

The Strategic State: A case study of devolved government in Scotland

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ABSTRACT: Recent government failures and the persistent presence of wicked issues have shed a critical light on the performance of governments around the world. Increasingly there are calls for government to move away from new public management inspired reforms, towards more collaborative and joined-up forms of governance with government, business and third sector bodies working together to create public value and sustainable development. In the case of Scotland, these issues rose to prominence following devolution and received significant political support with the election (as a minority government), in 2007, of a political party (Scottish National Party) whose primary aim is to re-establish Scotland as an independent country. This created a window of opportunity for the Scottish Government to experiment with new strategic forms of government which were distinct from other parts of the UK. The results of these reforms are contested, but ongoing debates highlight some of the challenges inherent in developing a strategic state even in the context of a relatively small polity.

Keywords: Strategic state; leadership, collective leadership, devolution, Scotland

The Strategic State: The Case of Scotland

Conceptualizations of public service design and delivery have evolved significantly from the ideas of Traditional Public Administration (TPA) to New Public Management (NPM) and now to Public Governance (Osborne 2010). These conceptual changes reflect a shifting policy focus from government-directed design and delivery (TPA) to government-directed design but with mixed approaches to delivery (NPM) and now, arguably, to mixed approaches to design and delivery (NPG), which requires a greater focus on collaborative modes of governance (Fenwick et al. 2012; McQuaid 2010; Mackie 2013). There is also, within many Western societies, a shift towards more populist politics and a related rise of post-truth, alternative-facts rhetoric within political discourse which has challenged traditional models of government, democratic systems (Bauer & Becker, 2020) and the ability to innovate (Borins, 2018).

This chapter considers how the Scottish Government have responded to these challenges through the development of a strategic state (Elliott, 2020) including establishment of a National Performance Framework, a reformed civil service organizational structure and the development of a whole-of-society approach to governance. Through exploring more recent reforms to the National Performance Framework, and using illustrative examples from practice, it is shown how a lack of focus and waning momentum has created significant challenges in the practice of strategy across the Scottish Government, police service and health service. Finally, some recommendations are made for future research.

<a>What is the strategic state and why does it matter?

There is a burgeoning literature on policy failure (McConnell, 2015), government blunders (King & Crewe, 2013) and administrative burden (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). Questions over how and why governments make mistakes are of course not new. For example, the introduction of the community charge (known as the poll tax) in the UK in 1990 has been expertly documented by Butler et al (1994). There is also a significant legacy of important work within the subject areas of administrative justice and ombudsmen over many decades (Buck T et al., 2010; Stacey, 1971). Finally, there are many examples of public inquiries which have investigated government failures; particularly high-profile UK inquiries include the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the Leveson Inquiry.

These examples of failure provide part of the rationale for calls to do government better. At the same time there is growing recognition, both within the literature and in practice, that wicked problems require joined-up solutions (Bryson et al., 2006; Carey & Crammond, 2015). Others have drawn on complexity theory to illustrate how the level of analysis needs to be at the system, or macro-, level and that public organizations work within complex open systems (Lowe, French, & Hawkins, 2020; Roberts, 2018). A broad range of possible responses to this complex landscape have been prescribed including more evidence-based policy making (Cairney, 2016; Parkhurst, 2017), systems-based policy design (Lowe, French, Hawkins, et al., 2020) and, in particular, more strategic forms of government (Bryson, 2010; Bryson et al., 2010; George et al., 2019; George & Desmidt, 2014; Joyce & Drumaux, 2014). But there remains a lack of research that has explored the nature, antecedents, and consequences of the strategic state and it remains a relatively underexplored concept.

Much of what has been written on the strategic state has come from the OECD who have provided particular impetus to calls for more strategic forms of government (Drumaux & Joyce, 2018). Through public governance reviews the OECD have explored moves towards a strategic state in countries across Europe (OECD, 2010, 2012, 2013). Whilst there is no one way to develop a strategic state, and the nature of a strategic state will vary depending on context, some key factors may include:

- Broadly supported long-term vision;
- Clearly identified emerging and longer-term needs;
- Prioritised objectives;
- Identification of medium and short-term deliverables;
- Assessed and managed risk;
- Efficient policy design and service delivery to meet identified needs;
- Actors and resources across society mobilised to achieve outcomes.

(Adapted from OECD, 2013: 58).

Specifically, the strategic state has been defined as “a set of capabilities around the creation and delivery of an effective strategy at a country-wide level” (Elliott, 2020: 286) and by others as “the essence of the new thinking about public governance, and it represents the reinvention of governance around a set of public management processes that deliver direction, steering, and a new relationship between government and citizens” (Drumaux & Joyce, 2018, p. 26). The following section briefly summarizes how the above key factors can be seen to have been implemented by the Scottish Government (for a fuller discussion on the implementation of the strategic state see Elliott (2020b)).

<a>The Scottish example as a unique case study

The Scottish Parliament was established (or re-enacted) in 1999 with the aspiration of a new type of politics (Arter 2004; Cairney 2011). A consensual, less adversarial, approach to politics was designed into the system, including the architecture of the Scottish Parliament debating chamber, the unicameral system with scrutiny taking place via a cross-party committee system, and the form of proportional representation in the voting system (a combination of first-past-the-post and the Additional Member System) (Arter 2004). More than 20 years later many have cited Scottish devolution as a significant success (Mitchell 2009; McGarvey and McConnell 2012) though more recently some have questioned the progress that has been made over this time. As noted by the Auditor General for Scotland, “audit work consistently shows a major implementation gap between policy ambitions and delivery on the ground” (Boyle, 2021). The nature and extent of any comparative success is therefore a matter of ongoing debate.

In the introduction to his monograph on *The Scottish Question*, Professor James Mitchell cites the Scottish journalist J.M. Reid who noted that Scotland was “a country which is, at least in some sense, a nation, but in no sense a State” (Mitchell, 2014). This might rightly beg the question – what can the case of Scotland give to our understanding of the Strategic State? However, Scotland offers a unique case for many historical, cultural and political reasons. Having been an independent nation, prior to the Treaty of Union 1707 which created the Kingdom of Great Britain, Scotland maintained some administrative devolution due, in part, to the functions preserved in the Treaty (Parry 1982 as cited by Rhodes et al. 2003). Specifically, Scotland retained its own legal system, education system and established church. At the same time, the distinctiveness of the Scottish system must not be overstated, and undoubtedly 300

years of Union have brought significant unity to the systems of Government across England and Scotland. But devolution, and the re-enactment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, have brought a renewed momentum to Scottish public affairs and high expectations that were set out by Donald Dewar (inaugural First Minister of Scotland 1999-2000) at the opening of the new Scottish Parliament that it was brought about in order “to do right by the people of Scotland; to respect their priorities; to better their lot; and to contribute to the commonweal” (Dewar, 1999).

The strongest rationale for exploring Scotland as an example of the strategic state lies in the reforms which took place following the election of the first minority Scottish National Party (SNP) administration in 2007. Scotland may not, at least for now, be a State. But it has much to offer by way of example to other nations and small States in its experience as an aspiring State over this time. The remainder of this chapter will explore the development of a distinct ‘Scottish Approach’ to public services since 2007 and, in particular, how a lack of focus and waning momentum has led to significant challenges in the practice of strategy.

<a> The development of a strategic state?

Despite some distinctions, as noted above, the Scottish form of devolution was originally designed to closely resemble the Whitehall model (Elvidge, 2011) and many of the systems and structures of the Scottish Government were remnants of the former Scottish Office (the UK Government department which exercised government functions in Scotland prior to devolution). Yet it became clear during the early years of the parliament that these traditional ways of working were not optimal for the new realities of devolution. One of the challenges in early years of devolution was the nature of coalition government (Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition 1999-2003; Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition 2003-2007) which led to the development of

very broad *Programmes for Government*. As noted by Sir John Elvidge (Scottish Government Permanent Secretary 2003-2010),

“The 2003-07 agreement [between Labour and Liberal Democrats] contained over 460 specific individual commitments. It was later decided that those commitments were not to be the subject of any form of agreed prioritization. The two parties had contrived to manufacture a shared straitjacket for themselves” (2011, p. 12).

The perceived challenges in running the Scottish Government through the first two coalitions following devolution would later form a significant part of the rationale for development of a more strategic approach (Elliott, 2020).

With the election, in May 2007, of the first minority SNP administration the opportunity was taken to reshape the Scottish Government. It was felt, particularly by the Permanent Secretary at that time (Sir John Elvidge), that a more strategic and joined-up approach was required in order to better tackle persistent wicked issues (Elvidge, 2007). Subsequently, specific reforms were made including the establishment of a National Performance Framework founded on an outcomes-based approach, a reformed civil service organizational structure and the development of a whole-of-government approach.

** Establishment of a National Performance Framework**

The National Performance Framework (NPF) was introduced within the Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007. This included an overarching purpose,

“to focus government activity and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth”. (Scottish Government, 2007, p. 2).

The NPF represented a shift in governing from a target-driven approach to a more strategic approach (Arnott & Ozga, 2010). The NPF was based on the Virginia Performs model (Bryson, 2018) and was to provide an overview of the performance of the Scottish Government against each of its five strategic objectives. The associated website – Scotland Performs (www.scotlandperforms.com) – was launched in June 2008 to present information on how Scotland was performing against the indicators and targets outlined in the NPF.

** Reformed civil service organizational structure**

To support this new strategic approach to government the Scottish Government was restructured. The Departmental structure, which resembled the traditional Whitehall structure (and had been inherited from the Scottish Office), was abolished. Heads of Department were replaced with five Directors-General, each one responsible for a strategic objective (Wealthier and Fairer; Safer and Stronger; Smarter; Greener; and Healthier) and a larger number of more autonomous Directorates. The new organizational structure was intended to remove old departmental silos and encourage a more joined-up and strategic approach to government.

As explained in the ‘Civil Service Capabilities’ report, this meant that Directors-General,

“now had a compelling reason to understand Scottish Government holistically, taking an interest beyond their own directorate. It also put them far more directly in touch with the local implications of actions from the centre, an awareness that they could then apply to their own policy making” (Kidson, 2013, p. 19)

Each of the five strategic objectives was underpinned by 15 National Outcomes and 45 National Indicators (refreshed in 2011 and 2016).

** Development of a whole-of-government approach to a whole-of-society approach**

Arguably the most significant and innovative development of the Scottish Government's approach to strategic management was the inclusion of other public bodies, and even parts of the Third Sector, within the NPF. So, for example, all 32 local authorities in Scotland were aligned with the priorities of the Scottish Government. As stated by the Scottish Government,

“As part of the new relationship, local government will be expected to contribute to the delivery of the national Strategic Objectives, outcomes, indicators and targets, and in this way to support the Scottish Government in the delivery of its overarching Purpose” (Scottish Government, 2007, p. 71).

This alignment came about through the agreement of a Local Government Concordat whereby the Scottish Government cut the ring-fencing of funding and consequently streamlined reporting requirements in exchange for all 32 local authorities agreeing to freeze council tax rates and sign up to the National Performance Framework. Similarly, the NPF was extended to Community Planning Partnerships including Police Scotland, Health Boards, Enterprise Networks, the Fire and Rescue Service and Regional Transport Partnerships. Thus, it initially represented a 'whole-of-government' approach.

The strategic approach to government, as symbolized by the NPF, was overhauled in 2018. The 15 National Outcomes were replaced by 11 Outcomes and the 45 National Indicators replaced by 81 indicators. Crucially, as part of the ongoing changes, the NPF was reorientated from being a 'whole-of-government' approach to being a 'whole-of-society' approach. This included the NPF being notionally owned by the Scottish Leaders Forum, which is an informal collaborative forum of leaders from across a wide range of public service organizations, rather than being owned and led by the Scottish Government. It also included an explicit recognition

that not all indicators could be achieved by government and public bodies alone. As noted on the revised National Performance Framework website (<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>):

“To achieve the national outcomes, the National Performance Framework aims to get everyone in Scotland to work together. This includes:

- national and local government
- businesses
- voluntary organisations
- people living in Scotland” (Scottish Government, n.d.)

As well as including government, public bodies and the third sector the revised NPF also included businesses and the people of Scotland. It also included broader outcomes such as “[W]e grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential” (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 2). In doing so the nature of the NPF shifted from being a whole-of-government approach to a whole-of-society approach. Thus, at one time the strategy became less focused (and arguably less strategic) and more extensive (and technical). Whilst there may be challenges in developing a strategic approach within an organization, or across several organizations (as was the ambition of the original NPF), there is even less evidence from the literature on how a strategic approach can apply to a whole country (as envisioned by the newly refreshed NPF).

The NPF is supported by The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act. Together these legislate for an outcomes-based approach which must be renewed, following consultation, every five years and requires that services must be planned, delivered and evaluated across partnerships. The results from this strategic approach, in terms of improved outcomes, are mixed (Wallace et al., 2013) yet the Scottish Government clearly created a distinctly Scottish approach to government and demonstrated competence and

proficiency in matters of governance – often in contrast to the ‘traditional’ Westminster-approach. This is demonstrated in the consistently high levels of public trust in the Scottish Government (Reid et al., 2020; Scottish Government, 2021) and strong election performance from the SNP who have remained in government since 2007, either as a minority (2007-2011 and 2016-2021), majority (2011-2016) or power-sharing administration (2021-present).

<a> Recent changes and loss of focus

Some scholars question whether the use of strategic concepts and practices is appropriate in a public context, particularly as many of these have evolved from the private sector (Alford & Greve, 2017). Others have provided evidence to suggest, in terms of content (Andrews et al., 2006) and processes (Andrews et al., 2009), that strategy does have a significant impact on performance. In part the value of adopting strategic practices in public contexts depends on how you define value. For George et al. (2019) strategic planning can enhance effectiveness but does not necessarily achieve efficiency gains. Within the public management literature there is even more debate over the value of outcomes-based approaches, particularly in the context of inter-institutional contexts (French & Mollinger-Sahba, 2021; Lowe, 2013; Lowe & Wilson, 2017; Moynihan et al., 2011; Wimbush, 2011). What remains even less clear is to what extent strategic concepts and practices can be applied to a whole society.

In some senses the Scottish Government moves to develop a ‘whole-of-society’ approach occurred before the ‘whole-of-government’ approach had even taken hold. For example, having an outcomes focus was central to the underpinning philosophy of the original NPF. Yet it was noted that “[W]hile the Scottish model provides the basis for the scrutiny of outcomes, linked to the budget, the evidence suggests that this is not used in a systematic, sustained way across all

committees of the Scottish Parliament” (Potter, 2016, p. 1). It remains the case that evidence surrounding the impact of the outcomes-based approach is mixed (Connolly & Pyper, 2020; Mackie, 2018; Wallace et al., 2013). Therefore, questions remain over both the extent to which the strategic approach was ever embedded across the public sector and how effective this had been in practice. Specifically, there are examples from across the Scottish Government, the police service and the health service that would suggest a loss of focus and waning momentum have threatened the practice of strategy.

** Changes to leadership development activity**

Initially the Scottish Approach advocated an adaptive leadership approach and significant leadership development took place, particularly with mid-level civil servants, involving both Ron Heifetz (adaptive leadership) and Mark Moore (public value). By May 2007 all Heads of Departments and Group Heads were to have engaged in training on adaptive leadership and public value (Scottish Executive, 2006). Yet initially this leadership development, and other related changes, were largely internal to the Scottish Government and many public sector employees, outside of the core civil service, were unaware of the reforms (Wallace, 2019). Later, particularly given the requirements of the NPF and the commitment to co-production, for joined-up or partnership working, wider parts of the public sector were included in leadership development activities. Following the refresh of the NPF in 2016 the focus for leadership development shifted from adaptive leadership and public value to collective leadership.

Leadership development was initially coordinated by the Scottish Government through ‘Workforce Scotland’ which was established following the publication of the Christie Commission Report (Christie, 2011). This was renamed Collective Leadership for Scotland in

2018 in recognition of the increasing focus on this particular model of leadership and in line with the revised NPF. It is described as a “a collaborative partnership which reaches right across public services, with a small core team based within The Scottish Government” (Collective Leadership for Scotland, 2020). The Scottish Government, through Collective Leadership for Scotland, have identified “a wide range of complex, wicked issues in Scotland, such as poverty, increasing inequalities and climate change” (Sharp, 2018, p. 2) and note that “many of our conventional models for leadership of change do not serve us well when it comes to complex, systemic issues” (Sharp, 2018, p. 2).

The previous approach to leadership development (2007-2017) was arguably too focused on internal civil service development. Broadening the scope of leadership development activity, and establishing Collective Leadership for Scotland, may have helped address this criticism but by extending the scope of the NPF to encompass a whole-of-society approach any leadership development efforts would require significantly more investment.

** Lost opportunities and emerging failures**

From a strategic perspective the Scottish Government, particularly the political leadership in the devolved polity, have attempted to differentiate themselves from the rest of the UK whilst at the same time the Scottish Government, in terms of the administrative function, remains part of a unified British Civil Service. In terms of leadership style and organizational culture there has tended to be a very strong Whitehall influence. As noted by Rhodes et al. (2003) it has historically been common for civil servants to transfer between Edinburgh and London. This has been seen to serve two purposes: to develop leadership experience across a range of Government

departments and to maintain strong cultural and organizational links between Whitehall and Edinburgh.

Some argue that the status of the Scottish Government as part of the British civil service has remained largely unchanged since devolution and the Whitehall Model, whilst undergoing change, remains dominant across Britain (Northern Ireland has always had a separate civil service) (Parry, 2012). However, the development of a strategic Scottish Approach to public services marks a deliberate shift from the Whitehall model (particularly in relation to the organizational structure and culture). There may be different motivations administratively and politically for this development but focusing on being distinctive may lead to lost opportunities for learning, when other parts of the UK are in fact doing similar things.

Opportunities may exist across the devolved administrations and with Whitehall for greater sharing of learning, leadership development and experience which risk not been capitalized on in favor of developing a separate and distinctive approach. To a small extent these opportunities have always existed, for example, the Wednesday morning Whitehall meetings of permanent secretaries (Parry, 2012). Yet there are limited opportunities for shared learning and development at all levels of the civil service as well as beyond the civil service to other parts of the public sector. The lack of learning opportunities is no more evident than in the higher education sector where there is currently only one MPA program and one MPP program across Scotland. This is in comparison to around 6 MPA and MPP programs in both the US States of Minnesota and South Carolina (both with equivalent population sizes to Scotland).

Ideas of boundary spanning and collaborative governance are neither new nor are they unique to the Scottish experience (O'Flynn, 2014; Pollitt, 2003; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). The outcomes-based approach which underpins the Scottish approach has also been developed across

the other nations of the UK (Birrell & Gray, 2018). Yet, the demise of the UK National School of Government in 2012 and subsequent creation of Civil Service Learning has “left a void that has not been filled” (PACAC, 2019, p. 11). Permanent institutions for civil service learning and development as exist in other countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, France, and New Zealand have not been established at a UK-wide level (PACAC, 2019). But even developments at a devolved government level, as with Academi Wales and the Wales Centre for Public Policy, have not been matched in Scotland. Consequently, there remains a lack of investment in either a distinct approach to learning and development or in building on other UK-wide approaches. Within the Scottish context the lack of a joined-up approach to leadership development has meant that “leadership cadres across the civil service, local government, the health and social services and the other arms of the public service, have remained distinct and disaggregated” (Connolly & Pyper, 2020, p. 411). Other examples where there has been shown to be a lack of leadership development and investment in capacity include in relation to community empowerment (Elliott et al., 2019), in relation to health and social care integration (Elliott et al., 2020) and in relation to local government (Elliott, 2020; Gibb et al., 2020).

The lack of investment in leadership development has led to a significant lost opportunity in health and social care integration (Elliott et al., 2020) and local interpretation of performance measures has resulted in inconsistencies in how different areas have approached and evaluated integration (Audit Scotland, 2015). The independent review into allegations of bullying and harassment in NHS Highland, conducted by John Sturrock QC, found that the Scottish Government continue to focus on centralized targets and ring-fenced budgeting (Sturrock, 2019). One NHS Highland Director commented:

“It’s targets. It’s finance. It’s political. Populist policies but don’t have the resources to fill them. NHS is just one health board of many that are suffering.”

(Sturrock, 2019, p. 35)

The Sturrock report calls for greater training and development and for a focus on collective leadership approaches. Finally, in relation to policing it has been noted that “muddy lines of accountability, a lack of separation between the key actors and an interventionist approach by the Scottish Government has politicized the space in which strategy is developed” (Murray & Malik, 2019, p. 174). Controversies surrounding the establishment of Police Scotland (Thomson et al., 2015), the use of stop and search powers (Murray, 2015), deployment of armed policing, and scrapping of the Edinburgh housebreaking unit (Malik, 2018; Thomson et al., 2015) have all served to highlight the challenges in running a national public service whilst also being sensitive to local context and needs.

The national audit agency, Audit Scotland, have repeatedly raised concerns over the Scottish Government’s continued use of top-down targets (Audit Scotland, 2019b); inconsistencies in the approaches and evaluation of health and social care integration (Audit Scotland, 2015); challenges in recruitment and retention of staff (Audit Scotland, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b); and a lack of collaborative leadership (Audit Scotland, 2018a). This is despite having adopted an explicit strategic approach to government in 2007 and having implemented many of the factors consistent with the strategic state (Elliott, 2020b).

As recently highlighted by the Auditor General for Scotland, Stephen Boyle,

“For now, there’s a mismatch between the Scottish Government’s vision of a more successful Scotland – where poverty is reduced, and economic growth is sustainable – and how we assess public sector performance. I am not convinced that

public sector leaders really feel accountable for delivering change that demands different organisations work together. There is much talk of collaborative leadership. But in my discussions with public sector leaders, it's clear that too many of them still don't feel truly empowered or sufficiently emboldened to make the changes they think are needed to deliver Christie [the Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services (Christie, 2011)]." (Boyle, 2021).

<a> Conclusions

The key factors required to be a strategic state have been listed by the OECD as including:

- Broadly supported long-term vision;
- Clearly identified emerging and longer-term needs;
- Prioritised objectives;
- Identification of medium and short-term deliverables;
- Assessed and managed risk;
- Efficient policy design and service delivery to meet identified needs;
- Actors and resources across society mobilised to achieve outcomes.

(Adapted from OECD, 2013: 58).

In the case of Scotland most of these can be seen to be in place but there remain significant challenges in ensuring actors and resources across society are mobilized to achieve the desired outcomes – particularly given the ambitions to develop a ‘whole-of-society’ approach. Despite over 20 years of devolution, and nearly 15 years of the NPF, there remains little clear apparent success in relation to key indicators such as child poverty and educational

attainment. This has led the Auditor General for Scotland to assert that “[W]e all need to rethink radically how we measure success and hold organisations to account for their performance”. This radical rethinking of how we measure success is, at least in part, what the NPF was meant to achieve almost 15 years ago. The austerity policies that have emanated from Westminster since 2008 may have played a part in stalling some of the strategic goals, particularly as training budgets across the public sector have been the first to be cut (Elliott, 2020a). But the moves to widen the scope of the strategic approach from a ‘whole-of-government’ to ‘whole-of-society’ approach without increased investment, particularly in learning and development activities, have undoubtedly placed greater pressure on the aspiration to be a strategic state.

The small scale of Scottish public service landscape and the opportunities that came with devolution lead to a sense that things could be done differently – and better. Both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have developed and matured over time. Working beyond Westminster has enabled the development of a distinctly Scottish Approach. With the implementation of a strategic state, underpinned by the NPF, significant improvements were made to the running of the Scottish Government (Elliott, 2020). There is significant evidence that this strategic approach was an improvement on what had come before, particularly in relation to the inner workings of the Scottish Government. At the same time the dawning of a ‘new politics’ has not been fully realized and further developments towards a fully integrated and strategic public sector have been stalled. Devolution has been described as a success (Mitchell 2009; McGarvey and McConnell 2012), yet there is a risk that, without a consistent and sustained investment in the delivery of public services the measures that have been taken so far may appear as little more than window-dressing.

A Strategic State is a whole-of-government approach to the design and delivery of public services which links a shared long-term vision with the collective capacity, capability and conviction to make it happen. On all three tests the Scottish case would appear to be fracturing. There are challenges around capacity and capability – in relation to workforce planning, talent management and broader education, training and development. Recent Audit Scotland reports have suggested that there is a lack of strategic planning, collaborative leadership and investment in strategic capacity (Audit Scotland, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a). What remains unclear is the extent to which recent controversies and failures represent the beginning of a breakdown in the strategic state or whether the legislative protections that have been put in place will be sufficient to ensure that the longer-term strategic focus can be regained. Undoubtedly further research is required to continue to explore these issues in depth. The following are just some suggestions for further research and are provided in no particular order:

- Comparison between models of leadership in Scottish Government and at city region level in England.
- Comparison of leadership across different countries that have adopted a wellbeing perspective such as New Zealand and Scotland.
- Comparison of strategic approaches to government across similar countries such as Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Republic of Ireland and Estonia.
- The relationship between different forms of leadership and the strategic state
- The understanding and use of collective leadership across public service organisations.

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