



In Scotland's Defence?

An Assessment of SNP Defence Strategy

By George Grant

Foreword by Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford



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Finally, I should like to extend particular thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford, who has not only written the Foreword, but has also been an invaluable support. Stuart is universally respected for his efforts to provide clarity and depth to this issue, having authored the first serious assessment of how an independent Scotland might structure its Armed Forces. A former SNP parliamentary candidate who remains ready to provide a non-partisan assessment, Stuart is additionally valuable as a voice of balance in this most divisive of debates. It only remains for me to say that any errors or omissions contained within this publication are mine alone.

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Foreword Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford

As the referendum on Scottish independence – to be held on 18 September 2014 – looms ever closer, how an independent Scotland might define its defence policy and raise; organise; and deploy its own Armed Forces has become one of the major *topics du jour* of the debate. And yet, surprisingly little has been published on it to date.

George Grant's assessment of the defence strategy of the Scottish National Party (SNP), who are the prime movers in the 'Yes Scotland' campaign for Scottish independence, is accordingly both appropriate and timely. As he so rightly points out, "precious little has been said by either the SNP or the British Government" about the potential defence implications of the referendum; the British Government refuses to speculate, and the SNP refuse to give any detail.

He sets out in this study not to suggest a defence blueprint for an independent Scotland, but rather to look in some detail at current SNP defence policy, such as it is. His investigation is based on the SNP's *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, dated October 2012, which is hardly a detailed exposition of the party's plans, and which has been criticised in some quarters as "vener thin."

In doing so, he has produced the most detailed and comprehensive examination of SNP policy so far, casting his net far and wide to take the views of most of the commentators who will be prominent in the debate. The breadth and depth of his research demands his report be treated with the gravitas it deserves.

It would be churlish of me to attempt to précis what he has discovered in this

report; but, I thought it appropriate to comment on some of the main topics which he has covered. Whilst everyone will have their own ideas on what the most important aspects might be, for me there are only three: NATO membership, which is inextricably tied to the question of the future prospects of Trident-armed submarines based at Faslane on the Clyde; cyber security and intelligence gathering; and Scottish jobs dependent on the defence industry.

The SNP conference in October 2012 saw the party reverse its long-held policy on NATO, which had been – up until then – to withdraw from the alliance upon independence, as it is a "nuclear-led alliance". This made neither military nor political sense, and the party leadership had long acknowledged it. Post conference, the SNP position is – and I paraphrase here – to remain within NATO, but to work towards the removal of nuclear weapons from Scottish soil at the earliest opportunity.

This position is ambivalent at best and downright contradictory at worst. Nuclear deterrence is the bedrock of NATO's military posture. On leaving the UK, most commentators agree that Scotland is unlikely to have the status of 'continuing state', and so would have to apply for NATO membership. It would need the agreement of all current members, in order to be admitted to this most successful military alliance, and the strong message coming out of Washington, DC is that, if Scotland persists in its demand for removal of nuclear weapons from its territory, then its accession to NATO will either be blocked or delayed for many years. This the SNP need to resolve.

In terms of cyber security and

intelligence gathering, it is clear that an independent Scotland could not realistically hope to replicate the current UK triad of the Security Service (MI5); the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6); and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Even attempting to produce a scaled-down version of the latter would appear to be well beyond the likely resources of a fledgling independent nation of some 5 million souls.

So, an independent Scotland would be reliant, in the short-to-medium term at least, on the rest of the UK (rUK) for most of its intelligence. Whether the rest of the UK would be willing or able to share its intelligence with Scotland is another thing altogether, tied in as it is with the US; Canada; Australia; and New Zealand via the 'Five Eyes' arrangement for sharing signals intelligence (SIGINT). However, without the rUK, Scotland will be exceedingly vulnerable to the cyber attacks and terrorism which are the most likely future risks for the newly independent state. This is an important matter for the SNP to address.

And lastly, jobs. As I have said oftentimes before: you don't predicate a defence policy on the number of civilian jobs it might support, no more than you would build a hospital just to provide employment for doctors and nurses. Of course they are an important consideration, but they are of second-order importance to the primary purpose of guaranteeing the safety and security of the nation.

Currently, it is claimed that Scotland's defence industries employ some 12,600

people and contribute around £1.8 billion per annum to the country's economy. Much of this – think of the Clyde shipyards and the Faslane/Coulport naval base – relies on orders from the MoD and hosting on the Trident submarine fleet.

With the best will in the world, if – following Scottish independence – the MoD were to place future equipment orders elsewhere in the UK, under the EU Article 346 exemption, then the Scottish defence industries would be in trouble. Similarly, if the Trident fleet was forced to leave the Clyde, then there would undoubtedly be job losses (the SNP's proposal to base both the Scottish Navy and Joint Headquarters there notwithstanding). This is something the SNP need to acknowledge and deal with, no matter how bitter a political pill it may be to swallow.

I could go on, but I would only be repeating what George Grant has already visited in this admirable report. His study asks these – and many other – basic and important questions of SNP defence policy, all of which must be addressed and answered before the referendum vote. We can only hope that the party's defence White Paper, to be published in the autumn of 2013, will provide at least some of the answers.

To quote George one last time: "that Scottish voters should be presented with a clear and truthful picture of what it is they are voting for is surely something on which we can all agree." Amen to that.

Stuart Crawford
Gullane, East Lothian
20th June 2013

Acronyms

Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE)
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)
Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN)
Commercial Satellite Communications (SATCOM)
Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)
Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)
Denial-of-Service (DoS)
European Union (EU)
Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)
Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB)
International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)
Mine Countermeasures (MCM)
Ministry of Defence (MoD)
Mixed Fighter Force Operations (MFFOs)
Multi Role Brigade (MRB)
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE)
Partnership for Peace (PfP)
Quick Reaction Alert (QRA)
Research and development (R&D)
Royal Air Force (RAF)
Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD)
rUK (rest of the UK, minus Scotland)
Scottish Defence Force (SDF)
Scottish National Party (SNP)
Signals intelligence (SIGINT)
Special Air Service (SAS)
Special Boat Service (SBS)
Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)
United Nations (UN)
United States of America (US)



Executive Summary

This report provides the first comprehensive assessment of the Scottish National Party (SNP)'s proposed defence strategy for an independent Scotland. Covering six main areas, it finds significant shortcomings in the SNP's policy as presently construed. The chapters for this report examine: foreign policy and risks to national security; joining NATO; the funding and constitution of the proposed Scottish Defence Force (SDF); Trident removal; intelligence and cyber security; and the future of the Scottish defence industry.

At the heart of the problem with the SNP's defence strategy is the fact that it appears to be more concerned with helping win the 2014 independence referendum, than with actually defending Scotland. Political – as opposed to strategic – considerations look to have driven policy formulation in many areas, including the future of the Scottish regiments; where to base the Scottish Navy; and the commitment to joining NATO whilst simultaneously removing Trident from Scotland.

Defending What, Exactly?

The SNP's defence strategy does not articulate a foreign policy based on the priorities of an independent Scotland; nor is there an assessment of the risks to national security and Scottish interests – a necessary requirement to enable defence planners to envisage the role of Scotland's defence forces.

SNP policy envisages a Scotland with a predominantly regional focus centred on the northern European neighbourhood in which it is situated, in comparison to the more global posture of the UK. Scotland would also emphasise its influence through multilateral organisations, including the UN; the EU; and, if possible, NATO. However, the SNP make no attempt at prioritisation:

it is not clear how they would go about achieving Scotland's international objectives; nor is it clear what emphasis they would place on involvement in international humanitarian operations.

The SNP have provided no real assessment of the risks to Scottish national security. This report finds that an independent Scotland would likely be confronted with many of the same threats as face the UK now, such as cyber crime; instability overseas; disruption to oil and gas supplies; and international terrorism. It should not be assumed that disassociation from UK foreign policy would automatically lower the threat towards Scotland from hostile actors.

Joining NATO

The SNP's position that Scotland should "maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons" would make negotiations for entry to the alliance, which would not be automatic, very difficult. There is a fundamental inconsistency between the SNP's non-nuclear policy and NATO's *Strategic Concept*, which states that as "long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance".

Unlike the anti-nuclear stance of some existing NATO members (such as Norway, whose stance is held largely in principle), the SNP's policy would have very real practical implications. Especially problematic are: the SNP's commitment to the unilateral divestiture of Trident

from Scotland, without agreement from other NATO allies; its opposition to nuclear-armed vessels docking in Scottish ports, a position held by no other NATO country; and the possibility of its demands resulting in the unilateral disarmament of another NATO member: the UK (or, after independence, the 'rUK' – rest of the UK, minus Scotland).

Nuclear weapons aside, there are clear geostrategic reasons why an independent Scotland might wish to join NATO, and why the alliance might wish to have Scotland as a member. Careful thought should be given, however, as to whether the potential commitments of membership would be compatible with Scotland's other foreign and defence policy objectives.

Establishing a Scottish Defence Force

The SNP have proposed a defence budget of £2.5 billion per annum. This figure appears to have been chosen arbitrarily since it does not match the commitments envisaged by the SNP for their defence force. Moreover, the Scottish Finance Secretary has privately warned his party's defence planners that "a much lower budget must be assumed".

SNP commitments will create significant personnel difficulties. The SNP propose a defence force of 15,000, including all "current Scottish raised and restored UK regiments". The commitment is likely more political than strategic, and would leave Scotland with a heavily Army-centric defence force when, strategically, a greater focus on maritime and air defence would be preferable.

Furthermore, the SNP have said that

Scottish soldiers will be able to choose whether to join the SDF or remain with the British Armed Forces. The overwhelming consensus of service personnel consulted for this report was that the majority of soldiers would prefer to remain with the British Armed Forces, which, they believed, would offer greater opportunities.

The SNP have provided very limited detail on what equipment their defence force would require, and many of the platforms which they have singled out would be either impractical or unworkable. The commitment to procure "conventional submarines" and "new frigates" would be extremely expensive, while most experts believe that a Scottish Navy would have greater use for smaller vessels. Despite a commitment to inherit Scotland's share

of fast jets from the UK, none of the Royal Air Force (RAF)'s three jet types would be suitable. The Eurofighter Typhoon would likely be too expensive and complex, and the ageing Tornado GR4 lacks an air-to-air capability. The last option, the Hawk trainer (endorsed by the SNP's defence spokesman), is comparatively slow, with no radar and only limited offensive capability. Therefore, it would be unable to fulfil the air-defence function envisaged by the party. As a result, if the SNP wanted a fast jet for its Air Force, it would need to be procured elsewhere.

The SNP have said Scotland would seek to coordinate its defence policy with the rUK and other allies, and to prioritise

what capabilities the SDF would seek to deliver in line with the NATO concept of 'Smart Defence'. This approach is sensible, but the SNP have gone further by advocating "shared conventional basing" and "sharing conventional military capabilities". Whilst it would be sensible to allow the rUK to make use of facilities north of the border, sharing bases is another matter entirely, and sharing military capabilities still more so. Such an arrangement would almost certainly be unworkable since it would give one nation a *de facto* veto over the foreign policy of another nation if disagreements arose as to how shared assets should be used at a given moment.

Removing Trident

Removing the UK's Trident nuclear deterrent from Scotland is a pivotal plank of the SNP's bid for independence. The pertinent issues are timing and cost, as well as the impact on regional unemployment.

The SNP have not articulated a time frame on Trident removal, committing only to "the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane". In theory, Admiral Lord Alan West believes that Trident could be re-established and operational south of the border within a matter of months; in practice, however, given its high financial and political cost, a realistic time frame would be years – and perhaps even decades. Furthermore, as Scotland would be dependent on goodwill from the rUK

to obtain a favourable settlement on a number of other issues, Trident removal will likely be central to independence negotiations.

Trident removal has serious implications for regional job losses: 6,700 are presently employed at Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde, a figure set to increase to 8,200 by 2022. While the SNP propose stationing the Scottish Navy in place of the Trident fleet, that would be unlikely to generate more than 1,000 jobs. Placing the Scottish Navy in the southwest of the country also raises strategic questions, given that Scotland's main maritime assets, and many of the potential threats, are located to the north and east.

Intelligence and Cyber Security

The SNP have provided little information on establishing Scottish security and intelligence services. The Deputy First Minister has said that she “envisage[s] Scotland having independent domestic intelligence machinery”, with an overseas-intelligence service being “one option available to Scotland”. While experts agree that the country could develop a small domestic service modelled on MI5, only a handful of countries possess international services – the equivalent of MI6. As such, Scotland would rely on domestic intelligence; on defence attachés abroad; and on liaison with other nations’ security and intelligence services.

The extent to which an independent Scotland could expect other countries, in particular the rUK, to share intelligence is one of the most serious misassumptions made by the SNP. No country shares intelligence without full confidence in the security of the service receiving that information; nor would the rUK have an automatic interest in intelligence sharing purely on the basis of shared geography and other commonalities.

Opinions vary regarding the feasibility

of a Scottish equivalent of the UK's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), although all are agreed Scotland's would not be on the same scale. Moreover, GCHQ is central to the British Government's efforts to counter the threat of cyber warfare – an increasing, global threat, to which the current international peacekeeping framework is not configured to respond appropriately. The experience of Estonia, in 2007, demonstrates that smaller countries cannot rely on the protection of large alliances, such as NATO, when targeted by cyber attacks.

Cyber security extends more broadly than cyber warfare, however: approximately 80 per cent of the Internet lies in the private sector, with threats ranging from cyber crime, to non-malicious damage caused by careless data storage. While Scotland could utilise existing private companies to develop effective policies and systems to help counter such threats, the most serious challenge would be one of scale. Recruiting cyber-security specialists remains a challenge in both the public and private sector, especially for smaller countries.

The Future of the Scottish Defence Industry

The Scottish defence industry employs in excess of 12,600 people, and has annual sales in excess of £1.8 billion. The SNP have said that this industry would continue to have “a healthy order book” post-independence. However, an independent Scottish defence industry would likely depend on producing specialist components for use in defence systems, and the party has yet to develop a coherent strategy to reassure

potential investors of their commitment in this area.

The SNP have repeatedly emphasised the importance of Ministry of Defence (MoD) contracts for the Scottish defence industry. Post-independence, however, MoD contracts for more complex weapons systems would likely be dramatically reduced. Orders for the Type 26 Global Combat Ship, for example, would almost certainly be

cancelled, and – in time – most of the shipyards would likely close.

The SNP have expressed an interest in joint procurement with other countries to acquire assets not inherited from the UK. This is a sensible approach both financially, in terms of cost-sharing, and also for securing work for domestic industries. The SNP, however, will need

to mitigate the potential for these arrangements to increase costs and delay delivery when not properly pre-planned, as exemplified by the 'Future European Fighter Aircraft' programme. Joint-procurement programmes also only tend to be entered into by countries which share not only common commercial interests, but also common strategic and political goals.

Introduction

The central purpose of this report is to help advance the public debate about the defence implications of Scottish independence. In so doing, it does not seek to provide a defence blueprint for an independent Scotland, but rather to analyse what the Scottish National Party (SNP) have said on the matter, and to see if their proposals stand up to serious scrutiny.

Besides the SNP, there are – needless to say – several political parties and other groups advocating Scottish independence. Nevertheless, it is the SNP who are overwhelmingly the most significant drivers of the movement. Moreover, as things presently stand, none of the other main pro-independence groups have put forward any significant proposals on defence whatsoever.¹ As it is the SNP who presently govern at Holyrood, it will be their vision for an independent Scotland which will inform most voters on 18 September 2014; thus, it is their policies which merit the most scrutiny. As a result, all references in this report to ‘an independent Scotland’ imply one following the SNP’s current independence ambitions.

With little more than a year to go before a vote on the future of one of the most significant political unions of all time, it was a major concern to find that

precious little has been said by either the SNP or the British Government about the potential defence implications of that decision. Given that defence is the first duty of government, and should therefore be an absolutely central feature in the independence debate, this is problematic.

Extraordinarily, perhaps, current UK Government policy is explicitly not to have a policy on what the potential defence implications of Scottish independence might be. Whilst the Government has provided specific assessments of existing defence arrangements north of the border, and how – in its view – they benefit both Scotland and the UK as a whole, it has decided against speculating on what could happen to those arrangements in the event of a ‘Yes’ vote next September.

In an October 2012 submission to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) made it plain that the “UK Government’s position is clear: Scotland benefits from being part of the UK and the UK benefits from having Scotland within the UK. The UK Government is confident that the people of Scotland will choose to remain part of the UK, and is not planning for any other outcome. It is for those advocating independence to explain the nature and implications of an independent Scotland”.¹

Whilst this position is understandable on one level, not least because Westminster has no interest in helping do the SNP’s job for them, it undoubtedly impedes efforts to provide voters in Scotland with a clear and accurate picture of what the consequences of their decision might

i. In their most recent Westminster manifesto, the Scottish Greens restricted themselves to pledges to do away with the Trident nuclear deterrent; cut military spending; and scrap the “redundant Typhoon fighter aircraft” and “strategically pointless new aircraft carriers”.

The defence proposals of the Scottish Socialists, meanwhile, extended to just two points: “the removal of all nuclear weapons from Scotland”, and for “Scotland’s overall military budget to [be] brought into line per capita with that of the Republic of Ireland”.

be. In lieu of this, and aware of the importance of thinking through these issues before the vote (and not just negotiating the outcome afterwards), several Parliamentary select committees have taken it upon themselves to provide their own assessments. Amongst them have been the Defence Committee; the Scottish Affairs Committee; the Foreign Affairs Committee; and the Lords Economic Affairs Committee. This report has benefited from the insights provided by many of the expert witnesses for those inquiries, in addition to the more than two dozen experts interviewed separately as part of my own research.

For its part, the centrepiece of the SNP's published thinking on how to defend an independent Scotland is contained within its *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, a 768-word document released shortly after the party conference in October 2012.² ⁱⁱ The policy positions contained within that paper (combined with other published statements and submissions by the SNP and its leadership, and my own interviews) in turn form the basis of what this report seeks to scrutinise.

ii. It is worthy of note that the full and updated version of this resolution – meant to be the cornerstone of the SNP's foreign and defence policies – is not available anywhere on the SNP's website or, it appears, online. The full document was obtained by this report directly from the office of Angus Robertson MP and is included as the Appendix to this report. The nearest available version online was reproduced by *The Scotsman* shortly before the October conference. The two resolutions are identical, save for a 27-word addition to the final paragraph, regarding NATO membership, which is missing from *The Scotsman's* copy. The section in question follows here, with the additional text italicised:

"An SNP Government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty of which all its members are signatories, and further that NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations" (my emphasis).

The report is broken down into six chapters analysing the SNP's positions on:

1. The foreign policy of an independent Scotland, and the risks to national security
2. Joining NATO
3. Establishing a Scottish Defence Force (SDF)
4. Removing the Trident nuclear deterrent from Scotland
5. Intelligence and cyber security in an independent Scotland
6. The future of the Scottish defence industry

Each chapter begins by providing as much detail as possible on what the SNP have proposed for these areas, before moving on to the views of experts from the political; military; academic; and defence-industrial fields. The opinions come from both sides of the debate, and – combined with my own assessment – examine the viability of the SNP's positions, and what the alternative outcomes may be.

As research for this report progressed, what quickly became apparent is that, if one is being objective on this subject, it is almost impossible not to arrive at the conclusion that – as things currently stand – defence policy is one of the SNP's weak points.

This is not because they have attempted to put forward a fully thought-through defence strategy that nevertheless appears to have some deficiencies, but rather because their strategy appears to be predicated more on how not to alienate voters, than on how to actually defend Scotland.

Three of the most glaring examples of this are found in the SNP's commitments to retain all the current Scottish regiments,

to base their entire Navy and their Armed Forces' headquarters on the Clyde; and to join NATO whilst simultaneously divesting Scotland of nuclear weapons.

The Scottish fighting regiments are undoubtedly amongst the most iconic in the British Armed Forces, and any hint by the SNP that they might be reduced or even dismantled in an independent Scotland would be politically toxic. Nevertheless, on the proposed budget and personnel count for an SDF, as put forward by the party, this commitment would almost certainly leave Scotland with an Army-heavy and equipment-light Armed Forces when – strategically speaking – a greater focus on maritime and air defence would be required.

Likewise, the commitment to base the Armed Forces' headquarters and the Scottish Navy on the Clyde seems to be as much about assuaging concerns over potentially massive job losses incurred by removing Trident (which is currently based there) as it is about meeting the challenges of the security environment in which an independent Scotland would find itself. The Clyde is based in the southwest of Scotland, whilst both the potential threats and the major offshore assets are located in the north and east.

As for the NATO commitment, the SNP's defence spokesman, Angus Robertson MP, is on record telling party delegates (those who are sceptical that a deeply held anti-nuclear position is compatible with joining a first-strike nuclear alliance) that 75 per cent of Scots want in, and that the SNP have got a referendum to win.

None of this is to suggest that an independent Scotland could not defend itself; but, it is to say that many of the SNP's policies on defence need serious work, and that voters deserve to have a clear and credible picture of what the potential ramifications of their choice

might actually be, before they enter the polling booths on 18 September 2014.

Finally, it is impossible to conclude without remarking upon an extraordinary and wholly unintended feature of this report: the vastly disproportionate number of Scots interviewed as part of my research. These individuals were chosen by virtue of their relevance to the issue, much of the time as a result of holding – or having held – a significant office in the world of defence and security at the UK and international level, and nothing to do with their nationality.

They include former NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson; former MI6 operative Baroness Meta Ramsay; defence-industry chief Ian Godden; leading defence experts Professor Sir Hew Strachan and Professor Malcolm Chalmers; former Defence Secretary Liam Fox MP; and former Foreign Secretary, and current chair of Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP. Others, such as Angus Robertson; Bill Kidd MSP; Jackie Baillie MSP; Edinburgh University's Dr Colin Fleming; and Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford (who has kindly penned the Foreword to this report), were – of course – chosen by virtue of their direct relevance to these issues within Scotland.

Looking down this list of names, I could not help but recall the observation of the Saudi prince who, when asked what he thought of Scottish independence replied, "Maybe the Scots want to rule Scotland but why that is preferable to ruling England as well, I don't know."³

Irrespective of whether or not readers agree with the conclusions arrived at in this report, I nevertheless hope that, as an extensive and varied compilation of expert insights, it will serve as a useful contribution to this vitally important debate.



CHAPTER I

Defending What, Exactly?

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND

Before any useful attempt can be made at establishing what the defence priorities and requirements of an independent Scotland should be, there must first be a clear sense of what its foreign-policy objectives and interests would be, and – in turn – what sort of risks to national security and Scottish interests would likely be faced.

Although brief, the SNP have given some indication of their foreign-policy aims in their recent *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*. It appears that they envisage an independent Scotland operating with a regional focus (as opposed to the global ambitions of the UK), necessarily centred around Scotland's location in the northern European neighbourhood:

“Scotland is [a] maritime nation with more than 11,000 miles of coastline, including nearly 800 islands, critical under-sea and offshore infrastructure and an area of responsibility extending far into the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The SNP recognises our national responsibilities as a northern European nation to work with our neighbours to fulfil current defence and security responsibilities and improve collective regional arrangements. Environmental changes to the High North and Arctic Region raise major regional challenges and responsibilities which Scotland shares.”⁴

As with many other Small Powers, an independent Scotland would place a

strong emphasis on working through formal and informal alliances (principally with the UN; the EU; and NATO, if possible) to enhance its influence abroad, and to protect itself from stronger powers in turn. An independent Scotland would not be pacifist, but the SNP are explicit that, under their rule, it would “only take part in UN-sanctioned operations”. An independent Scotland would therefore be likely to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations from time to time, or partake in UN-authorized NATO missions, if it joined the alliance; but, it is almost inconceivable that an independent Scotland would ever seek to exert itself militarily beyond its borders on its own.

The dual possibilities of the militarisation of the Arctic and the opening up of new trade routes (both as a result of the thawing of the ice caps) are two specific examples of areas in which an independent Scotland would wish to focus. Counter-terrorism, in particular the protection of its offshore oilfields, constitutes a third obvious area of concern.

Unfortunately, however, the *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* is very light on specifics and, as importantly, prioritisation. For instance, whilst it is clear that a Scottish foreign policy (at least with regard to its defence and security arrangements) would broadly be regional in focus and informed by Scotland's geographical location in the north Atlantic, the SNP have provided scant indication of exactly what sort of role they might wish the country to

play in the area. Would Scotland adopt a full-spectrum approach to defence in the region? Or would it adopt a more specialist stance, focusing on the provision of certain capabilities, and allowing its regional neighbours to fill in the gaps?

Likewise, whilst it is possible to deduce that an independent Scotland might wish to contribute, as part of a coalition, to UN-mandated operations further afield, it is much less clear how much of a priority an independent Scotland might afford to humanitarian operations, and what level of resources they would accordingly need to set aside for them.

Would Scotland attempt to seriously pursue a 'values-led' foreign policy, providing assets to humanitarian missions on a regular basis? Or would it only contribute to the most serious crises? Would an SDF focus only on peacekeeping missions? Or would it contemplate participation in more militarily robust 'peace-enforcement' operations as well? Alternatively, would it steer clear of both, and focus only on disaster relief?

Without answers to questions such as these, it is exceedingly difficult to paint a clear picture of what an independent SDF would – or should – look like, and the SNP certainly have a responsibility to the Scottish public to provide more detail ahead of next year's referendum. The remit of this report, however, is to scrutinise whatever SNP policy there is already available, and to draw conclusions accordingly.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO SCOTTISH NATIONAL SECURITY

As to the kind of risks Scotland would likely face, the SNP have given no detailed assessment at all, and a clear picture cannot be drawn without a

fully formed idea of an independent Scotland's foreign-policy ambitions.

That being said, it is possible to hazard a few logical assumptions based on what is currently known (not least regarding the broader geopolitical context in which Scotland would sit), and to consider whether the risks likely to face an independent Scotland would differ in any meaningful way from those which it already confronts as part of the UK.

In its 2010 National Security Strategy, the UK Government identified the main risks to which it felt Britain was vulnerable – looking forwards – and prioritised them into three tiers, taking account of both likelihood and potential impact. They were as follows:

TIER ONE

- International terrorism affecting the UK or its interests. Threats include a chemical; biological; radiological; or nuclear (CBRN) attack by terrorists, and/or a significant increase in the levels of terrorism relating to Northern Ireland.
- Hostile attacks upon UK cyber space by other states, and large-scale cyber crime.
- A major accident or natural hazard which requires a national response. Examples of major hazards are severe coastal flooding affecting three or more regions of the UK, or an influenza pandemic.
- An international military crisis between states, drawing in the UK; its allies; and other states and non-state actors.

TIER TWO

- An attack on the UK, or its Overseas Territories, by another state or proxy using CBRN weapons.

- Risk of major overseas instability; insurgency; or civil war, creating an environment which terrorists can exploit in order to threaten the UK.
- A significant increase in the level of organised crime affecting the UK.
- Severe disruption to information received; transmitted; or collected by satellites, possibly as the result of a deliberate attack by another state.

TIER THREE

- A large-scale, conventional military attack on the UK by another state (not involving the use of CBRN weapons), resulting in fatalities and damage to infrastructure within the UK.
- A significant increase in the level of terrorists, organised criminals, illegal immigrants, and illicit goods trying to cross the UK border to enter the country.
- Disruption to oil or gas supplies to the UK, or oil and gas-price instability, as a result of war; accident; major political upheaval; or deliberate manipulation of supply by producers.
- A major release of radioactive material from a civil nuclear site within the UK, affecting one or more regions.
- A conventional attack by a state on another NATO or EU member, to which the UK would have to respond.
- An attack on a UK Overseas Territory as the result of a sovereignty dispute or a wider regional conflict.
- Short-to-medium term disruption to international supplies of resources (e.g. food, minerals) essential to the UK.⁵

Looking down this list, it is immediately apparent that an independent Scotland would very likely be confronted with many of the same risks, and to at least as great an extent, which it faces as part of the UK.

This certainly includes the risk from cyber crime and natural hazards, in Tier One; the knock-on effects of instability overseas and organised crime, in Tier Two; and an increase in the level of illicit cross-border activity, disruption to oil and gas supplies, and disruption to international supplies of resources essential to the country, as well as a major release of radioactive material, in Tier Three.

Several of the other risks on this list could also be included (but perhaps requiring some qualification), primarily relating to the widely held assumption that a more 'passive' Scottish foreign policy would reduce the risk posed by hostile actors wishing to do the nation harm. Amongst the most severe and obvious dangers to fall into this category is the threat of terrorism.

This was essentially the conclusion that the Jimmy Reid Foundation reached in a report published in October 2012 (*No Need To Be Afraid: An assessment of possible threats to Scotland's security and how they should be addressed*). The top three factors identified by the report as "likely to increase the threat to Scottish security" are: "[a]ssociation with UK foreign policy", "[p]resence of nuclear weapons on Scottish soil", and "[m]embership of military alliances with policies of aggression or retaliation, such as NATO."⁶

In its assessment of the threat of terrorism in an independent Scotland, the report concludes that it is "[h]ard to assess but certainly real, though probably lower than [for the] UK as a whole".

The implications of independence on this threat, it continues, would be “[s]omewhere between ‘no difference’ and ‘likely decreased threat resulting from detachment from UK foreign policy’”.⁷

The former head of MI5, Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller, also drew the link between foreign policy and the threat of terrorism when she said that the 2003 invasion of Iraq “showed very clearly that foreign and domestic policy are intertwined – actions overseas have an impact at home. And our involvement in Iraq spurred some young British Muslims to turn to terror.”⁸

Most recently, the horrendous murder of Drummer Lee Rigby on the streets of London on 22 May 2013 was, claimed Michael Adebolajo (one of the two men allegedly responsible for Rigby’s death, and a convert to Islam), directly related to the UK’s military presence overseas: “The only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers. And this British soldier is one. It is an eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth. By Allah, we swear by the almighty Allah, we will never stop fighting until you leave us alone.”⁹

However, whilst foreign-policy grievances help motivate some terrorists, it would be highly unwise to calibrate the overall terrorist threat to a state on that basis alone, or – indeed – to conclude that foreign-policy grievances constitute the sole, or even the primary, motivator for many who go on to commit terrorist offences.

Data from the *Global Terrorism Index* produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace appears to bear this out. Designed to systematically rank the nations of the world according to terrorist activity, it placed Norway and Greece 21st and 26th (respectively, out of a total of 116) in 2011 – the most recent

year assessed at the time of writing.¹⁰ This puts them as the two highest-ranked European nations; yet neither country is known internationally for its provocative overseas foreign policies. Norway was sent spiralling up the index as a result of the atrocity perpetrated by the far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik, whilst Greece was hit primarily by domestic groups angered at the government’s stringent austerity measures.¹¹ It is also notable that, looking globally, from 2002 to 2011, North America was the region least likely to suffer from terrorism.¹²

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Europol’s most recent “Terrorism Situation and Trend Report”, *TE-SAT 2012*, which stated that, in 2011, “[n]ot one religiously-inspired [sic] terrorist attack [...] was reported by Member States, nor were any single-issue terrorist attacks registered. [...] Of all specified affiliations, the majority of attacks were committed by separatist groups.”¹³

Whilst complaints about foreign policy are often cited by individuals convicted of religiously motivated – and, specifically, Islamist – terrorism, such grievances often extend more broadly than the foreign policy of one particular nation. In most cases, they tend to be subsidiary to the primary ideological objective of advancing an agenda incompatible with the democratic values of every state in Europe, irrespective of their foreign-policy posture. Moreover, it should go without saying that to argue for any nation’s foreign policy to be altered, in order to assuage the grievances (real or imagined) of individuals who intentionally deploy violence against civilians for political purposes, is a very dangerous – and morally ambiguous – road indeed.

“Some people seem to think the Scots are not in [the Islamists’] sights, but

the whole of Western Europe is in their sights," Baroness Meta Ramsay, formerly a senior operative with MI6, said in an interview for this report. "If you want to create a world caliphate, you certainly include Scotland in that, and, in many ways, Scotland is a soft target."¹⁴ According to Ramsay, Glasgow airport was chosen as the site for the attempted bombing in 2007 because the attackers deemed it to be an easier target than comparable sites south of the border.¹⁵

The attackers' motives appear to have been a mixture of hatred for the UK's foreign policy, primarily its involvement in Iraq, as well as a more general disdain for the West and what it represented. The day before the Glasgow attack, the two conspirators – Bilal Abdulla and Kafeel Ahmed – had been in London and had planted bombs (which failed to detonate) near a bus stop and near the *Tiger Tiger* nightclub. After Abdulla's prosecution, the judge stated that the choice of a nightclub was symbolic, as it represented all that the attackers despised about "Western culture: drink, association between the sexes, and music."¹⁶

Similarly, it would not be inconceivable to envisage how Scotland may well be no freer from several of the other risks affecting the UK which, at first glance, could be construed as being directly linked to foreign-policy posture.

For instance, whilst the rUK (rest of the UK, minus Scotland) would almost certainly retain military capabilities that were greatly superior to those of an independent Scotland, and a more 'activist' foreign-policy posture when it came to overseas military deployments, that does not mean that an international military crisis between states (one of the four Tier One risks which threaten

the UK), would necessarily exclude an independent Scotland.

Indeed, any sensible assessment of the potential risks to an independent Scotland, and how they should inform its defence posture, would recognise that the world in 10; 20; or 50 years' time may – and most likely will – look very different to the world of today.

A good national security strategy must also take account of the need for a country to respond effectively not just to predetermined, definable threats, but also to strategic shocks that can materialise without warning, at any place and at any time. It is worthy of note that none of the main military conflicts in which the UK has been involved since 1945 were predicted beforehand; the lesson from that is clear: sovereign nations serious about their defence need to retain armed forces with a good degree of flexibility and resilience, and must resist the slide towards a bare-bones defence specialised for scenarios that may not – and probably will not – be the ones that are actually faced.ⁱⁱⁱ

Finally, it is important to note that several of the risks highlighted above would not necessarily fall within the remit of defence forces at all, but rather the police; emergency services; and other specialist outfits. Many of these agencies are already devolved, and are not the focus of this report; but, it is worth appreciating how broad the risks are to national security, and how often they fall outside what might commonly be thought of as conventional security domains.

iii. See Jenkin, B. & Grant, G., *The Tipping Point: British National Strategy and the UK's Future World Role*, The Henry Jackson Society, London, July 2011



CHAPTER II

Joining NATO

Amongst the most important issues that will help shape the sort of foreign policy and defence posture that an independent Scotland would have is whether or not it would be in NATO. Of all the big questions surrounding the independence debate, this is also one of the most contentious.

On 19 October 2012, following one of the most heated discussions in the party's 78-year history, the SNP narrowly voted to reverse their decades-long opposition to NATO membership for an independent Scotland.

The resolution (proposed by the SNP's defence spokesman, Angus Robertson, together with Angus MacNeil MP) said: "On independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO. An SNP Government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations."¹⁷

A total of 426 delegates voted in favour of the change, with 332 opposed, after an amendment to reject the motion altogether was defeated by just 29 votes.¹⁸ Four days later, MSPs John Finnie and Jean Urquhart announced their decision to stand down from the party, in protest against the vote. Finnie later explained that the pair could not "continue to belong to a party that quite rightly does not wish to hold nuclear weapons on its soil, but [then also] wants to join a first-strike nuclear alliance."¹⁹

The vote was certainly controversial; however, it came on the back of discussions (with officials from other NATO members) that highlighted why a Scottish exit from the alliance would be problematic, and after a realisation amongst the SNP leadership that an independent Scotland outside NATO could be left dangerously exposed.

The SNP's *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, released shortly after the conference, has this to say about the party's new stance on NATO:

"Security cooperation in our region functions primarily through NATO, which is regarded as the keystone defence organisation by Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the United Kingdom. The SNP wishes Scotland to fulfil its responsibilities to neighbours and allies. On independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO.

"An SNP Government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of which all its members are signatories, and further that NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations. In the absence of such an agreement, Scotland will work with NATO as a member of the Partnership for Peace [PfP] programme like Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland. Scotland will be a full member of the Common Security and Defence

Policy (CSDP) of the European Union and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE)."²⁰

Addressing delegates at the October conference to debate the motion, Angus Robertson explained the proposed change by calling upon Scotland's strategic obligation to be a responsible player, internationally, at a time when its "region in northern Europe is facing considerable challenges and opportunities".

"For the last ten years," he said, "the SNP has had a policy of supporting 'Partnership for Peace', which is: associate membership of NATO. I am proposing that, given the information we now have from our neighbours, we must fulfil our treaty obligations – including mutual defence guarantees and conventional cooperation. Sovereignty for Scotland means that we can have the optimal conventional defence policy, and we should make sure that we continue to have the best relations with our neighbours."²¹

Supporting his colleague, Angus MacNeil reiterated the point, arguing that "the independent-together group of 28 nations who're in NATO [are] natural allies, and people sympathetic to Scotland [...] Scotland in NATO is good defence, good for our neighbouring nations who are looking for historical continuity in defence."²²

Presenting an argument that elicited strong objection from many delegates, Alyn Smith MEP re-emphasised the message put forward by Robertson and MacNeil: "Robert Burns said it best: 'to see ourselves as others see us' is a pretty harsh rigour, and – in my considered, regretful, professional view – our present policy makes us look odd, hopelessly naive and idealistic at best, not ready for the big league."²³

In his interview for this report in March 2013, Robertson elaborated further on the argument which he had previously put forward at the October conference: "For quite some time the SNP [have] had a formal position for wishing to be a member of NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' programme."²⁴ However, he said, meetings with neighbouring states, including Norway and Denmark, had brought home to him that PfP membership alone might not be enough, and that the strategic benefits offered to small European states by NATO membership were not to be taken lightly: "it became apparent to me that there was a significant gap between what the 'Partnership for Peace' provides, and what NATO membership offers – both to individual countries [and] collectively – in security terms".

Launched in January 1994, the PfP is described as "a programme of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO."²⁵ The PfP is presently comprised of 22 members – ranging from former states of the Soviet Union (including Russia and Uzbekistan), to various EU member states (such as Ireland, Austria, and Sweden) which, for various historical reasons, have opted out of becoming fully fledged NATO members.

Given the breadth of its membership, the PfP has adopted an avowedly loose mandate, whereby members can choose "their own priorities for cooperation". This extends across most fields of NATO activity, including defence reform; civil-military relations; military-to-military cooperation and planning; civil-emergency planning; and disaster response.²⁶

According to Robertson, there are several specific areas in which full NATO membership would provide Scotland

with benefits that PfP membership could not, citing maritime patrol and air defence as examples. "If a plane flies towards Scotland from the north, it is first spotted by a NATO communication centre in Jutland, under the command of a Norwegian, and that information is then passed on to the UK. If Scotland were no longer in NATO, that key air-policing; advance-warning; collaborative approach is not possible – similarly in maritime patrol, and, indeed, air policing in northern Europe."²⁷

Shortly before the October conference, Robertson said that a question had been put to him, whilst accompanying Alex Salmond MSP on a fact-finding trip to neighbouring countries, about whether the Scottish Government understood how important NATO air cover was to North Sea security:

"I asked what the impact would be of Scotland not being in NATO. The answer came that the simplest way to describe it is pulling the plug on the radar. Everything that is around Scotland turns into a black hole where we have no idea what's going on, and that worries our neighbours intensely."²⁸

Whilst strategic considerations such as these will undoubtedly have played a part in informing the revised stance of the SNP leadership, there does also seem to have been a more political concern at play: namely, the acute need for the SNP to minimise the number of reasons Scots might find to vote 'No' to independence in 2014.

As the party leadership has reminded its membership on more than one occasion, fully 75 per cent of Scots are reckoned to support an independent Scotland being part of NATO, a position also held by 70 per cent of SNP voters.²⁹ Perhaps tellingly, it was this argument – as opposed to the military-strategic

angle – that Robertson used at the October conference, when closing his case for revising the party's NATO policy. Following a battering raft of strongly worded, and enthusiastically received, speeches of opposition from a number of senior SNP members, he said:

"I'm very honoured to have been the campaign director of the SNP in the two national Scottish Parliament-election victories that we have won; but do not kid yourself, our best ever result has been 44 per cent of the vote, not '50 per cent plus one' – and that is what we require in the referendum in 2014 to secure our independence.

"This debate, this vote, is about much, much more than carrying a conference hall; this is about carrying the country, and we need the country to vote 'Yes'. Do not disregard the evidence. When asked, 75 per cent of respondents said they would wish an independent Scotland to remain [*boos from the audience*]... you can boo, you can boo, but do not disregard the evidence."³⁰

Criticism of the SNP's new stance on NATO, both from inside the party and outside, has centred on the perceived incompatibility of the commitment to remove nuclear weapons from Scottish soil whilst simultaneously seeking to join a first-strike nuclear alliance.

It is important to re-emphasise, however, that, should the SNP's stance on nuclear weapons prove an obstacle to NATO membership for whatever reason, then the party has stipulated it will forfeit membership in favour of its commitment to making Scotland nuclear-weapons free. As the *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* makes clear:

"An SNP Government will maintain NATO membership subject to an

agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of which all its members are signatories.”³¹

WOULD SCOTLAND REMAIN WITHIN NATO, OR HAVE TO REAPPLY?

What is also apparent from the previous quote is the fact that the SNP’s position is that an independent Scotland would not in fact need to reapply for NATO membership at all; it would continue with the *status quo ante* until such time as Scotland, not NATO, decided otherwise. The SNP have long taken a similar stance regarding whether or not an independent Scotland would have to reapply for membership of the European Union.

“With independence, we would just continue within NATO as a member state, and it would then be after independence that the Scottish people would decide if that would be the continuing position,” Bill Kidd, co-convenor of the Scottish Parliament’s Cross-Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament, said in an interview for this report.³²

“[The *North Atlantic Treaty*] is an international treaty. The treaty has been signed on behalf of all of the people and the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It has not been signed on behalf of England or Westminster; it has been signed by all of the people. And, because in 1707 there was a unification of parliaments (and not an incorporation of parliaments by Westminster), then it is joint and certainly liable with all treaties.”³³

However, the claim that Scotland would enjoy the status of ‘continuing state’

has been strongly challenged by two of the world’s leading authorities on state formation in international law.

James Crawford SC, Whewell Professor of International Law at the University of Cambridge, and Alan Boyle, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Edinburgh, argue that it is not legally possible for two new states to inherit the international personality of the former state, and that it would be the rUK which would continue as before, retaining the rights and obligations of the UK as it currently stands.³⁴

The two men provide four main reasons for this. First, there is the majority of international precedent (including the creation of an Irish state from within the UK, and the break-up of the Soviet Union). Second, there will be the fact of the rUK’s retention of most of the population (92 per cent) and territory (68 per cent) of the current UK. Third, there is the likelihood that other states would recognise the rUK as the same legal entity as before Scottish independence, not least because of its pivotal role in the post-war world order. Finally, there is the fact that, on the rare occasions when one state is dissolved and two new states are created peacefully from it, this tends to happen by mutual agreement.

On the last of these points, it is hard to envisage any scenario in which the majority of people in the UK would ever give the Westminster Parliament a mandate to dissolve the entire state by voting it out of existence. These four factors combined, it is therefore most likely that it would be the rUK which would assume the position of ‘continuing state’.

In the opinion of Crawford and Boyle, “the status of Scotland before the union of 1707 would be of little or no relevance. In particular, the *Treaty of*

Union, considered with or without the *Acts of Union*, does not currently sound as a treaty in international law.”

The two men concede that the “rules of state succession to treaties generally do not apply to membership of international organisations”, arguing instead that “membership depends on the particular rules and practices of the organisation.” In the case of the UN, they conclude, Scotland would be expected to join as a new state, whilst the rUK would continue as before – including with its permanent seat on the UN Security Council.³⁵

As regards the case with the EU, the situation is less clear, since there is no precedent for one part of an existing member state breaking away and wishing to continue with EU membership. However, in a letter sent on 10 December 2012 to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso appeared to deliver a definitive verdict on the matter:

“The EU is founded on the Treaties which apply only to the Member States who have agreed and ratified them. If part of the territory of a Member State would cease to be part of that state because it were to become a new independent state, the Treaties would no longer apply to that territory. In other words, a new independent state would, by the fact of its independence, become a third country with respect to the EU and the Treaties would no longer apply on its territory.

“Under Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, any European state which respects the principles set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union may apply to become a member of the EU. If the application is accepted by the Council acting unanimously, an agreement is then negotiated between

the applicant state and the Member States on the conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties which such admission entails. This agreement is subject to ratification by all Member States and the applicant state.”³⁶

NATO officials have delivered a similar verdict, stating in April 2013 that: “It appears widely agreed that, as a matter of law, a Scotland which has declared its independence and thereby established its separate statehood would be viewed as a new state.

“In the NATO context, the definitive determination on this question would be made by the member states, acting in the North Atlantic Council. A new state would not be a party to the North Atlantic Treaty, and thus not a member of NATO. If it were to choose to apply for NATO membership, its application would be subject to the normal procedure, as outlined in Article 10 of the Treaty.”^{36A}

How eligible an independent Scotland would be for NATO membership is an entirely separate question, addressed in the following section of this chapter.

JOINING A NUCLEAR-ARMED ALLIANCE WHILST MAKING SCOTLAND NUCLEAR-FREE

On several occasions, both Angus Robertson and Alex Salmond have argued that the SNP's stance on nuclear weapons should not pose a problem for NATO membership, pointing out that, with just three of the organisation's 28 members retaining possession of nuclear weapons (they are: the UK, the US, and France), to be a non-nuclear member of NATO is not – in fact – the exception, but the norm.

“Within NATO there are other countries that have the same position that we do,” Robertson said. “For instance, the Norwegian Government’s sovereign wealth fund does not invest in companies that produce nuclear weapons. It’s one of the rules of the investment fund.”³⁷

Responding to the point that whilst the governments of several NATO countries might oppose nuclear weapons in theory, none are presently committed to a policy of unilateral removal of these weapons from their territory in practice, Robertson noted that two NATO member states had become nuclear-free in recent decades: Greece and Canada. In many important respects, however, neither the experience of Greece nor Canada can be said to serve as an applicable precedent for Scotland.

In the case of Greece, the country never possessed nuclear weapons of its own, but retained a base – Araxos Air Base – on which American nuclear weapons were stored as part of NATO’s nuclear-sharing arrangement. The US enacted a decision to remove these weapons from Greece in 2001, ending more than 40 years of US nuclear weapons deployment to the country.³⁸

When asked at the time to provide an explanation for this decision, Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral Craig Quigley declined to comment: “We have a long-standing policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence or absence of nuclear weapons on any installation, and that is still our policy. It’s served us well over the years.”³⁹ What can be surmised, however, is that the decision came as part of a broader drawdown of forward-deployed US nuclear weapons in Europe, something which has been taking place since the end of the Cold War; it was not forced on the US by demands from the government in Athens. In other

words, it was the considered choice of the nuclear-armed state to remove the weapons, as opposed to a reaction to demands made by the state in which those armaments were based.

As for Canada, it stands unique as the only one of the three countries involved in the Manhattan Project – to develop the nuclear bomb – which decided against developing its own nuclear arsenal (the other two countries in the project were Britain and the US). However, the decision was subsequently taken to equip the Canadian military with American nuclear weapons, starting in 1963 and ending with Canada’s final divestiture of the bomb in 1984. During that period, Canada deployed four nuclear-weapons systems both domestically and in West Germany, and, at one point, was also providing fully 20 per cent of NATO’s available nuclear-capable aircraft.⁴⁰

The decision to phase out these nuclear weapons was a unilateral one taken by the Canadian Government, and it caused no little disquiet amongst the NATO allies at the time. Yet, what is significant is the fact that Canada took this action in an attempt to reverse the prior resolution to equip its military with nuclear-capable weapons systems. Unlike the SNP, the Government was not to trying force the removal of a nuclear capability resting under the exclusive control of another country.

Today, five non-nuclear NATO members host US-military-controlled nuclear weapons on their territory: Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey. Although three of these countries – Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands – have publicly stated their desire to divest themselves of these weapons, all have committed to a policy of consensus within NATO on the issue.

That is to say that any decision to remove nuclear weapons from these territories would be subject to agreement by all 28 NATO member states.⁴¹

An SNP-governed independent Scotland would therefore stand alone in its commitment to unilaterally force the removal of another country's nuclear-weapons capability from its territory.

There are, moreover, two further components of the Scottish situation that additionally complicate matters, neither of which applies to any of the above cases involving other NATO countries.

ALLOWING NUCLEAR-ARMED VESSELS TO DOCK IN SCOTTISH PORTS

The first of these concerns pertains to the SNP's stipulation that not only will they refuse to allow nuclear weapons to be based on their territory, but they will also seek to prohibit nuclear-armed NATO vessels from docking in Scottish ports. Irrespective of their overall stance on nuclear weapons, no NATO member has sought to proscribe freedom of movement for the alliance's cornerstone strategic asset in this way.

In truth, the SNP leadership has not been entirely consistent on this matter in recent months. Shortly after the resolution reversing the party's stance on NATO membership was passed in October 2012, Alex Salmond was pressed repeatedly on this particular topic, and appeared to come down in favour of allowing such vessels to dock in Scottish ports.

"The issue about visiting warships, etc, no country ever confirms the existence of nuclear weapons on its warships – that is well known. This is an issue all non-nuclear countries have to face up to within NATO and out of NATO and we will do exactly the same thing."⁴²

Asked if he was effectively advocating a 'don't ask, don't tell' posture with respect to weapons of mass destruction in Scottish territorial waters, Salmond dodged the question, choosing instead to reiterate his broader opposition to nuclear weapons:

"No, we'll have exactly the same policy against nuclear weapons as Canada or Norway has: explicitly made by their parliaments. We'll make it a constitutional provision to prevent Scotland having the possession of nuclear weapons, because we are deeply opposed to these nuclear weapons [...] I'm saying we'll be in exactly the same position as other non-nuclear members of NATO, and that no country, as you must know, ever confirms the existence of nuclear weapons on visiting warships; that's just not done. So, we'll have the same policy as other non-nuclear members of NATO."

Five months later, at their spring conference in March 2013, the SNP appeared to move towards a more explicitly hostile position with regard to Scotland playing host to the nuclear weapons of other countries. A proposed motion requesting that the constitution of an independent Scotland "should seek to ban the possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction" was amended to remove the words "seek to", and insert the additional prohibition on "basing and hosting" nuclear arms.⁴³

On 6 April 2013, Angus Robertson provided perhaps the clearest statement yet on the issue:

"Well, the issue for the SNP is about the hosting and basing of nuclear weapons [...] we do not want to have nuclear weapons based in Scotland [...] Of course, there is a right of passage for all vessels under the United Nations Law

of the Sea, and so that's not something one can take exception to; there is a right of passage for all countries. What we are talking about is [...] Scotland, as a sovereign state: will we have nuclear weapons based in our country? [Will we] host them, or allow them to come to ports in Scotland? We don't want that to happen. And, of course, that's one of the great advantages of being a sovereign state [...] you can make these decisions."⁴⁴

WANTING TO MAKE THE RUK NUCLEAR FREE?

The second peculiarity with the SNP's position on nuclear weapons (which also does not apply to the experience of any other NATO member) is that, at its most extreme, it could potentially force the unilateral disarmament of another NATO member state.

Whereas every other NATO member which has – or has had – nuclear weapons based in their territory was playing host to just one of many US nuclear bases, an independent Scotland would be hosting the sole nuclear base belonging to the rUK. Consequently, even if a state such as Belgium; Germany; or the Netherlands unilaterally demanded the removal of American nuclear weapons from their soil, it would never result in the *de facto* nuclear disarmament of the entire United States.

Although it is highly unlikely that an independent Scotland would force the removal of nuclear missiles from its territory in such a manner as to deprive the rUK of its nuclear-weapons capability, the possibility must – at the very least – be considered, not least because it is the stated desire of several SNP members (including Alex Salmond) that Scottish independence should indeed trigger a scenario that results in the rUK divesting itself of nuclear armaments.

"Far better it was curtains for Trident, I would say," Salmond told the BBC in October 2012, when asked what the consequence might be for the UK of moving its nuclear deterrent off Scottish territory.⁴⁵

Bill Kidd has gone further, stating his desire to see Scottish independence trigger a chain-reaction which would not only see the rUK rid itself of nuclear weapons, but France as well:

"If Scotland ceases to have nuclear weapons on its territory, then I believe that the United Kingdom will find itself unable to continue to be in that position also [...] When [the nuclear missiles] are removed from Scotland, the Westminster-ruled part of the United Kingdom that remains will have no option but to dismantle their nuclear weapons and cease to actually be a nuclear-weapons state.

"Following on from that [...] I have been recently over speaking in France at the National Assembly about this. I know [...] – because I said it there, and it caused a little bit of a ripple of intake of breath – that France would be put in an iniquitous position as the only remaining nuclear-weapons state in Western Europe. Therefore, the rolling programme, hopefully (from my point of view), would be that France would not be able to continue as a nuclear-weapons state with any credibility after Britain ceased to be one also."⁴⁶

THE CASE AGAINST NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR A NUCLEAR-FREE SCOTLAND

The SNP's insistence that its policies on nuclear weapons would not come at the expense of NATO membership has been widely challenged. The arguments are multifaceted; but, amongst the most

pertinent is the seeming incompatibility between the SNP's posture on nuclear arms, and the NATO *Strategic Concept*.

Although NATO lacks any official accession criteria, all members are expected to sign-up to its *Strategic Concept*, which, on the matter of nuclear weapons, is explicit: "As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance."⁴⁷

Specifically, the SNP's objection to any nuclear-armed vessel docking in Scottish ports, and their broader aspiration to see the UK and – perhaps – even France decommission their own nuclear deterrents (coming as a result of the removal of British nuclear weapons from the Clyde) do indeed appear inconsistent with the *Strategic Concept* as it stands at present.

NATO describes nuclear forces – "particularly those of the United States" – as the "supreme guarantee of the Allies", adding that "the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies." Aspiring to help rid one, if not two, of those members of their nuclear forces does not appear consistent with NATO's statement.

The *Strategic Concept* is also fairly explicit with regard to the importance of a mutually cooperative approach amongst allies, on the issue of nuclear defence. Members pledge to "ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defence planning on nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces, and in command, control and consultation arrangements".

On 14 April 2013, Franklin Miller (a senior director of the US' National Security Council, and a former chairman

of NATO's nuclear-policy committee) warned that, on the SNP's current trajectory, Scotland "could not stay in NATO" after independence. Going on the current evidence, Miller said, "the SNP believes that nuclear weapons are illegal and should be banned [...] If that is the case then that is totally incompatible with the NATO position that nuclear weapons are a critical part of the alliance's defensive component."⁴⁸ Miller was referring to the SNP's official policy of writing a legal ban on nuclear weapons into a Scottish constitution, if the nation opted for independence.⁴⁹

This view is shared by Lord George Robertson (a former NATO Secretary General and former Labour Party Defence Secretary), who has said that Scottish membership of NATO would be "inconceivable" if Scotland did not accept the alliance's 2010 *Strategic Concept*.

"There is no doubt at all in my mind. New members have a whole series of obligations that they've got to fulfil, but the basic one is the *Strategic Concept* – it is NATO's working document," Lord Robertson said in an interview for this report. "If you don't accept that and all that it says, then you simply cannot be a member. In a way [the SNP] got over the hurdle at the conference, and the perception is that, 'Right, they have accepted NATO membership, but they have not accepted what comes with it'."

One crucial issue that may well influence how Scotland's application for membership will be viewed by the other members is the speed at which it seeks to divest itself of the UK's nuclear deterrent.

Providing evidence to a recent Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry, Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Director of Research at the Royal United Services

Institute in London, warned that “there would be little international sympathy, at least amongst the UK’s traditional allies, were Scotland to insist that the UK’s nuclear-armed submarines leave its territory on a timescale that did not allow the rUK to construct alternative bases in England or Wales. Such a policy could encourage a robust response from the rUK, perhaps even a questioning of whether it could support Scotland’s NATO and EU aspirations.”

It is worth re-emphasising that NATO operates on the basis of consensus, meaning that, to successfully join, an independent Scotland would need to have the support of all 28 existing members.

Of potentially significant concern to the SNP will be the stance of Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford on this issue. A former SNP parliamentary candidate and the author of a paper (widely cited by that same party) on how an independent Scotland might defend itself, Crawford has described the SNP’s NATO ambitions as “irreconcilable in the short-to-medium term”.

In Crawford’s view, the SNP’s stance on NATO membership is informed primarily by political – as opposed to strategic – considerations, and is seriously impeded by the fact that a more credible posture would be almost impossible to sell to the party’s grassroots membership. “Traditionally, the SNP’s objection to NATO was that it was a ‘nuclear-led’ alliance – and not just ‘nuclear-led’, but ‘first-strike’. But, politically, their credibility was shot to bits by trying to negotiate out of NATO when everyone else was trying to get in; it just made no sense whatsoever.”

It was this concern, Crawford says, which informed the SNP leadership’s

policy change last October. “If the SNP were to force the issue of the removal of nuclear weapons from the Clyde, that is effectively forcing the unilateral disarmament of the [r]UK; [...] the [r] UK wouldn’t allow that to happen, and neither would the Americans.” What the SNP have attempted, with their revised NATO stance – according to Crawford – is to “kick the contradictions into the long grass”.⁵⁰

Liam Fox (the former Conservative Defence Secretary) concurred in warning that an independent Scotland – if adopting the stance advocated by the SNP – should certainly not take NATO membership for granted, describing the party’s desire to rid itself of nuclear weapons whilst concurrently sheltering under the alliance’s nuclear umbrella, as “the most appalling hypocrisy”.

“Why should the UK give everything to the Government of Scotland that they want, whilst the Government of Scotland is denying all the rest of the UK, and indeed our NATO allies, one of the key capabilities that it requires: the nuclear deterrent? Clearly, there would be enormous pressure – not just from the UK Government, but from France and the United States – to retain our current capability as part of NATO’s nuclear umbrella. It would be very hard to see why (if the Scottish Government was denying that capability to Britain and to NATO) France, Britain, or the US would allow Scotland to join NATO at all.”⁵¹

Meanwhile, Sir Malcolm Rifkind (the former Conservative Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary) has described the SNP’s commitment to joining NATO as “purely presentational”; but he went on to warn that the reality would not be so straightforward:

“If they want to join, they will be asked, ‘Do you accept the underlying basis of what NATO means?’. It’s a nuclear-weapons-based alliance, and, if the answer is, ‘Yes, we do’, then how can you simultaneously be compelling the expulsion of nuclear weapons from your territory? Scotland would not be accepted on that basis, and nor should it be [...] To say only three members are nuclear-armed is invalid because the security of all member states is ultimately based on nuclear weapons. How can we insist on getting rid of nuclear weapons in Scotland, and then say we want to remain part of an alliance where our essential safety and security would be underpinned by the United States’ nuclear guarantee? It’s absolutely absurd.”⁵²

DIVISIONS ON NATO MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THE SNP

Perhaps ironically, the potential pitfalls of the SNP’s NATO bid are one of the few things that pro-unionists and NATO advocates have in common with several of those within the SNP itself. Addressing delegates at last October’s debate on NATO, Jamie Hepburn MSP warned the party leadership that divesting Scotland of Trident might not be as straightforward as was commonly believed, if the country joined NATO:

“If we take as our starting point ‘remaining in NATO’, as the resolution asks us to do, we can expect it to be more difficult to remove Trident from the Clyde. We can expect NATO to prevaricate on whether it’s acceptable for Scotland to remove nuclear weapons from within our borders, and that will delay the removal of those nuclear weapons.

“Let’s look at Germany, the largest nation in Europe, this continent’s

economic powerhouse. They have had to step back from their stated desire to remove nuclear weapons from their shores because of pressure from NATO. The same thing has happened with [the Netherlands] and Belgium. If it’s nigh on impossible for Germany to remove nuclear weapons of mass destruction from within NATO, why should we expect it to be simple for Scotland to remove them, let alone make our case for global disarmament an easier one?

“Even if it were possible for Scotland to remove nuclear weapons, and remain a member of NATO, where is the morality in seeking to rid our own country of the abhorrence of nuclear weapons, [whilst] sheltering under the umbrella of an organisation that retains a nuclear first-strike policy? Do we consider nuclear weapons immoral just because they’re located within Scotland, or do we consider them immoral wherever they may be located?”⁵³

This sentiment, that a Scotland in NATO may find it more difficult to hold unswervingly to its commitment to rapidly divest itself of nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear-armed forces from ever visiting its shores, is shared by many others within the party.

“Let’s consider NATO membership when the last Trident boat sails down the Clyde, and not before,” urged Bill Ramsay, of the SNP’s Trade Unions Group, to cheers and applause from delegates at the October conference.

THE GEOSTRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SCOTLAND IN NATO

All of these details aside, the SNP have argued that it would retain NATO membership for a very practical

reason which has nothing at all to do with nuclear weapons: namely, the geostrategic importance of Scotland to the alliance.

As previously mentioned, Angus Robertson has spoken at length about Scotland's geostrategic value to NATO (in particular, in terms of maritime surveillance and reconnaissance in the high north). On 9 April 2013, during a speech to the Brookings Institution in the United States, Alex Salmond sought to take this argument further still, by turning the issue on its head and effectively suggesting that Scotland would be doing NATO a favour by becoming a member, as opposed to the other way around:

"[A]nybody could argue that a 'Partnership for Peace' arrangement, as Sweden; Finland; [and] Ireland [have], would be perfectly adequate for Scotland's defence requirements [...] The reason that the SNP last year, after a strong and vigorous debate, decided to adopt a policy of favouring NATO membership is because we have had indications – signals – from our friends and partners [that] that is what they would prefer, because the framework of having Scotland (from a strategic position) is quite important in terms of their defence configurations. So, we've taken a decision to signal that we want to be [...] a responsible member of the international community, and there's every possible reason (in terms of NATO's treaties and founding charters) that that would be accepted; but that's the reason why we've done this."⁵⁴

Dr Colin Fleming, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Edinburgh University, has also emphasised the strategic importance, for the rUK, of a Scotland in NATO.

"[Scotland in NATO could] provide

something to the rUK that doesn't exist already, and that would be filling a gap in the north Atlantic and the high north [...This] would be useful for the rUK because today the rUK looks south, in particular to the Middle East (which is understandable); but it leaves a gap. In the days when the Royal Navy was stronger, that was fine. Before austerity, they were persuaded they could fill these gaps easily; but that's no longer the case."⁵⁵

Paul Courtnage (an air-defence specialist and former Royal Air Force (RAF) Wing Commander) concurred that military cooperation with Scotland would be important for enabling the rUK to effectively patrol and protect its high north, warning that, by taking Scotland out of the picture, "the furthest-north airfield from which our jets could be based is RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire."

THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF NATO MEMBERSHIP ON FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICY

One final issue, with regard to the NATO question, that Scottish voters may wish to consider before they head to the polls next September is what impact membership may have on conventional foreign and defence policy, quite apart from nuclear weapons.

In the past two decades, the UK has engaged in several overseas military interventions, more often than not in conjunction with the NATO alliance. Whilst the SNP should not be considered a pacifist party, it is probably fair to say that they have traditionally taken a more critical stance towards such interventions than governments at Westminster have.

SNP opposition to the war in Iraq is well documented, but Alex Salmond also strongly criticised the 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo (which did not enjoy a UN Security Council mandate, on account of Russian opposition), calling it “an act of dubious legality, but above all one of unpardonable folly”.⁵⁶

In its *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, the SNP have made clear their intention for an independent Scotland “to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations”, adding that a NATO commitment to respect this right is one of the conditions for Scottish membership of the alliance.⁵⁷ “We’ve talked about a triple lock involving the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government, and the United Nations’ standards in relation to military operations,” Angus Robertson said.⁵⁸

There are, however, those who suggest that, if Scotland was a part of the alliance, it may find itself under greater pressure to contribute to NATO military operations too, than it would do if it chose not to join: the unwritten membership fee of the world’s most undisputedly powerful military club.

Proponents of this position point, in particular, to the experiences of countries such as Denmark and Norway, both of which are frequently cited by the SNP as desirable Nordic models to follow.

“I think we feel that we have to do our bit,” said Søren Espersen (foreign-affairs spokesman for the Danish People’s Party) in a recent interview on Denmark’s approach to NATO membership. “I can’t really see why it should always be British and American soldiers that should die, whereas other nations would sit on their hands – like, indeed, many of the European countries do. Members of the

EU who don’t lift a finger: I think that is a disgrace.”

Shedding light on this rationale, Ole Kværnø, Director at the Royal Danish Defence College’s Institute for Strategy, has explained that small NATO countries – such as Denmark – operate on the basis of an unvarnished appreciation of their geostrategic positions, something which might not sit comfortably with several of the more fiercely anti-NATO and anti-American advocates of Scottish independence:

“Our vision is by no means to defend ourselves. We, as a state, are no longer able to defend ourselves in military terms [...] our investment is not in our direct and own defence but rather in keeping our preferred partners happy so that they will come to our rescue at the end of the day.”⁵⁹

“The best way of defending Denmark would be [by doing it] somewhere far away from the borders of Denmark, [as] part of an alliance. That’s why we’ve decided to play an active part in what the NATO alliance is doing,” added John Dyrby Paulsen, of the Danish Social Democrat Party.

True to its word, the country has been highly active in NATO operations in Afghanistan and Libya, and has also contributed support to the French-led intervention in Mali.

Although less active than their Danish neighbours, Norway has also not shirked its responsibilities as a NATO member. In recent years, it has contributed militarily to both the missions in Afghanistan and in Libya, guided by a similar mindset.

“NATO is our ultimate security guarantee,” said Iver Neumann, a former senior advisor to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Being [a

member] is simply part of the package of being [situated in] the West [...] This is the state of play, and NATO membership simply [...] is not something you toy with; it's something you do."

He added that, although some other European states – such as Austria, Finland, and Ireland – were not part of NATO for historical reasons, an independent Scotland would be hard-pressed to opt out of the alliance and be taken seriously by the other states. "That's what this is all about. Why did the SNP [choose] to go out on a limb after 30 years of anti-NATO policy? Because they realised that [if they continued with that position...] they wouldn't be taken seriously by anybody – not just the Nordics, but across the board."⁶⁰

Moreover, as a small country inside NATO, Scotland – like Norway – may well find itself under pressure to follow the lead of the bigger members: "Teddy Roosevelt used to say, 'Speak softly and carry a big stick,'" Neumann said. "[...] we don't carry a big stick, and that's the reason why we should speak softly all of the time. I mean, you don't mess with the bigger boys; [...] it's a sandpit rule: if you're not the sabre-toothed tiger on the savannah, you basically lie low. [...]"

"On matters nuclear, Norway has consistently been like a duckling behind 'Mother US': [though] we have been in favour of different kinds of reductions of arms, we've been very reticent when [...] the talk has been about getting rid of nuclear arms. [However,] we've been keeping our eyes on what we could do, given [...] the specific squeeze that we [are] in."⁶¹

In spite of these experiences, however, former NATO Secretary General Lord

Robertson has rejected the notion that an independent Scotland would find itself compelled to partake in NATO operations to which it strongly objected:

"That's a red herring. NATO has become much more à la carte now. You need a collective decision to do things like Afghanistan; but there is no obligation on countries – other than Article 5 – to participate."^{iv}

Moreover, in the view of several military officers interviewed for this report, an independent Scotland may in fact be able to go the other way, and 'piggyback' off the rUK and NATO defence umbrella for its own security, whilst providing little in return; however, this might come at the expense of membership.

"Of course, Scotland is important geostrategically, and what I think [the SNP will] want to do is what Ireland's done because – as far as the UK is concerned – [in order] to defend our islands, we have to make sure we defend the sea and airspace (particularly up to the north of Scotland)," said one senior military officer who wished to remain anonymous. "What [the SNP] are hoping is: 'We won't pay any money for this; [the rUK] will do it. We'll be part of NATO, and it won't cost us anything'"

Wing Commander Courtnage concurred that Scotland's physical location may well give it the option to rely on its neighbours to defend it, should it so wish: "Because of where Scotland sits, it's very difficult for an invading force

iv. Article 5 states that an armed attack against one NATO member will be considered an act of violence against every NATO member, and that – consequently – all NATO allies will take the actions which they deem necessary in order to assist the member attacked.

to get to it without going through NATO countries (or very close to them, if they come round the north cape of Norway). So there is a temptation [that the SNP] might think they can hide under the NATO umbrella without contributing anything to it – just by default, by virtue of Scotland's location.”

However, whilst possible in theory, in practice, an independent Scotland

seeking to become part of NATO would most likely need to demonstrate a readiness to actively contribute to the alliance (especially given the difficulties that would be thrown up by its posture on nuclear weapons). This is by no means a reason why Scotland should not seek to join NATO if it becomes independent; but, it is certainly a dimension voters might wish to consider.



CHAPTER III

Establishing a Scottish Defence Force

The most obvious question, when considering the potential defence implications of Scottish independence, is the sort of defence forces the country would have. The SNP have sketched out some ideas in their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*; but, as with the foreign policy that must necessarily guide such considerations, detail is still unfortunately lacking.

Nevertheless, amongst experts (both consulted for this report, and elsewhere), there is broad consensus that an independent Scotland would likely want to prioritise fairly locally orientated maritime and air defence. This would enable the nation to effectively patrol its waters and airspace whilst also contributing to operations in the area. Such a posture would be consistent with the more regionally orientated focus that an independent Scotland would seek to adopt, as well as with the geostrategic space within which it would sit.

The threat of terrorism and potential risks to critical economic assets, including oil rigs, would demand small – but competent – Special Forces, as well as capable security and intelligence infrastructure. (This latter issue is dealt with at length in Chapter V).

Whilst Scotland would clearly wish to maintain a standing army, it would likely want it to be fairly small and easily deployable as part of overseas operations involving larger coalitions. Maintaining the capabilities, especially heavy-lift aircraft, necessary to contribute to

humanitarian relief operations would also be desirable. Resources (such as advanced fast jets, battle tanks, aircraft carriers, and the requisite supporting assets) which enable Scotland to play a more global role would almost certainly not be on the table.

In its *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, the SNP envisage an SDF comprising “15,000 regular and 5,000 reserve personnel [...] organised into one regular and one reserve Multi Role Brigade (MRB).”⁶² The SNP have also pledged to ensure that Scotland’s ground forces will include “current Scottish raised and restored UK regiments, support units as well as Special Forces and Royal Marines, who will retain responsibility for offshore protection.”

In terms of equipment, the SNP envisage that the “Scottish defence and peacekeeping forces will initially be equipped with Scotland’s share of current assets including ocean going [sic] vessels, fast jets for domestic air patrol [sic] duties, transport aircraft and helicopters as well as army vehicles, artillery and air defence [sic] systems. A Scottish defence industrial [sic] strategy and procurement [sic] plan will fill UK capability gaps in Scotland, addressing the lack of new frigates, conventional submarines and maritime patrol aircraft.”

THE SNP’S PROPOSED DEFENCE BUDGET

To pay for all this, the SNP have proposed an annual defence budget of £2.5 billion for an independent Scotland.

This figure represents roughly 1.7 per cent of Scottish GDP, significantly less than the approximate 2.5 per cent of GDP currently spent by the UK, but just above the overall NATO average of 1.6 per cent.⁶³ Given that, militarily, an independent Scotland would likely be less globally ambitious than the UK, this (as a stand-alone figure) seems reasonable.

A more useful way of looking at this, however, is to ask whether that figure is appropriate for what the SNP have proposed for their defence force (in terms of both personnel and equipment), in addition to asking whether those personnel and equipment aspirations are themselves realistic. Both of these questions are addressed in detail in this chapter.

For its part, the SNP have sought to present this £2.5 billion as simultaneously a saving and an increase in Scottish defence spending. This amount represents, the party says, “an annual increase of some [£]500m on recent UK levels of defence spending in Scotland, but nearly £1bn less than Scottish taxpayers currently contribute to UK defence spending.”⁶⁴

The SNP’s assertion that their proposed £2.5 billion defence budget represents a £500 million increase on current defence spending in Scotland appears to be predicated on the view that any given region of the UK can calibrate how much it benefits from overall defence spending based on how much is spent there, relative to other regions.

Such a perspective is problematic insofar as there will be numerous assets integral to the defence of Scotland as a part of the UK that are not physically located there, just as there will be assets based in Scotland which are integral to the defence of England; Wales; and

Northern Ireland. This is quite aside from the fact that actually calculating how much is spent on defence in a given region is notoriously difficult (hence why the MoD ceased attempting to do so at the end of the 2007-2008 financial year; although, Angus Robertson has claimed this is “nothing more or less than a cover-up”, since the MoD continues to produce estimates for internal consumption).⁶⁵

If the SNP are correct in claiming that their proposed budget will provide them with an extra £500 million to invest in Scottish defence, then the area in which it could have the greatest relevance is with respect to the local defence jobs that such spending would generate. The SNP have focused extensively on this issue in recent years, and it is dealt with in greater depth in Chapter VI.

As of March 2013, however, the SNP’s entire case surrounding the pledge to spend £2.5 billion on defence has been cast into serious doubt. The reason is an internal memo, authored by John Swinney MSP (the Scottish Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth), which was leaked on 6 March.

The document significantly downgrades Scotland’s post-independence economic prospects from those which the SNP have given in public, with the result being that “a much lower budget must be assumed.”⁶⁶

Quite how this potential downgrade will impact on the SNP’s defence proposals – and whether it will happen at all – remains to be seen, with greater clarity to be hoped for in the party’s defence White Paper, which is due to be published in November 2013.

SECURING SCOTLAND'S "SHARE" OF UK MILITARY ASSETS

Central to the SNP's case for how much UK defence equipment might be inherited by the SDF upon independence is the argument that Scotland is entitled to its "share" of existing military assets.

This commitment has been much lampooned of late, most recently by the current Secretary of State for Defence, Philip Hammond MP. In a speech delivered in Edinburgh, on 14 March 2013, Hammond pointed out that such a division would leave Scotland with a bewildering – and clearly unworkable – Armed Forces consisting of, amongst other things, 10 Typhoon jets; two Hercules C-130J heavy-lift aircraft; 1.6 destroyers or frigates (from a total of 19); just over half an Astute-class submarine (from a fleet of seven); one sixth of an aircraft carrier; and under one Red Arrow.⁶⁷

In 2011, the then-Secretary of State for Defence, Liam Fox, likened the SNP to a child "at a Pick 'n' Mix counter in a sweet shop. Angus Robertson dips his hand in to the Army and grabs the Scottish infantry and cavalry regiments; then the RAF to pluck a couple of fighter jets and their crews; then the Navy for some ocean going war ships and some coastal vessels too. But like a child with his pocket money he is thinking purely of what looks most attractive for the money, and ignoring the savouries he needs to balance his diet! He's chosen an Army without any supporting arms; an Air Force without any transport aircraft or tankers; and a Navy without a fleet auxiliary."⁶⁸

Unsurprisingly, Robertson has rejected this characterisation of the SNP's ambitions as simplistic, pointing out

that whilst it is the party's policy that Scotland is *entitled* to its share of current assets, that does not mean that it will seek to acquire all of them in practice should it become independent:

"On equipment, we're a twelfth of the population, so 8.4 per cent; it's pretty much what everybody acknowledges," he said in an interview for this report. "Assets and liabilities will be negotiated at that level. [...] There are equipment types [however] that we have contributed towards which Scotland will not be operating. Scotland will not be operating nuclear submarines, although we have paid for them; Scotland will not be operating aircraft carriers, although we have contributed towards them."

What Robertson envisages would be negotiations in which Scotland might take a proportionately higher share of certain assets, in exchange for taking zero shares of those which it felt that it did not need. Alternatively, he suggested, the SNP may agree to some form of financial settlement that would see Scotland fairly compensated for its contribution – whilst it had been part of the UK – towards assets which it would not inherit come independence.

Objectively assessed, however, whilst Hammond's and Fox's proportional breakdowns of the Armed Forces could be dismissed as 'political point scoring', there are other examples of number crunching that are much more difficult to ignore. Perhaps foremost amongst these is what it would mean in practice for the Scottish Armed Forces should the SNP stick to their long-held, and electorally important, commitment to incorporate all current Scottish raised, and UK-restored, regiments into a Scottish Army.

THE SCOTTISH REGIMENTS

According to the Defence Secretary, the current liability of the Scottish fighting infantry regiments – the Scots Guards, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, and the five battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland – is some 4,100 posts. Add to that a further 550 posts from the King's Own Scottish Borderers when they were amalgamated with the Royal Scots (to form the Royal Scots Borderers), and the total is some 4,650: almost one third of the SNP's entire proposed defence force.

As Hammond and many others have pointed out, however, the current 'tooth-to-tail' ratio of the British Army (that is, the ratio of fighting units to units required to support them) is approximately 1:2.

The Defence Secretary has calculated that "if these fighting units are going to be supported by artillery, supplied by logisticians, kept on the move by engineers, and able to talk to each other thanks to signallers, then that's 14,000 of the entire defence force of 15,000 used up just on ground forces.

"That's before you've even begun to think about military headquarters, or protecting Scotland's skies with an air force, or her 11,000+ miles of coastline, roughly half the coastline of the UK, with a navy.

"On a generous interpretation, even if you ignore the logic of scale economies and assume that the naval and air elements of the Scottish defence forces would form roughly the same proportion as the Royal Navy and RAF do of the UK armed forces under our 2020 plans, this would add another 6,500 service personnel, requiring a total regular defence force of over 20,000."⁶⁹

Asked whether or not he took issue with Hammond's assessment, Robertson replied, "I take issue with most things Philip Hammond says, especially about what he says in relation to Scotland." Pressed on the specific point that to honour the pledge of retaining all the Scottish regiments would dramatically unbalance the SDF, Robertson simply reiterated the position given in the *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*: "We believe that 15,000 uniformed service personnel will fulfil the requirements for land, sea, and air forces necessary to ensure the key defence and security tasks that Scotland will require."

Professor Sir Hew Strachan (Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University, and one of the country's leading authorities on defence issues) has pointed out that, with regard to the SNP's commitment to incorporating the Scottish regiments, one of the biggest problems is that the party "haven't been very precise about what they mean."

"They've talked about the restoration of the Scottish regiments," he said. "But are they talking about the 1881 order of battle, what they see as the historic regiments? That's not just the Black Watch and the last round of amalgamations. In 1881, the numbered regiments of the line were, in most cases, amalgamated to create two battalion regiments. So, for example, the Black Watch is the 42nd and the 73rd put together in 1881; the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders is the 91st and the 93rd put together; and so on and so forth.

"When Scotland thinks of its historic regiments it's those regiments from 1881 that they think of. Now they've gone essentially in three rounds of defence cuts, of which the 2005 lot (in which

the Royal Regiment of Scotland was created) are only the most recent. Ever since 1956 [leading to the 1957 defence White Paper, *The Sandys Review*] there have been debates about the Scottish regiments; it's been going on for that long. So my question, to throw it back to the SNP, is how many of these regiments are you going to reactivate? The Black Watch is just the tip of the iceberg."⁷⁰

Even just taking the Scottish regiments which exist now, significant issues arise – stemming, essentially, from the fact that the 'Scots regiments' (like the 'English', 'Irish', and 'Welsh' regiments) have become part of a distinctive and deeply interwoven whole that cannot be so easily disassembled.

The Scots Guards, for instance, are part of the British Army's Guards division, and, of the several serving officers spoken to for this report, not one thought it likely or feasible that this regiment would be broken off to become part of the SDF.

More broadly – as the SNP themselves have noted – more than half of Scotland's locally drafted regiments are not even based in Scotland, and a significant proportion of recruits are now drawn from outside Scotland as well. Quite what would happen to non-Scots members of these regiments, not to mention the many Scots who may opt to remain with the British Armed Forces, is unclear. The situation gets more problematic still if those wishing to remain in the British Armed Forces were to outnumber those wishing to join the SDF in a given regiment. In any case, these issues are all quite aside from the fact that it is anything but a foregone conclusion that the rUK would simply agree to hand over all these regiments, come independence.⁷¹

Conceding that the SNP's current proposals might not completely reflect

the final outcome, Robertson has added that "post-independence, one of the first things that we will be undertaking is a Strategic Defence and Security Review [SDSR], which will help guide the transition of defence forces to the optimal outcome."⁷²

Such a review will indeed be necessary; but the SNP also have a responsibility to present the Scottish public with a clear and credible picture of how an independent Scotland might realistically defend itself before the independence referendum. Sadly, the party's current *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* falls short in that regard. Quite apart from the practicalities of restoring the Scottish regiments, there are also serious questions as to whether an independent Scotland would really want – or need – such an Army-centric defence force.

WOULD THE SNP'S PROPOSALS RESULT IN AN IMBALANCED DEFENCE FORCE?

On 23 May 2012, the editor of *Defence Analysis* – Francis Tusa – appeared before the Scottish Affairs Committee, in order to provide them with his assessment of the SNP's public foreign-policy statements. His verdict on the talk of "defence of airspace, economic zones and so forth", appearing in the party's manifestos, was that it "leads you pretty inevitably towards [needing] a maritime and air-based armed forces, with much smaller land forces."⁷³ Professor Strachan, in his evidence to the committee, came to the same conclusion, positing that "the more you think that the primary threat faced by an independent Scotland would be from the north – from the Arctic – the more you might put emphasis on naval or air

forces rather than ground forces.”⁷⁴

Ron Smith, a defence expert and professor of Applied Economics at Birkbeck College, has also warned that an Army-centric defence strategy involving the maintenance and restoration of all the Scottish regiments would not be sensible. Under this model, Smith warned, a disproportionate amount of the defence budget would inevitably be spent on salaries and overheads: “these numbers are army-centric. You are not providing [the regiments] with a lot of equipment, but you have a lot of bodies and are paying their salaries. The issue is that it would not match Scotland’s security needs.”⁷⁵

Irrespective of whether or not an independent Scotland decides to restore the Scottish regiments, a cursory breakdown of the SNP’s proposed figures suggests that their defence force would be overly personnel heavy. At 15,000 personnel, the proposed SDF would number more than 10 per cent of the UK’s current Armed Forces, whilst its proposed budget of £2.5 billion would be about 7 per cent in comparison to the UK’s.

Should the commitment to the Scottish regiments take the total size of the SDF up to 20,000 soldiers, the mismatch between personnel and budget becomes closer to 14 per cent and 7 per cent of the UK’s current totals, respectively; it would be greater still if John Swinney’s warning of reduced funds for defence were to materialise.

Critics of this assessment will doubtless observe that the UK, when compared to many other European powers, spends a proportionately greater amount of its defence budget on equipment, consistent with its ambitions to maintain a global expeditionary reach. An independent Scotland, by contrast, with

its more regional focus, might reasonably be expected to spend a proportionately lower amount on equipment than the UK – in line with most of its European neighbours.

This, however, is not what appears to be envisaged by the SNP, with the *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* outlining some fairly hefty ambitions on the equipment side. Amongst other things, it envisages Scotland possessing fast jets capable of performing air patrol duties; new frigates; and conventional submarines.

THE SNP’S ASPIRATIONS FOR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT

SUBMARINES

Currently, the entire UK submarine fleet is nuclear-powered, meaning that an independent Scotland would need to purchase any conventional, diesel-powered submarines it may wish to acquire. In the view of Professor Chalmers, Scotland would need three to four submarines to constitute a viable fleet, ensuring that at least one vessel could be at sea at any one time.⁷⁶ Although significantly less expensive than their nuclear-powered counterparts, conventional submarines are, nevertheless, by no means cheap (with prices ranging anywhere between £300 million and £650 million apiece to buy off-the-shelf).⁷⁷

Building conventional submarines in Scottish shipyards, a highly specialist skill that has not been attempted for decades, would likely cost several times that amount. Considering that Scotland’s annual defence budget would be just £2.5 billion (and quite possibly less than that), the cost of developing and maintaining a conventional-submarine force would appear to be prohibitive.

Admiral Lord Alan West, formerly First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, has said that a Scottish submarine force would be “inconceivable unless they have huge defence spending” far in excess of what is currently being proposed by the SNP.⁷⁸

As Professor Strachan has observed, “there is a function for submarines, particularly if you are thinking about maritime defence”; but this must inevitably be set against the consideration of affordability and the question of prioritisation.⁷⁹ “If [the SNP] clearly prioritised maritime defence – and submarines in particular – and were ready to go very small on ground forces, then it might be possible [to obtain a fleet]; but, if they want to maintain all the Scottish regiments as well, then it would not be”.⁸⁰

For comparison, Norway currently retains a fleet of six Ula-class submarines, but on an annual defence budget of £4.6 billion – almost double that which the SNP have proposed.⁸¹ Denmark, which has a more similar defence budget of £2.6 billion, no longer retains any submarines in its navy.⁸² In his analysis of the possible composition of an independent Scottish Navy, Stuart Crawford concluded that, with nuclear-powered submarines out of Scotland's reach and with no conventional variants in the Royal Navy at present, submarines “therefore, are unlikely to form part of the inventory of the [Scottish Navy], in the short-to-medium term at least. In the longer term, Scotland might wish to consider [the] off-the-shelf purchase of conventionally powered and armed submarines of the type built by Germany or Sweden.”⁸³ To do so, however, the issues relating to cost and the overall balance of the SDF would, once more, need to be considered.

FRIGATES

The SNP have also stipulated their ambition that an independent Scottish Navy should possess frigates, with the 2012 *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* lamenting “the lack of new frigates” in the Royal Navy as a capability gap that Scotland would wish to fill.

Presently, the Royal Navy retains 13 Type 23 frigates in its surface fleet, together with six Type 45 destroyers (after the last Type 42 destroyer was decommissioned in June 2013).⁸⁴ The Navy is planning to replace the Type 23s with 13 Type 26 Global Combat Ships, due to start entering service from 2021.⁸⁵

In his 2012 report, *A' the Blue Bonnets*, Stuart Crawford supports the notion of an independent Scottish Navy possessing a limited number of frigates: “Possibly a couple of frigates of the anti-submarine or anti-aircraft type would fit the bill in terms of likely tasks in maritime diplomacy, control and escort of shipping, and providing a Scottish naval contribution to regional and international alliances and coalitions as appropriate. The Type 23-class frigates HMS *Argyll* and HMS *Montrrose* are clearly already suitably named for the [Scottish Navy] and might fit this requirement adequately.”⁸⁶

This assumption has been challenged by Professor Chalmers, however. On 23 January 2013, he told the Scottish Affairs Committee that, looked at strategically, Scotland would not want to have any frigates at all; although, if broken down proportionately, it “would get one” as part of its inheritance from the 13 currently in service with the Royal Navy.⁸⁷ Explaining his rationale, Chalmers observed that the “Royal Navy has made a choice over the years to focus on quality rather than quantity and to have capabilities that are globally

deployable. One of the problems we have with things like counter-piracy is that, because we have so few numbers, we are using 200-million-pound ships to confront a few pirates with Kalashnikovs. Scotland might well end up inheriting one frigate, but that would not be the centrepiece of its navy in terms of what it had to confront; it would have to have a significant number of other smaller vessels, I would suggest.”⁸⁸

As for the Type 45 air-defence destroyers, their size and sophistication would almost certainly put them out of Scotland’s reach; the same is true of the Type 26 frigates (as and when they enter service), should Scotland contemplate acquiring one for whatever reason.

Echoing Chalmers’ warning that Scotland would probably want to opt for a fleet comprised of smaller vessels, Lord West has given the view that even “the Type 23s are too complex”, but that inheriting its share of these would be the main option confronting Scotland, given the lack of alternatives in the Royal Navy.⁸⁹ In the view of Ron Smith, a Scottish Navy would wish to focus more on corvettes and patrol boats, “which is what most other countries have, [and] would be a lot cheaper”. Such vessels would, he suggests, be suitable for the types of functions a Scottish Navy might wish to carry out, namely: “fishery protection, protection of North Sea oil and occasional issues to do with piracy and terrorism.”⁹⁰

The SNP’s position on exactly what sort of frigates they want for an independent Scotland is puzzling. The *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* is not specific, but laments “the lack of new frigates” as a procurement gap that Scotland would need to fill. Presumably this means that the SNP have acknowledged that the ageing Type

23s would need to be replaced in the not-too-distant future, and that the Type 26 would not be considered suitable (as and when it enters service).

Asked to clarify exactly what the SNP had in mind by this assertion, an advisor to Angus Robertson replied that “there are a number of stages to go through before reaching final conclusions on military equipment” – including the 2013 Scottish Government White Paper on independence, post-independence negotiations from 2014 to 2016, and a Scottish SDSR in 2016.⁹¹ Pressed on the point that, by lamenting “the lack of new frigates”, the SNP must surely have in mind what they don’t like about the Royal Navy’s existing and future-planned ships, no further response was forthcoming.

REMAINING SCOTTISH NAVY

As just mentioned, smaller vessels than submarines and frigates would likely form the bulk of an independent Scottish Navy, and there are several of these currently in the possession of the British Royal Navy.

The SNP have yet to give a clear indication of what type and number of these craft they might wish to acquire, referring only to the need for “ocean going vessels”. When combined with the lack of detail on the foreign-policy side, this presents not inconsiderable difficulties when attempting to scrutinise the SNP’s naval ambitions beyond the major ‘status’ assets such as frigates and submarines which they mention specifically in their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*.

That being said, it is possible to surmise some of the likely requirements of a Scottish Navy – based on some of what the SNP have said, and on logical deduction considering Scotland’s

size; geographical location; and likely ambitions. Of most interest to an independent Scottish Navy would likely be a share of the Royal Navy's Mine Countermeasures (MCM) ships and offshore patrol vessels. Presently, the Royal Navy possesses eight Hunt-class minehunters and seven in the Sandown class.⁹² The UK's MCMs are recognised as amongst the best in the world, and perform an important role in seeking out – and keeping sea lanes clear of – unexploded ordnance. As a result, a share of these would represent a valuable addition to an independent Scottish Navy.

Scotland would probably have a more difficult time negotiating a share of the UK's River-class offshore patrol vessels, however, since the Royal Navy possesses just four of them at present.⁹³ The ships perform an invaluable function enforcing UK and EU fisheries laws, and can be used from anything from fire-fighting to disaster-relief operations. Such vessels would also play an important role in patrolling Scotland's offshore installations, and, in truth, would appear to be a much more functional asset than any large frigates which the country may seek to acquire. However, given that so few are available, it is quite probable that Scotland would need to procure additional equivalents from elsewhere.

The Royal Navy also possesses a number of smaller patrol boats – including 16 of the Archer-class P2000 Fast Inshore Patrol Craft, and two Fast Patrol Boats of the Scimitar class.⁹⁴ The latter are responsible for patrolling the shores around Gibraltar, and for supporting ships in the Strait of Gibraltar. The Archer-class boats contribute to a range of 'fleet tasking' (although their primary role is to support the country's 14 University Royal Naval Units, which provide undergraduates with experience

of – and exposure to – the Royal Navy). An independent Scotland would certainly be entitled to a share of these.

Not mentioned so far are the four assault ships in service with the Royal Navy: the two helicopter carriers, HMS *Illustrious* and HMS *Ocean*, and the amphibious assault ships HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark*.⁹⁵ All four have been designed for an outward-looking navy with global reach, and it seems unlikely they would be within the reach independent Scotland. This being said, it comes back to the question of what sort of role a Scottish Navy would want to play. The amphibious assault ships are versatile vessels that can be deployed across a range of functions, from enabling and supporting onshore military incursions, to providing a *de facto* offshore hospital and command centre for disaster relief operations.

Beyond that, the Royal Navy also possesses the Surveying Flotilla, a disparate group of six ice-patrol and survey ships which traverse the waters of the world, gathering data to be translated into charts which will provide safe passage for mariners across the globe.⁹⁶ An independent Scotland may or may not wish to attempt such a role; but, given that these vessels perform a non-defence-specific function, it is anyway outwith the remit of this report to venture an answer in that regard.

FAST JETS

In terms of feasible inheritance options, one of the biggest challenges for an independent Scotland will surely be the lack of suitable fast jets for its Air Force. Currently, the RAF retains three types of jet: the Eurofighter Typhoon; the Tornado GR4; and two variants of the Hawk training aircraft, the Hawk T1 and the Hawk T2.

At present, the RAF maintains six squadrons apiece of the Typhoons and the Tornados, and more than 200 Hawks, meaning that – numerically speaking, at least – an independent Scotland could be apportioned its ‘fair share’. There are very serious questions, however, about how appropriate any of these aircraft would be for the country’s defence needs.

An extremely capable all-weather reconnaissance aircraft, the Tornado GR4 also boasts advanced air-to-ground attack systems which were deployed most recently in 2011, during Operation Ellamy (part of the NATO mission to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973 over Libya). A significant limiting factor, in terms of its suitability for an independent Scottish Air Force, however, is its lack of air-to-air defence systems, with Angus Robertson explicitly endorsing the proposition that a Scottish Air Force (for reasons of cost and feasibility) “operate[s] one jet variant or one aircraft variant”, not both – necessitating a multi-role fighter if at all possible.⁹⁷ Moreover, the RAF’s Tornado fleet is fast approaching the end of its life, and is due to be phased out altogether to make way for additional Typhoons and the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter in the next few years.⁹⁸

If Scotland is expecting to inherit some air-defence aircraft from the UK, then the only suitable option (in terms of capabilities) would be the Eurofighter Typhoon. Amongst the world’s most advanced multi-role fighters, the Typhoon is capable of being deployed in the full spectrum of air operations: from air policing, to peace support, through to high-intensity conflict. Unlike the Tornado GR4, the Typhoon is capable of air-to-air and air-to-ground roles.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, there appears to be broad agreement amongst the strategic

community, as well as recognition from within the SNP, that the Typhoon would almost certainly be too advanced and too expensive for an independent Scotland to maintain.

This then leaves the Hawk trainer as the only other jet available, in the RAF’s hangars, for inheritance by an independent Scotland. In his report, Lieutenant Colonel Crawford concluded that both the Typhoon and Tornado were likely beyond Scotland’s reach, and that “even smaller nations’ aircraft of choice, the American F-16, might be beyond the [Scottish Air Force’s] realistic aspirations and, in any case, would have to be purchased from elsewhere.” Thus, he surmises that, for air defence and strike attack, “Scotland’s relatively modest needs [...] might be filled [...] by the BAE Hawk aircraft currently in the RAF inventory.”¹⁰⁰

With Crawford’s admirable report representing the first and most comprehensive effort to detail what the SDF might actually look like, many of his conclusions have been incorporated by the SNP. In interview, Angus Robertson endorsed Crawford’s choice of aircraft, describing the Hawk as a machine which “can be operated to do the role the fast jets currently perform in the QRA [Quick Reaction Alert] platform”.¹⁰¹

However, this conclusion has been strongly challenged by the air-defence expert consulted for this report (who argued not only that the Hawk would be incapable of carrying out this role, but that an independent Scotland may wish to consider not attempting its own air defence at all). “Simply put, I don’t see what use Scotland would have for the Hawk; you’re giving them a trainer,” said Wing Commander Paul Courtneage.

“The Hawk couldn’t do QRA because it doesn’t have radar, so it would never

find its target. BAE do export Hawks fitted with radar (essentially it's a cut-down F-16 radar); but you couldn't just add that sort of equipment to the nose of our Hawks. It wouldn't fit, for a start, and you haven't got the ability to power it – the hydraulics to drive the antenna, and so forth."

Asked if the Hawk might not be able to perform even a basic air-defence role, guided by ground-based radar, Courtneage said, "They could, but it's a lightweight fighter armed with very short-range weapons. It's far more likely to be taken out by incoming fighters with much longer-range weapons and greater capability. They just won't match a potential airborne threat on their own.

"The Hawks are capable of carrying a very limited air-to-air fit: two sidewinders and a gun. They have no radar; so all they could really do would be point defence, let's say, as a lightweight visual fighter."

During the Cold War, Hawks were used to augment the UK's frontline fighters on Mixed Fighter Force Operations (MFFOs) over the North Sea. "The Hawks would sit on the wing of a big, radar-equipped aircraft, and would follow them to an engagement, with the idea being that the big fighters would try and get [...] visual on the enemy, and let [the Hawks] go and mix with them," Courtneage continued. "Obviously it wasn't something we ever used in anger, and it was difficult to do, and it tended to tie the hands of the big fighters anyway because they couldn't just accelerate away as fast as they liked to meet the enemy because they'd just leave the Hawks behind."¹⁰² On the SNP's own rationale, however, this would not be possible for an independent Scottish Air Force, since the Hawk would be the sole fighter jet in its armoury, if chosen.

Courtneage concluded that, for the needs of an independent Scotland, the Hawk

would therefore serve a very limited practical purpose, and would probably be chosen simply so that Scotland could claim to have a fleet of fighter jets come independence. "What the SNP seem to be envisaging [for their Air Force] is just not what [the Hawks are] designed for, or certainly not the T1s, the T1As and the T2s that we have. And the big giveaway is the letter they all begin with: T, for Trainer."¹⁰³ Indeed, it is worthy of note that the RAF itself does not list the Hawk as one of its Offensive or Defence jets, but as a Training Aircraft, along with several small propeller planes and a glider.¹⁰⁴

If Scotland did wish to possess fast jets in its Air Force, therefore, it is the conclusion of this report that it would need to acquire them from elsewhere; no suitable jet currently exists in the RAF's inventory.

MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT

Another central function for a Scottish Air Force, as envisaged by the SNP, would be maritime patrol. On this issue, the party have made much of the UK Government's decision to scrap the Nimrod MRA4 programme as part of their 2010 SDSR. Angus Robertson recently said in interview that a "good example of where Scotland would have to procure equipment which it will not inherit is [in] maritime patrol aircraft, of which the UK currently has zero – unlike the Norwegians, unlike the Danes, unlike the Irish".¹⁰⁵ To fill the roles intended for the MRA4, the UK is currently relying on existing assets such as the Type 23 frigate and the Merlin helicopter.

Whilst an independent Scotland would clearly require assets capable of performing a maritime-patrol function, Courtneage is critical of SNP suggestions that they could have realistically expected to inherit Nimrods from the UK

had the programme not been scrapped. “The Nimrods are way beyond what they would need. They will need aircraft that can do maritime patrols – coastguard-type operations – but they don’t need big maritime patrol aircraft to do that.

“The Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency currently operates two Reims Vigilant F-406 aircraft that they use to monitor fishing vessels, and to protect no-take areas. Assuming that they might want to do slightly more than that – and actually be able to patrol their waters, defend their coastline, and carry out anti-smuggling operations; search and rescue; oil-spill and pollution monitoring; and the like – they might consider something like the Airbus Military HC-144 Ocean Sentry.

“[The Sentry] is not long range [...]; but it can stay airborne for around eight hours, and has the sorts of sensors that they would require. It has multiple voice- and data-communications capabilities, [...] Commercial Satellite Communications (SATCOM), a vessel Automatic Identification System, direction-finding equipment, [...] surface-search radar, an electro-optical/infra-red system, and electronic surveillance equipment.

“Another option is the ATR 42 Maritime Patrol Surveyor, used by the Italians. Many nations are looking at the Boeing P-8 Poseidon; but that’s a much bigger, more expensive beast. There are quite a lot out there; but the Scottish needs and budget should be reasonably modest.”¹⁰⁶

REMAINING SCOTTISH AIR FORCE

As regards the numerous other assets required to operate a functioning air force, the SNP have thus far not given specifics beyond a general ambition to acquire “transport aircraft and helicopters”. Here, again, deducing

exactly what type of aircraft and helicopters an independent Scottish Air Force may require – not to mention all the other resources required to support their effective operation – is almost impossible without knowing what Scotland would wish to achieve with them.

For instance, until it becomes clear how serious an independent Scotland might be about overseas military deployments or disaster-relief operations, it is hard to calibrate how many – and what kind of – transport aircraft it may wish to acquire. The same applies to helicopters, bearing in mind the point made by Angus Robertson: that a Scottish Air Force, for reasons of cost and practicality, would wish to avoid having more than one type of any given asset where at all possible.

The British Army Air Corps currently maintains a sizable fleet of more than 60 Apache attack helicopters (highly expensive and advanced pieces of equipment designed to hunt and destroy tanks, and capable of classifying and prioritising up to 256 potential targets in a matter of seconds).¹⁰⁷ It is hard to envisage what use an independent Scotland would have for such equipment (unless it planned to adopt an extremely assertive posture internationally, which does seem unlikely).

Likewise, it is hard to conceive what use Scotland would have for a share of the RAF’s nine TriStar air-to-air refuelling aircraft; but, again, without a clear foreign policy, it is impossible to be certain.

SCOTTISH ARMY

Many of the same questions need to be asked with regard to the composition of Scottish ground forces, because the SNP’s *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* offers nothing more

specific than the assurance that they will contain “army vehicles” and “artillery”.¹⁰⁸

In his assessment of the Scottish Armed Forces, Lieutenant Colonel Crawford concludes that it is unlikely that a Scottish Army would need to equip itself at the heavy end of the war-fighting spectrum: “There is no real case for main battle tanks or heavy artillery for an army with a regional focus and [which is] predicated on home defence, aid to the civilian authorities, and limited contribution to coalition military operations overseas.”¹⁰⁹ Yet again, it has to be said that such an assessment can provide no guarantees in the absence of a fully crafted foreign policy and national strategy.

It is the position of this report that, whilst it does indeed seem unlikely a that Scottish Army would have much use for the British Army's Challenger II main battle tank, there could be a place for some of the more advanced artillery assets – especially air-defence systems. Ground-based air defence might assume still greater importance if Scotland does initially find itself without an air-defence-capable jet fighter (although both of the British Army's Rapier and Starstreak platforms are short-range, and could only be used to guard specific assets).¹¹⁰ If Scotland were to get into the business of serious ground-based air defence, it may wish to consider procuring the Patriot missile system; although, again, this would need to be measured against a proper national security risk assessment, as well as cost.

Regarding other potential assets of use to a Scottish Army, Brigadier John Deverell CBE, formerly of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, is of the view that Scotland may well wish to develop a wheeled, medium-to-light armoured force. “I cannot see them having any

use for main battle tanks, unless it's in support of overseas aspirations as part of NATO, because they are so expensive. What I can see them needing are armoured cars, such as [the six-wheel-drive] Mastiffs, as well as other hybrid anti-mine-type vehicles.”

Deverell also envisages Scotland adopting some of the British Army's lighter, tracked assets, in particular the Scimitar armoured fighting vehicle (which is armed with a 30mm cannon, for self-defence, and is deployed in a reconnaissance role). In terms of giving further specifics, particularly the sort of numbers that might be required, Deverell agreed that such an assessment was impossible without first knowing what the SNP's foreign policy would be, and for what activities they would want to use the Army.

SPECIAL FORCES

Relatively little has been said in public regarding the role of Special Forces in an independent SDF. The SNP have said nothing more than that Scotland should have some, who, together with the Royal Marines, “will retain responsibility for offshore protection.”¹¹¹

Perhaps the most authoritative voice to have spoken out on the issue to date was the late Colonel Clive Fairweather, a former second-in-command of 22 SAS, who helped bring an end to the siege on the Iranian embassy in London in 1980. Fairweather concluded that Scotland would indeed wish to have its own Special Forces, and that they would focus primarily on counter-terrorism – in particular, protection of the North Sea oil rigs. Scotland would also need to consider threats to critical infrastructure on the mainland (for instance petrochemical sites like Grangemouth and Mossmorran, as well as the Torness and

Hunterston nuclear-power stations).

He also told a defence conference, in 2012, that, given how dependent Scotland would be on oil and gas revenues, its Special Forces would want to be situated close to a port or airfield to enable them speedy access to the rigs when necessary. “We need about 75 individuals for a Scottish Special Forces squadron, with the ability to get aboard towering rigs by boat, or possibly from underwater or by air,” he said. “The unit would need snipers, linguists, medics and bomb-disposal experts, all of whom can nimbly scale ladders and kill the enemy at short range if necessary.”¹¹²

Fairweather warned that Scotland could not rely on inheriting Special Forces units from the British Army, however, suggesting that only a “handful” of SAS (Special Air Service) and SBS (Special Boat Service) personnel might “come home” to join.¹¹³

This assessment is broadly shared by another former SAS officer spoken to for this report, who wished to remain anonymous. “The SNP would have to create their own Special Forces unit, mainly to defend the oil rigs. I would suggest an SBS capability to prevent the oilrigs being hijacked.” The officer cautioned, however, that recruitment might be a problem, given the likelihood that Scottish Special Forces would be focused just on Scotland, and may therefore spend their time “thumb twiddling”. “The Scottish Special Forces couldn’t be expeditionary or peacekeeping; they would just be based in Scotland”, he predicted.

Colonel Fairweather said that it would likely take three years to get Scotland’s Special Forces operational, at a cost of £5-10 million “and at least £2.5 million annually to keep the force on the ground.” During the transitional period,

the country would have to “rely on UK Special Forces” to provide it with the necessary security.¹¹⁴

CHOOSING BETWEEN THE BRITISH ARMED FORCES AND THE SCOTTISH DEFENCE FORCE

Amongst the most contentious questions surrounding the future of the Armed Forces, should Scotland opt for independence, is: In which nation’s military would Scots soldiers serve?

The question is not so much whether or not they will be given a choice, as it is which Armed Force they would actually choose. Regarding the former issue, Angus Robertson has been explicit in saying that personnel serving in regiments assigned to Scotland would not be obliged to continue with those regiments if they did not wish to do so:

“Service personnel take an oath to the Crown, and that oath will be fulfilled within the Scottish defence forces or Armed Forces of the rest of the United Kingdom. Serving personnel will be given the option to be part of the Scottish defence forces, or remain within the Armed Forces of the rest of the United Kingdom.”¹¹⁵

The overwhelming consensus amongst service personnel consulted for this report is that a majority – perhaps even a large majority – of Scottish service personnel would prefer to remain within the British Armed Forces, rather than join the SDF. All who agreed to speak did so on condition of strict anonymity, being conscious of the acute political sensitivity of this issue (in particular, from a constitutional perspective as members of the Armed Forces). The MoD’s policy of not offering any opinion on the ramifications of Scottish independence

also made impossible a survey designed for this report, to be circulated amongst Scottish service personnel, asking precisely this question.

Privately, many serving in regiments north of the border are seriously contemplating this issue, in light of the forthcoming independence referendum. One officer spoken to for this report put the question to his platoon of 32 men shortly upon returning from Afghanistan in early 2013. Of the 32, fully 30 said that they would wish to remain with the British Army. Of the two who did not, one said he wasn't bothered either way, whilst the second offered his opinion that, for the same level of pay and conditions, why wouldn't he want to join the SDF when "all we'd be doing is checking passports on the M6"? Similar feedback was offered from all other servicemen consulted.

It was even revealed that some soldiers had been asking their officers whether or not it was treasonable for them to support joining the armed forces of another country, given that they had sworn an oath to serve the Crown as part of the British Armed Forces.

Coupled to this, there was a strong feeling that few within the current Armed Forces really knew what the SDF would be for, and that also made them sceptical. Of the ten soldiers asked by another officer if they favoured joining the SDF, nine said that they could not understand what would be achieved by independence, whilst the tenth said he wasn't bothered either way.

Of those who have formed an opinion in this regard, the general view appears to be that the SDF would be less exciting and offer fewer opportunities than its larger and – they assumed – more globally active British counterpart.

"Because the Scottish Government would only focus on home defence and peacekeeping, the view inside the regiment is that you would have large numbers of predominantly Scottish young men going to join the British Army, because there they can serve on operations; and they know that, in an SDF, operational defence would be extremely limited," said one officer.

"And what of the young officer born, raised, and educated in Scotland? He can either join the Paras [British Army Parachute Regiment] or the local Scots regiment. If he chooses the latter, he cannot go to Sandhurst; so he would be going to a new training school in Scotland, with the best hope of going and sitting on the border in Cyprus or Lebanon with a blue beret and no rounds in his rifle. Or he can join the Paras, one of the most recognisable regiments in the world. What's he going to do? It's a no brainer; the SDF would be too dead-end and too parochial."

The worrying consequence of this, in the view of this officer and others consulted, is that an independent Scotland would be left with a "second-rate" defence force, with the best and brightest opting to join the British Armed Forces instead. "This is the view of officers and men, the consensus view," said the officer. "The SDF will be staffed by second-class Scots soldiers [...] If you have all those infantry battalions, like the SNP want to have, you're going to have to keep them interested and deployed, and you won't get many if they can join a deployable British Army."

This concern about the challenges that an independent Scottish Armed Forces might have in persuading potential recruits to join it (and not its British counterpart) has also been voiced outside the Armed Forces. "I can

envisage a two-tier military service, where ambitious young Scots join the British Army, and then, once he's married and got children and wants to calm down a bit later in life, he transfers to the Scottish Army," said Professor Strachan.

"Assuming the British Armed Forces continued to recruit Scots, and the Scots currently serving chose to stay (and I think the majority would), only with a very good pay and pension deal – which would add further to costs – could you entice Scots to a Scottish Armed Forces. I think you're bound to get lower calibre personnel in an SDF [...] When you join the RAF, for instance, presumably you want to fly fast jets in exciting places, not Hawks in the north of Scotland."¹¹⁶

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond also waded into this debate recently, claiming that an SDF would be able to offer only a "fraction" of the career opportunities of the British Armed Forces. He went on to add that the SNP's promise to base troops entirely in Scotland was akin to telling potential recruits: "Join the Navy and see the Clyde."¹¹⁷

Happily for the SNP, however, not everyone is so pessimistic, including Colonel Crawford (who has argued that men and women serving in an SDF may in fact have more opportunities for deployment, not fewer). "It's wrong to think that a Scottish Defence Force would be boring. It may have only 50 per cent of the commitments [of the British Armed Forces]; but, if it's 10 per cent of the size, then that's five times more opportunities."¹¹⁸ In spite of this, Crawford has also warned that Scottish soldiers would likely prefer to remain as part of the British Armed Forces: "All of us in the military community are saying that no-one has asked the Scottish soldiers if they would want to transfer;

all of us collectively believe that few of them would want to. No-one knows what the Scottish defence force is for."¹¹⁹

'SMART DEFENCE' AND THE SPECIALISATION OF SCOTLAND'S ARMED FORCES

Underpinning the entire debate over the appropriate size, shape and ambitions of the SDF is the question of just how specialised that force should be. As with all but the greatest martial powers, an independent Scotland would very much rely on the collective military strength of its allies for its ultimate defence, hence the SNP's ambition for Scotland to be part of NATO.

In light of this, there has been some discussion as to how Scotland might configure its Armed Forces to most usefully contribute to those alliances. Professor Strachan has suggested that Scotland would wish to consider adopting a 'niche' defence posture, whereby it abandoned any notion of attempting to develop a full spectrum of defence capabilities and instead focused on delivering high-quality capabilities in a few specific areas. Such an approach, Strachan argued, could achieve "enormous amounts of savings and greater efficiencies", and would, moreover, conform to precisely the sort of "smart defence" thinking being called for by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.¹²⁰

'Smart Defence' is a NATO initiative that essentially seeks to formalise and further deepen collaboration between members on defence. The alliance reasons that in "these times of austerity, each euro, dollar or pound sterling counts. Smart defence is a new way of thinking about generating the modern defence capabilities the Alliance needs

for the coming decade and beyond. It is a renewed culture of cooperation that encourages Allies to cooperate in developing, acquiring and maintaining military capabilities to undertake the Alliance's essential core tasks agreed in the new NATO strategic concept. That means pooling and sharing capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better."¹²¹

By acting together, NATO has rationalised, members can have access to resources which they could not afford individually. 'Smart Defence' also seeks to redress the long-standing problem of some members making unilateral decisions to give up certain capabilities, which leaves other members under an increased obligation to maintain their own investment those now-abandoned areas of defence (in turn, leading to specialisation "by default"). To address this, the initiative seeks to encourage specialisation "'by design' so that members concentrate on their national strengths and agree to coordinate planned defence budget cuts with the Allies, while maintaining national sovereignty for their final decision."¹²²

The SNP have specifically endorsed this concept in their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, asserting that in an independent Scotland: "Joint procurement will be pursued with the rest of the UK and other allies as well as shared conventional basing, training and logistics arrangements, fulfilling shared priorities in 'Smart Defence'. This includes sharing conventional military capabilities, setting priorities and better coordinating efforts providing economic synergies, job stability and taxpayer value for money."¹²³

Clearly, however, this sort of arrangement depends strongly on political goodwill and exceptionally close military-strategic planning, making

Scottish NATO membership all-but imperative for this to work.

Whilst this 'specialised' route is one option for Scotland, there are those who argue that NATO has just as great a need for members who are ready and able to deliver the more 'conventional' capabilities, which are by no means incompatible with the Smart Defence concept. "If you look at Afghanistan and ISAF [the International Security Assistance Force], what have all the Nordics done?", asked Tusa. "They have deployed infantry battle groups and, boy, has NATO been saying, 'Please give us these.' They have not necessarily said, 'Please send us this niche or that niche.' Because they have been so short of bodies, they have been crying out loud for boots on the ground and so forth, so these entirely non-niche capabilities from Denmark, Norway and whatever have been welcomed with open arms."¹²⁴

Moreover, Tusa argued, the logic of having niche forces only applies if Scotland proved itself ready and able to actually use them when called on:

"[People will] rely on you only if you will turn up on the day when they say, 'My God, I need whatever it is you are providing.' Based on the very scant things from SNP documents, you do not get the impression [that they will have] an armed force that [is] looking to deploy anywhere, in which case you will not be able to have niche armed forces, because no one will want to rely on your niches if you will never use them".¹²⁵

DEFENCE COOPERATION WITH THE RUK

Just as an independent Scotland would wish to work closely with NATO on defence, so too would it need to cooperate especially closely with the rUK in particular.

This certainly seems to be what the SNP have in mind, with their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* advocating “shared conventional basing” with the rUK, as well as “shared conventional training and logistics arrangements”, as previously mentioned.¹²⁶

In the assessment of Dr Fleming, Scotland’s geographical location makes collaborative defence agreements “a practical solution to an awful lot of headaches – both from a Scottish perspective, [and] also from an rUK perspective”.¹²⁷

“The assets in Scotland would be difficult to replicate,” he argued, citing in particular the radar systems on the western coast, as well as subsea systems vital to UK intelligence gathering. The problems thrown up by having no RAF airfields north of the border could also be significant for the rUK, with the most northerly suitable airfield in England being, as previously mentioned, RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire. Responding to potential incursions from the high north, therefore, would become considerably more difficult – even if existing stations further north in England were adapted, or new ones built.

Quite what any such agreement might look like in practice, however, is subject to differing interpretations. In Fleming’s view, Scotland would be “filling a gap in the north Atlantic and the high north” in exchange for defence support in other areas.

“That would be a natural strategic position for Scotland to take – the high north – and it would be useful for the rUK because [...] the rUK looks south, in particular to the Middle East (which is understandable); but it leaves a gap. In the days when the Royal Navy was stronger, that was fine. Before austerity, they were persuaded they could fill

these gaps easily; but that’s no longer the case.”¹²⁸

Such a vision seems to entail the rUK leaving Scotland to ‘cover its back’ in the north, freeing London to focus its resources elsewhere; however, several difficulties with this immediately arise. The first is the greatly reduced capabilities that Scottish defence forces will almost certainly have at their disposal, when compared to the UK assets currently based north of the border. On air defence, for instance, RAF Lossiemouth is currently the main base for the Tornado GR4s, with three squadrons of Typhoons scheduled to relocate there beginning summer 2014 (in order to take on the QRA (Interceptor) North role).¹²⁹

The SNP have said that they plan to use Lossiemouth as the home for Scotland’s Air Force; but, given that they would quite possibly be attempting to fulfil the same QRA function with Hawk trainers, it seems unlikely that the rUK would feel its back was being suitably covered. Similar comparisons could be drawn on the maritime side, given the enormous likely discrepancies between the Royal Navy and a future Scottish Navy.

Clearly, there would be areas where Scotland could fill capability gaps, or – at the very least – work closely together with rUK Armed Forces in order to do so; but, the most substantive component of any defence agreement between the two countries would likely involve continued rUK access to military facilities currently based in Scotland.

As the former Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Nick Harvey, has made clear, “the defence footprint in Scotland at the moment is comprehensively integrated with the whole of the United Kingdom’s defence capability. What is based in Scotland is not there

by accident. It is based there because it makes sense in military terms for the defence of the UK as a whole."¹³⁰ Consequently, Harvey continued, "it is certainly the case that there are facilities in Scotland that, in an ideal world, we would wish to continue using."

In their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, however, the SNP appear to envisage even closer collaboration than this, advocating not only "shared conventional basing," but also "sharing conventional military capabilities".¹³¹ Quite how this might work in practice is very far from clear. As Nick Harvey has again observed, this sort of joint defence "is not a concept or a doctrine that we recognise. We cannot see anywhere in the world an example of joint defences among sovereign UN member states."¹³²

The immediate, and seemingly insurmountable, problem with sharing military capabilities is what to do when foreign-policy objectives diverge. If one party wishes to deploy an asset, and the other objects – or, if the two parties have differing objectives for how that asset should be used at a given moment – then the situation becomes impossible. Such an arrangement would be tantamount to giving Scotland a *de facto* veto over rUK foreign policy, and vice versa.

Even the sharing of bases seems a difficult proposition, with similar – although not as extreme – obstacles arising in terms of a divergence of views with regard to deploying assets from a shared base.

Indeed, even when it comes to more conventional defence-cooperation agreements, Scotland would have to be aware that the closer it sought to integrate itself militarily with the rUK – and other allies, for that matter – the greater the limitations there would be on its own freedom of action (with regard to its defence and foreign policies). To take advantage of NATO's 'Smart Defence' depends first of all on Scotland being accepted as a member, and, secondly (assuming that that hurdle will be crossed), on Scotland taking a conscious decision to align its military priorities; objectives; and capabilities with those other member states. The potential for limiting freedom of action, that this necessarily entails, is certainly a challenge for all nations; but it is a proportionately greater one for smaller countries with more limited capabilities and a greater dependence on alliances to begin with.

The SNP may well conclude that, for reasons of cost and practicality, it would be better to allow the rUK to provide it with defence capabilities in certain areas (in return for continued access to bases and other assets north of the border). However, they will have to be realistic and honest about what the potential consequences of this will be, particularly in terms of the extent to which they could pursue an authentically different defence policy to that of the rUK. This, after all, is the ultimate expression of what it means to be a sovereign nation.



CHAPTER IV

Removing Trident

The most fiercely held position of the SNP, when it comes to defence and independence, is the need to remove the UK's nuclear deterrent from Scotland. The issue of whether this ambition is compatible with NATO membership has been examined in Chapter II; this chapter will focus more specifically on some of the practical issues surrounding the removal of Trident from Scottish territory.

The SNP's 2012 *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* reiterates the party's commitment to this policy: "A long-standing national consensus has existed that Scotland should not host nuclear weapons and a sovereign SNP government will negotiate the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane which will be replaced by conventional naval forces."¹³³

There is no disagreement as to the fact that Trident could be removed from Scotland; the debate is over the timeline and what the potential consequences of that decision might be, for both the rUK and an independent Scotland.

Doubtless aware of these issues, the SNP have been cautious not to put a timeline on Trident removal, and are unlikely to do so. In recent years, various analyses have been conducted on this subject, with conclusions ranging from a timeline of 20 years or more (working on the assumption that this is how long it might take the rUK to find and construct an alternative site south of the border), to a matter of weeks (working on the assumption that this is the maximum speed at which the weapons could

feasibly be removed, irrespective of whether or not the rUK had a permanent base for them elsewhere).

When pressed to give some indication of a preferred timeline, Angus Robertson reiterated that the SNP position was just to see the "speediest safe" removal of Trident. Asked whether it would be acceptable if it did indeed take 20 years to find and construct a safe and secure site south of the border, he answered, "when was the last time you thought 20 years was speedy?", but refused to be more specific than that.¹³⁴

Should Scotland opt for independence in 2014, it is likely that two primary considerations will qualify the SNP's fervour to remove nuclear weapons from Scottish territory. The first will be the speed with which an alternative site can be found south of the border. An SNP government would be unlikely to force the missiles' removal so fast as to prevent an alternative location being found, since the result of doing so could be the unilateral disarmament of the rUK.

The second consideration will be simple *realpolitik* and the strategic importance of Alex Salmond fulfilling his pledge that an independent Scotland would cease to be a "surly lodger" within the UK, and would instead set out to be a "good neighbour".¹³⁵ Whatever the fiery rhetoric at party conferences, the SNP leadership understands that the removal of Trident will form but one of a panoply of issues to be negotiated, and that the importance of close cooperation with the rUK in a host of other defence-related

areas will temper their ability to force this particular issue too hard. In practical terms, this means that, whilst the SNP could – in theory – bullishly demand Trident's removal at a speed that would add considerable cost and disruption to the rUK's efforts to find a suitable new location for the fleet (not to mention poisoning relations, with potentially deleterious consequences for Scotland in other areas), they are much more likely to allow the rUK time – within reason – to move at a more comfortable pace.

What this means, of course, is that Scottish voters who believe that a vote for independence will be a vote for the immediate removal of Trident should prepare to be disappointed. Without question, the rUK would not wish to have its nuclear deterrent based indefinitely in what would be a foreign country – so clearly there would be ambition from both sides to bring Trident south of the border – but, equally, this would need to be balanced against serious considerations of cost and practicality, which would weigh heavily on the speed with which relocation could be achieved.

In August 2012, the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) published a report entitled *Disarming Trident: A practical guide to de-activating and dismantling the Scottish-based Trident nuclear weapon system*.

The report examined how quickly the fleet could be decommissioned and removed from Scotland, and concluded that: the keys and triggers for the weapons could be removed within seven days, the missiles disabled within eight, and the warheads disabled within a year. Within two years, the report asserted, all the warheads could be entirely removed from Scotland, and dismantled completely within four.¹³⁶ This timeline has subsequently been endorsed as

credible – in terms of being possible, irrespective of whether it is desirable – by Parliament's Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

CND Scotland's report concerned itself exclusively with the question of how quickly, in theory, the nuclear deterrent could be disabled and removed from the country (with no allowance made for finding alternative locations elsewhere). This is unsurprising, given that – as its name suggests – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is concerned not just with the removal of Trident from Scotland, but with the unilateral nuclear disarmament of the UK as a whole. Indeed, a prior report published in January 2012, entitled *Trident: Nowhere to Go*, concluded that, should the weapons be removed from Scotland, no single site would exist in the rUK that could feasibly house them – in practice, necessitating their complete disposal.

The Trident nuclear deterrent is comprised of three components: the four Vanguard-class submarines, the warheads, and the missiles. All four of the UK's nuclear-armed submarines are located at Faslane Naval Base, situated on the eastern shore of Gare Loch in southwest Scotland. Any warheads not onboard the submarines are stored at the Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD) Coulport, situated some eight miles west of Faslane, beside Loch Long. The missiles, on the other hand, are carried in the submarines at all times, with none being stored at either Faslane or Coulport (although there is a facility to do so, if needed).¹³⁷

The difficulty insofar as relocation is concerned is not where to house the nuclear submarines, but where to house the warheads and – most problematic – mate them with the missiles.

As far as the submarines are concerned,

the primary considerations are that the site be satisfactorily defensible; large enough; and able to provide ready access to deep water, ideally enabling the submarines to enter and leave port from any direction. Aside from Faslane, there are several other ports in the UK that could serve. Amongst these are Milford Haven, a natural deepwater port in south Wales, and Devonport in southern England, presently home to Britain's five Trafalgar-class nuclear-powered submarines.¹³⁸ Both sites also have the additional advantage of shorter supply lines to the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston (where the warheads are manufactured and assembled), whilst Devonport already regularly hosts the Vanguard submarines, unarmed, for maintenance.¹³⁹

Following extensive examination of expert witnesses, the Scottish Affairs Committee concluded that – as presently configured – neither Milford Haven nor Devonport could be used to house the warheads, or mate them to the missiles; similar conclusions were reached regarding other potential sites. Milford Haven, presently the third-largest port in the UK, also has a huge Liquid Natural Gas facility nearby, and is responsible for 29 per cent of the UK's trade in seaborne oil and gas.¹⁴⁰ For obvious reasons, this places a potentially decisive question mark over the wisdom of storing nuclear warheads nearby. Devonport, meanwhile, has a large population too close to the port to satisfy the safety margins required by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, and nearby Falmouth (which was considered as a possible Coulport in the 1960s) was ruled out because it would impact on an area with a strong tourist economy, and would involve the loss of two villages and moving a significant population.¹⁴¹

Other sites to have been considered in

the past include the Portland Naval Base near Weymouth, which closed in 1995, and Barrow in Cumbria. Barrow has never been a serious contender, owing to the shallowness of the water (which would restrict submarine access without significant dredging); the small size of the dock; and a significant population nearby.¹⁴² Portland was placed on the shortlist for Polaris, the predecessor to Trident, but was ruled out due to the lack of a suitable site for a nuclear-arms depot in the vicinity. Since then, Portland has seen a number of new residential, commercial, and marina developments; has become home to the UK national sailing centre; and was even a venue for the sailing at the 2012 Olympic Games.¹⁴³

It should also be noted that various studies have mooted the possibility of temporary relocation of Trident to France or the United States; but given that this could not be a long-term solution – if indeed it could be done at all – the question would inevitably return to where in the rUK to base it thereafter (hence this proposal is not afforded consideration in this report).

In *Trident: Nowhere to Go*, the CND examined all of the above options, and concluded that there was not a single viable alternative to Faslane and Coulport anywhere else in the rUK. The implication was made that independence for Scotland would therefore mean the *de facto* nuclear disarmament for the entire UK, with the report's author (John Ainslie) commenting that the MoD "are beginning to realise that if an independent Scotland holds its ground on Trident, then Britain would have to abandon its nuclear weapons programme."¹⁴⁴

HOW QUICKLY COULD TRIDENT BE MOVED IN AN EMERGENCY?

The CND's assessment that, come independence, the rUK may be forced to "abandon its nuclear weapons programme" has, however, met with strong opposition. One of the most notable challenges has come from Lord West, who has insisted that – with the requisite political will – a major national-strategic asset such as Trident could certainly be relocated (within months if absolutely necessary).

Examining the worst-case scenario, in which an independent Scotland demanded the fleet's immediate removal, West concluded that, with emergency legislation, it could be done. "We could get rid of the warheads from Coulport quickly, and we could get rid of the boats – the submarines move; that's not a problem. You could just do it [...] Getting the warheads out would take a bit longer; you'd have to have convoys to bring it all down south, but that's not a problem: you've got the space at Aldermaston and Burghfield to store those."¹⁴⁵

Both Aldermaston and Burghfield are nuclear-licensed facilities in Berkshire, and part of the MoD's Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). The AWE is headquartered at Aldermaston, a sizeable location covering some 750 acres. Formerly a wartime airfield, the site is now a sophisticated centre providing advanced-research, design, and manufacturing facilities. AWE Burghfield, a former munitions factory, occupies a 225-acre site, and is responsible for the maintenance of the warheads whilst in service (as well as their complex final assembly and eventual decommissioning).¹⁴⁶

Two principal objections have been levelled at the use of either facility in the past: first, that neither has the same amount of storage space for the warheads as Coulport does; and second, that they are situated in the middle of the Berkshire countryside (some 40 miles from the coast, and over a 170-mile drive from the most likely submarine base at Devonport).¹⁴⁷ Yet, as Francis Tusa noted on 23 May 2012, in his evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee, simply because it is not ideal does not mean it could not be done (as an interim measure, at least): "You have to remember that all the nuclear warheads go through those facilities for upgrade and maintenance; they are driven along the roads. It happens daily."¹⁴⁸

Whilst AWE Burghfield would need to be modernised, both sites are considered of sufficient size (as the UK has overseen considerable reductions to the number of warheads in its possession since the end of the Cold War). Whilst Coulport was designed to accommodate some 600 warheads, any alternative facility today would need to accommodate closer to one third of that number. In a statement to Parliament on 26 May 2010, Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that, in future, the UK's overall stockpile "will not exceed 225 nuclear warheads", whilst the maximum number of operationally available warheads will remain at 160.¹⁴⁹

"The huge storage area we've got for nuclear warheads [at Coulport] is huge because, once upon a time, we had each submarine full of 16 missiles with ten warheads on each; that's 160 warheads in each submarine," said Lord West.¹⁵⁰ "Now that's been reduced dramatically because of various attempts at multilateral disarmament; so, the actual number of warheads you have to store is dramatically less. We can store

them at Aldermaston and Burghfield if necessary.”¹⁵¹

Most radically, Lord West has also stated that, in an emergency scenario, the Coulport weapon-handling facility could literally be floated down the coast in its entirety. “It’s the biggest floating structure in Europe. It would have to be done really carefully, because it hasn’t been moved for years; but, yes, in theory it could be done.” The main problem, as previously highlighted, would be where to put it. “If Scotland got separation, and immediately said, ‘Take your warheads away’, then there would have to be emergency primary legislation to disregard planning laws and say that, [as it’s] a national security emergency, you are going to [move them].”¹⁵²

Asked how long such an operation might take in total, Lord West estimated a matter of months, dismissing the notion that it would take several years at least. “I think it could be done much quicker. People are talking about what happens in peacetime. If you have to do something, you can do it. How long would it take us to sail a task force to the Falklands? If you asked someone today they would tell you months; you’ve got to get all the stuff ready. How long did it take when we actually were at war? Four days. That’s the difference: [whether or not] you have to do something. If [the SNP] turned round and said, ‘Take your warheads away, otherwise we’re going to confiscate them’, what do you say? ‘Oh, that’s going to take us a very long time’? Then they say, ‘Well, we’ll confiscate them’, and you say, ‘OK, well you confiscate our warheads’. No; you’d move them.”¹⁵³

West also pointed out that, in the worst-case scenario, the rUK would have a little over six months – some 200 days – to execute this move if it wanted to able

to retain a continuous at-sea deterrent throughout the transition. This is about the length of time that the Vanguards (which would have been previously equipped at Faslane and Coulport) tend stay out on patrol.¹⁵⁴

As Lord West himself freely acknowledged, however, such drastic measures would generate a massive uproar, and incur an enormous cost (which he estimated at around £4 billion).¹⁵⁵ Needless to say, an ultimatum from the SNP necessitating such a response would also comprehensively poison the independence negotiations between Scotland and the rUK; it is, for that reason, exceedingly unlikely that the SNP would take such severe action.

Indeed, if its life as an independent country is not to begin with disaster, a Scottish Government would depend on positive relations with the rUK in order to obtain satisfactory results in negotiations on a whole host of issues critical to its future. This applies to other defence-related matters (such as the division and sharing of assets, cyber security, intelligence, and membership of NATO), as well as issues that go to the heart of the Scottish economy (including the mooted ‘Sterling-zone’ currency union, North Sea-oil revenues, pensions, and the division of the UK national debt). As is the case with accession to NATO, accession to the European Union is also contingent on the approval of all member states.

Moreover, whatever the rhetoric about standing up to Westminster, the SNP will be all too aware that Scotland would possess the weaker hand in any post-independence negotiations, by virtue of it being the smaller state; the *demandeur*; and – with near certainty – the party without continuing-state status.

Hence, it seems fair to assume that this

is why the SNP have been so reluctant to place a definitive timeline on Trident removal. Given the blunt considerations of *realpolitik*, it simply would not make strategic sense for Scotland to insist on Trident's removal before an alternative location can be found elsewhere.

In fact, there is good reason to believe that this reality has been quietly accepted by the SNP leadership for some time. As early as 1997, their election-manifesto statement that "the SNP have a long-standing objection to nuclear weapons" was followed by a pledge to "negotiate a *phased* but complete withdrawal of Trident from the Clyde" (my emphasis), a significant departure from previous manifestos which had demanded its immediate removal.¹⁵⁶

THE JOB IMPLICATIONS OF TRIDENT REMOVAL

One further consideration that is very likely to stay the SNP's hand on Trident, at least in terms of the speed with which they may seek to get it out of Scotland, is the significant number of jobs it provides.

Figures vary slightly, but there are currently some 6,700 civilian and military personnel employed at Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde – which comprises Faslane and Coulport – and the Government projects this number to increase to around 8,200 by 2022.¹⁵⁷ The rise in the number of jobs over the next decade accompanies the Government's decision to base all of the Royal Navy's submarines on the Clyde, with all five of the Trafalgar-class vessels to be moved there from Devonport by 2017.¹⁵⁸ According to the MSP who represents the constituency in which the base is situated, however, these figures do not take into account the several thousand jobs not directly related to HMNB Clyde, but which exist by virtue of its presence.

"Currently, the MoD will say there are around 6,500 people directly employed at Faslane and Coulport, with another 2,000 coming," said Jackie Baillie, Labour MSP for Dumbarton.¹⁵⁹ "But, in 2003, EKOS [an economic and social-development consultancy] did a study to look at the economic impact of Faslane. In addition to the 6,500 directly employed, they concluded that another 4,500 were dependent on the site; so that's 11,000 in total. And whatever people's view is on nuclear weapons, there is a responsibility to think about the jobs there."¹⁶⁰

Those presently employed at the site are indeed worried for their futures, should Scotland choose independence next year and divest itself of Trident. Speaking in front of the Scottish Affairs Committee, plumber and Unite union shop steward Richie Calder, from Faslane, spoke of "a fear in the [local] community" that independence "is going to take it apart".¹⁶¹ Jim Conroy (chairman of the industrial shop-stewards' committee on the base, and a mechanical fitter in Faslane's Northern Utilities building) added his prediction that independence "would be devastation for the west of Scotland as a whole. Our members don't just reside in the local area – Helensburgh, Garelochhead, Renton and Dumbarton. They travel from Glasgow and even further afield than Glasgow. It would be devastation. You have other support companies outwith the base as well."¹⁶²

Such sentiments very much reflect the messages relayed to Baillie from people living in the area: "When I speak to my constituents, it's instructive. The retailers understand the importance of having Faslane, because [it is] able to sustain a retail offer [for the] town. When most other towns are on their knees with empty shop units, Helensburgh is able to sustain a retail offer that is quite diverse

and, despite the recession, doing quite well.

"You go into a school and you ask them, 'How many of you know somebody who works in Faslane?'; and at least half the hands go up. So it is the most significant local employer; it matters to our economy. If the jobs weren't there, would we have the same range of schools that are there, the same infrastructure support? [...Consider] the almost 2,000 people coming up [to work at HMNB Clyde]: the impact that will have in making sure we have enough space in our schools, enough suitable housing to either rent or buy; [...] recognise that, during a recession, to have an influx of some 2,000 people – plus their families – is really significant for any local area. It's a real boost for the local economy."¹⁶³

The upshot of this (insists Baillie) is that, whilst Trident may be unpopular across Scotland as a whole, in the area in which it is situated, it is quite the opposite: "By and large, people view the base as a very positive thing [...] I've done focus groups in the past. I've spoken to groups of women in the past, who instinctively don't like the idea of nuclear weapons; but they understand it provides employment in their community. They understand it's not just low-paid jobs; these are high-quality, well-paid jobs, which are hard to come by."¹⁶⁴

The SNP have an answer to such uncertainty: that Faslane would be used to house the entire Scottish Navy, and would serve as the headquarters for the Armed Forces in an independent Scotland. Clearly, however, this then presents the question as to whether such a set-up could match the 6,700 jobs currently provided by HMNB Clyde, and the 1,500 (or 2,000, according to Baillie) extra ones set to move there in the coming years. On top of this, of

course, there are the several thousand additional jobs generated across the wider economy, as a result of the base's presence.

Unfortunately, without having a clear idea of what an independent Scottish Navy would consist of, it is impossible to accurately predict how many jobs it would provide. What the SNP have said, however, is that their naval force would be comparable to that of Denmark or Norway.

As discussed in the chapter on conventional forces, the comparison with Norway seems unrealistic. With an annual defence budget of £4.6 billion, over £2 billion more than the SNP propose to spend, the Norwegian Navy consists of 37 vessels (including five frigates and six submarines).¹⁶⁵ It also has one major base, employing some 4,000 people in total.¹⁶⁶

Closer to the mark – at least in terms of budget – is Denmark, which spends £2.6 billion per annum on defence (almost the same as the SNP's proposed £2.5 billion). Denmark has two main bases: one with 600 personnel and the other with 500 personnel, a total of 1,100.¹⁶⁷

Clearly, this figure falls far short of the jobs provided by HMNB Clyde, and employees there have additionally complained of a lack of clarity from the SNP on specifics. According to Calder, "[p]eople are really quite sceptical about what has come up so far, which is very little." Of concern is not merely how many jobs might be replaced if Trident goes, but what kind of jobs (and whether they will be transferable for current employees, many of whom have very specialist skills). These and other questions were put to Angus Robertson, by Calder and other base representatives, at a meeting on 15 February 2013; but they are not expecting to receive any answers until

after the SNP have published their defence White Paper in November.¹⁶⁸

In strategic terms, there is also a serious question mark over the SNP's plans with regard to the suitability of Faslane as either Scotland's sole naval base, or as headquarters for the Armed Forces. Legitimate questions exist as to the strategic viability of placing the entire Scottish Navy in the southwest of the country, given that both its primary at-sea assets (the oil and gas rigs), as well as potential threats, are located almost entirely in the north and east.

In the past, the SNP have spoken about using Rosyth, on the east coast, as a base. This would add a further dimension to the post-Trident jobs equation; but it is not clear whether strategic considerations would precipitate a resurrection of this policy if Scotland did become independent. As for having the Armed Forces' headquarters at Faslane, this also raises questions since, ordinarily, it is seen as advantageous to have such a facility rather closer to the centre of political power – in this case, Edinburgh. In the UK, for comparison, the MoD is situated just a few hundred yards down the road from Parliament, and more or less directly opposite Downing Street.

For all of these reasons, combined with the length of time it would take to properly establish an independent Scottish Navy, the SNP may very well choose against moving Trident out of Scotland at such a speed as gives those presently working there insufficient time to find alternative employment. In the words of Lord West: "If 6,500 employees are given their P60s all at once, and told, 'Off you go', that isn't going to make the SNP dead popular is it?"¹⁶⁹

MOVING TRIDENT – THE REALISTIC SCENARIO

Consequently, the most realistic scenario for Trident removal will be that it takes place over an extended period of time, sufficient to enable the rUK to find and make ready an alternative location, and likewise for proper preparations to be made for HMNB Clyde's future – and that of its employees – on the Scottish side.

Judged against these criteria, the overwhelming consensus is that moving Trident will take many years, although quite how many remains a matter of intense speculation. At the lower end of the scale is Lord West, who estimated that "if you want to set up and build a new site – and do it really quickly as a major, fast project – it would probably take about five to seven years, because you would have to go through all the clearances [and] planning; work out where you were going to put the thing; work out exactly what it is you want to bring down; and all the other stuff. That would be speedy in a peacetime context."¹⁷⁰

Others, such as Professor William Walker of St Andrews University (who co-authored an early assessment of Trident's future in an independent Scotland, together with Professor Chalmers, back in 2002), warn that any move could take 20 years or more. Whilst RNAD Coulport was constructed in just four years, following the selection of Faslane in the 1960s as the home for the Polaris ballistic-missile submarines, neither of the "facilities had to go through any kind of planning system." This time, though, any relocation will likely not be as swift because the "public feels it has a right to express an opinion on these matters [...] The Government would have to go through various quite difficult political processes to try to get consent for [a move]."¹⁷¹ In Walker's estimation, "the

process of finding a site might take five to 10 years"; then, with "all the engineering and construction works [...] it could be a long time." His conclusion: "20 years might be a minimum."¹⁷²

Dr Phillips O'Brien, Director of the Scottish Centre for War Studies at Glasgow University, has suggested that 10-15 years might be a possible target, but only under specific conditions which are unlikely to materialise: "If you had unlimited political will and funds behind it, you could do it quicker than 20 years without a doubt, but an enormous amount of resources would have to be put into it with no one objecting and cross-party support [...] personally I can't see that happening."¹⁷³

In light of this, there are some within the community of experts examining this issue – amongst them Lieutenant Colonel Crawford – who have concluded that an independent Scotland would be wiser to shelve any notion of speedy withdrawal of Trident, and instead see the deterrent for what it is: the ultimate bargaining chip.

"Angus Robertson has been careful not to put a time frame on the removal of Trident. It's the biggest bargaining chip they have," Crawford said, arguing that the only reason that the SNP have not been more up-front about this ahead of the referendum is because it would cause uproar with the party grassroots. "They haven't sold that line to the grassroots of the party, and the grassroots wouldn't have it; there would be a huge fuss. But that's the reality, that's what they're trading on [...] I've said until I'm blue in the face that Trident will stay on the Clyde until it's obsolete."¹⁷⁴

When, however, will Trident become obsolete? Under current plans, first outlined in a 2006 MoD White Paper, "the Vanguard-class submarines are likely to start leaving service from the early 2020s"; but, the UK has committed

to replacing them, and to participate in the US life-extension programme for the Trident D5 missile, "which will enable us to retain that missile in-service until the early 2040s."¹⁷⁵

Professor Chalmers has also argued strongly that Trident is a bargaining chip which the SNP, in an independent Scotland, would be foolish to squander.

"I think the starting point for London will be: 'Look, it's bloody difficult for us to move this. We want this to stay here'. I think, actually, the rUK would want to go further than that; I think they would want some legal undertaking by the Scots Government [...] I mean, they'd have to have legal arrangements anyway for how it operated, but I think they'd want some guarantee that it would stay for some significant number of years – 10; 15; or however many years to, at the very least, give them the chance to build an alternative.

"But, from a Scottish point of view, I think it's a great bargaining chip if they are prepared to play it. I don't think the SNP, now or after a referendum, would be prepared to give away that chip very easily. So they'd say, 'OK, if you really want this, you'll have to give us X; Y; and Z in return', like support for NATO and EU membership."¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately, given the enormous political sensitivity surrounding this issue, combined with the fact that the SNP will not want to reveal their hand – for perfectly understandable reasons – before negotiations begin, this is one area where we should not expect full disclosure before the referendum. Hopefully, however, this chapter will have helped shine some light on the possible realities of moving Trident from Scotland, and why it would likely be a much more drawn-out process than is sometimes assumed.



CHAPTER V

Intelligence and Cyber Security

Of all the issues pertaining to the defence of an independent Scotland, intelligence and cyber security are perhaps the most sensitive and least well understood. The SNP have provided precious little detail on their plans in this area to date, with the relevant section of their *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* stating only that they will possess such capabilities – and no detail at all about how this will happen:

“While conventional military threats to Scotland are low, it is important to maintain appropriate security and defence arrangements and capabilities. This includes a cyber security and intelligence infrastructure to deal with new threats and protect key national economic and social infrastructure.”¹⁷⁷

The Deputy First Minister of the Scottish Government, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, provided a little more detail in her evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, whilst promising a fuller assessment in the SNP's much-anticipated defence White Paper (due in November 2013).

Speaking on 28 January 2013, she said, “In terms of security and intelligence, I would envisage Scotland having independent domestic intelligence machinery in Scotland sitting alongside our police service.”¹⁷⁸

Asked if an independent Scotland might attempt to set up an external-intelligence service, the UK equivalent being MI6, Sturgeon answered, “That is one option that is available to Scotland”.¹⁷⁹

On the issue of how much these services would cost to run, Sturgeon took the amount presently spent by the UK on intelligence and cyber security, a little over £2 billion, and calculated a “pro rata [sic] share of that” for Scotland.¹⁸⁰ When it was pointed out that the UK has devoted billions of pounds over several decades to developing its sophisticated intelligence and cyber-security infrastructure, and asked if the SNP had factored set-up costs into the equation, Sturgeon did not provide an answer, but referred the committee back to the White Paper currently under preparation.¹⁸¹

When similar questions were put to Angus Robertson for this report, he answered that “for very obvious reasons, I'm not going to go and have a long conversation about how you deal with intelligence [...] the Home Secretary, she would say exactly the same thing to you.”¹⁸²

Asked to at least give a broad indication as to the SNP's thinking on the matter, Robertson focused on cyber security as “one of the greatest challenges we face”, and “an area of great potential for Scotland [as it is] perfectly suited to developing appropriate technology to deal with this 21st-century challenge”.

“There are already projects underway in Scotland relating to cyber security, which are very easily scalable [after] an independence vote. There are also people within the current intelligence and policing community who will be very

well placed,” he said.¹⁸³

Asked if he believed, therefore, that a share of current intelligence and security operatives would be transferred from the UK services such as the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and MI5 to work in independent Scottish services, Robertson posited that “across the defence and security world, there are a great many people who would be glad to be based in Scotland; work in Scotland; and provide the appropriate defence and security skill set for a sovereign Scotland.”¹⁸⁴

It also appears to be clear SNP policy that the country, particularly in the initial post-independence phase, would share intelligence and security assets with the rUK. As Nicola Sturgeon explained, the envisaged domestic-intelligence service would be “working very closely [...] with the [r]UK and making sure we are sharing intelligence and sharing our response to some of these threats. [...] There would be continued shared arrangements with the rest of the UK regardless of our independent capability because that makes sense based on our geography.”¹⁸⁵

Asked if she believed that a Scottish Government would be able “to read the rest of the UK’s secret intelligence”, Sturgeon replied, “There are arrangements with other countries and the UK [...] now in terms of sharing intelligence. [...] I think there would be a very close relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK.”¹⁸⁶

Clearly, the SNP do not yet possess a fully formed position on these issues, and – perhaps unsurprisingly – large swathes of the SNP’s assumptions have been called into question (including by several experts interviewed by this report). Areas of particular note are the

vast set-up costs of establishing new security and intelligence infrastructure, quite distinct from the costs of running it; the feasibility of attempting to establish Scottish equivalents to MI6 and GCHQ; and, perhaps most contentiously, the conditions under which intelligence would be shared between the rUK and Scotland.

INTELLIGENCE SHARING WITH THE RUK AND OTHER COUNTRIES

In a February 2013 submission to Parliament, the UK Government examined the implications of Scottish independence, and looked closely at their impact on the three security and intelligence agencies. It concluded that the “Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) operate lawfully within the UK, and abroad on its behalf, under UK Acts of Parliament passed in 1989 and 1994. Should Scotland become independent the automatic position in law would be that [these services] would continue to operate on the same basis, except that they would have no authority or obligation to act on behalf of an independent Scottish state.”¹⁸⁷

The report continued: “It would be open to representatives of an independent Scottish state to seek to make use of arrangements now operative within the UK should they so wish, although any proposals would need to be considered carefully and may not be straightforward or necessarily in the interests of the continuing UK.”¹⁸⁸

The Home Secretary has also warned that assumptions by the SNP that shared geography and other interests would inevitably result in shared intelligence

are premature.

During a visit to Glasgow, on 8 February 2013, Theresa May made it clear that before the rUK agreed to share any intelligence with an independent Scotland, the new country would need to establish the same basis of trust as the UK currently has with other nations. "The point is that if Scotland is separate it becomes a separate state. So it is not the same as sharing intelligence across the UK," she said.

"The SNP make a lot of assumptions in a lot of areas and are trying to tell people nothing would change but there is a whole range of issues that would need to be looked at and decided upon [...] I think in terms of looking ahead to the referendum, people would question very seriously the SNP if they don't come up with firm proposals on issues like this."¹⁸⁹

The SNP have hit back at these remarks, with a party spokesman accusing May of "rank hypocrisy". He went on to add that she is "in no position to lecture Scotland", and that her comments "make no sense – if the UK government is happy to share intelligence with Algeria, as David Cameron recently announced, why wouldn't it make sense to share intelligence with an independent Scotland?"¹⁹⁰

The Home Secretary's warnings have, however, been defended by Baroness Ramsay, who strongly dismissed the comparison with Algeria:

"You could almost hear the amusement in the voice of this idiot from the Scottish Government, implying that if you're going to share with Algeria, then why not the Scots? But, of course, what this person – whoever he is – didn't know, or doesn't seem to understand, is: of course we're going to share information

with the Algerians; the Algerians have – for many, many years – a history of having to deal with Islamist terrorism, an absolute treasure trove of information about people and organisations who are a direct threat to British interests. So, sneering this off [as] 'if you're going to talk to somebody like the Algerians then why not talk to us?' just shows a complete ignorance of the reality."¹⁹¹

The harsh reality, Ramsay insists, is that the rUK would not share intelligence with any country unless it had a clear interest in doing so:

"It's a cold, hard, nasty world that we're in when we're talking about sharing or giving intelligence, and it's always only given when it's in the interests of the giver – not the recipient – and that's an important principle [the SNP] don't seem to grasp. It's maybe not nice; but you don't tell somebody something's in their interests to know unless it's in your interests that they know it."¹⁹²

This is a rule that extends across intelligence communities – including the UK and US, between whom exists perhaps the most sophisticated and in-depth intelligence-sharing relationship on earth: "The reason the Americans work with us, and have good liaison with us, is not because they like the blue of our eyes, or because they're very Anglophile; it's because they reckon they get something back for it that they value, and if you haven't got anything to offer, you don't get. [...]"

"What the SNP are working on is an assumption that the resources the British agencies have, they will have absolute access to; and that's not what's going to happen, because that's not what does happen in these situations. They'll only get what's in the interests of the [r]UK agencies to tell them."¹⁹³

This point was also made separately by Sir Malcolm Rifkind (who, since 2010, has chaired Parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee, and who served as Foreign Secretary between 1995 and 1997):

“It takes two to tango: you don’t share intelligence with any government, however much you might wish to, unless that government is cooperating with you. It’s a two-way process; there is no country in the world that we share intelligence with unless we have the corresponding benefit from them. It is entirely probable that an independent Scotland would want to have that relationship with the rUK; but that then brings up the question of how would they make their contribution? They would have to make a Scottish equivalent of the [Secret Intelligence Service]. They would have to create a Scottish equivalent of the Security Service, [and] of GCHQ. These things take money; but they also take a hell of a lot of time.”¹⁹⁴

One other important factor that could jeopardise the intelligence-sharing relationship between an independent Scotland and the rUK, at least initially, would be issues pertaining to the reliability of any new Scottish agencies:

“A new service setting up in Scotland would take many years to persuade people to trust it,” said Baroness Ramsay. “It’s got nothing to do with nationality; it’s to do with the organisation – how it works, and how it’s seen to be working – and any Scottish service would have to prove (not just to the British, but to services all round the world) that they could be trusted – not because they would deliberately be untrustworthy, but accidentally [untrustworthy].

“You have to be sure. Secret intelligence is terribly sensitive because of the

sourcing, and the sourcing is something which you protect at all costs. First, because of the security of that particular source, whether it’s technical or human; [and second,] because, if you’re a service that gets known as not protecting its sources to the utmost, you soon stop getting sources.

“Why would anybody risk giving you anything if they know you can’t be trusted to keep their secret? For many sources it is a matter of life and death; it’s not overly dramatic to say that. When you think about it: if it’s secret intelligence, it’s something you should not be having – in which case, you’re getting it through a person or a technical operation which shouldn’t be happening, and somebody’s at risk in there if it gets out. So I just don’t think enough thought is given to this. [The SNP] seem to think that intelligence is traded like any other commodity; but that is not how it happens.”¹⁹⁵

It is quite possible to accept the point that no country shares intelligence unless it is in its interests to do so, whilst also appreciating that the physical; economic; and other ties between Scotland and the rUK would render close relations in both their interests. Indeed, this point has been repeatedly made by Nicola Sturgeon and many others.

According to Baroness Ramsay, however, this fact would by no means result in the rUK going ‘above and beyond’ the standard *modus operandi* in its intelligence-sharing relationship with Scotland. The notion, for instance, that London and Edinburgh might come to some arrangement – as part of independence negotiations – whereby the rUK provided an intelligence ‘umbrella’ to Scotland (sharing all relevant intelligence until the Scottish

services were up and running) was described by Ramsay as “just not in the real world”.

“This picture is exactly what Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP would like to believe – that important areas of activity can just continue as they are at present, without any change produced by independence. It just will not happen like that; the [r]UK intelligence and security services will pursue their own interests by all the considerable means at their disposal, and the only time any intelligence might be given to a Scottish structure would be when essential [r] UK interests were involved and it was essential that Scotland needed to know.”¹⁹⁶

THE THIRD-PARTY RULE

The extent to which the rUK would be willing to share intelligence with an independent Scotland would also be influenced by the international relations of both countries. For instance, were the US to share a piece of intelligence with their British counterparts, which the rUK subsequently deemed to be of relevance to Scotland, it could under no circumstances pass that information onto Scotland without America's express consent. This rule, known as the Third-Party Rule, is of fundamental importance in the intelligence community, and the consequences of breaking it are – at best – a drying-up of that source of information, if not a wider breakdown in relations between the two parties.

It was the British Government's determination not to break this principle that led it to fight so hard against successive rulings from the courts that secret intelligence relating to the alleged torture of the UK resident and terror suspect, Binyam Mohamed, be released. This intelligence, which had been provided to British officials by the

CIA, was alleged by Mohamed's lawyers to have substantiated his claim to have been tortured at – and en route to – Guantánamo Bay.

Having lost its case first in the High Court, and then in the Court of Appeal, the British Government resolved to settle with Mohamed, by awarding him a rumoured £1 million in compensation.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, such has been the Government's determination to prevent a repeat of this incident that it has inserted a clause in the Justice and Security Act 2013, given Royal Assent on 25 April, stipulating “that the court is required to give permission for material not to be disclosed if it considers that the disclosure of the material would be damaging to the interests of national security.”¹⁹⁸

The circumstances under which the US – or other countries – may wish for secret intelligence provided to the [r] UK not to be passed onto Scotland are varied, but would obviously include their assessment of the ability of Scottish services to keep that information secret.

Countries would also consider the implications of sharing intelligence with Scotland based on its international posture and foreign-policy objectives. This would also apply to the rUK's bilateral intelligence-sharing relationship with a new nation north of the border. In short, countries would have precious little reason to share intelligence with a Scotland whose international orientation was at odds with their own, if the result would be to facilitate that posture and underpin it. As Sir Richard Mottram, a former chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, has said: under such circumstances, all rUK Governments would have “a very narrow definition of what they would want to do. Where they had a direct interest in

things such as counter-terrorism, yes, they would do something, because that was in their interests. Otherwise, they would probably be quite awkward.”¹⁹⁹

MULTILATERAL INTELLIGENCE-SHARING RELATIONSHIPS

Similar considerations would also apply to whether or not an independent Scotland would be party to multilateral intelligence-sharing relationships, in particular the ‘Five Eyes’ community and NATO’s internal intelligence-sharing network.

For Scotland to be part of the NATO network would obviously be contingent on it joining the alliance (although sources consulted for this report are in private agreement that only fairly low-level intelligence tends to be shared in this network in any case). An altogether tighter and more significant operation is ‘Five Eyes’, one of the most important intelligence-sharing frameworks on earth.

First established in 1946 as an agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence (SIGINT) between the UK and US, ‘Five Eyes’ (formally the UKUSA Agreement) was later extended to include the three Commonwealth countries of Canada; Australia; and New Zealand.²⁰⁰

‘Five Eyes’ is one of the most important international intelligence-sharing frameworks in the world, with membership determined by a common language; mutually compatible strategic objectives; and, importantly, the ability of each member to contribute intelligence to the benefit of the others. Each member of ‘Five Eyes’ is officially assigned lead responsibility for intelligence collection and analysis in different parts of the globe, consistent with their geographical location and capabilities.

Whether or not an independent Scotland might ever be invited to join ‘Five Eyes’, thus presumably making it ‘Six Eyes’, would depend on whether or not it was considered strategically compatible, and – equally – whether or not it could actually and meaningfully contribute SIGINT to the alliance. At least part of the answer to this latter question would depend on how serious and effective an independent Scotland’s overseas-intelligence-gathering network would be, and in what areas it would choose to prioritise its efforts.

ESTABLISHING SCOTTISH SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

The UK’s intelligence network consists of three agencies which, between them, command a budget in excess of £2 billion a year. Working together to protect the country, they are: the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), which has responsibility for taking action to deal with threats from abroad; the Security Service (MI5), responsible for threats developing domestically; and the SIGINT Service (GCHQ), tasked with monitoring, intercepting, and decrypting information from those who pose a threat to the UK from overseas (including in cyber space).

In addition, there are the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The former makes up part of the MoD, and its primary functions are to assess intelligence material and to provide information on possible threats to the UK. The latter is part of the Cabinet Office, and its responsibilities are to advise government ministers on priorities for intelligence gathering, as well as analysing information provided by the other four agencies.

Across a range of areas, the intelligence and security services also work closely with the police; although, given that policing is already a devolved matter (with Scotland possessing a distinctive and effective police service), this is not an area covered in this report.

Both for reasons of cost and because of the probability that it would not be so globally ambitious as the UK is now, it seems almost inconceivable that an independent Scotland would seek to replicate the entirety of the vast cross-governmental network that makes up Britain's existing security and intelligence capability.

THE SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (MI6)

Although Nicola Sturgeon has said that establishing a Scottish equivalent of MI6 would be "an option", experts (both consulted for this report, and elsewhere) seem to be in broad agreement that this would be unlikely. Whilst Scottish intelligence and security services would clearly need to gather information regarding potential threats to Scotland from abroad, that is not analogous to the work of MI6 (which maintains one of the world's biggest networks of overseas agents who perform a broad range of secret-intelligence gathering and covert operations abroad in pursuit of British Government objectives).

Baroness Ramsay has said that Scotland "would be mad to establish an intelligence service [like MI6]", pointing out that "very few countries in the world actually have an MI6 [...] global-intelligence services are very few and far between."²⁰¹ Instead, Baroness Ramsay posited, Scotland would probably adopt similar methods to those deployed by other small countries (such as the Nordic states) for their overseas-

intelligence work: "All the Nordic states gather intelligence either through defence attachés or through liaison with other services like our own".²⁰² She also emphasised that the Nordic states each possess an excellent Security Service which, in addition to its normal security activity, is able to gather some foreign intelligence on its own soil.

In evidence given to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Sir Richard Mottram concurred that any external-intelligence agency which Scotland might seek to create would "not bear any relationship to the scale of the network that is currently operated by [MI6] and the range of information that it derives." Assuming, as Sturgeon has posited, that Scottish intelligence agencies would be funded to the tune of 8-10 per cent of the current UK total – some £160-200 million – Mottram suggested that Scotland could deliver an external-intelligence service comparable to that of sister agencies such as New Zealand's, "which have a fairly narrow range of functions".²⁰³

THE SECURITY SERVICE (MI5)

Scotland would, however, need to establish its equivalent of MI5, albeit on a smaller scale. Baroness Ramsay has suggested that "in time, Scotland could have a reasonably efficient, capable national security service on a par with some of the smaller European countries."²⁰⁴ The difficulty would be the likely prolonged length of time it would take to set-up a Scottish Security Service, and, indeed, any other intelligence-gathering agency Scotland may wish to establish.

One of the major challenges, Baroness Ramsay said, would be recruitment. "That's got nothing to do with the talents of Scots at all; there are a lot

of Scots in the intelligence and security services who've done extremely well. It's not a question of national talents; it's a question of resources and expertise built up over time."²⁰⁵

A major part of this is the extreme importance of personal relationships and liaisons in intelligence gathering, which can often take years to identify; cultivate; and maintain. Added to that is the already mentioned issue that it would take considerable time for Scottish intelligence agencies to win the trust of sister agencies. Good inter-agency relationships are of particular importance to smaller countries such as Scotland "because none of the individual countries that aren't global have the resources to get all the information they need," the Baroness explained. "That's where trust in your capability and your ability to protect secrets [comes in]; the minute you think a security service is a bit loose with information, you just don't give them anything."²⁰⁶

The difficulty in this regard is that, unlike with the Armed Forces, it is almost inconceivable that an independent Scotland would take its "share" of the security and intelligence services, in either personnel or assets. The nature of an intelligence agent's work is such that he or she could not simply be transferred sideways into the equivalent service of another country, taking all of their contacts and classified information with them. "That does not mean some Scots might not leave and come to Scotland and help to try and set something up," Meta Ramsay said. "But the only expertise an MI5 officer would be able to actually bring in to a Scottish service would be the expertise of how to recruit people, how to run agents, that sort of thing; but it's all very theoretical. What he or she wouldn't be bringing are

the real nitty-gritty of agents and cases. You couldn't do that because [you] cannot talk about anything you've done inside."²⁰⁷

For much the same reasons, the UK Government would also be extremely unlikely to relinquish the physical assets that comprise its security and intelligence services, most of which are – in any case – situated south of the border.

In the early years at least, and quite possibly subsequently, an independent Scotland would require considerable support from the UK if it were not to be left dangerously exposed. Such assistance would not be without precedent, as Sir David Omand has highlighted: "It is part of our history that we helped both Australia and Canada develop significant capability over a period of very many years, lending them staff and in some cases providing even the director of their communications security and communications intelligence organisations until they were able to stand on their own feet, which they do now."²⁰⁸

In the case of the Scotland-rUK relationship, the importance of such assistance would likely be even more pressing given the deep interconnectedness of the two countries. This might also consequently limit Scotland's freedom of action, with Omand telling the Foreign Affairs Committee, "There would, of course, initially be a large number of gaps [in Scotland's intelligence capabilities]. Part of the negotiation that I would imagine would take place would be London saying very firmly to Edinburgh, 'Here's part of the deal: for our security as well as your own, you are going to have to make certain arrangements.'"²⁰⁹

Moreover, as Omand; Ramsay; and others have made clear, the rUK would only offer an independent Scotland such assistance as was required to meet its own security interests, not those of Scotland; and, whilst the two would certainly be interconnected, they would not be one and the same.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS HEADQUARTERS (GCHQ)

Opinions vary as to the extent to which an independent Scotland could establish its own version of GCHQ. In order to counter the developing cyber threat, Sir Richard Mottram has said that Scotland would indeed “need a mini-GCHQ to both protect their information and consider other things that go with this. [...] These things can be done because we can think of other countries that do this that are of a similar scale to Scotland in terms of population and economy.”²¹⁰

Sir David Omand, who formerly headed GCHQ, concurred with Mottram's analysis regarding the possibility of establishing a “mini-GCHQ”, but voiced greater concern as to whether it would have the requisite capabilities to protect Scotland adequately:

“The United Kingdom Government in its cyber strategy has said that we will be a leading player. The highest standards of cyber security will be necessary for economic reasons. I cannot imagine a Government in Edinburgh would want to take a different view [...] and] that means you then have to have access to technical capability linked to some serious intelligence capability.

“The smaller nations in NATO can access some of this through the NATO arrangements which the Americans are underpinning. There is some NATO research capability. To get to the sort of level that I would think appropriate,

much more than that would be needed. It would be expensive and [the] overall value you would get from two centres [NATO's and Scotland's] rather than one would be less [...] I have some doubts as to whether it would be feasible to do it to the requisite standard. A much more sensible way would be to try to construct a relationship of sharing with the rest of the United Kingdom.”²¹¹

Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones (a former chair of the JIC, who served as Minister of State for Security and Counter-Terrorism between 2010 and 2011) has also highlighted some of the key challenges confronting the establishment of a Scottish GCHQ: “The issue will be cost. I do not think Scotland could develop – because the investment is long and deep, and extremely resource demanding – I do not think they could develop an organisation that is on a par with GCHQ. There's only one other country that's in the game the way we are, and that is the US [...] We are devoting £650 million additional over five years, on the base of already having substantial structure – and intellectual and political investment – in the subject. GCHQ is there; you build on what you've got, and, if you're starting from scratch, this is potentially a very big call on resources.”²¹²

Professor Keith Martin, Director of the Information Security Group at Royal Holloway University, concurs that Scotland would struggle to replicate the set-up at Cheltenham. “GCHQ is a pivotal organisation in the cyber defence of the realm [...] and] if Scotland was cut off from GCHQ, then clearly there's something missing. If I were a Scottish minister planning a breakaway, I'd certainly be thinking carefully about that. I do not think it would be easy for Scotland to have its own GCHQ.”²¹³

The importance of GCHQ is its ability to

identify, monitor, and counter threats to national security and which emanate from cyber space. It stands to reason that the starting point when putting up effective cyber defences is knowing where the threat is aimed. “It’s not good enough to just have a general understanding that there is a threat,” said Baroness Neville-Jones. “You need to know where it’s going and where it’s coming from. That depends on an extremely well-developed intelligence base, at the heart of which is GCHQ [...] GCHQ tracks the threat; it can show you the threat coming.”²¹⁴

Such a capability is especially vital in countering malicious threats to a nation’s electronic infrastructure, what is commonly referred to as cyber warfare. The threat posed by cyber warfare is real and growing (with risks exacerbated as malicious actors enhance their capacity to launch cyber attacks, and nations become ever more reliant on electronic systems in order to function properly).

There is no exact agreed definition of cyber warfare; but it can essentially be summarised as politically motivated hacking in order to conduct sabotage and espionage, especially against government targets and other critical national infrastructure. Although cyber attacks can be launched by private citizens, this is also a new mode of warfare being developed by governments (with China already talking of “winning informationised wars by the mid-21st century”).²¹⁵

In some respects, cyber warfare poses a greater threat to national security than conventional conflict does, not least because the world’s current international peacekeeping framework is manifestly not configured to respond appropriately. No better example of this exists than the cyber attacks on Estonia,

in 2007. The attacks swamped websites of numerous Estonian organisations, including the parliament; banks; government ministries; newspapers; and broadcasters, with the perpetrator widely suspected to have been Russia. Had this been a conventional attack, Estonia (a NATO member since 2004) could have expected a robust response from the alliance – under Article 5 of NATO’s founding treaty, whereby “an attack against one or more [members] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all” – not to mention severe sanction from the United Nations.²¹⁶

As it was, the international response to this flagrant and malicious violation of Estonian sovereignty was collective international impotence (made all the more acute by the fact that, although Russia was widely suspected to have been responsible, this was never definitively proved to have been the case).²¹⁷ In January 2008, more than eight months after the attacks were launched, Estonia succeeded in convicting one man for participating in the affair, and fined him the grand total of £830.²¹⁸

In this new and evolving security arena, therefore, nations are arguably more vulnerable – and less able to rely on international protection – than in any other kind of warfare, making effective national cyber security capabilities (such as are presently afforded to the UK by GCHQ) even more important.

CYBER SECURITY BEYOND GCHQ

Vital though government agencies such as GCHQ are in this arena, however, they nevertheless form only part of the solution in dealing with threats from cyber space.

As the Government has acknowledged in its 2013 review of the landscape of the UK's cyber security strategy, fully 80 per cent of cyber attacks could be prevented through simple computer and network 'hygiene'.²¹⁹

Indeed, it is important to distinguish between cyber warfare of the sort previously described and cyber crime more broadly (which encompasses commercially motivated offences online, as well as non-malicious acts that can result in damage to electronic systems and/or the loss of information).

In countering all of these threats, private companies – and individual Internet users – have both a role to play and an interest in playing it. The reality is that nobody controls the Internet, and nobody owns it (with 80 per cent of it lying in the private sector).²²⁰

In most cases, the first line of defence against cyber threats, whether malicious or accidental, must be provided by the target of those threats themselves. Dr Thomas Rid (one of the world's leading experts on cyber-security strategy, and a Reader at the Department of War Studies at Kings College London) made this clear in his interview for this report: "If you are HSBC and you are a target of attacks – which every bank is – who is at the frontline there? The answer is the company itself. If your company network is penetrated from another country, it is not as if any UK agency is standing at the border watching the traffic; or, at least it is not as if they can do something about it. It is a question of how you organise your company security, and – in some cases – how you cooperate with law enforcement in order to take action, if you have to take action."²²¹

Brought right down to the individual level, good cyber security could be as

simple as ensuring the appropriate anti-virus software is installed on a computer, or that data is properly stored and backed up.

"Cyber security is as much about protecting us from ourselves, as it is about protecting us from others," Professor Martin said. "Accidental loss of data, and careless practice that results in information leaking – this is not necessarily because of a malicious enemy; it's because of bad practice that leads to massive data loss. People lock their houses up; they lock papers in a drawer; they look after their photo album, and keep it somewhere safe; but they stick all this stuff digitally on a computer, and don't back it up. If that computer then gets a bit of malware, they lose their entire photo album; they lose all their correspondence; they lose access to their bank."²²²

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY

The challenge in developing an effective cyber-security strategy is how to integrate all these areas: promoting best practice at the individual and company level, and also timely and appropriate information sharing and system integration further up the scale.

The reality, according to Professor Rid, is that "nobody has full visibility about the entire picture; so, neither GCHQ nor the Cabinet Office nor anybody else in the City has full visibility of the threat landscape, of the vulnerability landscape."²²³

Bringing these disparate components together to provide that bigger picture is a challenge that all nations are now

having to confront, with varying levels of success. The UK Government's review of the cyber-security landscape was itself a product of collaboration between central government, think tanks, industry representatives, academics, and citizens' groups.²²⁴ The Government has also begun an initiative to create an information exchange in a confidential environment, in order to enable major companies to share experiences and lessons learned about cyber attacks to which they have been subjected but, for commercial and reputational reasons, do not want to acknowledge publicly.²²⁵

As previously mentioned, the Government is also devoting an additional £650 million to its cyber-security strategy, with payment spread out between 2011 and 2015. Additionally, it is bringing together fifteen government organisations, in an attempt to coordinate these efforts.²²⁶

With some 1,000 cyber attacks launched against British targets every hour, at an annual cost to the economy of between £18 billion and £27 billion, *the UK clearly remains vulnerable*; but, there is reason to believe that it is faring well compared to other advanced nations.²²⁷

According to the *Cyber Power Index* prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the UK now surpasses every other G20 country for its ability to withstand cyber attacks and to deploy digital infrastructure needed to boost the economy. The index is constructed from 39 indicators and sub-indicators which measure specific attributes of the cyber environment, with data drawn from across four drivers of cyber power: legal and regulatory framework, economic and social context, technology infrastructure, and industry application. When all this information has been

analysed, Britain is placed in first position, ahead of the US; Australia; and Germany (who are ranked second; third; and fourth, respectively).²²⁸

In terms of developing its own cyber-security strategy; bringing together the government, the private sector, and academia; and taking advantage of some of the commercial opportunities which the sector provides, there are those who argue that an independent Scotland could do well.

"I think Scotland, if it got its act together, could tackle a fair amount of cyber security," said Professor Martin. "I think the UK is struggling to get its head round cyber security – it's certainly making good progress; but it's not got it all sorted – so it's not like there's a perfect system now. Scotland has as good a chance as anybody, in that sense of getting it right."²²⁹

Planners would need to recognise that an independent Scotland would remain acutely vulnerable to cyber attacks on its critical national infrastructure, as well as to commercially motivated cyber crime (not least on account of its still significant financial-services industry). Denial-of-Service (DoS) attacks and covert data acquisition can be particularly damaging to financial-services industries (due to the destruction of trust and the potential slowing – or even stopping – of trade, quite aside from the immediate loss of money and data involved).

However, whilst Scotland's vulnerability in that area would be significant, the same could be said of the market for cyber solutions and services. As Professor Martin pointed out whilst highlighting the business potential of the Scottish cyber industry:

"The UK Government is trying to secure

Britain, [and] also to promote cyber as a business the UK can sell, with people coming to the UK for cyber-security services. There are lots of companies in that industry [which are already in Scotland], as well as the universities. There's nothing to stop Scotland getting on top of that and developing its own cyber-security industry. Singapore is going to pour money into research to develop cyber programmes and security companies there – so this is not a closed door; it's an open market".²³⁰

In Scotland today, there are already some 2,000 people employed in the security and resilience industry, with sales of over £200 million. Scotland has over 100 capable companies with products; services; and applications in fields ranging from cyber security, to surveillance, and business continuity, to biometrics.²³¹

In his evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Sir David Omand also made this point, highlighting companies (such as SELEX Galileo, one of the world's leading companies in the cyber security) based north of the border, as well as the "excellent computer science departments" in Scottish universities.²³²

SCALING THE CYBER SECURITY PROBLEM: THE CHALLENGE FOR SCOTLAND

Perhaps the most serious challenge for Scotland in establishing itself as a serious player in the cyber-security domain would be one of scale. Whilst, as mentioned, there would be nothing to hold an independent Scotland back from designing a coherent cyber-security strategy, drawing together the requisite capabilities to enact it in practice would be more problematic.

"Every country, including the United States – a huge country in comparison to all European countries – is struggling to recruit the necessary talent and skills to develop the products, programmes, and projects that make you safe in cyber space. It's a problem in the public and the private sector," Professor Rid said.

"With the exception of Israel – and Scotland will not be Israel – all small countries are by definition marginal players in this field, and, to a degree, dependent on the larger players [...] Basically, you need an economy of scale when it comes to cyber security."²³³

As a specific example of the challenge, Rid cited the problem he has encountered in finding UK-based control-system experts to better gauge the threats to, and vulnerabilities in, Industrial Control Systems (ICS). "It turns out there are actually very few people in the UK to talk about this; one of them is actually in Scotland. If a country of 63 or 64 million has issues with the economy of scale because it is actually not big enough compared to, say, the United States [what chance does a smaller nation like Scotland have?] That is the biggest issue; I cannot emphasise that enough."²³⁴

In an effort to address the serious shortage of qualified cyber-security experts, GCHQ has thrown its weight behind the 'Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research', a programme which has brought together eight leading British Universities in an attempt to encourage them to devote greater focus and resources to this field. Amongst the various benefits offered to the universities by GCHQ are: closer collaboration with GCHQ and others in the cyber-security industry; partnership endorsement in publications and prospectuses; and extra funding opportunities, including up to £50,000

in capital investment.²³⁵

Indeed, even the United States has struggled to find the necessary talent in this field. In 2010, it was estimated that just 1,000 people existed in the entire US with the requisite skills needed for the most demanding cyber-defence tasks, with a force of some 20,000 to 30,000 being what was needed.²³⁶

“You need to be big in this game,” Rid continued. “If you look at the private sector, some companies in the US have more revenue than entire countries. In the conventional security arena, when it comes to military capabilities, states are very unequal. They are even more unequal when it comes to cyber security, because the supporting eco-system that you need in order to be both defensively and offensively big players is so hard to come by. [...]

“It is certainly possible that small companies in this arena could be very successful; but, if you are a Scottish company and you are interested in cyber security, right now you are part of a system that is one of the best: it can compete with what is happening in the United States. It is impressive what is happening in London. [...So] I think it is unrealistic to [try and] replicate this in a small country because no other small country in Europe is into it in a major way. The economy-of-scale argument is the central argument, and you can break that down into networks between companies and government; the running of intelligence agencies or law-enforcement agencies; or attracting skill, you name it.”²³⁷

As a final point, Rid also emphasised the importance of physical proximity between political and economic centres of power, a more subtle but additionally important component of developing

effective cyber defences. In this respect, he said that London presently enjoyed a distinct advantage:

“London is extremely well positioned to combine the private sector and the public sector because of their physical proximity to one another. Think what other cities can offer the same thing. Germany does not have a city where you have business and government in one spot: business and banking is in Frankfurt; but the government is in Berlin. In America, business and banking is in New York, not in Washington, DC; and Brussels a similar picture. This physical proximity is extremely important because it is all about trusting people, about creating trust between individuals. Cyber security is not something that is just technical [...] We have to see the entire cyber-security set-up in the UK as more like a cluster, like an eco-system that consists of private entities as well as public entities.”²³⁸

For an independent Scotland, therefore, the challenges of establishing a cyber-security network comparable to that possessed by the UK are clear.

Irrespective of whether one accepts the analysis provided here, however, what is absolutely certain is that developing and implementing a coherent, integrated cyber-security strategy is an extremely complex undertaking – made all the more so by the continuously fluid and evolving nature of cyber space.

It is undoubtedly striking, therefore, that, whilst the SNP have singled out cyber security as a field in which they feel an independent Scotland could thrive, they have presented no meaningful proposals whatsoever for how they might go about this in practice. Whilst it is unrealistic to expect the SNP to present a full cyber-security strategy before the 2014

referendum, it is difficult to accept their more than aspiration as yet exists to
assurances as to Scotland's potential substantiate the claim.
to succeed in this arena when nothing



CHAPTER VI

The Future of the Scottish Defence Industry

The Scottish defence industry currently employs over 12,600 people, and has annual sales in excess of £1.8 billion. It is primarily focused on the naval sector, with leading players including Rosyth-based Babcock Marine – which is part of an alliance of companies building the UK's two new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers. Furthermore, BAE Systems Maritime undertakes the design and manufacture of, and through-life support for, a number of warships – including the Type 45 destroyers – all from its facility on the River Clyde.²³⁹

Yet, Scotland is also home to a range of other defence contractors working across a broad spectrum of sectors. SELEX Galileo is a leader in the supply of electronic systems for military air; land; and sea platforms, and is also heavily involved in many other programmes (including the Eurofighter, and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter). Thales Optronics designs and manufactures a variety of systems – including laser targeting devices for the British and other armed forces, and the sonar and electronic-warfare support for the Royal Navy's Vanguard- and Astute-class submarines. A third example would be Vector Aerospace Component Services, which specialises in providing one-stop-shop capability for an extensive range of mechanical and hydraulic components for rotary and fast-jet aircraft.²⁴⁰

Should Scotland vote for independence in 2014, Angus Robertson has presented an optimistic outlook for the Scottish

defence industry, including for its iconic and politically significant shipyards. Said the SNP defence spokesman, in May 2012, "With independence, Scotland would have a healthy order book. It is not the London government that makes the yards successful – it is the second-to-none Scottish skills base and technical expertise that brings orders to the yards, and that will continue under independence."²⁴¹

With regard to their ambitions for the defence industry in Scotland, the SNP's *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update* says simply that a "Scottish defence industrial strategy and procurement plan will fill UK capability gaps in Scotland, addressing the lack of new frigates, conventional submarines and maritime patrol aircraft."²⁴²

The SNP have also stated their support for an independent Scotland pursuing a joint-procurement strategy:

"Joint procurement will be pursued with the rest of the UK and other allies as well as shared conventional basing, training and logistics arrangements, fulfilling shared priorities in 'Smart Defence'."²⁴³

Little else has been offered by the SNP on this issue to date. The vast majority of existing references to Scotland's defence industry have been focusing on job losses and what the party alleges to be the MoD's defence underspend in Scotland, with no substantive assertions on what the industry's future might look like under independence – other than a

statement that jobs would be protected, and the spending imbalance rectified.

On 22 November 2012, the party issued a statement describing the Westminster government as the “[r]eal threat to Scotland’s defence sector”, arguing that the loss of 360 civilian defence jobs over two consecutive quarters that year was “making a mockery of scaremongering [over the potential loss of] defence jobs in an independent Scotland”.

In the statement, Angus Robertson warned that “Westminster is making disproportionate and damaging cuts to Scotland’s defence jobs, and the only way that will change is with a Yes vote in 2014. Unlike a Westminster Government determined to continue eroding Scotland’s defence footprint, an independent Scotland would protect defence jobs.”

In evidence provided to the Scottish Affairs Committee, Ian Godden (the former chairman of the defence-industry trade organisation, ADS) suggested that the defence industry could succeed – under the right conditions – in an independent Scotland. Drawing on these words, Robertson said this assessment “reflects the positive vision that the SNP has for the defence industry”, elaborating further: “the exceptional skill base, industrial capacity and strong supply chain [which] the defence industry has in Scotland means that the sector would continue to thrive in an independent Scotland.”²⁴⁴

In an interview for this report, however, Godden reacted unhappily to Robertson’s evaluation of his evidence to the committee, claiming that he felt “used and abused” by the SNP. “I gave evidence for three hours to the Scottish Affairs Committee, and they picked two bits and made it look like I was supporting the idea that defence would

be fine in Scotland [...] I don’t think they are fully engaging in the debate on this subject, and I don’t mind being public on that criticism”.²⁴⁵

A fuller breakdown of Godden’s assessment of the defence industry’s prospects in an independent Scotland is provided later in this chapter; however, his criticism of the SNP is included here because of Robertson’s direct reference to his evidence, which the defence spokesman had used in formulating his own case.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MOD FOR SCOTLAND’S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

In 2010, the SNP published an SDRS to coincide with the UK Government’s own National Security Strategy and SDRS that followed from it. The majority of the document is devoted to a detailed breakdown of how many defence jobs have been cut in Scotland – more than 10,000 since 1997, on the SNP’s assessment – and the level and impact of the MoD’s ‘defence underspend’ in Scotland (calculated as more than £5.6 billion between 2002 and 2008, when compared with spending levels in other regions of the UK).²⁴⁶

The SNP’s report warns that independence may be highly necessary for the future security of Scotland, depending on whether or not the Westminster government “is committed to a future for conventional defence across the UK” (my emphasis). It goes on to express fears that “[u]nless the SDRS and Ministers consider this as a priority now, the conventional UK Armed Forces will become concentrated in ‘Super Garrisons’ and bases, commanded and trained almost exclusively in the south of England.”²⁴⁷

Most recently, the SNP have strongly condemned revisions to the MoD's 2011 Defence Basing Review, specifically with regard to the relocation of forces currently based in Germany. The 2011 Review "had originally envisaged the re-location of 6,500-7,000 [Army] personnel currently based in Germany, to bases in Scotland", as part of the UK's total planned drawdown from Germany by 2020. It predicted that "as a result the overall defence footprint in Scotland will increase by over 2,000 posts".²⁴⁸ In April 2013, however, it was formally announced that this figure, as part of a broader recalibration, was to be reduced to merely "an additional 600 personnel returning from Germany."²⁴⁹

Responding to rumours of the change, which were circulating ahead of the April announcement, Angus Robertson described the move as "a monumental betrayal of Scotland's defence personnel, their families, and the people of Scotland", adding that "this devastating blow comes on the back of significant cuts in defence spending and jobs in Scotland".²⁵⁰

In addition to focusing heavily on defence jobs, the SNP have also delivered a frank assessment of the importance of continued MoD investment for the future of the Scottish defence industry – in particular, shipbuilding.

At the time that the SNP's 2010 SDSR submission was written, considerable uncertainty existed regarding the future of one of the two Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, significant sections of which are under construction in Scotland. "To cancel one or more of the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers would present a huge challenge to the sustainability of the Scottish and UK shipbuilding industry," the report cautions. "With the two largest lower

blocks under construction in Glasgow, and the planned integration of the vessels in a purpose-built facility in Rosyth (in addition to significant supply-chain activity), Scotland would suffer a disproportionate impact from any cancellation."²⁵¹

Specifically, the document warns, "due to workload and capacity planning which has been focused on the carrier projects, neither BAE Systems (Clyde) [...nor] Babcock Marine (Rosyth) [have] sufficient order book to sustain the current workforce of [around] 5,400 direct employees if one or more of the carriers are cancelled [...] Cancellation of the contracts would immediately impact on the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, BAE Systems Surface Ships, Babcock Marine, Thales, Rolls-Royce, Converteam, MacTaggart Scott, SSSL (Rosyth), Ticon, and a range of other Scottish companies in the carrier supply chain. The likely impact would be at least 1,000 jobs directly, and 4,500 indirectly, in the supply chain."²⁵²

The SNP SDSR submission also mentions the impact of cancelling any plans to construct the Type 26 Global Combat Ship north of the border (although details were far less exhaustive since no construction work has yet begun, and nor have the final locations for construction yet been finalised). From what the SNP understood at the time, however, "any cancellation would lead to job losses for 100 engineers based [on] the west coast of Scotland", and would also "affect BAE Systems and other companies in the supply chain."²⁵³

With its focus on securing continued UK-Government investment in Scotland, not on the prospects for the defence industry in the event of independence, the SNP SDSR makes very clear the importance of MoD programmes for

the Scottish defence industry: “Based on the new approach to industry-customer cooperation and industry partnership (developed initially through the Type 25 destroyer programme, and fully manifested in the aircraft-carrier programme), the shipbuilding industry in Scotland is now achieving independently benchmarked world-class levels of efficiency in warship construction.

“In short, the certainty of MoD programmes and associated long-term employment on the development and building of highly capable military ships has been the catalyst for developing a sophisticated class-leading industry, capable of competing internationally,” the SNP report continues. “Skills and capacity, once lost, would be almost impossible to reinstate later. This not only has implications for the defence industry, but will diminish the increasingly positive attitude towards prospective employment in engineering [...] now being seen in the Scottish economy.”²⁵⁴ This assertion is supported by statistics, with 50-80 per cent – probably closer to 80 per cent – of all defence work in Scotland directly dependent on MoD contracts.²⁵⁵

All of this is exceedingly pertinent in the context of the industry’s future under independence, given the high likelihood that the UK Government would greatly reduce the number of defence orders it placed in an independent Scotland. In the case of complex warship building, it may even cease placing orders there altogether.

As several expert witnesses pointed out during interviews for this report, defence procurement remains very far from being an open market, with the British Government retaining a strong interest in favouring domestically based companies (in particular where national

security is an essential consideration). In 2011-2012, 40 per cent of new MoD contracts by value, and 63 per cent by number, were placed on a non-competitive basis (that is, were not tendered on the open market).²⁵⁶

This trend is particularly pronounced when broken down by supplier, with an overwhelming majority of contracts which are placed with the big companies responsible for producing complex security products being awarded non-competitively. In 2011-2012, just 45 per cent of the contracts awarded by the MoD to Babcock International were won competitively, as were 29 per cent of those won by Thales; 11 per cent by BAE Systems; 7 per cent by Rolls Royce; and just 3 per cent by Finmeccanica (SELEX Galileo being a Finmeccanica subsidiary).²⁵⁷

Equally significant is the proportion of MoD contracts awarded to British-based companies, even when tendered competitively. This is a direct consequence of the fact that the UK defence industry is presently the second biggest on Earth, and certainly amongst the most advanced: around 85-90 per cent of defence contracts stay within the UK when offered competitively.²⁵⁸

Perhaps the most exclusively national and non-competitive section of the defence industry is warship building. It is the only major sector in which 100 per cent of the platforms tend to be national – as opposed to fighter jets, for instance, which are often international, collaborative efforts – and contracts for these ships are invariably awarded non-competitively to UK-based companies. It is regularly pointed out that the UK has not ordered and built a warship in a foreign country since the Second World War, and Peter Luff MP, the former minister responsible for defence

equipment, has gone so far as to state that – in fact – no complex Royal Navy warship has been built outside the UK for almost 200 years.²⁵⁹

THE ARTICLE 346 EXEMPTION

Under EU competition rules, Member States are obliged to place contracts on the open market, except in cases considered essential to national security. The exclusion, laid down in Article 346(b) of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, stipulates that “any Member State may take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security which are connected with the production of or trade in arms, munitions and war material; such measures shall not adversely affect the conditions of competition in the internal market regarding products which are not intended for specifically military purposes.”²⁶⁰ There is no application process to apply an Article 346 exemption; it is up to Member States to decide for themselves whether the criteria have been met, and the MoD's Director Commercial for Defence Equipment and Support has said that he cannot recall an instance where an exemption had been challenged.²⁶¹

Peter Luff has explained that, when considering whether to use the Article 346 exemption, “the test that we apply as a country is a test of operational advantage and freedom of action. We believe in our ability to maintain an operational advantage and a competitive edge over our enemy. [...] Where we wish to maintain our operational freedom of action we would apply the Article 346 exemption”.²⁶²

Warship building comes under the exemption, meaning that defence companies based in an independent Scotland could no longer secure MoD

contracts to build warships for the Royal Navy unless the rUK decided not to apply the Article 346 exemption (which is a highly unlikely prospect).

THE FUTURE OF THE TYPE 26 GLOBAL COMBAT SHIP

On the immediate horizon, in regard to Scotland and MoD build contracts, is the issue of the Type 26 Global Combat Ship (13 of which are due to replace the Royal Navy's ageing Type 23-class frigates from 2021 onwards).²⁶³ Within the UK, the Clyde shipyards are billed to become “the main British centre of excellence for naval surface ships”, meaning that in all likelihood they would, ordinarily, become the sole supplier of complex ships for the Royal Navy, including the Type 26.²⁶⁴

However, there are now widespread concerns that the UK Government is delaying any final decision on where the Type 26 frigates will be built until after the independence referendum, because a ‘Yes’ vote will result in them no longer being built in Scotland. On this point, the Government has now been explicit. As Peter Luff told the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, on 13 June 2012, “When we come to build the new Type 26 frigate – the Global Combat Ship – we will have to apply for an exemption under Article 346 to enable us to build it within the United Kingdom without contracting it. That means that, if Scotland is separate, we cannot build it in Scotland.”²⁶⁵

Amidst growing press speculation that this would be the case, Angus Robertson, speaking a month before Luff made his comments, sought to dismiss such concerns as “the scaremongering of Tory ministers”. He pointed out that “shipbuilders across Europe regularly get orders from other countries”, and that the Type 26 Global Combat Ship

“has attracted interest from countries including Australia and Canada.”²⁶⁶

In fact, the Canadian Government had ruled out the prospect of collaboration with the UK on the project over one year earlier, having come under sustained pressure from their own shipyards (which were concerned that they would lose out on bidding and building).²⁶⁷

The prospect of the UK and Australia working together on the Type 26 is, however, a much more distinct possibility. On 18 January 2013, the British and Australian governments signed a new defence treaty “to provide a framework for the many strands of co-operation between the two countries.”²⁶⁸ Amongst the various potential areas of collaboration, the Royal Navy has announced that “the two countries’ military will be seeing whether we can work jointly on Australia’s future frigates and the Royal Navy’s Type 26 ‘Global Combat Ship’”. Specifically, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond and his Australian counterpart, Stephen Smith, agreed “to explore the possibility of co-operation over mutual design work for the Royal Navy’s new Type 26 Global Combat Ship – a design that could meet the needs of the Royal Australian Navy.”²⁶⁹

As the statement makes explicit, however, nothing has yet been formally confirmed regarding such collaboration (which would, nevertheless, be confined to mutual design work to ensure that the Type 26 met the requirements of the Australian Navy, should they decide to adopt the ship themselves). What seems apparent is that, come the construction phase, the UK would not be building Type 26 frigates for use by the Royal Navy in Australia, nor would the Australians be building their frigates in the UK.

THE FUTURE OF THE QUEEN ELIZABETH-CLASS AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

As regards the construction of the two Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, suggestions that construction could be moved out of Scotland upon independence are misplaced. Work on both carriers is well underway, and it would be neither practical nor sensible to move the operations at this advanced stage. Regarding the Article 346 exemption, Luff has made clear that “the exemption applies to the prevailing conditions at the time it is applied. It would not be invalidated by a Scottish separate state. The carriers would not be affected, as I understand it.”²⁷⁰

Where the future for work on the carriers would be far less certain, however, is during the post-construction maintenance and refitting stage (which will be considerable, given that the carriers are due to see some five decades of service apiece). It was Luff’s opinion that people “often focus [too much] on the construction of a particular platform or asset. Through-life maintenance and support are often of a greater value to the economy. We would not be able to maintain complex warships in a country where we could not guarantee our freedom of action. It is as though Scotland would disqualify itself from the maintenance of ships.”²⁷¹

Philip Dunne MP, Luff’s successor as Minister for Defence Equipment, has estimated that the cost of providing support to the carriers over their lifetime is likely to be as significant as their construction cost. The trade unions of Babcock Marine in Rosyth have said that they envisaged each of the two warships needing maintenance every 10 years or so – meaning one aircraft carrier

being worked on every five years, over a period of 50 years. The unions have also been frank in their view that it would be much less likely that this work would take place if Rosyth were outside the UK.²⁷²

THE MOOD AMONGST THE DEFENCE INDUSTRY IN SCOTLAND

Representatives of defence companies based in Scotland are extremely reluctant to speak publicly about their fears or otherwise, regarding Scottish independence; none agreed to do so for this report. Privately, however, concerns have been raised about the potential loss of access to the world's second-largest defence market, and there have been some discussions about the possibility of relocation south of the border in the event of a 'Yes' vote in 2014.

One well-placed source told this report that, following discussions he had had with the board of one of the big defence companies, "they said quite clearly that, if Scotland became independent, they would move their operation out from near Edinburgh". The company in question employs several thousand people in Scotland who, the source said, would consequently lose their jobs. Separately, Peter Luff has also told the Scottish Affairs Committee that "individual companies in Scotland are saying to me privately, 'In the event of separation we would consider moving south of the border because we want to keep our access.'²⁷³

Given the certainty of being excluded from the large number of non-competitive contracts still placed by the MoD, it is not hard to understand why defence companies in Scotland will have reservations. Even on the open market, with the best will in the world, it cannot

possibly be assumed that the Scottish Government would be in the business of placing defence orders on anything like the scale of its UK counterpart, and, like all commercial enterprises, defence companies tend to go where the money is.

As Dr John Louth (Director of the 'Defence, Industries and Society' programme at RUSI) told the Scottish Affairs Committee recently, "It seems to me that there is a very strong correlation between the size of the nation's defence budget and the size, scale, capability and capacity of its defence industrial base."²⁷⁴ Francis Tusa has agreed with this assessment, providing the direct example of Thales (which currently has a significant presence in Scotland): "They move their facilities to where the money is. In the case of air defence, they closed down all of their French facilities and moved them to the UK because that was where the budget was for their particular niche.

"It is a lot easier to flex factory demand within the defence industry than you would think. The idea that that could take decades before a move is wrong. If you ended up with an independent Scottish defence force with limited capabilities, and low-tech capabilities at that, those facilities will be within Britain within months – end of. It goes where the money is, pure and simple."²⁷⁵

CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE SCOTTISH DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Whilst an independent Scotland's defence sector would undoubtedly be much smaller than the rUK's, this does not mean that its collapse would be inevitable, at least in some areas.

Ian Godden has argued that a Scottish defence industry could succeed, but only under specific conditions and with the active support of a future independent Scottish Government:

“First – and this is an apolitical statement – Scotland needs a defence-industrial strategy; it hasn’t got one, and it needs one. If it’s a new nation, I would argue it needs an even sharper one, because otherwise it will lose industries it has got used to having as a result of being part of the UK”.²⁷⁶

Godden stressed that Scotland could not allow its defence-industrial strategy to dictate its defence strategy (that is, prioritising defence jobs over the nation’s actual strategic needs); but, nor should the country’s defence strategy fail to take account of its industrial base.

Highlighting what he described as the “immaturity” of current thinking on this issue, he cited one recent defence conference he had attended in which experts had presented what equipment they felt an independent Scotland would require. “Guess what? Ninety per cent of the equipment was bought from America. So I said, ‘OK, fine; what happens to Scotland’s investment in the Eurofighter Typhoon? What happens to all the missiles that the Europeans use? Are you going to buy European missiles? Because some of the equipment is made in Paisley and Glasgow. What are you going to do with SELEX Galileo that’s tied into all these European programmes?’ So somebody had tied a defence policy to defence equipment without thinking of the industrial implications of anything.

“Next, if Scotland wants the existing defence-industrial base to continue, it will have to, as a nation, do two things it is not doing at the moment: committing much higher research and development [R&D] spending to the industry, and,

second, getting off its hobbyhorse about whether defence industrial is a good thing or not.”²⁷⁷

Godden argued that Scotland would need to invest around £40 million per annum in defence R&D, warning that “the industries will die if it doesn’t do that.” £40 million equates to 10 per cent of the roughly £400 million UK science and technology budget for defence (although the MoD’s total R&D spend is much higher, around £1.5 billion per year).²⁷⁸

Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Mathews, the Royal Navy’s Chief of Matériel (Fleet) for Defence Equipment and Support, has offered a similar view: “I suspect that there is quite a strong correlation between high-end manufacture, in terms of defence equipment, and the amount that nation spends on defence R and D.”²⁷⁹

The next critical factor for the success of an independent Scottish defence industry would be certainty about the future. The Scottish Government must, Godden said, “give large international companies a signal about their commitment for 15 to 20 to 30 years; otherwise they will not invest.”²⁸⁰

Even with all these requirements in place, however, Godden warned that Scotland’s defence industry would need to fundamentally recalibrate what sort of equipment it sort to produce – effectively abandoning ambitions to manufacture complete platforms, and focus instead on being a niche supplier of specific products for use in defence systems. Shipbuilding of the kind that defence companies in Scotland engage in now, Godden said, would have no future under independence:

“This idea that Scotland could become a platform producer for aircraft carriers,

or a large-plane manufacturer: that's nonsense; it's just a cover story. This debate about shipbuilding and so-on is, in my view, a distraction because the real industrial question is: 'Can Scotland continue to build its niche technologies and, as an independent country, become even better at promoting its engineering skills?'"²⁸¹

For instance, Scotland has for many years produced some of the finest submarine periscopes in the world, and every Royal Navy submarine since 1917 has been fitted with a periscope from Thales or its previous incarnation as Barr and Stroud.²⁸² Scotland does not only fit out Royal Navy submarines with their periscopes, however, but exports to other countries as well.²⁸³ Scottish defence companies are also involved in the production of a range of other equipment (including missile systems and sensor systems, along with mechanical and hydraulic components for rotary and fast-jet aircraft).²⁸⁴

Clearly, however, the Scottish defence industry is heavily geared towards equipping the British Armed Forces at present, with the majority of defence work directly dependent on MoD contracts. Whilst some contracts would doubtless continue to be placed in Scotland, there is also the risk that the MoD would shift its orders for specific items of defence equipment to companies located within the rUK.

As with the warships, such a shift south of the border would be especially probable in the case of sensitive high-end equipment which the British Government would chose to procure non-competitively, in the interests of national security. One specific example posited by Philip Dunne would be with sensitive radar equipment, which the British Government "would be most

unlikely to seek to procure outside a UK eyes-only environment".²⁸⁵

Much of the radar work in Scotland is currently carried out by SELEX Galileo. In the event of Scottish independence, the rUK would exempt the contract from open competition, and seek to retain it within its own borders. SELEX Galileo is also what is known as a 'List X' site, which means that it has access to confidential information which the MoD would not want outside of the UK. Both of these considerations would certainly make the SELEX site vulnerable in an independent Scotland.

Other 'niche technology'-sector firms which would be adversely impacted include Vector Aerospace, in Perth, and Thales, in Glasgow. As the Scottish Affairs Committee have noted, "Vector Aerospace carries out maintenance and repair on aircraft parts. It is over 80 per cent reliant on contracts to maintain components for the [MoD's] aircraft fleet of over 40 Chinooks and 130 Tornados. It is unclear whether the Perth site would be awarded any such contracts when Vector has an alternative site in Hampshire." Thales, meanwhile, is also a 'List X' site and is heavily dependent on MoD contracts for its defence-electronics and Optronics work. As the Scottish Affairs Committee warns, "If the MoD withdrew its custom, and was not willing to place orders in a separate Scotland, then it would put a big question mark over the viability of the Glasgow site."²⁸⁶

In his interview for this report Hew Strachan concurred that the shift of UK defence contracts out of Scotland would prove a major challenge to the defence industry there under any circumstances: "[The defence companies] are pretty terrified, saying these expertise[s] will leech out of Scotland, and so forth."

Asked for his assessment of the ‘niche technology’ route, Strachan said, “I don’t think it’s a viable option. Most of those employed in defence in Scotland are employed on the ‘whole submarine’ side, not the ‘periscope’ side, and – in any case – why would the rUK continue to place further orders north of the border?”²⁸⁷

OPEN PROCUREMENT

In answer to Professor Strachan’s question, the main reason for continuing to award contracts to an independent Scotland would be (according to the UK Government’s own defence-industrial strategy) one of quality and cost. In its February 2012 White Paper, *National Security Through Technology: Technology, Equipment, and Support for UK Defence and Security*, the Government placed a strong emphasis on the desirability of open procurement: “Wherever possible, we will seek to fulfil the UK’s defence and security requirements through open competition in the domestic and global market,” the report reads. It goes on to lay out the Government’s commitment to “buy off-the-shelf where appropriate”, and even states that it is “concerned about the proportion of non-competitive contracts that have been let by the [MoD]”.²⁸⁸

Inevitably, however, the UK Government is significantly constrained, in this regard, by national security considerations, as the White Paper itself openly acknowledges: “Procurement in the defence and security areas is, however, fundamentally different from other forms of procurement, so we will [...] take action to protect the UK’s operational advantages and freedom of action, but only where this is essential for our national security.”²⁸⁹

In what the White Paper has described

as “the new approach” of the UK Government to defence procurement, several criteria have to be met before the MoD should consider issuing a non-competitive contract. Examples of when an open-procurement approach should be adopted include: when a requirement can be met off-the-shelf from the domestic and global market, when it can be met by modifying an off-the-shelf-product, and when it can be met through a new development programme via the market. In the first category are anything from simple commodities such as socks and body armour, to mature technologies such as the C-17 transport aircraft. Potential modified off-the-shelf products include protected vehicles such as those used in Afghanistan, whilst new development programmes pursued through the market include the new F-35 Lightning fighter and the A400M Atlas transport aircraft.²⁹⁰

Examples of products that could not – and would not – be procured on the open market include national-level communications, low-level observables, aspects of complex weapons, and nuclear technologies.²⁹¹

To look at what proportion of MoD procurement fits the former and latter categories is to understand, however, how very far defence is from being an open market – even with the best will in the world. To repeat, fully 63 per cent of MoD contracts by number, and 40 per cent by value, were placed non-competitively in 2011-2012.

Scotland’s defence industry would therefore need to find other customers to replace the lost UK business if possible, whilst also actively seeking to encourage new defence orders from the rUK Government. Scotland’s own defence needs would undoubtedly be insufficient to maintain the industry at

anything like its current size. In order to succeed, Scotland would need to consciously and proactively seek to link its defence industry to the needs of bigger countries, and to develop bilateral relationships with them; it could not simply continue as presently constituted and hope new orders would materialise to replace lost ones. Of course, to speak of the defence industry as a homogenous unit in this sense is deeply misleading: it is a collection of individual companies with individual agendas; but, given that the final customer in this industry is almost invariably a national government, government policy clearly has an important role to play.

"If Scotland votes to delink with England politically, is it going to rely on the industrial policy with England to remain? It's going to have to be stronger because you've just created a barrier to industrial policy called a nation," Godden said. "Scotland will need a much stronger industrial policy, and it needs to be much clearer about what its industrial policy is, and about which countries it's trying to do business with in defence. It's hard enough for the UK to negotiate with America on the Chinooks, the Joint Strike Fighter, and some of those contracts." A "small country like Scotland", he surmised, would find it even tougher.

This is why, Godden insists, Scotland will need to be extremely focused on what exactly it is trying to offer, and to whom. "Why would the US feel it was better investing in Scotland than the rUK? Does the US have a special feeling about Scotland?" As previously mentioned, Godden is of the view that Scotland should focus on providing high-quality products in the niche engineering and technology sectors that presently reside in Scotland. He also insisted that, for all the potential difficulties, Scotland would be exceedingly unwise to avoid trying

to develop an extremely close defence-industrial relationship with the rUK.

"If Scotland wants to become independent of England, industrially then it has to link with some other large country. My own feeling is it would be Germany; it would be the new industrial relationship that Scotland should be seeking – which, of course, politically, is very difficult to say – [but] for a small nation like Scotland, it has to link to one of the big industrial powers."²⁹²

JOINT PROCUREMENT

Creating the conditions in which larger powers would wish to purchase defence equipment from an independent Scotland would often mean entering agreements whereby Scotland agreed to purchase equipment from them in turn. Such appear to be the rules of the game in the defence industry, and, whilst seeking to square this circle in terms of committing to the principles of open procurement, this is also an area which brings into greater clarity the need to properly coordinate a nation's defence strategy with its defence-industrial strategy.

In addition to these kinds of bilateral *quid pro quo* defence relationships, Scotland may well also want to consider the option of joint-procurement programmes in order to secure contracts to build a share of a given asset with another country or countries. In principle at least, joint-procurement programmes enable countries to fulfil a twin objective of securing work for their domestic industries whilst also gaining a needed military asset. Such programmes have become increasingly popular in recent years (with defence budgets being squeezed, and weapons systems becoming increasingly complex) as a means of acquiring equipment that

some countries could not develop on their own.

In its *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*, the SNP explicitly iterated their ambition for an independent Scotland to adopt a joint-procurement strategy with both the rUK and other allies.

The classic example of joint procurement in the UK in recent years has been the Eurofighter Typhoon, and it also serves as an example of the many potential pitfalls of collaboration between nations which have competing (and often, evolving) interests. The origins of the Eurofighter programme can be traced back as far as the 1970s; but the formal 'Future European Fighter Aircraft' programme that was to become the Eurofighter was launched by the UK, France, Italy, Spain, and West Germany in 1983.²⁹³ It was not until 2003 that the Eurofighter entered service, however, fully 54 months late. During this time, it had undergone

countless alterations; the French had pulled out; the Germans had tried, and failed, to do the same; and the UK alone had expended more than £20 billion on the programme. (In 2011, the National Audit Office estimated the UK's total programme cost would eventually hit £37 billion).²⁹⁴

An important feature of this scheme from the perspective of an independent Scotland, aside from highlighting the potential pitfalls, is the strategic proximity of the nations involved. Joint-procurement programmes tend to be entered into by countries not only with common commercial interests, but also common strategic and political interests. Quite how many nations an independent Scotland could identify with similar strategic requirements and budgetary capabilities, and which were also in the business of developing their own defence-industrial programmes, is open to question.

Conclusion

On 18 September 2014, the future of the United Kingdom will be decided when the people of Scotland vote on whether or not they want independence. Not until after that vote has taken place, assuming the outcome favours separation, would the real work on how to establish Scotland as an independent country begin. What comes out of that process, be it with regard to defence; the economy; or any other area, would be likely to differ in many important respects to what was promised by the negotiating parties going in. It would, after all, only be at this point that the rhetoric would cease, and both sides would be forced to seriously confront what was and was not feasible.

In this respect, it is legitimate to ask how useful it is to focus, before that time has come, on the practicalities of how an independent Scotland might defend itself. Added to this is the fact that opinion polls have consistently showed a clear majority opposed to independence, meaning that such discussions are most likely academic in any case.

The answer to both of these questions is the same: voters need to be presented with the clearest possible picture of what they are voting for. Just as political parties have a responsibility to present the public with their manifestos before an election, so the need for a clear appraisal of the facts is all the more important ahead of the independence referendum (given that voters will be choosing not merely a government for the next five years, but whether or not to break apart the United Kingdom).

The SNP have presented their vision of how an independent Scotland would defend itself, and have promised further detail in their defence White Paper due to be published in November 2013. Whilst it is to be hoped that this White Paper will fill in some of the gaps present in their current policies, it is unlikely to dramatically alter any assessment of the SNP's substantive positions (unless, of course, they are planning some dramatic policy U-turns, which Angus Robertson has assured me they are not).

For instance, the SNP have already been clear that they want to rid Scotland of nuclear weapons; that they want Scotland to be in NATO; that they will have a defence force of 15,000 personnel; that they will preserve all the Scottish regiments; that they want frigates, fast jets, and submarines; that they will base the Scottish Navy at Faslane; and so forth. These are very clear and not easily misinterpreted commitments, all of which have been examined at length in this report.

Where more detail from the SNP would make a real difference would be on the 'whys' and the 'hows' of what they have proposed – which, in turn, would better inform the sort of 'whats' listed above. Most important as a starting point would be a serious foreign policy that started by asking what sort of country would Scotland seek to be in the world. A proper assessment of the sort of risks with which any Scottish defence force might have to deal as a result of that would then necessarily follow.

The SNP's failure to properly answer these questions lies at the heart of the

problem with their defence strategy as it presently stands. The SNP have said that they want a defence force of 15,000 men; but why? To do what exactly? And what is the strategic purpose of retaining all the Scottish regiments? Likewise, the SNP ambition to acquire big-status assets such as frigates and submarines is not underpinned by any clear assessment of what purpose they would serve in a Scottish Navy. That is not to say that such assets might not serve a good purpose, just that the SNP have not made clear what that purpose would be.

Overarching all of these considerations is, of course, the question of how all these aspirations would fit together to form a coherent – and affordable – whole. On a budget of £2.5 billion per annum (and considerably less if John Swinney is to be taken at his word), could Scotland really afford to maintain all of the different assets which the SNP would wish for it to acquire? And would they really deliver the sort of defence force Scotland would need?

It is the considered conclusion of this report that not only have the SNP failed to answer most of these questions adequately to date, but that many – if not the majority – of their proposals for defence do not withstand serious scrutiny.

There does, unfortunately, appear to be a good reason for this, which was mentioned in the introduction to this report: namely, that the SNP's current defence strategy appears not to be geared towards genuinely trying to defend Scotland at all, but to help it win the independence referendum. On one level, this is perhaps understandable, since the SNP leadership know as well as anybody that without victory in that referendum all of these issues are

indeed academic; but it means that they leave a wide open goal for any serious appraisal of their defence proposals.

The difficulty that SNP planners will doubtless be wrestling with is the seeming incompatibility, in many areas, between what makes strategic sense in military terms (or at least what is viable) and what they perceive voters to actually want. As previously mentioned, glaring examples of this include the politically important commitment to retain all the Scottish regiments and to put the entire Scottish Navy on the Clyde.

The fact that an independent Scottish Defence Force would most likely want to focus on maritime and air defence matters little when the electoral consequences of saying that all the Scottish infantry regiments might not make it through independence – at least not without considerable reductions in size – could be fatal. The same goes for the naval commitment: one of the biggest difficulties, in electoral terms, with pledging to divest Scotland of Trident is the significant job losses that that would entail. What better way to assuage those concerns than a pledge to replace those British nuclear submarines with all of Scotland's fighting ships, irrespective of the fact that Faslane would make a questionable location for this navy at best?

On many other issues, it is the conclusion of this report that the SNP are guilty of simple wishful thinking. The clearest example of this is what they seem to believe would be the nature of any intelligence-sharing relationship between an independent Scotland and the rUK. As was discussed at length in Chapter V, it is almost inconceivable that the rUK would share intelligence with Scotland to anything like the extent suggested by Nicola Sturgeon in her

evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in January 2013. Likewise, although it is the view of this report that an independent Scotland would be able to negotiate entry to NATO, the SNP's position on nuclear weapons would pose far greater difficulties than Angus Robertson and others within the party are letting on. Scotland would almost certainly not automatically continue as a NATO member upon independence, as Bill Kidd has claimed it would.

As regards the all-important issue of Trident removal, this too would be fraught with difficulties of a kind that the SNP have yet to lay before Scottish voters. Although the government of a sovereign Scotland would have every right to demand the removal of nuclear weapons from Scottish territory, and although this could be theoretically achieved in a matter of months, it is simply inconceivable that the SNP would deliver such an ultimatum to the rUK (given the potential to wreck its negotiating position across a whole host of other critical issues by doing so). Much more likely would be a time frame for removal that extended into years, if not decades, given the serious financial; logistical; and political challenges of locating and constructing a suitable alternative base south of the border. Somehow, however, one gets the impression that many pro-independence voters committed to seeing Scotland quickly rid itself of Trident have not been fully apprised of this reality.

In truth, there is not a single aspect of the SNP's defence policy looked at for this report that did not raise some fairly serious questions. Although there are undoubtedly areas within the field of cyber security in which an independent Scotland could do well, major challenges arising from the importance of scale – combined with the difficulties Scotland

would have in establishing its version of GCHQ – have not been addressed. Similarly, although there are conditions under which sections of the Scottish defence industry could succeed, Angus Robertson's assertion that the shipyards would have "a healthy order book", following independence, seems fanciful. The days in which Scotland was in the business of constructing complete military platforms would almost certainly be over, and the defence industry would instead need to invest heavily in enhancing Scotland's position as a niche supplier of products for use in defence systems.

Having said all of this, it is not in any way the position of this report that Scotland could not develop a coherent and effective defence strategy suited to its national interests and security requirements. But then, the purpose of this report has never been to formulate this blueprint, but rather to scrutinise the SNP (whose responsibility it is to produce such a strategy ahead of next year's referendum).

That the party have not done so is unfortunate first and foremost from the perspective of the voters of Scotland themselves, who need to be given the facts before they head to the ballot boxes on 18 September 2014. Given how politically charged and divisive the independence debate can be, however, this failure is also unfortunate from the perspective of this report and how it is likely to be received in that context.

As mentioned in the introduction, it was my express ambition at the outset of this undertaking to deliver as objective an assessment as possible of SNP defence strategy, highlighting the positives as well as the negatives, backed by clear and honest assessment from experts across the field. That there is so little

Conclusion

about the SNP's current proposals that withstands serious scrutiny means that this report is necessarily very critical, and it is thus quite likely to be written off as 'pro-union' in some quarters.

However, rather than taking this paper as a negative challenge to their case for independence, it is my hope that

the SNP will at least reflect on some of its conclusions, and refine their case accordingly. Irrespective of whether one is pro-union or pro-independence, that Scottish voters should be presented with a clear and truthful picture of what it is they are voting for is surely something on which we can all agree.

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Appendix

Resolution to SNP Conference: *Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update*

October 2012

The Foreign, Security and Defence policy of Scotland should be determined by the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament and always reflect the priorities of people living in Scotland.

An independent Scotland will be an outward-looking nation which is open, fair and tolerant, contributing to peace, justice and equality. By mobilising our assets and the goodwill and recognition that Scotland enjoys in the world, we will provide sustainable access to natural resources to tackle need and prevent insecurity in the world for this and future generations.

The SNP reiterates its commitment to non-nuclear defence, international law, the United Nations and supporting multilateral solutions to regional and global challenges.

While conventional military threats to Scotland are low, it is important to maintain appropriate security and defence arrangements and capabilities. This includes a cyber security and intelligence infrastructure to deal with new threats and protect key national economic and social infrastructure.

Scotland is a maritime nation with more than 11,000 miles of coastline, including nearly 800 islands, critical under-sea and offshore infrastructure and an area of responsibility extending far into the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The SNP recognises our national responsibilities as a northern European nation to work with our neighbours to fulfil current

defence and security responsibilities and improve collective regional arrangements. Environmental changes to the High North and Arctic Region raise major regional challenges and responsibilities which Scotland shares.

Scotland will require military capabilities to fulfil these responsibilities. These will be provided by the Scottish defence and peacekeeping services which will be answerable to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. An independent Scottish government led by the SNP will commit to an annual defence and security budget of £2.5bn, an annual increase of more than £500m on recent UK levels of defence spending in Scotland but nearly £1bn less than Scottish taxpayers currently contribute to UK defence spending.

The Scottish armed forces will comprise 15,000 regular and 5,000 reserve personnel, operating under Joint Forces Headquarters based at Faslane, which will be Scotland's main conventional naval facility. All current bases will be retained to accommodate units, which will be organised into one regular and one reserve Multi Role Brigade (MRB). The air force will operate from Lossiemouth and Leuchars.

Regular ground forces will include current Scottish raised and restored UK regiments, support units as well as Special Forces and Royal Marines, who will retain responsibility for offshore protection.

The Scottish armed forces will be focused on territorial defence, aid to the civil power and also support for the international community. The Multi Role Brigade structure and interoperable air and sea assets will provide deployable capabilities for United Nations sanctioned missions and support of humanitarian, peacekeeping and peace-making 'Petersburg Tasks'.

The Scottish defence and peacekeeping forces will initially be equipped with Scotland's share of current assets including ocean going vessels, fast jets for domestic air patrol duties, transport aircraft and helicopters as well as army vehicles, artillery and air defence systems. A Scottish defence industrial strategy and procurement plan will fill UK capability gaps in Scotland, addressing the lack of new frigates, conventional submarines and maritime patrol aircraft.

Joint procurement will be pursued with the rest of the UK and other allies as well as shared conventional basing, training and logistics arrangements, fulfilling shared priorities in 'Smart Defence'. This includes sharing conventional military capabilities, setting priorities and better coordinating efforts providing economic synergies, job stability and taxpayer value for money.

A long-standing national consensus has existed that Scotland should not host

nuclear weapons and a sovereign SNP government will negotiate the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane which will be replaced by conventional naval forces.

Security cooperation in our region functions primarily through NATO, which is regarded as the keystone defence organisation by Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the United Kingdom. The SNP wishes Scotland to fulfil its responsibilities to neighbours and allies. On independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO. An SNP government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty of which all its members are signatories, and further that NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations. In the absence of such an agreement, Scotland will work with NATO as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme like Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland. Scotland will be a full member of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE).

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‘If you believe in the cause of freedom, then proclaim it, live it and protect it, for humanity’s future depends on it.’

Henry M. ‘Scoop’ Jackson

(May 31, 1912 – September 1, 1983)

U.S. Congressman and Senator for Washington State from 1941 – 1983

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