The Scotland and Quebec Referendum Experiences: Lessons Learned

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The Quebec Referendum Experiences

- May 1980: 40.4% voting Yes

- October 1995: 49.4% voting Yes
Scottish Referendum: Evidence of Learning

- Yes and No campaign themes, tone
Scottish Referendum: Evidence of Learning

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Scottish Referendum: Evidence of Learning

- Yes and No campaign themes, tone
Scottish Referendum: Evidence of Learning

- Yes and No campaign themes, tone
- The Edinburgh agreement (question, threshold of victory)
3 More Lessons that Ought to Have Been Learned

1) Campaigns matter
   - No should have anticipated the Yes surge
   - Yes should have anticipated the No’s economic arguments
3 More Lessons that Ought to Have Been Learned

1) Campaigns matter

2) Opinion polls overestimate Yes support
   - The last stretch was likely not as tight as believed
   - Unnecessarily affected the No’s strategy?
3 More Lessons that Ought to Have Been Learned

1) Campaigns matter

2) Opinion polls overestimate Yes support

3) Never say never again
   ➢ The “one opportunity” really?
   ➢ The pressure to deliver on the promise of change
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process: a precedent
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process: a precedent
   ➢ 2014 Scotland ballot question: 6 words
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process

- 1980 Quebec ballot question: 119 words

The Government of Québec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations:

- this agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad — in other words, sovereignty — and at the same time, to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency:

- no change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be effected without approval by the people through another referendum:

- on these terms, do you give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?

Le Gouvernement du Québec a fait connaître sa proposition d’en arriver, avec le reste du Canada, à une nouvelle entente fondée sur le principe de l’égalité des peuples;

- cette entente permettrait au Québec d’acquérir le pouvoir exclusif de faire ses lois, de percevoir ses impôts et d’établir ses relations extérieures, ce qui est la souveraineté — et, en même temps, de maintenir avec le Canada une association économique comportant l’utilisation de la même monnaie.

- aucun changement de statut politique résultant de ces négociations ne sera réalisé sans l’accord de la population lors d’un autre référendum:

- en conséquence, accordez-vous au Gouvernement du Québec le mandat de négocier l’entente proposée entre le Québec et le Canada?
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process

- 1995 Quebec ballot question: 40 words
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process

2) A likely return to the embracing of identity pluralism
   - More a reminder of the 1996-2007 message and efforts than a real inspiration
Lessons for Quebecers/Canadians?

1) The process

2) A likely return to the embracing of identity pluralism

3) The weight of economic considerations
Quebec

Now
(compared with rest of Canada)

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<td>Worse</td>
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If independent
(compared with rest of Canada)

Opinion survey data from Bélanger, Hepburn, Nadeau and Henderson project.
Data collected in April 2014 for Quebec and September 2012 for Scotland.
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Opinion survey data from Bélanger, Hepburn, Nadeau and Henderson project. Data collected in April 2014 for Quebec and September 2012 for Scotland.
If Not Independence, Then What?

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Opinion survey data from Bélanger, Hepburn, Nadeau and Henderson project.
Data collected in September 2012. Numbers for 2014 are survey data (Quebec) and actual outcome (Scotland).
Thank you!