that 'something will come along' is virtually a sign of desperation. What if it doesn't?

I am not for a second suggesting that there are no events which may occur which might not create a political environment in which refusing to permit a second referendum is untenable. I am most certainly not suggesting that we should not be ready to seize on that opportunity if it comes along. For my money, I suspect that another major financial crisis prompted by ongoing corruption in Britain's banking system as a result of failure to regulate and punish after the last one is the event which might enrage enough people to view staying in Britain as more of a risk than leaving it. We should be ready.

But we need a Plan A. Waiting for something to come and rescue us isn't Plan B because it isn't even a plan, it's a hope. Thankfully, there is a simple Plan A. We need to seek a democratic mandate for a second referendum. If we have that mandate, we can compel a second referendum.

If that democratic mandate is not heeded, it will provoke a constitutional crisis which will almost certainly lead to Scotland's independence one way or another.

Achieving that mandate is comparatively easy. There will be a Scottish Election in 2021. We can convert that election into a referendum on having a referendum. There are a number of ways it can be done – the SNP could be supported in standing on a single ticket pro-referendum platform and other parties could step aside on a promise that if for any reason a referendum is not secured, a new election would be called. All the pro-independence parties could form a 'referendum alliance' to the same effect. Indeed, all the pro-independence parties could stand aside in favour of a single 'party' on the ballot paper called 'Give Scotland a Second Referendum on Independence'.

Now I of course realise that some of these ideas are more realistic than others. And people will argue that you need to have a full manifesto and a full plan for government in a Scottish parliamentary election. I would argue that, if you're really serious, you don't want a commitment to an independence referendum to be one item in such a manifesto. It leaves the door open to Westminster saying 'you have a mandate for the overall plan but that does not mean we have to go along with any individual bit of it'. If you really, really want to nail this down, I'd suggest that you need a mandate which is unequivocally about that second referendum. Of course you'd need to promise another election soon after a Yes vote where people really could get a chance to vote on a domestic agenda. And you'd probably need to offer a second quick election if you failed to get enough votes for a second referendum (though if that was in doubt, we've failed and the whole strategy would need to be shelved). So I accept that this is not normal or usual practice. But I am arguing that this is, conceptually, the way to guarantee another referendum.

Because all that is required is that an unequivocal statement be made by a majority of the Scottish population that they want this to happen and the democratic mandate is secure. But this would be a risky strategy if we're looking at 50.5 per cent. We need to get 60 per cent of the voting population to back this proposal. That is not only a mandate, it is the basis of a referendum victory.

If we were to achieve this (and if we were to follow the various steps proposed in chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven), we would already be prepared by the time of that 2021 Scottish Election to win a rapid referendum. There is an assumption among many independence supporters that referendums 'naturally' go on for ever. This is an assumption which springs only from the referendum we had. As the EU referendum shows, they do not need to last for three years. Indeed, they need not last more than a month or two. If we get a mandate for a second referendum in early May 2021 we can hold a referendum vote in September or October 2021 and have voted to be an

independent country by Christmas 2021. That would be a self-determined strategy built on strength and confidence.

But – and it's a substantial but – it relies on us having effectively won that second referendum by May 2021. Ideally we need a cohort of 65 per cent of the population which fully understands what is happening and which is committed to two votes within six months to create an independent Scotland. It will require both those votes to be secure before the process begins – if either of those votes goes wrong, independence is over for our generation.

This book is being written in May 2016. That means that as I type, we are already less than five years away from that momentous six months. If, by the middle of 2020 we are not sitting at at least a very solid 60 per cent support for independence (with rigorous checking and double-checking of methodology to ensure there are no nasty surprises), we need to pull out of this strategy and accept that it will be another five years again before it can be enacted. Which means that from this moment (mid 2016) we have only got four years to win Scottish independence. Tick tock.

If there is a crisis event between now and 2021 which looks like it might be sufficient in scale to move a sufficient number of people over to independence, the same solid strategy can be used by calling an early election. However, this is a much riskier strategy to enact in a period of volatility. Crises have a habit of producing outcomes which no-one expects. One poll for independence could reach 60 per cent but within the six months from there it takes to get to a referendum vote, events could have turned (an additional crisis in the Scottish economy for example) and we could lose. So while we should be prepared, a little patience is not a bad thing. Snatching at half chances – that's a bad thing...

I hope I have outlined a clear path to Scottish independence which is in our hands. I hope I have also persuaded you that, if humanly possible, referendums should be won well before referendums are held. But there is one additional conclusion that can be drawn from these arguments, and it is one I hope independence supporters will be happy to hear. You do not need a No campaign to have a Yes campaign.

I've come across the view held by some that it'll be much harder next time because the No campaign won't be as awful as it was last time (though actually as will be discussed in Chapter Six, it wasn't quite as bad as you think). I've heard others who think that we need really to work out what the next No campaign will throw at us and be prepared to combat it. Both things make sense and are partly true. But what if there isn't a No campaign? If we can put together a successful, enthusiastic, large and grassroots driven Yes campaign years before the actual referendum, will the No side even have the will to fight for that long? If we're staging this battle continually over four years, what kind of No campaign would there be?

Would Labour really have the will to be drawn deeply into a long, damaging battle on which it is on the wrong side? The Tories in Scotland have little to lose but can they run a No campaign all by themselves? Are there enough activists to keep a visible presence for that period of time? Can they make up for this through big donors and professional agencies? What message can they sustain for four years? It would be fundamentally and dangerously cocky to assume that we have this in the bag or that all we need to do is turn up. But when we're designing a campaign, why would we design it as if we're re-running 2014? If a plan anything like that outlined above is pursued, the dynamic will be significantly different. We should be planning to have won over a lot of people years before a referendum. When we think about the fight in those terms, we think differently.

There is a clear, simple, straightforward path from here to Scottish independence and it is within our hands. We don't need to pray to the gods for divine intervention. We don't require anything magical or mysterious. We just need to work and work hard. As soon as you realise that there are no 'triggers', that referendums should be won years in advance, that you don't need a No campaign to have a Yes campaign, you free yourself to devise the future as something which you can determine yourself. I believe firmly that it is this self-determination which will make the difference between us winning and losing. And I'm determined we don't lose.

Three: The Trick of Confidence

When people think of the con trick, too often they think in terms of 'gullible fool who fell for that'. That is a misunderstanding. The confidence trick works because we all respond to the subliminal sense that someone else has utter confidence in what they are telling us. We may not like it, but we are all subconsciously influenced by a sense of confidence. This doesn't mean the over-selling you get from someone faking confidence – most people can smell that from a mile away. It means the calm, assured sense you get from someone who seems utterly to know what they are talking about, the feeling that you're not going to catch them out with tricky questions because you sense they already know the answers.

There is an awful lot which the confidence trick and a campaign have in common. Take for example an advertising campaign – and I'm afraid for the best example you should probably look at the advertising of cosmetic products to women. These are campaigns of confidence. Everything about them drips in confidence, from the flawless, perfect smile of the model to the bit which allows you to feel 'not daft for caring so much about makeup' where there will be some pseudo-science backed up by a short animation involving molecular structures. You know, molecular structures like you subconsciously recall from the deeply serious walls of your high school chemical lab. In your heart you know this skin cream isn't going to disappear your wrinkles; that your hair isn't going to look like that no matter how much 'revitalising conditioner' you apply; that a cheap lipstick will probably look much the same. But the confidence trick works and as a nation we spend silly sums on products we rationally know don't work.

Car adverts drop in words like 'torque' and 'brake horsepower' – and a beautiful woman will often glance lustfully at the infeasibly handsome (and generally male) driver. You know you don't look like that; you know that buying that car won't make you look like that. You very possibly don't know what 'brake horsepower' is. But you watch the advert and you yearn for the confidence of the man with that car. Very simply, people don't buy

products that they don't feel confidence about or which don't make them feel confident. (In fact, adverts heavily rely on the other half of the 'deal' which is to make you feel deeply unconfident about yourself as you are now, then offering the promise that your 'failures' can be fixed by them, but that's a whole other book…)

Politics has always been about confidence. In Britain it was about a 'ruling class' with the education, accent and clothing we took to be indicators of authority. It made us feel confidence back in the patrician 1950s. As society changed, so did our definitions of authority. We came to reject the assumption that authority was a class issue we were born with and to replace it with a kind of meritocratic view of authority. It was success that granted authority by the 1980s. Britain's elite private schools had for centuries marketed themselves as finishing schools for the 'right kind of people'. It was social class and birth which mattered, not intelligence. Slowly, they rebranded themselves as places of academic merit, as incubators of brilliant minds. In truth, they were never about brilliant minds and were always about reinforcing privileges of birth. But they couldn't say it out loud any more.

And with that social transformation came the new era of political PR. Stylists were employed to make sure that aspiring politicians sent out the subconscious vibe that they were 'fit to rule' by making them shave their beards and wear dark blue suits with simply coloured ties (for men) and angular business suits with perpetually groomed hair (for women). Confidence became a game of looking like the chief executive of a successful medium-sized white collar enterprise of some sort. Because focus groups seemed to show that this is what made people confident.

But much more than the over-analysed styling issue, politics became about set-piece indicators of confidence. If you ask 100 people why Labour lost the 2015 General Election, a good proportion will tell you that they lacked 'economic competence'. If you then asked that group what aspect of economic competence they lacked, you will quickly descend into conversations of the vaguest sort possible. 'Business leaders don't trust them'. Nope, like bank robbers don't trust the police. 'They presided over a global crisis'. Yup, like most other world leaders. It's not about coherent arguments, it's about indicators that make us less confident. It's a reverse con trick. (Well, actually, Labour did lack economic credibility, but mainly for almost the opposite reasons that are usually cited.)

In an election you are asking the public to select people to whom you will give unmatched control over their lives. Confidence is crucial – or at least the illusion of confidence is crucial. It's what political strategists and image makers spend all their time doing, seeking to give the overwhelming sense of calm confidence to which people respond positively. (Hence Ed Milliband's 'be a happy warrior' notes.)

As discussed in Chapter One, the 'trick of confidence' was one of the central planks of the way SNP and Yes Scotland strategists approached the referendum. It was framed and described as reassurance rather than confidence, but it was about making people feel confident that if they voted Yes, the sky wouldn't fall in. I have already explained the extent to which I can completely understand why this was necessary in the context of the 2014 referendum – the whole process was so sudden that a longer process of confidence-building was impossible. So what could be called rapid-deployment assurance became necessary. Much of the campaign was built around arguments which did not so much explain exactly how the sky would be prevented from falling in but rather sought to make the idea of the sky falling in sound implausible through comparison with other small nations.

So we were all armed with lots and lots of slightly tendentious arguments about how pensions would be OK 'somehow' but without really costing out and designing what that 'somehow' was. It was all we could do. But because this concept of reassurance became so important and because uncertainty was the major weapon used by the No campaign, it led us up some unhelpful avenues. The easiest to mock are the fatuous ones – lifestyle gurus telling us that it is more 'empowering' to say independent than independence (as if the shift from abstract noun to qualitative adjective mattered a damn).

But there are much more important examples of where trying to bluff confidence didn't work. By far the most important was over currency. The choice of currency that an independent Scotland would use became a sort of touchstone issue which defined the campaign. You either believed that somehow the currency issue would be resolved and so you voted Yes or you believed that it was uncertain and risky and you voted No. (In many cases it is likely that this was a reverse-engineered position which people took to justify the decision they had already made, but the broad lack of confidence in itself will have played a substantial subconscious part in making that decision.)

Here's the funny thing though – despite the currency position being by far and away the issue which independence activists identify as the campaign's biggest failing, my experience is that people aren't exactly sure why or what should have been done instead. To make clear my personal position here, for very good economic reasons and reasons of sovereignty I always favoured a separate Scottish currency pegged to Sterling. But largely I did not arrive at this opinion for tactical reasons. It is why I am not convinced that 'if only' the Fiscal Commission had come out in favour of a Scottish currency everything would have been different and we'd have won. Strategically (rather than politically or economically) the problem was not with the conclusion the Fiscal Commission reached but with the Fiscal Commission itself.

So with the caveat that in 2013 there was little time to have done anything

else, the problem is that the Fiscal Commission was not really a serious piece of economics but was more like a substantial piece of propaganda. The difference is crucial. As someone who runs a think tank, I can't help but look at the report of the Fiscal Commission as if it was something we might have produced. I'd be perfectly proud of it (in terms of quality) if we'd produced it, not least because of the names attached. However, it is not only me who would have concluded that it was an interesting discussion paper and not a basis for any real plan. Had I taken that report to the Scottish Government and said 'here you go, here's a currency plan' I would not have been taken seriously. Because that's not what it was or what it was for.

With the best will in the world I don't believe the Fiscal Commission really started with an open mind. Indeed, I'm pretty sure that key members of the Commission did not really believe its conclusion. From my interactions with the SNP leadership from before the Commission was set up, I am pretty sure that the decision to keep Sterling was a tactical one based on focus group work which had much less to do with the needs of the economy of an independent Scotland than it did with the requirements of a strategy which sought to give the impression that come independence you'd barely notice so don't worry. I can imagine no circumstances in which the Commission report would have been published had it come out unequivocally in support of an independent currency, purely because that would have raised more questions than it answered. So instead we got a report which provided political cover (via the inclusion of 'big names') for a strategic decision that was already made.

I am not dismissing the argument that Scotland should have continued to use Sterling. I am the first to recognise that there are many very good reasons to hold that opinion and I have never argued that there is one, simple, 'correct' answer to the question. But I am definitely disputing any suggestion that the means by which that position was reached involved anything like enough critical thought, widespread consultation or detailed analysis which would generally be considered necessary to arrive at a decision of such monumental significance.

So to be clear, I'm not saying the argument that we should have formed a currency union was necessarily wrong. But it was short-term politics rather than long-term nation building. The reason currency became the issue most people identify as being the one which 'went wrong' during the referendum was because it was the most obvious example where people came to believe that independence campaigners were busking it. I find it hard to argue with that assessment.

To be technical (for no more than a paragraph), a position on currency arrived at without properly modelling crucial issues such as the size of a foreign currency reserve required to peg a 'Scottish Pound' to Sterling is incomplete. To brush over questions such as who would become the 'lender

of last resort', what national banking institutions would be required to sustain a currency, how cross-border trade and exchange would be managed is to fail to look seriously at the question. You just can't make a proper assessment of the options if you don't know these things.

But what do these technicalities mean for the outcome of the campaign? Am I suggesting that the people of Scotland would have burrowed down into the details of such a report and, by reassuring itself about the nature of foreign currency reserves, rush out and voted Yes? Nope, that's not what I'm suggesting at all. I'm suggesting that, to go back to the beginning of the chapter, there is a world of difference psychologically between someone barking confidently at you that they know everything and it'll be OK because some famous economists said it and being able to answer calmly and assuredly a series of important questions with the confidence that only comes from having the right answers.

I know this first-hand because I had to answer the question many times over in many town halls to many sceptical questioners. I tried to answer these questions as honestly as I could without undermining the wider campaign (in which disagreeing with keeping Sterling or the Queen or joining NATO were turned into screaming headlines about splits and conflict by a hostile press). I did a very little sketchy work of my own to answer some of these questions. I said honestly that there was no definitive or correct answer, that there were a range of options with pros and cons which I talked through and then eventually came down in favour of an independent currency while being clear about the costs and work involved balanced with the long-term benefits that would accrue. Generally, I got a positive response, even if the questioner wasn't in complete agreement. However, I did see some painful attempts by others just to 'stick to the line', which sometimes came across a little bit like 'Joseph Stiglitz has a Nobel Prize don't you know'. Saying it with certainty didn't seem to make people any more confident. And admitting doubt didn't seem to make people any less confident.

That's the thing about the confidence trick – people often think that a con artist is all bluster and style and no content or knowledge. This is the opposite of the truth. A good con artist prepares and prepares and prepares, knowing every avenue is covered, that every question can be answered, that no inconsistencies stick out. That is how they manage to con people. In politics the same is true – the more you have done the work - the hard, serious work - the more you have considered all the real pertinent questions and found answers to them, the more confident you will sound.

That is why currency is the emblematic factor of our defeat – because it symbolises the real problem with the campaign. We (for good reasons) weren't prepared. It's not that members of the public want to know the size of a foreign currency reserve, it's that they want to be convinced that someone really knows the answer. It's not that they necessarily preferred a

'Plan B' of an independent currency, it's that they wanted to be reassured that there was a fully-functioning Plan B in place just in case Osborne really did refuse to allow us access to the Bank of England. The currency issue became a failure because people sniffed out that the work hadn't really been done and that we were, to all intents and purposes, bluffing. (Let's be clear here – England really could have prevented a currency union and it did no good at all for us to have only the answer of 'liar, liar, pants on fire'. And with only 18 months to sort it out according to the timetable for independence, there wasn't much scope if things did go wrong. I write this here only so we can make sure this doesn't happen, but I was definitely a little worried that by painting ourselves into a corner for short-term campaigning purposes we were going to get a bad deal on currency which could have taken years if not decades to recover.)

It is this failure to induce confidence in nervous possible Yes voters which I believe to be the single biggest factor in the Yes campaign failing to win. On referendum night TV (which I recall only blearily) there was a crucial moment which encapsulated all this perfectly. There were various members of the public on a panel. The host interviews one. He tells her that he thought the currency case hadn't been worked out properly, that he was a businessman and the White Paper was too much assertion and not enough information, that this was all risk and the rewards hadn't been outlined (or words to that effect). An English-based commentator picked up on this and said 'so you're anti-independence?'. To his great surprise the man said 'not at all, I really want to believe in an independent Scotland, but it needs to be based on a much better case than this'. If we do not listen to this man and this opinion and we do not respond and react to it, we will shoot ourselves in the foot. We must make it easy for those who want to believe to actually believe.

Here I want to direct a little criticism towards the 'hold the line' tendency in the Yes movement. There are people who have expressed the view that the last thing we want to do is to mess around with the case but that rather we should just plough on with loyalty to the cause and discipline to the message. In this view, questioning whether we got things right the last time round is simply 'splitting the movement' and that if the 'high heid yins' have settled on Sterling union (for example) then it must be for a reason. This might be fair enough in the middle of a campaign, but it is positively dangerous in preparing a campaign. If we listen only to those 'above' us and expect to relay that to those 'below' us, we will ignore what we are being told by the very people who we need to win over. I have many No-voting friends and neighbours (I live in a firmly No-voting town). Absolutely none of them are saying to me 'right, what I need for you to convince me is to come back again with exactly the same stuff you came with last time and then to badger me about it some more'. The sympathetic ones are saying 'look, I'm

proud of Scotland and want to believe it can be an independent nation but you need to answer my questions'.

So let me be absolutely clear on how I think we answer those questions. I propose that we need not an updated White Paper (which frankly sprawled over far too many subjects, some barely related to the actual process of independence) but rather we learn the lesson from the Scottish Constitutional Convention which built the case (very successfully) for the Scottish Parliament. Over a pretty compressed period of time it worked through not every question it could think of but rather every question that needed to be answered to set up the infrastructure of a new Parliament. We should do the same.

Restricting ourselves only to the institutions and infrastructure required of a new country but which is not currently in place in Scotland, we should build a coherent, thought-through plan. In the next chapter I will outline in a little more detail what I think needs to be in that case. But broadly it covers the fiscal, monetary, social and regulatory infrastructure which is currently reserved to Westminster, the things we know we need but which we don't have. (There is all the time in the world for political parties and campaign groups to build a case for what we could do with all this new infrastructure and while I do not believe for a second there is such a thing as policy-neutral institution-building, we should stick as far as possible to what things would look like and how they would work rather than what they would do.) This would create what you might call a 'consolidated business plan for a new, independent nation'.

The process of building this plan will be important. It must be something which is broadly shared. It will do no good if there are unilateral decisions about controversial issues imposed on the whole movement without the movement having the opportunity to debate and negotiate these properly. Last time round a lot of people bit their tongue on issues like whether to keep a hereditary, unelected Head of State, a policy imposed on the movement which had very little support. This time round we have time to resolve these issues better (I am a republican but would happily accept a compromise that sees Queen Liz accepted as Head of State for her lifetime but with a promise of a referendum when the time of succession comes around). No-one will get absolutely everything they want (just like not everyone got what they wanted out of the final report of the Constitutional Convention). But what we should get if the process works is a really solid, really shared, really persuasive proposal for a new country which doesn't involve bluff or anyone holding their nose. The power of having such a document would be enormous. Independence would become a specific proposal which could be discussed seriously, not improvised round the edges.

There is of course a major problem here – which is that we're running out of time. Let's work backwards for a second from my proposal for a 2021

referendum. Ideally you'd want to have at least two full years of a major Yes campaign persuading people of the new 'business case' before you went anywhere near the election or referendum. This means that ideally you'd want the case completed for launch not later than the very beginning of 2019 (and the cautious side of me suggests that longer than that would be preferable – think how fast the last 18 months of the indyref went...). That means it would need to be signed off by everyone in the autumn of 2018. That is less than two and a half years away at the time of writing. And a cross-party body for overseeing and negotiating this work does not even exist yet (though steps are being taken to try and create it).

To demonstrate the time pressures, let's work forward for a moment. To create a detailed and robust case for a currency solution, a pension and social security system, a new civil service, regulatory infrastructure, an inland revenue service, some kind of central bank and so on, is not a small task. Were you to plan such a project I suspect you'd want more than three years and possibly something more like five years. We've got two. I will admit to being frustrated that we didn't get something like this started within six months of September 2014. From here it would be easy to sleep-walk into a second referendum little more prepared on crucial issues than we were for the first one.

But if we get it right we could hold a massive national launch of this founding document perhaps for Burns Night in 2019. We can by then have a big, effective national campaign planned (as discussed in Chapter Six). We can then spend two years campaigning relentlessly on this proposal. It gives us two years to shift that chunk of the population who were not opposed in principle but did not have confidence in us last time. They are more than enough to cross the 60 per cent threshold needed to enter 2021 with confidence. We then have the opportunity rapidly to convert that majority support into Scottish independence.

There is one other issue to do with confidence that I want to raise here. Throughout this chapter I have emphasised the rational end of confidence, the bit that wants to know there are proper answers to questions. I am utterly convinced that this is the only way to get us to substantial majority support in a short timescale. But there is another kind of confidence we must always be conscious of, which is cultural confidence.

By emphasising rational, calculating aspects of confidence I have intentionally ignored other aspects. If you look at Catalonia for example they have a big and vibrant independence movement which is not really predicated on a 'business case' at all. Catalonia is not on the verge of independence because people have a detailed plan for a new nation state but because they have reached a level of cultural confidence we do not have. Catalonians wage a flag unashamedly, we do not. In fact, we are still struggling to drag ourselves out of the Scottish cringe.

Here I really do want to place some blame at the feet of more or less all the political parties. They may well claim to be 'stronger for Scotland' or 'Scotland's radical alliance' or use other identifiers of Scottishness (a green saltire). But they really do far too often give the distinct impression that they are not quite as comfortable with the concept of being Scottish as they might. There was an awful lot of talk during the referendum aimed at distancing us from flags and identity. Fair enough in as far as militaristic, chauvinistic nationalism has sometimes used the aggressive waving of the national flag as a provocation. But honestly, do you really see the Saltire as a symbol of militarism or chauvinism? What is your real fear – that the waving of flags might lead to poetry?

The official Yes campaign was constantly vigilant about the issue of identity politics, policing diligently uses of Scots language, couthey imagery, flags and symbols. It was always worried about being tied to an impression of a 'small Scotlander' mentality. So was Nicola Sturgeon who was always at great pains to claim that she was really only interested in the democratic and civic cause. This was a line that was clung to by the Greens in particular (who constantly brand the life out of their party with Green everything but for some reason give the strong impression of objecting to the branding of the nation of Scotland via a simple national symbol like a flag). Colin Fox of the SSP deployed his 'democrat, not nationalist' line to very great effect.

As a professional political strategist I understand completely and myself sought to project an image of our campaign as civic and democratic. But here is my question – can someone explain to me where 'emphasising our civic nature' ends and 'cringe' begins? If we want people to identify Scotland as a viable, separate nation state, why do we sometimes give the distinct impression that we'd really rather people viewed it as a convenient administrative entity? The more we apologise for the flag, the less cultural confidence we give people. And people need to feel that cultural confidence as well as rational calculation. It's part of the package of confidence which makes people take (calculated) leaps into the dark.

And if you think I'm misreading this, that the SNP (in particular) is perfectly comfortable with the Saltire (which it is), explain the apparent fetishisation of things non-Scottish. Why are so many governmental advisors chosen from outside Scotland? Does it not give the very distinct impression that we don't have the relevant expertise here? Why have we not done things that boost cultural confidence like investing in the arts, film, music, the reflections of a modern nation state that let us see ourselves represented and then to feel proud of it? Why the hesitancy over Scottish history (which is just not all about 'beating the English')?

Because there is a constant, low-level cultural war going on right now. There are Union Jacks on our driving licences; policies to undermine our renewables industry; the devolution of contorted tax powers which are

difficult to use. The media is relentlessly repackaging Scotland as a small administrative centre which should focus on micromanaging a limited range of bureaucratic policies in health and education. It's the kind of narrative you'd usually find around a local authority. Apparently we should get over our cringe at TV series Outlander and welcome the jobs it creates. Eh, sorry here, but I wasn't cringing. It really is a perfectly good historical romp like much of what is coming out of the new wave of US long-format television.

Feel free to call me paranoid but I am of the belief that unionists are engaged in an ongoing attempt to undermine Scotland's confidence economically, culturally and politically. It's what I would do if I was them. Are we going to fight back against this and assert our own confident, modern cultural identity? Or are we just going to cringe along with them? I don't want a film studio in Scotland which has the sole purpose of enticing American productions about elves and goblins just because we have mountains. I want a film studio in Scotland that makes exciting contemporary films about a nation which is widely seen as one of the most exciting places to be in Europe.

I do not intend to go into any more detail in this book about these questions of cultural confidence, a subject which would require a book of its own. But we must be aware of that low-level culture war which is being run continually and we must be ready to assert our own vision of what Scotland's culture(s) mean not in theory but in rich, beautiful, tangible reality.

There will be no Scottish independence if there is no increase in Scotland's collective confidence in itself both as a cultural entity but more importantly as a functioning, modern nation state. People must believe – really believe – we know what we're doing. And that means we have to work and work hard to make sure that we absolutely do know what we're doing. For me, this remains the single biggest task ahead. So let's get that confident case for a confident nation built.

Four: Build the case

So if we are to build up people's confidence by producing a more detailed plan for the establishment of an independent Scottish nation, what should it be like and what should be in it? The bulk of this chapter will focus on a small selection of the key issues where I feel more work is required, with some suggestions about what approach might be taken. But there are a couple of things worth discussing about the general approach.

The one thing this document does not need to be is an argumentative propaganda publication. We will have a full campaign. That campaign can be filled with all the rhetoric, soundbites and publicity material we want. We can develop Q&A briefings by the bucketload, infographics to our hearts' content, leaflets about anything that takes our fancy. But to generate the confidence that will help lots of Scots take that next step we need concise, serious, detailed thinking on big issues. The less rhetoric there is in the document, the better. Let's create a plan, not a ploy.

That document should be produced through negotiation. There are a number of reasons for this. First, we need something which will unite the movement and make it easy for everyone to speak confidently about the solutions to the questions of nation-building that people say left them unconvinced the first time round. There is absolutely no doubt that the SNP is the biggest and most dominant part of the independence movement and there is no doubt that it's influence over this work will be very substantial indeed. But it will do us all good if we can tease out the issues properly in a way that can help us to at least try and resolve differences. Having one part of the movement entirely dictating terms to all the rest was a necessary compromise last time but next time round it will be helpful to everyone if we are united, and united without asking large proportions of the movement to bite their tongues. Collective responsibility is a powerful thing if it can be achieved. We should certainly try.

Another reason why a more open process of producing this work will be beneficial is that more ideas and more good thinking will be harnessed.

There are many sympathetic economists, political theorists, legal experts, constitutionalists and social policy practitioners who can contribute very substantially to the development of a stronger plan for independence. The more we involve people, the better chance we have of finding the best solutions to the complex issues. Because of the pace of development required of the White Paper last time round there were cases where solutions were adopted because they were the easiest to put together rather than because they were the best solutions. A wider process will help to improve the case which is built.

I'd therefore suggest that an inclusive steering group should oversee the development of this work with people included both to represent a range of views across the independence movement and to represent areas of specific expertise. The whole process should be overseen by a structure which enables all of the campaign to have a say. Steps are already being taken to see if the Scottish Independence Convention can be repurposed to this end.

There is a corollary of this openness and inclusivity – we need to be realistic. As someone on the Scottish left I am very aware that we can sometimes see an open and inclusive process and conclude that it is time for us to dust off that giant list of 'demands' that we keep in our heads. That will do no good. I personally have always accepted that at some point in the future, Scotland could conceivably see a substantial shift to the right (though there is very little sign of it just now and it would take decades).The idea of producing a founding document is not to try and 'stitch up' the future by shoving in every part of our own wish lists we can. The purpose is to create a workable foundation for a future nation. This document should not be a political document but a practical one. It is not meant to be a recipe for any specific future, it is meant to be the plans for a kitchen in which all our possible futures can be cooked up.

For this reason we should try and stick to the details of what needs to be put in place and avoid spending time explaining what can be done with them. Once we have the core plans in place, every single one of us can describe how to use that national infrastructure to pursue the future we want to see.

However, we should also be clear that there really is no technocratic solution to creating a new nation, no 'right answer' to what should be done. While a constitution or a civil service or a regulatory system should be fit for multiple possible futures, it is impossible to create them with no reference to the values and beliefs of the era in which they are created. As an example, whether or not we have a welfare state is in fact a political and ideological question. If we do choose to have a generous state pension, that is a political and value-driven decision. But if we don't immediately put in place a means of delivering a state pension, there won't be one – which in itself is a different kind of political decision.

So an early stage in the process should be to set out those values and basic expectations. It should not be difficult; the idea of Scotland as a democratic and liberal nation state with individual freedoms protected within a cradle-to-grave welfare state is pretty universally shared – and almost completely universally shared among independence supporters. It easily guides us to create a constitution based on international practice on transparency and human rights, an impartial civil service able to serve whatever government is elected, the technical foundations to provide a substantial welfare state and so on. All we have to do is be honest and clear about where we need to integrate specific values into the process and where we need to keep our political opinions out.

Let us assume that we can manage these things and create a process, I would then suggest there is something specific that we should be setting out as a goal. The final report, the final plan, should be as close to a 'how to' guide as possible. There is of course scope for integrating a little explanation of why one option was selected over another or why a particular approach was taken. But on the whole it should not look like a discussion document or give the impression of being the minutes of a lengthy debate. It should be a solid, actionable plan. If everyone involved in its preparation was wiped out in some kind of awful epidemic, others ought to be able to pick it up and implement it from what is on the page.

This is crucial. The idea of creating confidence is based not on how well we can 'tell' but how specifically we can 'show' – there's nothing like an instruction manual for making you believe that something actually works, actually does what it says it does. It is so much more powerful if what people see is a series of statements which say 'Scotland will…' followed by the actions and the numbers concerned. It makes that future concrete, believable. Which is what the next cohort of future supporters of independence want.

The last point to make here is that there is inevitably going to be compromises of scope as well as negotiations between partners. If I was allowed my way I'd have liked to see a monetary economist appointed in the months after the referendum defeat, tasked immediately to begin a substantial process of developing a much better position on currency. Given four or five years I believe we could have gone quite far down the path of having a currency (or at least a currency position) not only designed but prepared for implementation. It's two years later and we don't have that time. We therefore need to concentrate on what is essential and what can be achieved in the timescale. For example, if we seek to publish this document by the beginning of 2019, there is unlikely to have been the time to produce a constitution through a process of participatory deliberation among the public. That is a shame – it could have been very powerful if that had been possible. So we need to work from where we are and be realistic.

The list of what might be included in this project is potentially quite

extensive and different people will have different ideas. I am therefore not seeking to be in anyway conclusive or comprehensive in the following list. But I am selecting what I think are the biggest and most crucial issues to outline how we might improve our case. In each case I will offer opinions on what solutions might be possible. These are personal opinions; you might well disagree with all of them and yet still agree that a project of this nature is of value.

But there is one final approach that I would like to recommend – simplicity. The regulatory and managerial structures of the British state were concocted over years of addition, amendment and general tinkering. Sometimes they are horrendously complicated and difficult to understand because they have been deliberately designed to be opaque and therefore ripe for abuse (the tax code and its web of exemptions was largely written by accountancy firms seeking to ensure there are plenty loopholes for their clients). But a lot of the time it is just the accumulation of years of attempting to drag out-of-date procedures into the modern world, each phase adding one more layer of confusion.

The simpler and more transparent public life is, the better. It is better for citizens who can understand how their society works. Who really understands how and why tax avoidance is one of Britain's biggest industries? It is better for the economy where predictability of regulatory behaviour is genuinely helpful (except for the corporations which seek to fiddle and cheat through regulatory confusion). It is better for the public sector which does not require an army of lawyers to help make sense of their own rules. It is more effective and more efficient.

If you want an analogy to this, think about the internet. If the internet had been procured through the kind of public policy approaches we currently use (a good idea, followed by a world of consultants, lawyers, accountants and lobbyists who turn it into a bad idea) there is next to no chance the internet would even work. The fact that it does is almost wholly down to the fact that the internet is at its core incredibly simple. It is based on HTML, a phenomenally straightforward programming language which even I was able to pick up on the basis of a couple of days of very basic training. That incredibly simple foundation which is common across the globe enables people to build upwards – no-one sat down and decided that a video player had to be built into the code of HTML. Rather, HTML easily allows others to create plugins which can play videos. And when those plugins reach the end of their useful life as technology moves on, people can design new ones, not hacked out of the embers of the old ones but rebuilt from scratch on top of that incredibly simple foundation which still enables the internet to work right around the world.

So let's aim to build in simplicity and transparency wherever we can. And a final plea, let's try to do it in a language which an ordinary person can

understand. There just is no need to start a new nation in the bizarre and impenetrable legalistic language which plagues the one we're trying to leave. Two days and I can understand HTML. Twenty years and I can still barely understand chunks of the public legislation which defines our society.

Fiscal balance

Perhaps the first and most pressing issue which the independence movement needs to face up to is the national fiscal balance. This problem is probably familiar to most as the General Expenditure and Revenue Scotland report (you probably just know it as GERS). It is the only attempt which is made to assess whether Scotland is able to 'pay its own way'. And in recent times it has become the source of all those headlines about Scotland's 'financial black hole' which are the stuff of unionists dreams. GERS and the implication that Scotland can't afford to be independent is one of the biggest issues that face us at the moment.

There has been quite a bit of analysis done over the years on the flaws in GERS and this work has even been accepted and has resulted in changes in the GERS methodology. This in no way means that GERS is now an accurate predictor of the state of the public finances in an independent Scotland; there remains many flaws. Some have suggested that there should be significant work put into revising GERS to make it more accurate. This would be possible, but I'd like to argue that it is a bit like trying to wrestle a hostile animal into submission. Fundamentally, GERS was not devised, designed or implemented by people sympathetic to Scottish independence. And it is also predicated on a comparison with the UK fiscal situation and Westminster government in a way which grants them the status of 'normality'.

A very crude description of what GERS is and how it works is as follows. First, the UK fiscal situation as a whole is taken as the starting point – how much is raised in taxes and other revenues; how much is spent on services; infrastructure and other public 'goods'; and therefore what is the resulting fiscal balance, deficit or surplus position. Then the Scottish situation is considered – how much of that UK expenditure and income is 'Scottish', how much is 'British' (items seen as 'for everyone in Britain') and how much is 'not Scottish'. GERS then goes through a complex subtractive process which tries to allocate to Scotland what is raised and spent here and what is not. At the end of this process a number pops out which purports to show whether Scotland is in a better or worse financial position than the UK as a whole.

The problems are myriad – how do you assign what is Scottish and what is not? how do you apportion UK spending? what assumptions do you make about what was taxed and where and so on? Whether Scotland would

be expected to have replicated UK behaviours is not considered at all – so for example, an independent Scotland would presumably not continue to contribute almost ten per cent of the costs of the London Underground or big events like the London Olympics. Whether tax breaks to arms dealers should really be considered 'Scottish' expenditure is glossed over. And really big questions about what could be expected to happen in reality after independence is not factored in. For example, at the moment the majority of the value of the trading of Scotch whisky takes place through London and much of the tax revenue appears to be allocated from there. That would not be the case for an independent country where every transfer of saleable whisky to London would become an export. These are only a few of the kinds of complexity which are contained within GERS.

It is a subtractive model. It takes the current situation as it is seen and subtracts and subtracts based on all these assumptions until a number for Scotland results. Whether this represents an accurate picture of the financial situation of an independent Scotland is neither here nor there – it is a paper exercise and no-one believes it is really a description of the balance between Scottish revenue and Scottish expenditure. Disentangling this complexity would be a gargantuan task and would be contested at every stage. Even if we could, we'd still be subtracting from a baseline of UK financial priorities.

There is an alternative possible approach which I think should be considered seriously – to move to an additive system. This would not produce the annual like-for-like comparison with the rest of the UK which unionists enjoy so much but would instead model the financial position of a nominally independent Scotland. Rather than starting with the UK as 'default normality' and subtracting, it would involve a process of identifying what would be the expenditure requirements of an independent Scotland and adding them up, then working to identify what the tax base would be and subtracting that (and other revenues) from the total expenditure. This would create a model of the fiscal balance of an independent Scotland

It would be transparent – precisely what was designated as spending in each area would be laid out and could be interrogated. So if calculations are made on the cost of a social security system it would be easy for anyone to see what rates of payment were being proposed and what number of claimants were expected to take up those payments. Which means it would need to be rigorously realistic – this is not some kind of 'magical' system for disguising deficit. But it would also make for transparency in assessing the profligacy of the Westminster system. I do not believe it would be possible to design a nation state from first principles and not cut out lots and lots of blatant waste and inefficiency built into the Westminster system.

It would also require us to face up to some important questions, unlike the last referendum where we simply hid behind the UK because there was no time or will to do anything else. For example; tax. London is a virtual tax

haven. We were promised Scotland wouldn't be. So which tax rules would be different and what difference would they make? Would we really just be bringing Britain's silly tax code with us and trying to take out some of the more egregious failures? Or would we design a new, fit-for-purpose tax system? We can choose to do the former, but I strongly suspect it will be at the expense of our fiscal position. So what is really more important – building the best case for independence or making life as easy for ourselves as we can?

The method of building up this model could draw heavily from international best practice, identifying how the most effective tax-collecting nation states go about doing it and transposing methodologies to Scotland. We could look for the social security system we best aspire to and use that as a cost base to work from. It would not be a walk in the park, but to say that it could prove more than a little important in building up national confidence if it can set out a coherent case for how Scotland can pay its way is probably an understatement. And other than doing some clumsy and very risky things (crossing our fingers that oil prices rebound and that no-one remembers they collapsed; giving very risky permissions for mass-scale fracking in the hope that somehow it will just replace all the oil money), it seems very unlikely that we can just 'magic away' fears about fiscal balance.

However, I am still far from clear that this full process would be enough to turn Scotland into a land of milk and honey where we have no problems to deal with. So there may well be other big and potentially controversial issues that we need to look at to resolve fiscal balance issues. During the last referendum the Scottish Government absolutely ruled out any possibility of considering moves such as taking the energy system into collective ownership. There are so many levels on which this was a mistake (and far too much of a sense of cosiness with the energy multinationals who currently profit from our energy system). But one really does stand out – it would create revenue for the Scottish public purse of about £1 billion per year. There are all sorts of assets held privately in Britain which are held publicly in other European countries. All of them generate very substantial private profits for corporations which are almost all owned outside Scotland. If we want to build up a strong fiscal case for Scottish independence we may well want to concern ourselves a little less with the interests of those foreign companies and concern ourselves a little more with making it possible for Scotland to pay its way in the world. (And as an aside, if the Scottish Government or anyone else simply refuses to countenance any of this, then it is for them to explain how they are going to address this massive issue – and another PR campaign is not it.)

For reasons of complete transparency, we should also make clear assessments of the start-up costs for all of these new systems (and possibly describe methodologies for getting them set up). There will be borrowing

to fund these one-off costs and probably for other things such as setting up a central bank and a foreign currency reserve. These should be priced and modelled. However, we should also be assertive in setting out how much of the UK's national debt we would be willing to accept. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, this need not be as high as people think. But either way, we would be crazy not to subtract all the start-up costs of the new nation state from that total debt accepted – so there is no need to pretend there aren't start-up costs. Let's just budget them in and dispose of all those arguments about being vague about start-up costs.

So the first thing the document should do is to set out a detailed budget for the first year of an independent Scotland with the costs of set-up in its borrowing column. Let's spend time devising the outline of public services and the tax regime to ensure that we can present a compelling and verifiable case. Let's work on it until we are confident that when we put it out into the world independent voices will consider it credible. If we can do all of that we can focus on a campaign which is not permanently on the back foot asking 'how everything will be paid for' or implying that Scottish citizens will be subject to a massive drop in their quality of life. With work, this is possible.

Currency and banking

Most people would then cite currency as the next biggest issue which needs to be resolved. I believe that is correct (even though there is an argument to say that pensions may have had a more direct impact on the outcome overall). That is because it became such a totemic issue for the independence movement's lack of preparedness. So whatever we do next, we must make sure that we are seen as being prepared.

Now the currency question is complicated, entailing important economic questions, central strategic ones about how much risk people are willing to take and a host of complex technical questions. There isn't a 'right' answer to all of this. While I support an independent currency pegged to Sterling, there is merit in arguments supporting continued use of Sterling. There is then a complex question to be asked about whether that should take place in a formal currency union (by far the most restrictive option on the table) or going for Sterlingisation (a very workable solution but one which can be presented as odd and risky).

For the sake of disclosure, I'll outline why I favour an independent currency. The downsides are that the set-up costs and procedures will require a lot of work in the early days after an independence vote. It would require a foreign currency reserve. This is a large amount of the money of other countries which are held to 'underpin' the new currency and reassure people the currency is a safe bet. It is also used to 'peg' the currency (make

sure it maintains exactly the same value as Sterling) – you can buy and sell various combinations of Scottish and other currencies to affect the value of the Scottish currency and so keep it at the same price as Sterling (a Scottish pound and a pound Sterling would then always be worth exactly the same amount and would be exchanged on a one-for-one basis). To maintain parity a Scottish foreign currency reserve would be in the order of £10 billion to £30 billion. That may sound large, but to put it in perspective, that is about Scotland's share of the UK's debt interest for only two or three years. And of course it's a giant pile of money that you have…

You would then need some form of central bank to hold that reserve, guarantee the currency, regulate the monetary system and act as the 'lender of last resort' (the institution which bails out everyone else in the event of financial crisis). That would take a fair amount of work to design and set up, and whatever was done in the area of regulating bankers will kick up a fight (refusing to be properly regulated is what banks do these days). It would be quite a big undertaking.

Then you would need to address questions of internal UK trade and whether people would need to exchange their money at the border every time they came to Scotland or left again. For individuals this is not nearly as complicated as was implied during the last referendum – many shops accept Euros and since Sterling would be one-for-one exchangeable with a Scottish currency it would be easy to have the dual use of Sterling and a Scottish pound. It is a bit more complex for larger financial transactions, particularly between businesses. But again, not the insurmountable challenge that was implied by opponents of independence last time round.

The other aspect of a Scottish currency which was regularly raised was that it would make it much harder to borrow in the international money markets. It is true that for a period borrowing costs would rise a little, though once again for a much shorter period and by a much lower amount than was implied last time. Some of that is just the price of independence and would not be as high as made out (particularly depending on how much UK debt Scotland acquired). But if we pair this with the creation of a Scottish National Investment Bank, the establishment of a Scottish Government Bond (like the UK's gilts, which some people have called 'kilts'), and a better borrowing strategy for national infrastructure, it would be perfectly possible to ensure an environment in which Scotland had more than enough borrowing capacity. In fact, since Scotland can set up a national investment bank right now, by the time independence arrived it could be capitalised to a level designed to meet this need and a bond system could also be in place.

So these are the 'downsides' – but in every case the downside comes down to 'its hard work', 'it involves a bit of investment' (though that should be completely offset by accepting less of the UK's debt responsibilities) and 'bankers might not like being regulated'. On the last of these points, as well

as setting up a national investment bank, the Scottish Government could set up a secure People's Banking Network to ensure security of banking services locally. This is discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

The upsides? It turns an independent Scotland into a properly independent nation with proper control over its regulatory, fiscal and monetary policies. It can mirror UK approaches for as long as it wants but whenever it wants to take a different direction it can. And come any crisis it can respond properly (like Iceland) and not be stuck with the inevitable British failure to do what is needed (like last time).

But there are bigger upsides. Largely unspoken during the last campaign but acknowledged pretty universally by every economist and business person I spoke to, the other options could only ever be transitionary. In the long term it is inevitable that the monetary interests of Scotland and the remainder of the UK would diverge (you can argue they already have) and it is inevitable that this divergence would eventually create unavoidable pressures to either create an independent currency or at least join a broader currency union (like the Euro). And since both the short and long term prospects for broad currency unions are not promising, everyone I have ever spoken to believes that it is extremely likely sooner or later Scotland would have its own currency. So I am pretty strongly of the view that we should bite the bullet now and set things up properly. I can't see that going through the enormous transition of creating a new country would be helped by leaving this massive unfinished task to be addressed, possibly just at the point that all the transition had just settled down (round about ten years is the timescale most people I know thought that a Sterling union would survive – and that assuming there isn't another financial crisis). Creating a new nation will involve a bit of turmoil (and if we're clever it will be creative, positive turmoil). Setting up the likelihood of new turmoil in the immediate future does not seem like a wise decision.

Finally, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, not making this decision at the outset has one other big problem to it which is that we lose the ability to factor in all the implications when we are negotiating. It is a very reasonable expectation that in lieu of our stake in Sterling we would be able to write off the cost of setting up a foreign currency exchange from our allocation of debt during negotiations over separation. But once that is agreed, once the paper is signed and once we are an independent nation state, that option is immediately off the table and everything we do from then on will cost us. I've heard people argue that the 'cobble something together and then wait and see' is a kind of buy now, pay later scheme. In fact I think it would be a pay now, pay later scheme.

Incidentally, I believe that much of the approach taken in the last referendum was more about strategic positioning than solid monetary policy. It might be reasonable therefore to assess this proposal in terms

of strategy. Is the prospect of imposing an entirely new currency on the Scottish population more likely or less likely to encourage them to vote Yes? But here's the thing – it is only possible to make that assessment if you are able to measure certainty against certainty. If we could at least appear to guarantee that Scotland would keep Sterling with a lender of last resort, it might be possible to test that against the alternatives to assess public mood. The problem is that it is this above all which failed in the currency position the last time.

Put simply, I continue to believe that the UK would indeed agree to some form of currency union (though I remain pessimistic about whether the terms would be in Scotland's interests) – but next time just like last time, we can guarantee absolutely nothing. If they say no in public, all our plans and schemes for reassuring the public are shredded. This is what happened last time. A cautious, conservative position was taken to prevent people from being scared. It failed completely because it was so easy to undermine. People then feared they wouldn't have Sterling but they didn't even have the bare bones of a plan for how to set up a Scottish currency. So (in my opinion) the 'reassuring' option ended up less reassuring than the 'risky' option. Had we committed to a new currency we would at least have had a definite position which was in our hands to promise. We ended up with an answer to this crucial question which was entirely in the hands of our opponents and they could deny us that answer at will (and make no mistake, the UK really could very easily deny an independent Scotland access to the Bank of England if it wanted to be pig-headed).

There isn't that much work that is required to make the case for Sterling union again. But it will fail in precisely the same way again. It is my impression that by far the majority of independence supporters would really like Scotland to have its own currency and to get out of the disastrous UK banking system. But, as I made clear at the beginning, those who disagree have a perfectly respectable case. There are arguments in favour of retaining Sterling.

So here is my core argument – I do not know what currency option a negotiated position would result in. But whatever it is, there must be a detailed option to create our own currency. Even if it is not the 'Plan A', it is the only solid, sustainable currency option which it is in our hands to guarantee. If we do not have one unequivocal answer to the currency question which we can state categorically and unambiguously that we will implement either from choice or because the UK is being intransigent, we will end up in precisely the same situation we did last time.

And, very importantly, it will be worse this time. To arrive at the party wearing the wrong outfit once is a mistake. To do it again makes you look like you have no idea what you're doing. If we got currency wrong the last time (and everyone thinks we did), doing it again will raise substantial

questions about our collective competence. So whatever becomes Plan A, we must work really hard to flesh out a full plan for a Scottish currency. And, incidentally, once we do I suspect it will look very attractive.

Pensions and social security

There really is an argument to say that pensions played at least as big a part in our failure to win as did currency. If you are over 65 you almost certainly received a phone call from the No campaign telling you that you risked losing all your pension if you voted Yes. This was an outright lie and was pretty despicable all round. It was a knowing attempt to prey on the fears of an often vulnerable-feeling group using dishonesty and threats. But here's the thing – it was not completely baseless. (It is equally easy and just as accurate to make the point that the UK has no sensible or coherent plan for the future of pensions – but they're not fighting for their independence so there isn't much point in dwelling on that.)

In fact, it is arguable that the pension position was the least developed part of the whole case. In honesty it didn't really go any further than reassuring those already retired or soon to retire that things would be fine in a continuity way. Which was entirely true. But that's a long way short of answering the pensions question.

How will new pensions be paid in the future? Would it be a revenue system (like the UK, paying out pensions from annual tax returns), some kind of endowment system (setting up a big pension fund to pay future pensions on a contributory basis), some kind of hybrid system – or something different altogether, such as requiring people to take out private pension provision and giving them some form of contribution or tax break? In the end, what we got was PR and a kind of 'wait and see' answer.

Now, you could make a reasonable case that this was what should have been done. The transition period was covered (the UK would keep paying UK pensions to people who had contributed all their lives) and you might reasonably make the case that it is for democratic debate to define how pensions would be managed once Scotland was an independent country. Which might have been OK if the opposition were reasonable. That they were not.

Remembering that the aim of the No campaign was to damage confidence by creating endless 'uncertainties' and poking at every hole in the case. For that reason it would have been immensely helpful to have had the pension-shaped hole plugged with a structural answer, something built into the overall case. It may be unfair to expect us to devise an entire welfare state and outline exactly how it will operate prior to an independent Scotland even existing. But fairness has nothing to do with it, and nor does

logic. If we want to turn around the very substantial failure to get over-60s to vote Yes, we're going to have to do more than 'fairness' dictates.

At this point I should state clearly that not only is pensions policy not a strong suit of mine but that my attempts to find answers last time round proved difficult – mainly because of timescales. I wouldn't claim to have any kind of definitive answer to this. It is very likely (probably certain) that we'd want to pursue a revenue system, paying pensions out of tax. It may be that all we need to do is carefully and sensibly budget this and show a guaranteed and affordable system would be in place. In addition, we might take a much more ambitious approach and try and create a national pension fund (which could be paid into both publicly and privately creating a strong basis for state, occupational and private pensions). That would require quite a bit more actuarial analysis and would be a big move, but it could help to answer the questions of occupational and private pensions which the UK has simply swept under the carpet.

However, as I've been thinking about this question while preparing to write this, there is one option which I would like to suggest is at least considered, and that would be to model options around a Citizen's Basic Income. A CBI is a payment that comes out of general taxation which is paid to absolutely every citizen as of right. It is a system which for many years remained a theoretical idea which was viewed as too radical to pursue. However, in recent years there has been a significant shift in opinion on this and a number of countries are now taking seriously the idea that they might attempt to implement one.

At this point I want to flag up very clearly that this is a kind of radical policy based on a very strong social democratic value system which definitely strays away from my 'design basic infrastructure and let democracy decide how it is used' approach as outlined above. It would be a big move, and to be honest one that a couple of years ago I would probably have dismissed. But I think it should now be considered in relation to designing a plan for an independent Scotland. There are many, many social and economic benefits of a CBI which have been explored and debated extensively elsewhere. I do not want to go over those here. But there is one benefit which is very attractive in the context of setting up a new social security system – it is incredibly simple, incredibly easy to implement and covers by far the vast bulk of what a social security policy would need to cover. It answers the pensions question, the unemployment benefits question, a good chunk of the disability support question, the carer's allowance question and the entire child benefit question. It is nothing like as expensive to implement as some believe (though do not underestimate the size of the bill). Much of that cost is covered because a CBI also replaces a host of the complicated tax threshold, exemption and allowances questions. To pick up the analogy used earlier, this is the very definition of HTML-level simplicity which provides a solid,

hyper-efficient and stunningly easy to understand answer to a whole pile of the questions about an independent state which were hurled at us last time.

I'm afraid that I suspect it will be too much for the more conservatively-minded sections of the independence movement and as a new concept it would require more explaining that simply promising to keep pensions the same. But the extent to which it simply takes off the table dozens of systems that would otherwise have to be replicated or redesigned and the way it answers so completely some of the big questions about personal insecurity and vulnerability is hard to ignore. It is certainly worth exploring.

Any way round, whether it is simply adding up the bill for maintaining all UK benefits as they are and building that into the budget (with a particular eye on pensions) or whether it is a more detailed process of designing a more effective system of social security, this is a big and important task. Those in the more vulnerable economic position were both more likely to be sympathetic to independence and simultaneously more worried about uncertainty and insecurity. Proper work is needed to make sure they do not feel insecure or uncertain next time.

Tax and regulation

There is much about tax and regulation which can only be considered once the currency position is agreed. If Scotland is to seek a formal currency union with the remainder of the UK, it is likely that it will have to agree to go along with the UK's regulatory framework – tax havens, tax loopholes, tax avoidance mechanisms and all. It would almost certainly be a condition placed on Scotland that it would need to maintain an identical bank regulatory framework across the 'Sterling zone'. This means Scotland would have to hand over a substantial proportion of its new sovereignty to the institutions it had just gained its sovereignty from. During the last referendum there was also strong arguments coming from the British government that another condition would be a pretty restrictive 'fiscal pact' committing Scotland to follow UK tax policy fairly closely.

I don't think this was a bluff on the part of the UK government. While some of the things it said were pure political positioning, it probably really would expect Scotland to behave almost exactly like the rest of the UK on monetary and fiscal matters if it wanted a Sterling union. It is precisely this requirement to follow some of the worst practices of the UK (not known for high-quality bank regulation or clear and transparent tax policy) which is the main reason I don't support currency union.

However, if a currency union became the preferred option on currency after a negotiated process, we would need to think through where the requirement to synchronise with UK policy ended and what we would do

from that point. It would probably require us to accept the jurisdiction of London's regulatory institutions, particularly given that we would be asking for the Bank of England to be our central bank. Certainly that would make the task of setting up a new state easier since we'd be handing over a chunk of the responsibility to others. But it does leave the 'uncertainty' problem during the campaign – what if the UK says no? What then?

Either way, while there would be limitations on how far the tax system could vary from the rest of the UK, nevertheless we'd need a Scottish inland revenue service to do the collection. This will involve setting up a completely new collection system and new administrative systems. There is the seed of this in Revenue Scotland, but there is much that would need to be put in place. Last time the line was basically 'it'll be OK' and not an awful lot of detail was given about how that system would be built. It is hard to argue that the means through which an inland revenue system would be designed and built was a big factor in people's decision to vote Yes or No. But it does feed into the overall narrative of 'too much uncertainty; too much just being left until after the vote'. Since this work would need to be done within months of independence, it seems to make sense to do some of it in advance to send out the clear message that 'we're on top of it'.

Things are of course different if we were to choose an independent currency as either our first choice or a strong second. In that case we wouldn't be sharing the UK's regulatory framework or institutions and would have to rebuild them. There are undoubtedly advantages and disadvantages to this. For me the biggest advantage is the opportunity to do these things properly – design bank regulation which encourages sensible banking and discourages risky and corrupt behaviours and which collects tax simply and without avoidance or evasion. Almost as much of an advantage (to be discussed further in Chapter Seven) is that Scotland's negotiating hand would be immeasurably stronger. Because previously the whole basis of Scotland's economic future was predicated on Westminster allowing us to share 'its' institutions, it could set any terms it wanted and Scotland would have very little negotiating position. If Scotland was committed to setting up its own institutions, we would need very little from Westminster, making Scotland's negotiating hand very strong and Westminster's much weaker.

But there is a further advantage which is largely psychological. The aim of generating confidence among voters to believe that a Yes vote is not a leap into the dark (or at least that there is as little 'dark' as possible) also benefits from helping them to believe that an independent Scotland would be a 'proper' country. Very little attitude survey work has been done post-referendum to identify what kind of factors played a part. But certainly anecdotally there are hints that some people simply felt 'hold on a minute, if we still need to go cap in hand to London to run our country, we're not really a real country'. It creates the psychological sense that 'something is not quite

right if being independent is conditional on others running large parts of our affairs for us'. It's all very well saying that it would be worth sharing some institutions like the DVLA – who really cares who issues your vehicle tax reminder? But asking someone else to run your currency and your banking? It does not scream confidence.

The downsides are all about the volume of work required, the lack of continuity and all the inevitable talk of 'instability' that will follow. Yes, setting up a banking regulatory system would be more complicated than not doing so. And yes, there is comfort in nothing changing, in tax bills being identical, in tax rules being identical. But if you want everything to be identical, you're probably voting No anyway. And you do not need to go very far to find a lot of sentiment (in both the indigenous business sector and among the population) which is less than enamoured with the UK tax system.

It is worth being clear that the UK tax system is incredibly complicated and riddled with dodges and loopholes. For a long time now big accountancy firms have been seconding staff into the different parts of government which deal with tax and regulation. There, these staff members write UK policy. Then they leave, return to the accountancy firms and use the various loopholes they've written into the law of the land to help their clients avoid paying tax. It is harmful to everyone because it strips the government of revenue and so undermines public services and investment in national infrastructure. But it is particularly harmful to many indigenous Scottish businesses. If you're a medium-sized Scottish-owned bookshop, you will be paying all your taxes. But you will be competing with Amazon who is barely paying any tax at all.

In fact, it would be comparatively easy to create a clear, simple, understandable tax system which is consistent, does not allow for widespread evasion and does not need to be built on a complex spaghetti of allowances and exemptions that only accountants understand. If you were going to design all these systems from scratch and you were going to choose a national tax or bank regulation system to base it on, you would not choose Britain. But there are other places with better systems on which a Scottish approach could be based. And there has been a lot of academic and think tank work done around the world on what better systems would look like.

To give a very simple example, there is nothing in international law that prevents a government from taxing a multinational corporation on a basis related to global turnover and proportion of total activity taken place in that country. If a large online retail company has global sales profits of a given amount and a given proportion of those sales were made in Scotland, Scotland could tax the corporation on the basis of that proportion of global profits. It makes tax evasion very difficult indeed – and for many corporations virtually impossible. It is also simple.

People will argue that this will create turmoil and uncertainty and will be unpopular with the general population. However, the vast majority of the general population are simply taxed on their income – the complex web of allowances, exemptions and dodges are not open to them. They were written into the system by the very rich for the very rich, and frankly there aren't that many of them in Scotland. Changing and simplifying the rules of the system would barely be noticed by most individuals and if done properly would benefit small, medium and even large-sized enterprises, particularly if domestically owned. Few people will cry for corporations or people who hide their money in tax havens being asked to pay their fair share.

It is unlikely (though definitely not impossible) that an entire tax system would be devised in time for a launch in 2019. However, at the very least it would be possible to set out the mechanisms via which that system would work, the principles on which it would operate and some of the detail on how the main taxes would be levied. It might be possible to avoid this altogether if a rigid 'Sterling union or bust' position is taken again (though that is precisely the currency failure everyone has identified as being a major problem last time). If an independent currency is to be an active option, then it would be wise to give the strong impression that this has been properly thought through. Detailed tax policy is not something people talk about every day – and bank regulation will crop up in even fewer conversations. But, as per Chapter Three, it's not that people want to know all these details themselves, it's that they want to be reassured that someone has thought through these details and has done it properly. It would involve real work, but the benefits could be very substantial.

Institutions and the civil service

The above covers some of the major institutions that a new Scotland would require – possibly a currency and therefore possibly a central bank, a social security system, regulatory bodies and a revenue service. But there are others which would also be expected as part of a normal, functioning nation state. For reasons I never fully understood, the DVLA seemed to come up a lot in the last referendum. I suspect it was purely because it was another case where the pitch was that we would share the existing service, and that this would require permission from Westminster – which makes Scotland look subservient and vaguely weak. There might be a perfectly reasonable case for maintaining a British-isles-wide driving regulation body (though I'm not sure exactly what it is, other than expediency). And given the extent to which everything is now computerised I find it hard to see why it would be complicated to replicate.

I remain agnostic in policy terms on whether some of these more minor

institutions are the ones worth replicating or whether a sharing agreement would be more than sufficient. But tactically I have a tendency towards favouring a process of setting up a Scottish replacement where the balance of benefit is fairly even. Once again, this is just a matter of confidence – the sense that we don't need to ask permission to drive our cars but that we can make those decisions for ourselves. All those little jibes about being a 'pretendy nation' from the last referendum did not individually do all that much damage. But the aim was not to do damage individually but cumulatively. Every answer helps the Yes cause; every question helps the No cause. Certainly 'share with the UK' is a perfectly reasonable answer to the question 'how will you tax your cars?'. But if the follow-up question is 'and what if the UK refuses' then 'they won't' isn't an answer but a refutation. It's not that people necessarily believe that the UK really would refuse, it's that they get the sense that 'OK, the UK probably will be OK about this but yeah, what if they're not? What if we're just not prepared for this?'.

It's just like a TV interview or a court case – the more follow-up questions there are, the worse it gets. And the more the answers are factual and the less they represent opinion, the better it gets. So 'we'll set up a Scottish DVLA' followed by 'it'll cost £X and it's built into the budget we've presented' and 'it'll take nine months to complete' and 'we've taken professional advice and have identified a partner who is ready to do it for us' is a pretty comprehensive way to deal with questions like this. Once you've dealt with a question comprehensively, people stop asking it. What's the point? There's certainly no political leverage in allowing someone to sound composed, prepared and on top of things over and over again.

This is not a comprehensive attempt to work through the complete list of institutions that might need to be considered under this heading but it is an attempt to set out a reason why a comprehensive approach to this is probably beneficial. Much of this will be routine and in reality the list probably isn't all that long (once you deal with social security, regulation, monetary institutions and when you already have devolved institutions for health, education, transport and so on, there isn't all that much left). One potential big area is energy. The UK energy 'market' is a mess and the way it is being rigged further against renewables and in favour of nuclear is making it worse, particularly for Scotland. I have always favoured nationalising the National Grid in Scotland (not the individual energy companies, just the grid) and creating a different kind of market system controlled in the public interest. This would require some serious exploration and as it is a contested view (the SNP opposes nationalisation of energy and wants to maintain a UK-wide energy market) I won't go into it in much detail here. But it is an issue that really should be explored and resolved through negotiation.

However, there is one fairly substantial institution that we really need to look at and it's the civil service. In all the devolved areas we already have

the capacity in-country, and in some of the reserved areas we have at least some of the administrative capacity in-country. However, we need to be aware that generally most of the policy capacity in reserved areas is not in Scotland. Social security policy, monetary policy, foreign affairs and so on are government functions which have always been run from London. That capacity will need to be replicated in Scotland. Obviously we can simply advertise for qualified people and build up from there. But we should also be looking at how we can build up the capacity in Scotland through drawing more on academia and think tanks and by better international networking.

One proposal seriously worth considering is to reorganise the civil service as it stands just now. At the moment the civil service is not devolved and is managed and run from Whitehall. Scotland has administrative control over parts of the system and consultative rights over other parts, but it is still a UK-wide civil service. That civil service merges at least two major functions. Firstly, it does the 'thinking' – everything from 'blue sky' work on what new policy ideas might be considered down to more detailed planning of policies brought to them by Ministers. Secondly, it is an implementation and administrative body which has to take policies as conceived and implement and run them. Generally, both these functions happen in tandem.

However, there is a substantial conflict of interest here. Let's say there are two possible solutions to a problem, solution A and solution B. The 'thinking' part of the civil service might come to the conclusion that solution A is much more likely to work and to achieve the desired outcome. But the 'implementing' part of the civil service may conclude that solution B is much easier to implement and administer, and would retain a most substantial capacity for control by administrators. So what is to be presented to Ministers as the preferred solution – the effective one or the easy one? My observational experience is that the easy one usually wins. And why not? Civil servants don't get credit for improving our society, they get credit for running projects smoothly. And the other big problem with this structure is that the vast majority of us (and very possibly the Minister as well) will never see solution A, will never be able to make their own comparison because it will be factored out at the development stage on the basis of administrative ease.

There is a strong case for separating the thinking part and the doing part for reasons of good government, effective policy-making and transparency. The Scottish Government can't really reorganise the civil service, but it can certainly second civil servants. If it set up a series of national 'policy academies' as independent and inclusive think tanks covering all the key functions of government, civil servants could be seconded there, along with academics, and these academies could work closely with a wide range of civic partners and citizens to do the thinking 'in public'. It would make for better government with Ministers able to pick from a much wider range of thinking in developing public policy.

But for independence it offers an additional benefit. Policy Academies can be set up now within the powers of the existing Scottish Parliament and they do not need to be based only around existing devolved areas. It would be possible to set up a Social Security Academy, a Foreign Relations Academy, a Banking and Economy Academy. These would initially be academic think tank institutions, but they would also form the core of future civil service departments which don't currently exist in Scotland. They would be very helpful presentationally – when someone asks 'but how will you create a foreign office?' we can point to a Foreign Relations Academy and say 'it's half done'. (And, incidentally, Policy Academies could play a very valuable part in answering the many questions raised in this chapter.)

There is one more thing to say about institutions and capacity. No-one should be in any doubt that there is a substantial risk that if we do not get institution-building right, the new Scotland could get off on the wrong foot – and quite badly so. The one thing we can guarantee is that the networks which have done so much to twist the institutions of British government round the interests of corporations and the very wealthy will be very ready to do the same in a new Scotland. The big accountancy firms which were neck-deep in the dodgy dealings and outright corruption which led to the financial crisis will be ready to try and take control of the way a new Scotland is structured. The same people who created the accounting structures which brought down banks and advised the regulatory framework which brought down nations will be ready to create new institutions for Scotland. They'll be keen to do this partly because it will be incredibly lucrative, but also because they will then be in the prime position to build in a whole new generation of loopholes and then make even more money by selling themselves to clients on the basis that they are best placed to help those clients make the most of the loopholes.

Pretty well every public sector merger, redesign, IT project and staff restructuring which has taken place over the last 30 years in Scotland has been overseen by one of these large consultancy firms. Most have faced serious problems and few of them have achieved the goals on which the whole project was justified (Audit Scotland looked at six big mergers proposed and carried out by consultants based on their own evidence and found that none of them had achieved the savings that the consultant's evidence had claimed they would save).

It's the Serco effect. Run a prison? Sure, we'll take a shot at that. Operate a ferry? Sure, we'll take a shot at that. Operate a benefits assessment process? Sure, we'll take a shot at that. So long as we can make very large profits from the public purse we'll take a shot at that, whether we have any relevant experience or not. There is an alternative approach. Instead of going to 'project managers' who believe that specific project knowledge isn't important, look for either public-public partnerships (possibly

internationally), design-operate-train partnerships or project specific public sector teams.

The first of these would involve identifying who has been successfully operating institutions of the sort to be created, and then seek to develop a commercial partnership to develop an institution tailored to Scottish needs. For example, a joint partnership with the Swedish government might be agreed to get their support for setting up a social security system along the lines they have in Sweden.

The second option would be to follow the model used by Norway in creating a nationalised oil industry. International oil exploration and extraction companies were not given over the rights to Norwegian oil, they were given contracts to develop and operate an oil industry on behalf of the nation with a built-in training element which meant that after a set period of time the contract would come to an end and the nationalised oil company would be entirely self-sufficient. If care was taken it might be possible to find a commercial company which could be trusted to set up and operate a national banking or currency system, under public governance and with a training component which would make Scotland self-sufficient in this area at a given date when the contract would end.

The third option is to manage the whole project directly in the public sector by setting up a design and implementation team by recruiting experienced experts from wherever they can be found. Rather than trusting one of the big accountancy firms with creating a tax system (given that they are the very companies with the worst track record of dodgy tax avoidance), instead seek to recruit experts from wherever they can be found who have a strong track record in anti-corruption and tax transparency and task them with the job of creating the tax system.

All of these options can be developed as concrete means of creating and building the institutions that an independent Scotland will need. For a 2019 document it is perhaps pushing it to imagine that individual deals could be developed for each specific project. But it would be perfectly possible to flesh out these broad approaches into specific mechanisms for dealing with set-up issues. It would reassure the public that there really was a plan for how to do the nuts and bolts of creating a new nation. With some work it might even be possible to have some of these deals lined up in time for the referendum itself, contingent on a Yes vote. This would enable a Yes campaign to answer the question about the complexity of setting up all the new infrastructure of a country by saying 'we have a team of international tax experts ready to create a brilliant new tax system for Scotland and if you vote Yes they'll start work within the month'. It would probably be harder to achieve this with public-public partnerships because foreign governments would presumably be wary about being seen to interfere with domestic politics. But if initial discussions had taken place it would be possible to say that confidentiality

meant that details could not be revealed but that international partnerships were in place to deal with these issues.

If we can reassure people that we know how we are going to build new institutions, it will make the process of persuading them that Scotland really is ready to 'go it alone' so much easier.

War and defence

I wish to write very little on the issue of war and defence. This is mainly because I have very strong personal convictions on this issue and as this is an attempt to outline a plan to get us to independence which is not predicated on believing in exactly the same politics as I do I find it hard to be even a little neutral on the subject. In any case, while it is sort of possible to build a 'neutral' tax collection authority, one able to operate both a low-tax and a high-tax policy regime, there really isn't any such thing as a neutrally-designed army.

If you create an army with aircraft carriers, it is designed for overseas operations. If you create an army with fast jets, it is designed for bombing and overseas adventures. If you create an army of short-range boats, helicopters and jets, you design an army for territorial defence. If you create an army with a lot of 'special opps' capacity, you are creating an army to join in with military coalitions which have an expeditionary purpose. If it were down to me, I'd create an army which was constitutionally barred from any non-territorial actions which were not fully part of a UN-approved peacekeeping force. And even then I would focus that part of the army on conflict resolution practices and not black ops or bombing raids. It would have a substantial capacity to ensure the security of the coastline (more from organised crime than invading enemies) and to be a force which could assist big civil incidents such as major flooding. Of course it would be designed to defend Scotland in the virtually unforeseeable event of invasion. But that would be it.

It is quite possible you don't agree with this and that you wish to maintain at least an element of 'great military nation' status for reasons of prestige. That's fine. However, I would caution against the belief which seemed to be prevalent around the last referendum that if somehow we play at toy soldiers and sound big and tough and militarist it will help any. Last time (by a narrow squeak and under the most intense pressure I have ever seen brought to bear on members of the SNP), the party reversed its policy and committed to joining NATO. It also committed to spending an inordinately large amount of money on defence in comparison to almost any other country of our size (other than perhaps Norway). People were told to accept all of this because it was the price to pay to 'neutralise' the defence issue during the campaign.

Of course, it did no such thing. Whether on the more pro-military side or on the peace movement side, I literally did not meet a single person who thought for a second that an independent Scotland would play anything like the role that the UK currently plays on international defence issues. Scotland just won't be running major bombing sorties over Syria. It just won't be a significant player in whichever war western forces end up in next. It will never be expected to make any significant military intervention on the world stage. At most we would be the kind of make-weight partners to western coalitions to make them look more legitimate than they are, destined to be the butt of future jokes about pointless tokenism. There is no credible version of a Scottish military stance that anyone other than armchair generals in Scotland care about one little bit (well, except those who want to site their nuclear weapons here). During the last referendum I regularly found myself arguing that if your primary interest is to maintain the ability to invade Middle Eastern countries (and make a complete mess of it), you really should vote No.

Of course, that's what those people did. Why? Because if you are motivated strongly by an identification with the British Army, you're never going to vote Yes. If you really believe that Russia is on the verge of invasion, if you really think that we could be in major trouble any time soon if we don't have weapons of mass destruction on hand, then you're just not going to vote Yes. It is simply a daft idea to think that we will ever get a 100 per cent Yes vote. Devising positions to appeal to people who just won't vote Yes makes no sense tactically.

This is true of a number of issues, but it is particularly true in the area of war and defence. The reason for this is that the politics of defence are not in any sense rational. Defence is not based on the usual structure of logical thinking. Rather than saying 'here is a problem that can be identified or envisaged and here is a solution we propose', defence is based on 'if something impossible to foresee and extremely unlikely happens we may need this thing that no-one has yet thought of a use for'. It is a 'random fear generator'. Last referendum we offered to spend more on defence than any other comparable small nation – and then the UK Defence Minister started talking about aliens invading. In Defence circles, fear is an inexhaustible commodity. You cannot 'buy off' the Defence industry because they always want more. Always.

So I simply suggest that we do not go through the basically futile process we did last time of trying to appear more and more 'butch' by offering to join any gang that made us look butch so that people would think we were butch. Instead we should devise a reality-based defence posture and stick to it. Lord Robertson will rant on about 'the forces of darkness' either way.

There is however one issue that we probably could do with thinking about and that is the reaction of the Defence industries. Once again, if

you think that there is a way to bring these industries on-side then you've not talked to their trade unions. But it would help us deal with a range of attacks (not least around Faslane) if we could produce a credible defence diversification plan. I don't suggest that should be a core part of the work for a document on core independence plans for 2019 (although it should of course contain plans for an outline Scottish army and presumably some work on how it would be set up). But it would not be unhelpful if such a plan existed before a referendum took place.

Asset Audit

For reasons which will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 7, I place a little less emphasis than do others on working out the details of 'our share' of UK assets. I did indeed use these arguments substantially during the first referendum, but it was much more for rhetorical and comedic purposes than because I thought it was at the core of the case. Basically, I don't think that the assets the UK possesses and the assets Scotland should want are the same or are in the same place. As far as I'm concerned, the UK can keep its aircraft carriers and the embassies it has in places with no Scottish strategic interest. I was never much of a fan of the idea that negotiations would have a large element of 'dividing up the possessions'.

However, there is rhetorical benefit in demonstrating just how substantial those assets are and how they might be used in the process of negotiating. I suggest no more than that an audit should be done with no preconceptions about how the results would be used. It would involve identifying UK overseas assets and valuing them (either capital value or in some cases potentially use value). It would also require some valuation of UK-wide (i.e. non-devolved) assets based in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Once this is done there may be some of these assets Scotland really did want some form of access to or ownership of, but I suspect it would be a fairly small proportion. The rest just provides us a sum of asset value which we would then use in negotiations for how to allocate debt.

Constitution

There is one final issue of building a case for independence which should be seen very much as an opportunity and not a necessary task – and that's the question of a constitution. This in particular is an opportunity because it would be created through a participatory process and that process could involve a very large proportion of the Scottish population in one way or another. This would help us create the best constitution possible and one

which is widely understood and shared, but it would also have an additional benefit. By asking people to think about what should be in a constitution for a proposed independent country you get them to think about all the possibilities offered by that country – and it helps them to see that possible future country as real. And, as any advertiser will tell you, the more real you can make something feel to a person, the more that person will come to want the thing.

I must admit that I'm a bit of a constitution agnostic. In the end (in fact, from the beginning), what makes a country good or bad, successful or not, is a strong functioning democracy, not a constitution. The United States is considered to have a highly civilised and thoughtful constitution and at the moment it is difficult to see that reflected in a civilised and thoughtful national political discourse. It has always seemed to me that the process of creating a constitution for an independent Scotland would very possibly prove to be more important than the constitution as actually written. People engaged in thinking about what they want from the foundation of their nation may do more for that nation than any 'rules and regulations' which result. So personally there is very little that I strongly want to see in a constitution (other than to enshrine the best possible democracy with the strongest possible protection of human rights and, in the Scottish tradition, the strongest possible statement that it is the people and the people alone who are sovereign). But I really do want to see a brilliant, participatory process for creating it.

And here again, since this is just a consultative process, there is nothing that would stop the Scottish Government from beginning that process long before Scotland votes for independence. There are many ways it could be done and timed but perhaps if a lot of preparatory work was done in advance of a 2019 launch of a document making the detailed case for independence, the launch of that document could be followed quickly by rolling out a participatory process of crowdsourcing a constitution. It could create a buzz and get people thinking. Again, last time there was next to nothing done other than to reassure people that the Scottish Government would be writing an interim constitution. There is no excuse for a failure to reach out much further than that this time.

Five: Being Different

Up until this point, everything has been about planning for the future – how we get a second referendum, how we prepare a prospectus for the future Scotland and how strategically we give people the confidence to vote for that prospectus. And this has been the currency of the Yes movement – 'just think of what we could do if only…'.

And so it should be. We are a movement of hope which believes that if we have the power to control things we don't currently control we can use that control to make our world better. Hope is much mocked in politics and imagining what can be done with tools we don't have is dismissed as 'grievance' by people who don't want us to have those tools. They can mock and dismiss all they want – I am still driven by the belief that we can do better than has been done to us. In fact, it quite often gets me out of bed in the morning when I think about what bloody Westminster has done to us and what we could have done instead.

However, there is more than a hint of truth in the claim that we are so busy looking ahead and focussing on what we can't do that we're not looking to now and focussing on what we can do. I know some will argue that there are different tasks and it's not for the Yes movement to fix things in a system they fundamentally disagree with. And of course for the movement as a whole (and not the SNP in particular), there is some truth in that too. Many of us are involved in more than one campaign and each can have a different focus. The fact that by staying active in your local Yes group you are focussing on the future does not mean that by becoming active in your local anti-poverty campaign you do not want to see the present as a better place.

The mistake for independence supporters is to separate these two things – because they are not separate. The future is always – always – born out of the present. It is never a wholly new invention, a clean break, a fresh start. The seeds and the roots of what we are to become is always found in what we are now. It is true individually (those people who thought that if only they could live somewhere else then finally they could be a different

person, only to get there and discover that they're much the same as they ever were). And it is true collectively (the collective delusion that we can have one war to stop future wars...).

But it is never more true than it is psychologically; the idea that if one other thing could change (a new job; a new partner; a new pair of trainers) then finally we'll get round to going to the gym. Nonsense. The only thing that will get you going to the gym is the act of going to the gym. It isn't someone else's fault that we don't do the things we should do and that we do things we shouldn't (though the influence of others can be substantial). It is our fault if we act and it is our fault if we don't. Excuses are mechanisms for letting ourselves off the hook. You do something, and then you do it again, and then you do it again – and then that's what you are. Or you don't do it – and then you're something else.

So are we – as a nation; as a society – independent? Do we act independently? Do we do things independently? Can others see us as independent? Because the more that we act independently and the more that others see us acting independently, the more independent we become. There is a very thin line between feeling different and being different, because when we feel different we act differently and when we act differently then that makes us different. That St Augustine line – 'Lord make me chaste – but not yet" – is a curse for the independence movement. I absolutely accept that we should always be clear about what it is that we can't do because we don't have the powers and we should always point to the limits of the Scotland we can become as a result. But I do not accept that it follows that we should therefore do as little as possible and keep all our independence for some day in the future: 'I want to be independent – but not today'.

A thoughtful, London-based writer wrote during the referendum that he thought that, sooner or later, Scottish independence was inevitable. Why? Because he identified that when you arrive in Edinburgh from London, just like when you arrive in Dublin from London, it feels like a different place. That intangible, subliminal sense that you are 'no longer in Kansas'. That sense is a result of devolution, a combination of the different expectations, different institutions and different outlook that comes from making more of your own decisions. I have always said that 70 per cent of people who think we are gradually, inevitably, becoming an independent country is worth more than 51 per cent of people who are ready to vote for it immediately. It is a sounder foundation for our future if most of us really believe we're different.

It is a very important psychological phenomenon; the normalisation of difference. When I was a child, the back of an airplane was the smoking section. I told a colleague this a few years ago and she point-blank refused to believe me. She thought I was winding her up. The idea that you could climb into an air-bound metal box where you'd be forced to inhale other people's

recycled nicotine for hours on end just seemed incomprehensible. It is only a few years ago where quite a lot of people seemed to believed there would be genuine civil unrest if they weren't allowed to smoke in a pub. Now, when Nigel Farage proposes reversing the policy, it just sounds nuts to most people. Who wants to go back to stinking of tobacco every time you go for an afternoon pint with your family?

So who wants to go back to a tiny handful of Tory ministers imposing the Poll Tax on us despite Scotland voting overwhelmingly against? Not many takers? Or who really wants to reverse some of the specific changes of devolution like access to universities based on ability to learn not ability to pay? Or who thinks that there is a giant public attitude in favour of making people pay for medicine again? (A clue – these are all the same people...). When you make a reality – and particularly a reality that people like – they begin to define themselves by that reality. When you talk to your nephew or cousin from England and they tell you they're struggling with massive student debt, when you think about your own daughter or yourself and you think 'thank god we don't do things like that up here', you start to see yourself as, at least in part, a person that comes from a place which is like that.

And it comes to feel normal very quickly. Which is a great advantage for independence supporters because the more we can normalise our difference from the political agendas of London, the less we see ourselves as part of that agenda. The more we see ourselves as different. As independent. The more our institutions belong to us and are seen as a response to our specific needs, the more we become aware that our needs are indeed specific. The greater becomes the awareness that actually one size does not really fit all when it comes to responding to social and economic reality. And when it is better, when it is popular (and forget what you read in newspapers which oppose independence, most of what the Scottish Parliament has done differently is very popular), people come to see that as being where their interests lie. If we have a society and a politics which behaves independently and delivers what people want, those people themselves come to feel independent. The bigger the difference that exists, the smaller the step to independence feels.

Now, I can feel the contempt of any unionist commentator reading this. I am not saying that we should all be sent out to paint the roses blue just so they are not red or white. I am most certainly not suggesting that creating pointless, meaningless differences just so people will be 'mesmerized' into some kind of unthinking trance from which they will awake in an independent country as if by some kind of magic. I am being the opposite of cynical. I'm suggesting that, if we think Britain is getting it wrong, we should put our money where our mouth is and do something different. If we're right, if Britain isn't good for Scotland, then why aren't we doing something about it? Why follow the same path if we believe the path is wrong? And if we

follow the wrong path (going along with British policy through expediency or lack of courage), why would we expect to reach the correct destination?

I know that some people have argued that radicalism is too dangerous to attempt until after a successful Yes vote. There seems to be either a feeling that we might get it wrong or that we might scare the horses or that we might be better letting things get worse so we can promise to make them better later. The first of these arguments is to show the world our utter lack of confidence in ourselves – if we can't get ambitious projects right as we are now, what qualifies us to run our own country? The second seems to believe that the best way to get someone to make a big choice (voting Yes) is to precede it by making no choices whatsoever (while in reality the best way to get someone to make a big choice is to get them used to making choices over a period of time). The last argument is not only deeply cynical and fundamentally unjust, it also assumes people are stupid – you think that there will be absolutely no blow-back if we go five years and things get worse?

The more that we create policies, institutions and attitudes which can stand on their own two feet, the better prepared we are to stand on our own two feet. I cannot emphasise this enough – confidence is infectious. If we pursue a strong, distinct politics in Scotland now we give people the confidence to believe we can take the next step. If we are timid and cautious and small-c conservative, we will effectively create others in our own image. And relying on asking timid, cautious and small-c conservative people to vote Yes is a very bad plan. So of course you'd expect me to be pushing for a more exciting, innovative and radical politics because that is in my nature and has been the focus of my political life for 20 years. But the fact remains that we need confidence to get us over the threshold of independence and confidence is as confidence does.

I do not plan to go over a full policy programme for what a more different, more independent Scotland would look like. Common Weal has already published that book (A Book of Ideas, available from the shop at www.allofusfirst.org). It contains over a hundred substantial proposals for things we can do now with the powers we have now. But I want to pick two from either end of the spectrum to illustrate what confidence could mean in practice.

At the technical, pointy-headed end of the spectrum I'd suggest that there is no bigger national priority than setting up a Scottish National Investment Bank and a People's Banking Network. Common Weal (along with Friends of the Earth Scotland and the New Economics Foundation) has published plans for how these can be set up. There would be a single major national investment bank which would quickly become, proportionately, one of the biggest state investment banks in Europe in terms of its lending capacity. This has major and immediate consequences for all sorts of things.

Funding public sector rental housing immediately becomes easy. In fact, we could start building a range of top-quality houses for affordable rent almost immediately, limited in scale only by how many people want to live in one (and I think demand would be very high indeed). Emerging Scottish businesses at the large end of the scale could immediately get access to patient, safe, secure funding to help them grow and enabling them to stay independently Scottish owned without having to sell out to overseas equity capital. Local authorities and even the Scottish Government would have a reliable and mission-driven source of borrowing for national infrastructure projects.

But the benefits do not end there. A bank of that scale could be further capitalised in advance of an independence vote. If there was the confidence that a Yes vote was approaching, that capitalisation could be extended to prepare it to be possibly even the key lender for the transition period during the establishment of an independent Scottish state. It genuinely is true that international money markets would raise borrowing costs for a newly established Scotland (though by less and for shorter than has been suggested). It's just that there is much less need to source borrowing outside Scotland than people understand. Running to international lenders in the free market is the automatic default position of free-market obsessed Westminster. In Scotland we could choose instead to create substantial borrowing capacity of our own. There are enormous pension funds, substantial personal savings, money in credit unions. All these can be offered a safe, reliable home in a national investment bank and leveraged (sensibly) to give very substantial borrowing capacity to a new Scottish Government on independence without the need to go to international money markets (though it is likely we would still need to do that for some of the big costs such as setting up foreign currency reserves).

And it goes beyond borrowing power. Our proposal is that a Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) would also have the responsibility of coordinating and capitalising a People's Banking Network. This would be a series of local banks which were tasked to do nothing more than provide good basic banking facilities to people and small businesses on a mutual basis and seeking not to profit from them. The SNIB would regulate and manage that banking network. This immediately positions it as halfway to being a central bank for an independent Scotland and a regulatory overseer of a Scottish banking regulatory system.

The People's Banks would offer people a safe, non-exploitative place to keep their money and do their banking. If international experience is anything to go by it would quickly become the prime lender to small businesses and would be designed specifically to see the long term success of those businesses as their own success (unlike the existing banks which measure success only in how much profit can be squeezed out of customers

over the short term). They could provide an enormous economic stimulus very quickly. But they do something else – they create a safe, continuity banking system in Scotland. Because they would be managed either in the public sector or on a mutual, community-minded basis, they would be tasked to ensure that there were always solid, secure banking services available in Scotland as it moved to independence.

Let me be clear here – the banks were never really going to pull out of Scotland, close down their branches or switch off their cashline machines. That was political activism on behalf of the banks. But if we pursue an ambitious domestic agenda now and create a solid banking system, then if the banks behave in the same way during the next referendum we can simply call their bluff and wave them goodbye – their customers will all have somewhere better to go anyway. And very importantly, people will all know they will be confident that there will always be somewhere they can get their money from. It is a confident response to the threats of the banking community.

So that's a very economically-focused policy from the technical end of the spectrum. Let me also suggest a much more esoteric policy from the wellbeing end of the spectrum. Our surroundings have a very strong influence over our general perception of life. The people of the Soviet Union stacked into endless, identical grey high-rise blocks of flats for miles on end could not possibly have failed to feel small, insignificant, regimented, lacking individuality and generally apathetic about the chance of change. My experience of Reykjavik in Iceland couldn't be more different. The houses are all brightly coloured, individual, different, oozing their own personality. The people are the same (very recently they once again congregated on their Parliament and forced their Prime Minister to resign over corruption – which is my idea of a real democracy).

Many Scots live in pretty characterless housing estates which themselves are rows of grey harl boxes lacking individuality and coloured to feel drab and unexciting in our often grey-tinged weather. The landscaping is minimal and functional, the infrastructure of their communities in decline. Public policy has given very little impression that it cares very much. What if it did? What if we invested a bit in bringing the environment of these communities to life? We could engage in the widespread 'Tobermorification' of Scotland (after the Mull town where every house is a bright, colourful contrast to its neighbour). We could plant trees and plants and make the place feel alive. We could start to invest in local infrastructure and rebuild. We could improve insulation and make houses warm and cheaper to heat (work which pays for itself). We could make sure everyone has really good quality broadband. We could make them feel like they live in a community which is 'on the up' in a nation which is itself reaching upwards in a time when we want people to feel ready to reach even higher.

Knocking out a White Paper with lots of details of how an independent Scotland would work and offering to post it to people is a kind of sign of ambition. But somehow it does not spell ambition half as much as rolling up our sleeves and actually trying to make people feel like they are living in a country with ambition right now. Taking for granted communities which live in patched up houses in patched up streets with patched up infrastructure does not scream ambition. Make no mistake, it is these communities and not the bankers of Edinburgh who will deliver our independence. They will invest in us, so let's invest in them. Let them feel that Scotland is changing before we ask for their help.

I give these examples only to show what is possible. It might be creating first-class childcare. It might be replacing Britain's broken Council Tax system. It could be fixing massively wrong-sized local democracy. It might be a radical approach to land reform. It could be a step change in renewable energy generation and technology. It could be all of these things. But it really ought to be something. The future we want people to vote for is ambitious. Timidity won't get us there. I don't want to be independent later, I want to be independent now. At the very least I want us to behave as if we are. That is in our hands to do right now. Caution and fear serve the independence movement poorly. Boldness and confidence is our strongest weapon.

Six: A better campaign

The Scottish independence referendum is viewed around the world as one of the most inspiring examples of self-led, grassroots campaigning in recent years. I know this because I have been at quite a few seminars and conferences in a number of countries where people from social movements of many sorts and many countries have expressed their admiration for what happened in Scotland. It has – quite justifiably – been remembered as a model of a really engaged, functioning democracy creating a movement that spans well beyond any one political party or social group. In the UK it is particularly recognised for the extent to which it engaged and mobilised working class people who are generally assumed to be not politically active. It was an amazing campaign, one I will always be incredibly proud to have been a part of.

(It is worth noting in passing that one of the few countries which seems reluctant to remember the campaign for the amazing democratic experience it was is Scotland, where both a media and large chunks of an elite political class seem to want us to be ashamed of what happened, painting the whole process as 'divisive', driven by 'grievance' and having the characteristic of a 'cult' with irrational plebs refusing to accept the analysis that elites wish to put on events. Thankfully, history will remember them all unkindly – as it does with all reactionary elites who oppose social progress driven from the grassroots.)

The joy I experienced by working with and meeting people I'd never usually have had a chance to work with and meet. The laughter I experienced among the creativity, humour and down-to-earth good will of the campaign. The moments I was driven to tears by the emotion of what people sacrificed and how strongly and deeply they believed in a good cause. The fact that, time and again, what we did was open and generous and loving. Those mass donations to food banks left in George Square the day after we lost – all those things together; tears; laughter; pride. Enormous pride.

The way young creative types made it fun – and beautiful. Thanks

National Collective. The way a women's movement found a strong and inspiring voice that changed the gender debate in Scotland. Thanks Women for Independence. The way an exciting, radical edge made us all believe that yes, something was really about to happen. Thanks Radical Independence Campaign. The great writing, the great ideas, the great debate. Thanks Bella, Wings, Wee Ginger Dug, Bateman, Scot Goes Pop and everyone else.

I've been involved in professional political campaigning for 20 years. I thought I'd seen how it worked, and that I knew how it would work this time. I was very wrong. At the outset of the campaign I am very happy to admit that I was concerned that without some kind of central strategic direction and without really nailing the practices and techniques of standard political campaigning, a disaggregated, locally-driven campaign could very easily come off the rails and collapse. And I'm delighted to say I was wrong. Mostly. What happened belied the belief that only professionals can run national campaigns.

But the 'mostly' is important. Because while, like everyone else, I got so swept up in the campaign and loved every moment, it does not and should not mean I can't look at it critically as well. In Chapter One I discussed a little of what I think were the bigger strategic errors. There was an obsession with targeting the cautious, so-called 'aspirational' middle classes which was simply not supported by the polling data which made clear our votes would come from people lower down on the income scale. And there was a false belief that we were somehow going to be able to 'reassure' people into a Yes vote and that we could persuade them using abstract concepts of democracy rather than more concrete, real-world, inspiring ideas of what would be different.

But there was more than that which we didn't get right, organisationally and practically. The last thing I want to do is spend time picking apart the campaign and blaming people or organisations. Nevertheless, it would be irresponsible of us all not to try and work out what we didn't do well enough and to try and do better. Because we lost. And that means that brilliant wasn't good enough. It is perfectly possible that we could win next time with the same campaign – one more heave and all that. But is it really a risk we want to take? Wouldn't you feel more comfortable if we didn't assume victory and rather assumed that we need to fight for every inch of it? If so, let's see what we can do better.

The first and toughest thing to say is that as the official campaigning organisation, Yes Scotland wasn't ideal. There were many really good people who worked there, many good things done. I personally thought that Blair Jenkins was a good figurehead and a reassuring presence on TV. The team that liaised with the grassroots gradually found its stride and became rather effective by the end. And I want to give particular credit to Stewart Bremner and Stewart Kirkpatrick who created respectively many of the amazing

visual images that defined so much of the campaign and the social media strategy which reached so many people who would not otherwise have been reached. But that wasn't enough.

There are small points in terms of priority that I'd hope a new Yes Scotland would get right next time, such as spending less money fitting out an office and showing more restrain in salaries, instead focussing the money on producing materials for local groups. And I'd very much want to see much better, tighter governance. An Advisory Board wasn't enough – it should have been a Management Board with full control and responsibility for spending decisions, strategy and personnel. Ideally that Board should have had a broad plan before designing the organisation and not the other way round (though I appreciate the timescales concerned). This is important – had we all known the plan was for a grassroots-driven movement there should have been a greater focus on providing resources and training to help groups be as effective as possible.

Another thing I'd like to have seen would have been a more openly shared strategy. There is a view that you need to keep your entire strategy completely secret in case the other side gets hold of it. That may be fine if you're a small team doing the devising and delivery entirely yourself. It isn't so good if you're trying to deliver a strategy involving over 350 individual groups. People sometimes behave as if strategies need to all be super-secret. But your opponent is seldom daft and generally understands the rough outline of what you're trying to do (because they're generally professional campaigners too). It's therefore not a brilliant idea if your opponents have a pretty good idea of what you're up to but lots of people on your own side don't.

There are then a few aspects of that strategy I'd like to suggest we develop better next time. (I had pretty good access to Yes Scotland and have a reasonable picture of the strategy which was in place.) Let me begin with voter segmentation. The voting population is not one thing – indeed, no individual voter is one thing. There is an age spectrum, an income spectrum, a gender divide, political affiliation, religious affiliation, nationality of birth and loads more which create people's individual identity. To my knowledge, Yes Scotland just didn't have enough data on these different segments – or at least I don't know of anyone who saw it.

We can compare and contrast this with Better Together. In many ways it was a truly useless campaign, clumsy and tone deaf. But not in all ways. They didn't fit out an office at great expense, they just rented a bog standard unit and got on with it. And the 'it' they got on with was identifying our weaknesses and exploiting them ruthlessly. They had data that showed that pensioners were scared, so they got phone banks set up and they phoned every pensioner to scare them further. We didn't respond to that. In fact, there was very little message-targeting of older people from the Yes

campaign (and noticeably no prominent 'Pensioners for Yes' group). It may be 'old politics' but having good segmented data on voting trends and using that data to respond effectively is 'old' because it works. We should have known better what was happening to attitudes among older voters and we should have been sending a message out to all our local groups to get out and focus on positive, reassuring messages to older voters.

And negative messages. Very early on I was involved in preparing a private strategy document on how to run a campaign. I was one of the people who said 'positive, positive, positive'. The more positive the campaign felt, the more it helped us; the more negative it felt, the better for them. But I didn't realise that message would be taken quite so literally. I don't know if I could prove this but I suspect that it's functionally impossible to run a 100 per cent positive campaign. You need to be ready to poke at your opponent's weaknesses.

Britain is one of the worst places to be a pensioner in Europe with a low state pension, a collapsing occupational pensions system and a frankly fraudulent personal pension industry. Why didn't we say that more often? I did a radio debate with Willie Rennie and I kept making that point and it was as if it was the first time anyone had raised it. Why were we not pushing these buttons? The now iconic RIC leaflet about 'Britain is for the Rich' did exactly that; poked at Britain's failures. It worked very effectively and turned out to be one of the most downloaded things from the Yes Scotland website – which is slightly ironic because for a while they really resisted putting it up there.

There is a world of difference between having a couple of negative weapons in your armoury and being Project Fear. It is perfectly possible to run a positive campaign overall while still asking difficult questions of the other side. It was daft not to. And this was not only a Yes Scotland issue. I know that the SNP was for quite a while very resistant about what was described as 'bringing the NHS into play'. The feeling was that if there were negative messages around the question of the future of the NHS, that would be seen as negative and cynical. Perhaps. But when breast cancer surgeon (and now SNP MP) Philippa Whitford made a speech about it and someone filmed it, the video went viral. The NHS and the risk to it posed by Tory government in England became an important campaign theme – but only in the last few months of the campaign. It was a mistake not to use those arguments earlier.

I don't mean to keep criticising Yes Scotland but there are three remaining issues I really do feel I need to cover. First was some of the approach taken to media management. Being positive and cheery is all very well, but you need to rebut. Rebuttal is a standard piece of campaign and PR practice where you are ready rapidly to contradict mistruths put out by the other side. If they say the sky is falling in, you need a geographer to come

out and say 'actually, the sky will still be there tomorrow'. Every dodgy 'fact' about the fiscal situation; the borrowing rates; the likely economic impacts; the banking situation and so on needs to be challenged. 'Riding with the punches' is just not a good way to go about responding to opponents' attacks, because if numbers go unchallenged they become accepted as reality.

Next time we need to assemble a big address book of sympathetic experts who are ready at short notice to challenge opponents' claims. I spoke to economists and political scientists who would have been very happy to help with this but who were never contacted. There has to be a rebuttal unit next time and it has to do the dull, boring job of rebutting; day in, day out. Last time round it became a positively weird dynamic where by far the most important and significant rebuttal unit turned out to be a blog run by a video games reviewer in Bath.

Just briefly I want to touch on the question of how we thought we were going to win. This might sound like an odd question, but generally, it helps if you not only want to win or have confidence that you will win – or even that you have a plan for winning – but that you can describe how and why you will win. What will change? What will cause that change? Why will people change their minds and vote a different way than the polls were pointing? Right across the independence movement there was a slightly dangerous 'procession theory' which took hold. The idea was that the momentum was in our favour so if we just kept going, just kept being reassuring, just kept looking positive, gradually and eventually we'd get there. Like some kind of procession to victory.

That was a delusion, and a damaging one. People do not just get swept up in a wave of positive feeling and vote for radical change because everyone is smiling. Nor could we assume that everyone had always wanted this and that all we had to do was make it 'easy' for them and it would all be alright 'in the end'. Social group by social group, category by category, you need to think what it would take to change their mind, what it is that you can do to create that change and then get on with it. I believed that we had to make staying in Britain sound risky and getting out sound exciting and positive. That – roughly – is how I thought we could change minds.

The actions would then be different for different groups – emphasise pensions insecurity for the elderly and then devise a better welfare settlement for them (better social housing, better social services and so on – the whole 'Common Weal' thing). For the young, focus on courage and excitement and possibility (that bit we did very well). For the middle aged in relative security, focus on economic failings of Britain and devise a picture of a Nordic-style productive economy which underpinned good social services. For the poor and insecure, make them angry at how Britain has treated them and show them what it looks like when a country doesn't have that kind of poverty. And so on.

That's no more than a very crude run-through, but it creates a framework in which everyone can devise their own strategies. Processions never work unless everyone starts in the same place, which they didn't. It may be a little bit unfair, but I always suspected that one or two reasonably senior people had looked at the polling numbers and concluded that we couldn't actually win, so losing respectably with the ability to fight another day was the plan. I also suspect that some genuinely didn't know how to win this campaign from where we were, not least because it was a campaign like none of us ever fought before. Personally, I knew that it was a big ask to take a subject (independence) which to be honest had barely been discussed for a generation and to win people over in what was really only two years. But I always believed the latent capacity for that vote was there (I still think only 30 per cent of the population is fundamentally opposed to independence, with 70 per cent wanting or willing to believe it is possible). Which means in the end we could win. And I still believe we could have won.

So one final point about the central organisation of the campaign – there was just no excuse for the slow and ineffective way that the canvassing procedure was created and rolled out. Canvassing data is crucial and you really can't run a campaign without it. I was always surprised by this and still don't entirely understand what happened because the SNP system (called Activate) is known as an incredibly effective system. When you hear people say that the SNP is a very effective campaigning political party it is this they are often talking about.

I'm not an expert on this aspect of campaigns but I couldn't understand why that system was not just adapted for this purpose. I know it couldn't simply lift the existing version of Activate for various data protection reasons, but it was hard to see why a new system took so long. That new system was YesMo. I confess that I didn't use either of them so I am mainly repeating what people who know these things told me, but YesMo seemed never to have been quite as well regarded as it should have been. There are all sorts of reasons including familiarity with the other system and the slowness of the roll-out. Whatever the reason, quite a few groups opted to use Activate instead. This meant that data was collected by two different systems. That creates immediate problems.

(Incidentally, this is only anecdotal because I only discussed this with a few local campaigns but it always appeared to me that the places with the best and most effective canvass returns were the ones which used Activate. I don't know if that was because they were already more experienced at managing canvassing and so used a system they were familiar with which those 'new to the game' used the new system and were just not quite as good at it.)

What is certain is that there were really patchy canvass returns. That is certainly not just Yes Scotland's fault and it is here that we all need to look to

ourselves. There were an enormous number of doorstep-hours put in during the campaign. People were amazing. But too often people had great, long, inspiring conversations but didn't come away with the right data. I am most certainly not advocating that we follow the 'professional political' approach of just knocking the door, getting the minimum information and running away as quickly as possible. The conversations were really valuable. But the data was too, and we needed both.

And we needed comprehensive coverage. I spoke to some campaigns who had a good idea about specific voting intentions across their area. I spoke to some who had good data in some parts of their campaign area but not in others. And I spoke to some campaigns who just didn't really have reliable data. What I certainly never saw was any sense that at a nationwide level, we had a solid and reliable picture of what was going on. If we did, we'd have picked up the 'pensioner problem' – which we simply didn't seem to. (People knew it wasn't our best voting segment but I don't think I ever came across someone who realised that the voting patterns of over 60s alone would be enough to lose us the campaign.)

I compare and contrast this with Better Together. I was clearly not party to their data, but I did on occasion meet some of their strategists. With about a week to go, they seemed confident they had the data that showed they were going to win (though they didn't seem to be in crowing mood so I guess their data showed it was tighter than they'd have liked). Perhaps it was bluff. But if I had the same conversations with counterparts on our side of the campaign, they were much more of the 'fingers crossed' persuasion. Unless I'm misreading, some people whom I'd have expected to have access to pretty solid canvas data did not seem to know what was happening until polling day.

Certainly I know that RIC did an enormous amount of work in poorer housing estates and did get quite a lot of data. But I also know it was a bit haphazard – we knew what we'd got from the houses where we found someone at home, but when I asked what percentage of houses we'd got to, what percentage of those we'd got a reply at, what percentage of those had been Yes and so on, we simply didn't know. We should have. We should have known place by place how each community was planning to vote.

I am endlessly accommodating to our campaign. I know well that many of the people who did most of the work on the ground had sometimes never been near a political campaign before. I don't know how many times people told me about how nervous they were when they 'knocked their first door'. I am not going to criticise people for learning on the job. I admire them enormously. But let's not make the mistake again. We have a number of years to prepare. Why aren't we holding national training sessions to make sure that people really get trained on how to do things next time? At the very least, why don't we still have a network of all the local groups so we

can send them training videos and they can self-train? Next time we need to be not only beautiful and inspired, but technically competent and effective.

There is more we can train on. The national media was so overwhelmingly hostile that we needed to use other outlets. Some groups used their local newspapers effectively – but some didn't. Every local group should be offered training on how to work the local media and how to get stories taken. Indeed, every local group would benefit from having good training materials on how to construct a campaign – how to identify local issues, how to relate them to the campaign, how to target segments of the voting population and so on. It is not patronising to ask people to keep learning – I've been doing this for many years and I continue to learn all the time.

I know that a lot of people were exhausted and of course a bit demoralised. And of course a lot of people were either in a political party or joined a political party and didn't stop campaigning. I know it also may feel like quite a long time away before we need to fight the fight again. But even if we set aside the possibility of a snap referendum some time in the next few years (which I think unlikely but certainly not impossible), even then we have less time than we think. If we started now we'd barely be ready to create networks and training materials and some central support before the middle of 2017. We might then be only 18 months away from finding ourselves in a full-blown referendum campaign. So no, we really don't have all that much time to kick our feet up and wait.

There are of course endless things we could do to become better. And we should try. I don't of course necessarily mean 'more professional' – all those leaflets photocopied at someone's work advertising a meeting put together by people who'd never put a meeting together before were effective because they were so authentic. But we can be better. It's just that we can't rely on it happening 'all by itself'.

If you really, really want to win, good is never good enough – and neither is brilliant. We need to be tough on ourselves individually and collectively and we need to ask ourselves how to be better and better prepared.

Seven: That which is done is real

There is one remaining aspect of the process of independence which is an area where we can offer greater reassurance to those voters who are not yet confident enough to vote Yes – which is the post-referendum process. Another area where the No camp tried to make ground with its 'all too uncertain, don't take the risk' pitch was the process of negotiating independence after a Yes vote. I think the Yes side rather played into their fears by basically refusing to talk much about that process.

This was ostensibly on the basis that 'we can't talk about negotiating positions because you can't show your hand in public'. Of course there is an extent to which you don't really want to reveal every detail of your negotiating strategy in advance. But there is a world of difference between a negotiating strategy (how low you'll go, what secret weapons you have to increase the pressure, what is your nuclear option and so on) and a negotiating position (an opening statement about what you think is the fair outcome). It is absolutely normal practice to outline a negotiating position in advance.

Again, this was probably not doable last time because the work couldn't be done in the timescales. There was probably also a little bit of a desire to control as well – senior SNP people set out the argument that this was their negotiation to run and that they had the mandate (which was not true in any sense since no-one had elected them to negotiate independence). But we did at least get as far as a promise to have a 'Team Scotland' approach (though how many people in the 'team' would not have been part of Scotland's wealthiest five per cent was far from clear). Either way, as a natural result of timescales and the normal political desire to remain in the driving seat, little was known about either the content or process of negotiation.

This of course fed into the No campaign's determination that it would not 'pre-negotiate' anything. Of course it wouldn't – it was largely predicated on creating an overbearing sense of uncertainty and doubt. But was it true? Well, if it was, it would have been a gift. We could have just written our own terms for independence (what proportion of UK debt we would take,

what assets we would own and control and so on). And they would have to refuse to contradict that list because they weren't negotiating. So our list of demands would have been the only and unchallenged picture of the future.

In reality, had that happened, they'd have been 'negotiating' within minutes. If we said 'OK, we're only taking X proportion of the debt', they'd have said 'no, we won't accept that'. That's negotiating. They could have been pushed on lots of things and would either have had to bite their lip or at least hint at their position.

But in any case, it's not really the opposition you want to negotiate with before a referendum vote has taken place, it's the voters. You are gradually trying to persuade them that the future is foreseeable and understandable. The other side are trying to do the opposite. So it's not the other side that you're designing your opening negotiating position for but the voters. Your aim is to show them what looks like a highly reasonable, broadly desirable picture of what is going to happen next. You want them to believe that it's not as tricky as all that, not as massive an upheaval as all that – and that Scotland will end up in a strong position.

Now, there's quite a lot that would require some kind of negotiation or another – all those thousands of often obscure international treaties, the division of assets, the allocation of ongoing liabilities and much more. I'm not suggesting that this all needs to be done in detail miles in advance (though, on the other hand, it's going to have to be done sooner or later so why not sooner?). Nor am I suggesting that many people care about this level of detail. Once again, it is not the specific that matters but the general – the general sense that someone has done this, it's not a problem and all is in hand. Nothing to worry about here.

So I'd suggest that at some point after the general case document is published (in late 2018 or early 2019), it would be worth publishing a starting position for negotiation, an outline of what the Yes side thinks is a reasonable starting position. It would be necessary to think through some of this to be able to produce a budget for day one of independence anyway – we need a rough idea of how much debt we should accept to be able to price in the cost of debt servicing. We can't just avoid this altogether if we want to be more prepared.

During the last referendum I felt a little unease that there wasn't enough understanding of the negotiation process and the international legal framework in which it would take place. So I went and read the two relevant international 'Vienna Treaties' which govern the creation of two separate states from one. I really don't want to go into the rather obscure details of what is in them or the extent to which it would necessarily govern the process – they haven't been ratified by the UK so they wouldn't necessarily be legally applicable anyway. But they do outline the legal precedent so it's worth just taking a second to understand the very basics.

Broadly, they conclude that there are two ways an existing nation state could turn itself into two states. One assumes that one state has 'left' the other, with the leaving state becoming a successor state and the remaining one being a continuing state. The other assumes that one state breaks into two different states, that both of these states are successor states and that there isn't a 'continuity' state. There isn't really any discussion about which of these models would be adopted because that decision has already been made by Westminster – the UK would be a continuity state and Scotland would become a successor state. That is the only means via which the UK can say things like 'It's our Bank of England, not yours'. It is also the only means through which the remainder UK can keep all its existing treaties.

Because a successor state, in international law such as it is, leaves a continuity state. But it leaves it with all its assets and liabilities – subject to negotiation. Very, very simply, if the remainder UK says 'you'll need to renegotiate all your treaties but we won't and the Bank belongs to us and not you', that principle applies to absolutely everything other than in-territory assets. So things which are physically based in the geographic area which is to become the new nation (such as hospitals, schools and roads) belong to that new nation. But absolutely nothing else – or at least not automatically.

There is actually quite an interesting debate to be had about whether the UK has the right to take that stance unilaterally – can one partner in a divorce just claim that assets held in both their names actually just belong to one person? But it's an academic debate because the UK is never going to accept that it is a 'new' country. And I have always believed that, if we get our negotiating position right, this plays right into our hands. Because there are really two big games to be played here – who owns the currency and who owes the debt? The rest is mostly dividing up assets, signing bits of paper and agreeing who gets what 'access to the children' (by which I mean institutions like the DVLA). And as it plays out, each side (last time round) had a big ask of the other. Scotland decided that it really, really wanted to have access to the currency. The UK was determined that Scotland really, really had to take its share of the UK's massive debt.

Just to be clear again, so long as the successor state/continuity state split is the one the UK government insists on, Scotland really doesn't have any rights whatsoever to the Bank of England or Sterling. As far as international law exists at all in this area, George Osborne was sort of right when he claimed that Sterling wasn't like some kind of CD collection to be divided up. However, there is an important corollary of that – Scotland was due none of the UK's debt. Not a penny. It was Westminster that signed the IOUs so it was the UK which would be 100 per cent responsible for paying off those IOUs. We can debate the morality of it all to our hearts' content, but the legal position was that Scotland could sail off into the sunset debt-free.

In negotiations the first rule is that the person who wants least is in

control. If it was only an asset division process, it was entirely for London to persuade Edinburgh to pick up a share of London's debt. London wanted more than we did (the debt is much, much bigger than Scotland's share of the UK's non-Scotland based assets), so we were in control. Unless we wanted something big too. Which we did – to have a currency union. We made that ask absolutely unconditional, something that we were 100 per cent committed to getting. In fact, by not having the fabled 'Plan B on currency', we wanted a currency union even more than London wanted us to take a share of the debt. So immediately the balance of control swings decisively in London's favour. Far from not pre-negotiating, we opened the negotiation with 'we're totally begging you for currency union and we don't have any alternative so state your terms'. That's a desperately weak negotiating position.

That is one of the many reasons I favour an independent Scottish currency. We can simply take the UK government at its word, that it is the continuity state, that it owns the currency and that we're not getting it. Fine, we can set up our own. In return, we're due none of the debt. For anyone who can't see the significance of that, Scotland's fiscal deficit as seen in the last GERS report disappears overnight. Our borrowing capacity shoots up because we're one of the very few nations in the world borrowing from a debt-free position (although some credit ratings agencies which are entirely intertwined with the City of London financiers may well seek to punish Scotland by reducing our rating). And if we do decide to adopt some of the debt, we can claim a concession for every percentage point we take. It may be cynical, but a Scottish currency makes our negotiation position immensely strong.

Because (and I've been thinking about this for a while) I can't really see what else we need – other than a reasonable transition period. Personally, I'd suggest that far from pressing the UK for our share of the boats and planes that make up our share of the UK armed forces' assets, we'd be better off working out what we need and commissioning as much as possible from Clydeside. Since we'd be sort of rolling in money (or more specifically, borrowing power), it's not exactly a difficult world in which to procure military hardware. And that applies to a lot of other aspects of the division of assets. OK, it'll cost us money to set up a Scottish DVLA, but once we do that's jobs in Scotland. And yes, we could demand a room in each of the UK's embassies be deemed 'Scottish' (and effectively pay for them). But it would seem to make more sense to decide where we really want embassies and rent office space.

There is potentially a substantial economic boost available from a policy of 'if we can build it, don't inherit it'. And to be honest, there is not as much as people think that we really need to inherit. I mean, what were we really going to do with our share of the London Underground? We were going to

cash it in. So why develop a negotiating strategy from that direction? Why not budget for what we need, not to piece together a kind of hand-me-down country, but to order a bespoke new nation?

Because we probably should accept some proportion of the debt, simply because it is the people of England and Wales who will suffer if we don't. But if we go in with the stronger hand, it could be on our terms. Let them keep the assets and the institutions. Work out how much it will cost us to replicate them in brand-new, shiny modern form. Call that the start-up costs (including the costs of setting up a currency as a result of London's refusal to give us any access to the one we currently use). Borrow those from a Scottish National Investment Bank. Then subtract that from whatever we believe would be Scotland's debt share and say we'll agree to service that much of the UK's debt. But since international money market IOUs can't be transferred to third parties, we'd have an agreement to pay the remainder UK a sum equivalent to our share of debt costs. And this would need to be fixed – if the UK makes a mess of its economy and its borrowing costs go up, that's its problem. We should agree to pay an annual fixed amount for an agreed period and no more than that.

The UK negotiators might not like it. But since (in theory) we could just walk away with no debt whatsoever and do the same thing anyway, it would probably be a pretty solid starting point to negotiate from. I do of course realise that this is quite an aggressive negotiating position. Last time round Scotland did backflips to try and sound incredibly reasonable about how we'd negotiate (once again, this can hardly be described as refusing to show our hand in advance). The UK on the other hand virtually laughed in our face. I can only say again that if we're trying to give confidence to the people who are nearly there with a shift to a Yes vote, a strong and unapologetic negotiating position is hardly going to be unhelpful.

Now as I've been clear, my preferred option of a Scottish currency may not be the option that is settled on as Plan A. In which case we'd go back into negotiations for a currency union and once again be more on the back foot. But in my opinion it is therefore absolutely essential that we have a self-sufficient Plan B which means that we can fall back on a more aggressive negotiating stance if the UK just won't play ball (by which I mean during the referendum rather than afterwards). Plan B could be a Scottish currency or Sterlingisation (though that poses a number of other problems), but it must leave Scotland able to walk away. We then set out two negotiating positions – the terms on which we'll accept a currency union and the debt we'll accept in that position, and then the terms we will impose if a currency union isn't accepted.

Frankly, all we need is anything that is sufficiently reasonable to look like a legitimate starting position, clear answers to questions about how things would work and how we'd set up that new state, reassurance that

the smaller detail is in hand and a clear idea of what it's all going to cost us. Issues like whether the UK would accept dual nationality and whether it would impose border guards (it wouldn't) are issues on which we can state a preferred position but over which it is not crucial we reach a final position.

And to cover all the rest of the detail for the sake of reassurance we should just stick out a couple of bog-standard academic tenders. The thousands of obscure international treaties and how we'd treat them? Task that to the Foreign Affairs Policy Academy (if set up) or get an international relations think tank to write a paper. The various tangles of existing domestic constitution that need to be detangled? Advertise a contract for a constitutional academic to write the paper or commission an international constitutional NGO (there are loads). The to-ing and fro-ing over maritime borders and the like? Get an international arbiter to come up with a fair solution. No-one is going to look at these, but they will be reassured that when people ask what we're going to do, we can give them a web reference.

And there is another reason to do so much of this work in advance. Anyone who has ever read a John Le Carre novel or saw the recent BBC adaptation of the Night Manager will know that the British civil service is world class at being obtuse. Ten minutes in a room with a few Whitehall mandarins and Usain Bolt would be reduced to a crawling pace. The UK is quite likely to want to slow down the pace of negotiation to a virtual stand-still as a means of turning the screw. Because there is of course one other thing it really, really wants but which is non-negotiable in Scotland, which is continued basing of Trident in Scotland's waters. Every year the UK can delay the actual secession of Scotland, the happier it will be.

But here's the thing. I want out. I really, really want out. I don't want to be stuck in this United Kingdom given the awful direction it is headed. I want to be in an independent country where we can make different decisions. And I want it as soon as I can get it. The more work we have done to negotiate our departure in advance, the faster will be that departure. It'll also help us persuade people it's time to go when they see the deal we put on the table.

There is a fascinating psychological response to the idea of 'facts on the ground'. When something appears to become real, people start to accept it. When the details of how Scotland would rebuild are written down for all to see, they start to look tangible. When things look tangible we respond differently to them, we react as if they are more real than they are. If someone points to a field and says 'I'm going to build a house there', it still looks like a field. Show the architects drawings and suddenly you can almost see a house. Let's get the architect's drawings for an independent Scotland done. Because that which is not done is unreal – but that which is done is real.

Conclusion: From here to there

If you're an independence supporter, where is here? It's 2016. And we lost. Since we lost we have seen the SNP sweep Scotland and the other independence-supporting parties grow stronger. Plus the pro-union parties have become weaker. So far so good.

But that really is as far as we have got. There is no meaningful sense in which we can really talk about an active campaign for independence or a functioning movement for independence. There may be strategies around for how we get independence on our terms, but I've certainly not heard them. And from most of what I've seen and heard, at the moment the next step seems to look rather too much like a repeat of the last step.

What is definite is that the case that lost last time, the arguments and the content of the messages, have not moved forward at all. We know that the currency question was a major problem for us last time, yet nothing has changed. No work has been done, no discussion has taken place, no ideas have been explored. Little effort has been made to keep the cross-party movement or the grassroots movement together and networked (other than through the efforts of the grassroots themselves). No effort has been made to help that movement to learn and improve. In fact, very little effort has been put into learning lessons from the last time.

If I was to describe what has happened to us since September 18th 2014 I'd probably accept that we've grown. But to my eyes it looks that way because we got fatter, not stronger, not faster. In my more pessimistic moments I sometimes think we've spent coming on for two years congratulating ourselves. For losing.

OK, I know I have a tendency of seeing work that needs to be done everywhere and I do have a habit of expecting people to get up on their feet and go one more round when perhaps they really do need a wee rest. But even allowing for my industrial-strength Scottish work ethic, who doesn't feel a little bit of lack of direction from where we are now? Do you really feel that there is a lot of momentum behind us? If the next two years were

something like a repeat of the last two years, do you think we'd be further forward or where we are? The main thing to say about where we are is that we are British citizens and our leader is David Cameron.

Where's there? 'There' is an independent Scotland, won with the support of a proportion of the population big enough to mean this deal is built into our nation unequivocally, for ever and without ayes and buts. 'There' is a new Scotland set up properly, built properly, serving us properly. Just that.

How do we get from here to there? In this book I have outlined my best thinking. We get our strategy right, focussing specifically on the proportion of the population who are the next most likely people to move from No to Yes. They are not those on high income or of a right-wing perspective but much the same as the people who did vote Yes but who didn't yet feel confident enough. How do we get them? Make them confident. How do we do that? Work. Work to make sure that we have a much better plan for independence. Do that work now and get it published as a much better prospectus either at the end of 2018 or the beginning of 2019. In the meantime, get the movement together and train, learn, get better prepared. At the same time the Scottish Government will have led us through its boldness and its commitment to make Scotland different. Because in 2019 when that prospectus is out there we are going to launch a campaign even more focussed and even more determined than the last time. For two years we are going to make that case to every single person in Scotland.

Because by the end of 2020 we are going to have shifted enough people that support for independence is sitting at 65 per cent consistently for six months. We are going to measure this relentlessly. No guessing. Once we get there we will enter 2021 with a solid plan for using the Scottish Elections to get a non-negotiable mandate for a referendum. We will win that mandate in May 2021 and the mandate will be for a referendum in October 2021. We will win that referendum. And because we have already done the work to prepare for negotiations and to build a new country, we will quickly be ready to be out; to be gone. To be independent.

This is not the only possible plan – but it is at least a plan. It is at least self-determination; a decision to take this issue into our own hands. And not with our fingers crossed. It is a credible, serious and achievable way forward. There is nothing in this plan which we cannot choose to do.

And so I leave you to make up your own mind. Do you agree? Do you have a better idea? I would welcome a debate. Just as long as that debate is over soon and the work begins. But I want to finish with one plea. Don't believe someone or something is coming to save us. It isn't. And by all means have faith that someone else has this all in hand and that all you have to do is wait. But please don't take it for granted. Ask them, push them, demand to know where we go from here.

We get one more chance at this. If we wait a decade none of us can guess where we'll be. If we lose next time, it's over. If we cross our fingers we may lose. Or we may never even get a chance to try.

It's us. It's only us. And that's all it'll take. If we want it.

DETERMINATION

1: Firmness of purpose
2: The process of establishing something exactly by calculation or research

Scotland's independence movement didn't go away after it's defeat in 2014. In fact, many people believe it became stronger. But that does not mean that it will inevitably succeed. Robin McAlpine is a political strategist and prominent Yes campaigner. In this book he argues that the independence movement needs a solid plan which puts Scotland's constitutional future firmly in its own hands – and outlines what that plan might look like.

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