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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**SCOTLAND'S POTENTIAL INDEPENDENCE:  
DEFENSE IMPLICATIONS FOR BRITAIN, NATO,  
AND THE UNITED STATES**

by

Joshua A. Overn

March 2018

Thesis Advisor:

Donald Abenheim

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**SCOTLAND'S POTENTIAL INDEPENDENCE: DEFENSE IMPLICATIONS  
FOR BRITAIN, NATO, AND THE UNITED STATES**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(STRATEGIC STUDIES)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The significance of an independent Scotland would reach far beyond the borders of the United Kingdom (UK). Although the first Scottish independence referendum did not pass in September 2014, it raised some important questions that could affect the security of Europe and North America. The June 2016 “Brexit” vote calling for the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union has fueled speculation about a second possible referendum on Scottish independence, owing to the fact that a majority of Scots voted to remain in the EU. This thesis examines the potential consequences of an independent Scotland through the lessons learned from Scotland’s 2014 referendum and analyses by scholars in international relations and strategic studies. These possible consequences could include the weakening of the UK’s defense posture, the UK’s possible abandonment of its nuclear weapons, and uncertain prospects for a Scottish application to join NATO. The ramifications could be substantial for the security policies of the United Kingdom, the United States, and NATO as a whole.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CASD	Continuous-at-sea Deterrence
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RAF	Royal Air Force
rUK	rest of United Kingdom
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
SLBM	Submarine-launched ballistic missile
SNP	Scottish National Party
UN	United Nations

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In June 2016, under the leadership of Prime Minister David Cameron, the citizens of the United Kingdom approved a referendum for the UK to leave the European Union (EU). In the shadow of the approval of the British exit (widely termed “Brexit”) from the EU, Cameron’s successor as Prime Minister, Theresa May, invoked Article 50 of the treaty on European Union, and thereby established a deadline for Britain’s exit from the EU in 2019. The approval of the Brexit referendum by a majority of UK citizens was not a popular choice among Scottish voters, a majority of whom favored continued membership in the EU. Indeed, the approval of the Brexit referendum created favorable circumstances for the Scottish National Party (SNP) and its continued drive for Scottish independence from the UK.

The possibility of Scottish independence has gained serious attention owing to the first referendum on independence in September 2014 and the British vote in June 2016 to leave the EU. With the UK’s departure from the EU scheduled for March 2019, Scottish independence from the UK may follow in a second referendum, owing to the majority support in Scotland for Scottish membership in the EU.

This thesis analyzes the potential consequences of an independent Scotland for the security and defense policies of Scotland itself, the United Kingdom, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States by asking the following questions: What would be the impact on the British armed forces if Scotland were to succeed in gaining independence? Given the presence of Faslane, Coulport, and other Trident-related facilities in Scotland, how would the nuclear deterrence posture of the United Kingdom change? What could be the implications for the defense strategy of the United Kingdom? How could these developments affect Britain’s commitment to NATO and Britain’s relations with the United States?

This thesis analyzes the complicated but plausible scenario of an independent Scotland seeking to establish a defense force mainly equipped from the armed forces of the UK while striving to get the UK to move its nuclear weapon program out of Scottish

territory in a minimal amount of time. The implications of this effort for NATO could be of concern not only for current regional stability, but also for Scotland's possible future membership in the Alliance. Furthermore, Scottish decision-makers would have the added burden of justifying their effort to obtain the relocation of the rest of the United Kingdom's (rUK) nuclear program when the costs and complications of this move could jeopardize the future of this program and hamper Scotland's prospects of joining NATO. Scotland's candidacy for NATO membership could be hindered, moreover, by highly controversial secessionist movements within the borders of other NATO members.

## A. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Although the idea of Scottish independence has centuries-old roots, it is only within the last decade that the real possibility of Scotland peacefully separating from the United Kingdom has been established. Most of the works pertaining to the potential consequences of Scottish independence for the United Kingdom, the United States, and NATO are recent international affairs studies and journalistic reports. Most of the scholars cited in this thesis hail from the United Kingdom or are employed by institutions within the UK. Most of the theories and facts depicted in this thesis come from scholars who have published articles in *International Affairs*, the journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, also known as Chatham House. The volume of works about the ramifications of a secessionist Scotland is comparatively restricted, but the studies available are well-informed and provide empirical evidence for analysis.

A major source of information and motivation for the thesis comes from an article written by Colin M. Fleming and Carmen Gebhard titled, "Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security."<sup>1</sup> This article, published by the journal *European Security*, identified the prospective consequences of Scotland's first independence attempt. Fleming and Gebhard focused heavily on the geostrategic implications of Scotland's proposed

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<sup>1</sup> Colin M. Fleming and Carmen Gebhard, "Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security," *European Security* 23, no. 3 (Spring 2014) 307–325.

defense force as the SNP depicted it in its 2013 publication entitled “Scotland’s Future.”<sup>2</sup> Fleming and Gebhard clearly explained the challenges of the SNP’s proposed defense force for Scotland’s national security as well as its ambitions to join NATO. Fleming and Gebhard discussed comparisons of Scotland’s proposed armed forces with potential defense models of countries with similar geostrategic characteristics and examined how the SNP’s plans could face critical scrutiny.

The article by Fleming and Gebhard also opened up other avenues of inquiry discussed in this thesis. They cited sources from other international relations and strategic studies scholars that led the thesis to consider further questions and arguments concerning other potential ramifications of Scottish independence for Europe and the United States.

Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker each produced individual articles as well as a co-authored article concerning the issues in this thesis. Walker’s work focused primarily on the significance of Scottish independence on the international scene. In his single-authored article entitled “International Reactions to the Scottish Referendum”<sup>3</sup> and his work co-authored with Chalmers entitled “Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrence?”<sup>4</sup> Walker examined the potential political and strategic consequences of an independent Scotland, primarily on the United Kingdom and the United States. However, Walker also discussed the possible effects on Europe through the lens of NATO rather than individual European states.

Supplementing the primary sources (such as governmental and SNP statements) and the works of scholarship discussed above are copious amounts of contemporary editorials and other journalistic sources. Most of these sources consist of news publications both in the UK and the United States as well as defense information sites providing the empirical numbers for supporting data. This thesis utilizes primary sources as the

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government. *Scotland’s Future: The White Paper on Independence* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> William Walker, “International Reactions to the Scottish Referendum,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 4, (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker, “Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent?” *Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2013).

foundation of the analysis, especially sources concerning the independence referendum in Scotland in 2013–2014. Recent news articles and periodicals depict the atmosphere of the transatlantic security concerns regarding a possible second referendum on Scottish independence.

## **B. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II considers Scotland and Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Scottish National Party. It describes the rich political and cultural history shared by Scotland and England along with the long-term struggle for national independence within Scotland. This chapter provides the necessary historical background for the foundation of the Scottish-English relationship that we see today. Part A analyzes the rich political history of the relations between Scotland and England to explain the reasoning behind the dissatisfaction expressed by many Scottish officials and citizens regarding the policies of the United Kingdom. Part B introduces the Scottish National Party and its secessionist ideology. Finally, Part C examines the relationship of national defense and force policy pertaining to Scotland and the rUK and how significant the prospects could be for an independent Scotland.

Chapter III examines the potential military force structure of an independent Scotland and how this structure would affect the capabilities of the UK armed forces. Part A of the chapter focuses on the proposed Scottish defense force and the challenges that the SNP could face in trying to provide the necessary defense assets for the security of Scotland's national interests. Part B shifts the focus to the rUK and the impact of Scotland's claim to inherit specific platforms and other assets from the British Ministry of Defence (MoD). The threat of Scottish independence, among other factors, triggered a shift in the UK's defense policy. The UK began to constrict its force size and halt defense research programs before they could be completed before the SNP introduced the possibility of a Scottish independence referendum. Since, the UK has reversed course and now has plans on expanding its defense posture and refining Britain's security policy.

Chapter IV considers the future of the UK's nuclear deterrence posture. It concentrates on the nuclear force issues that could be raised for an independent Scotland,

the rUK, and NATO. These issues would arise because of the SNP's determination that the UK's nuclear program be removed from Scotland. Removing the rUK's Trident missiles and Vanguard class nuclear submarines would probably cause a chain of events to unfold with implications for Scottish prospects for membership in NATO. Part A analyzes the possibility of relocating the rUK's nuclear program to less optimal alternative sites within the rUK as well as the possibility of the rUK housing its program overseas in the United States or France. If relocation was simply not possible at a reasonable cost, the rUK would face the question of nuclear disarmament. Part B assess the implications of the rUK abandoning its nuclear weapons, including the effects this move would have on London's role on the international stage.

Chapter V discusses the importance of Scotland becoming a NATO member and the obstacles that stand in the way. Four issue areas pertain to possible Scottish membership. Part A compares Scotland's proposed defense model to the approaches taken by states with similar geostrategic characteristics, states that are either currently members of NATO or Partnership for Peace participants, and concludes that the SNP's plan for Scotland's defense posture is consistent with that pursued by comparable states in the region. Part B reexamines the nuclear issue facing the UK and what impact the SNP's intention to obtain the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland could have on Scotland's application to become a member of NATO. Part C reviews the potentially cumbersome defense authorization policy of the SNP called the "triple lock" system. This policy could in some circumstances create confusion and anxiety pertaining to Scotland's willingness to engage in the use of force to honor the mutual defense pledge in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Finally, Part D examines what may be the greatest obstacle to Scottish membership, the growing secessionist movements within Western Europe. Because of these movement, some NATO members may have reservations about accepting a secessionist in the Alliance.

Chapter VI, the "Conclusion," discusses the potential consequences of Scottish independence for transatlantic security and the European foreign relations of the United States. The United States said little on an official level about the first independence referendum in Scotland in 2014. However, the ramifications of an independent Scotland

could be significant for the security interests of the United States, notably with respect to continued transatlantic cooperation in NATO, and other institutions. With an independent Scotland would come the threat of the removal of the UK's nuclear weapons from Scotland and the risk of the UK's abandonment of its nuclear weapons. This decision would not only increase the nuclear deterrence burden for NATO borne by France and the United States, but it would also weaken the strongest political ally of the United States in the UN Security Council and other international organizations.

The potential consequences of a second Scottish independence referendum should raise concerns about the future transatlantic security dynamics and defense policies of the UK, NATO and the United States. In an environment in which the protection of national interests is based on collective defense institutions and strong deterrence postures, divisions in the Alliance due to political turmoil, unwanted defense policies, and secessionism would undoubtedly damage security relations among some of the most influential powers in the world.

## **II. SCOTLAND AND GREAT BRITAIN FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY**

Centuries of turmoil, mistrust, and political competition between Scotland and England have shaped the political environment in the United Kingdom. Experiences create a long-lasting perception of a political landscape between two nation-states. The history of relations between Scotland and England in the pre-modern world has therefore played a major role in the decision by many Scots to seek secession. The Scottish National Party (SNP) comprehends this rich political history between Scots and Englishmen very well and has used this history of mistrust to motivate Scottish citizens to support the pursuit of independence. Since its inception, the SNP has been the leading proponent of Scottish nationalism and the driver for Scottish sovereignty away from the halls of Westminster.

To understand the current contentious relations between Scotland and England, it is imperative to examine the underlying factors and experiences that have spurred the desire of Scottish leaders and citizens to secede from the Union they have been a part of for over 300 years. A series of historical events involving both nations has shaped the modern political structure, nationalistic ideologies, and the overall security apparatus of the United Kingdom. This is not to say that Scottish and English leaders have always been at odds with one another. In times of relative peace in Europe, Scotland and England have had a troubled relationship. In times of war within and outside the continent, the relationship has been that of a strong bond for survival.

Violent conflicts concerning the protection of sovereign rights dot the history of the Scottish-English relationship, owing to perceived political mistreatment and mistrust. Each event in its own right has had a profound impact on the political and security relationships between the two nations. Whether the issues stem from an antiquated monarchy or a more modern parliamentary democratic government, Scottish nationalism and the protection of the state have endured.



## A. POLITICAL RELATIONS

For centuries, Scottish and English monarchies took advantage of the others' weaknesses to gain relative power within the region. The first real proclamation of Scottish independence dates back to the late 13th century when the Scottish throne was left vacant due to unforeseen circumstances that allowed a power vacuum to take hold. In 1286, King Alexander III of Scotland suddenly passed away with no immediate heir to take his place. His three year old granddaughter Margaret was the last member in his lineage and thus was the obvious choice for succession to the Scottish monarchy. However, she too died while in transit from Norway to Scotland to take the crown. A "committee of guardians" was created to protect Scottish autonomy until a rightful monarchy could be reestablished. King Edward I of England took advantage of this opportunity and tyrannically ruled over Scotland into the early 14th century. The legends of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce come from this historical period as Scots fought the English for their freedom from the king's oppressive brutality.<sup>5</sup>

Scotland and England coexisted on the same island for many generations as separate domains before the 18th century. That all changed in 1707 when Scottish and English political relations hit another critical point. With Scotland in debt and its government unable to pay servants or troops to enforce laws around the country, Scotland and England agreed upon a Union "calling for courage on the part of the Scots and generosity on the part of the English."<sup>6</sup> This Union became the foundation of today's United Kingdom, but it did not come without its fair share of unrest and turmoil. The Unionization of the British Isles stirred resentment within Scotland and fostered attempts to maintain the sovereignty of Scotland distinct and free from English oversight. Violent uprisings ensued within Scotland to try to restore the autonomy that nationalists claimed was theirs.

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<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London: Rutledge Publications, 1970, 38–44). Scottish rule varied throughout the 14th century under "Committees of Guardians" that decided about kings and shared kingdoms, but the first real acts of preserving Scottish sovereignty occurred at the turn of the 14th century in the campaigns against English aggression.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 316.

The unsuccessful invasion of Scotland and England in 1745 by Charles Edward Stuart, a Jacobite trying to restore his family to the Scottish throne, showed the ineptitude of the British government in London in defending territories to the north. The lack of defense created further resentment and frustration among Scottish citizens. As Linda Colley states, “If large numbers of Britons had really wanted to throw in their lot with the Jacobite cause, it is hard to see in these circumstances how they could have been stopped.”<sup>7</sup> Even though the invasion was unsuccessful, it perpetuated further the political rift pertaining to nationalism in specific parts of Scotland and England. The most distinct separation of nationalist ideology before the failed invasion occurred internally within Scotland between the citizens of the Lowlands and the Highlands. The Lowlanders focused more on the economic grievances they were facing as businessmen and entrepreneurs whereas the Highlanders found their grievances in religious and linguistic issues separate from the concerns of Lowland Scotland. It was only after the failed invasion attempt by the Jacobites in 1746 that both groups for the first time began to understand the importance of common nationalist ideals. For the Lowland citizens, this was the time to embark on improving the economic performance of Scotland compared to that of England through “enlightenment” and “de-nationalization.”<sup>8</sup>

Internal cohesion in Scottish politics was growing ever stronger, but the drive towards independence was lacking even as other entities of the British crown were successful in secession. When the United States gained its independence from Great Britain in the late eighteenth century, Scottish nationalists (especially the elite land owners) were surprisingly unmoved.<sup>9</sup> It wasn’t until the 1790s that the poet Robert Burns began to publish works encouraging more radical changes for Scotland based on the events of the French Revolution. The logic of Burns’ literature was based on the “clubs” that French citizens introduced to argue the principles of a stable government, something that Burns

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7 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 81.

8 Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), 30.

9 Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 362. With regard to the independence of the United States, at the time most of the political movements within the United States were directed by landowners who maintained a stable economic stance. Scottish landowners remained relatively quiet on this front.

encouraged Scots to do within the British realm. The reactions to his writings were more radical than the English anticipated. The threat to the British crown from organized political groups appeared real as Louis XVI and his monarchy were destroyed. In addition, the British government was in the midst of planning for war with the French and could not afford the breakout of riots throughout Scotland.

The answer to this Scottish radicalism from the British government was not one of reform, but rather a hasty response through an unprecedented judicial process. The British government attempted to collect most of the leaders of these Scottish nationalist organizations and try them for sedition.<sup>10</sup> This type of crime was relatively new to Scottish courts. Judges were therefore forced to create their own definitions of the crime of sedition, further confirming the judicial corruption of the British government.<sup>11</sup> This process was condemned by the majority of the Scottish population. However, the Scottish leaders did not have the political power that English leaders shared for most of the 18th century.

By the late 19th century, Scottish politics were still lacking in political power more than ever, especially their representative power within the halls of Westminster. The Reform Act of 1832 and the creation of a Scottish Secretaryship in 1833 helped relieve some of the political tension as the Reform Act reshaped the political representation landscape by allowing the size of a population in general to be tied to the number of parliamentary seats in London.<sup>12</sup> The basis for this reform is traced to the influence of the Irish and their initial nationalist movements earlier in the century. The Irish nationalist propaganda was extremely effective with Highland citizens of Scotland, but not necessarily that moving to the larger populations of the Lowlands in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where the majority of the population was centered. Nevertheless, this nationalist movement never dissipated over time.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 364.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

## B. THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY

The most prominent changes in Scottish politics began in the early twentieth century with the formation in 1928 of the National Party of Scotland (renamed in 1934 the Scottish National Party). The inception of the SNP marked an era of nationalism as an independent movement separate from British politics. The SNP did have its struggles early on and was not the most popular of political parties within Scotland, but through sheer persistence and unwavering dedication to protecting and increasing Scottish sovereignty, the party became the leading political entity advocating an independent Scotland.

From the outset, the party relied on nationalism as the mobilizing force for its political movement. This practice coincided with the Plaid Cymru nationalist movement two years earlier. As Christopher Harvie explains, “Both depended on the mobilisation of students and intellectuals; both stressed linguistic distinctiveness and the existence of a native tradition of decentralized democracy.”<sup>14</sup> However, in the 1920s and 1930s, Scotland suffered a period of high emigration as key political proponents left for better opportunities. Political strength and knowledge within Holyrood (the seat of the Scottish Parliament) were missing, and thus the Scottish National Party could not break the hold of the established Union government that oversaw Scottish affairs.<sup>15</sup> Following World War II, the SNP struggled to maintain a majority power within the Scottish government since Scottish voters put nationalistic ideals second to other concerns.<sup>16</sup> These concerns included the defense and security of the British Isles in relation to potential European-based aggression. With the consequences of war still fresh in the minds of Scottish citizens, the SNP declined in stature and never held a majority of seats throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The SNP’s chances for a majority within the Scottish government improved dramatically with the discovery of oil and natural gas below the North Sea in the late

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<sup>14</sup> Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, 46. The Plaid Cymru movement originated in 1925 from multiple national political parties in Wales, promoting the Welsh language and potential Welsh independence from the United Kingdom.

<sup>15</sup> Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 418.

1960s.<sup>17</sup> These resources brought Scotland the economic stimulus that it needed to compete with the rest of the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe as an autonomous nation with a stable GDP. The secondary effect of this discovery was the return of nationalism and nationalist ideology, which the SNP exploited. “The Nationalist Party naturally seized on ‘Scotland’s oil’ as a further argument for independence.”<sup>18</sup> The 1970s showed a shift in political power as the SNP gained more and more seats from the Conservative and Labour parties due to the increase in the nationalistic aims of citizens. This trend continued for the next few decades.

It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that the SNP began to truly make headway in its pursuit of an independent Scotland. Following the election of 2007, in which the SNP took the second largest number of seats in the Scottish parliament, and then the majority in the election of 2011, the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, provided an opportunity for independence through a single-vote referendum. The Edinburgh Agreement between the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government, then headed by Prime Minister David Cameron, was signed in 2012. This momentous occasion earned the SNP the claim of being the first political party in Scottish history to secure a vote concerning Scotland’s possible secession from the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

The referendum about possible Scottish independence did not come without political anxiety and skepticism from British leaders regarding an SNP-led Scotland. The SNP operates on specific platforms pertaining to national defense policies and security concerns that have the British government worried about its collective security and defense capabilities and future role in international security affairs. The most prominent of these SNP policies is the call for a nuclear-weapon-free Scotland. Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker state that the “Anti-nuclear [weapons] sentiment extends well beyond the ranks of the SNP, cutting across political parties and finding strong expression in churches

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17 Ibid., 418.

18 Ibid., 419.

19 Scottish National Party, “Our Party,” accessed 03 October 2017. [https://www.snp.org/our\\_party](https://www.snp.org/our_party).

and civil society.”<sup>20</sup> This strong stance may be critical for the future of nuclear deterrence in Europe.

Another policy platform that the SNP has been committed to is for the United Kingdom to remain a member of the European Union. In “Scotland’s Future: The White Paper for Independence,” produced by the SNP for the first referendum, the SNP declared that “Scotland’s natural position is as an active participant in the EU, which provides us with unparalleled access to a market of over 500 million people.”<sup>21</sup> Scottish citizens shared the same sentiment during the Brexit vote in June 2016. According to results from the BBC, 62% of Scottish citizens voted for the UK to remain a member of the EU, the highest percentage of votes to remain compared to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.<sup>22</sup> The unpopular decision for the UK to leave the EU might give the SNP the political push it needs to introduce a second referendum on Scottish independence. This all depends on the completion of the negotiations between the UK and the EU and how these negotiations affect the Scottish population.

### **C. DEFENSE RELATIONS**

Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom are not only strongly bonded in the realm of politics; they are deeply rooted in the importance of a united defense posture against any foreign aggression as well as protecting interests abroad. In contrast to the wary political ties that Scotland and England have maintained, the military bond has never been in question. In times of conflict, Scottish fighters have risen to the challenge of defending the kingdom against any foreign aggression. In terms of survival, England and Scotland have come together to share the burden of national defense. All three branches of the UK military have significant establishments within Scotland, with Scots holding joint responsibilities among the ranks.

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<sup>20</sup> Chalmers and Walker, “Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent?” 110.

<sup>21</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 216.

<sup>22</sup> “EU Referendum Results,” BBC News, June 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu\\_referendum/results](http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu_referendum/results).

Throughout recent British history, Scots have been heavily involved in the defense structure of the empire. During the Napoleonic Wars, Scots shared a higher proportion of members in the defense volunteer corps than Englishmen. In her book, *Britons: Forging a Nation 1707–1836*, Linda Colley declares that

before the British state committed itself to popularizing civil defence in 1798, the statistics it compiled revealed that a *higher* proportion of Welshmen and Scots had attached themselves to volunteer corps than had Englishmen. Just under 4 per cent of the total male population in Wales and Scotland had volunteered to join home defence units in the first five years of the war as against just over 2 per cent in England. And in this early stage of the war, Scots and men from *South* Wales were far more extrovert in their military commitment than their English neighbours.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, Scots sought out positions of higher authority within these forces.

Even before the Union, the British army had been one of the few departments of the state wide open to Scottish ambition. By the mid-eighteenth century, perhaps one in four regimental officers was a Scot. Like their English, Welsh, and Irish counterparts, these men needed money and contacts to get to the very top of their profession. But if they possessed these attributes, as well as proven loyalty, there were no barriers to what they might achieve.<sup>24</sup>

To bring this into perspective, the male population in Scotland was approximately 6% of the entire male population in Scotland and England together in 1801, yet 25% of all regimental officers in the British army were Scotsmen.<sup>25</sup> For some Scottish citizens, enlistment in the British army brought stability to their lives as well as the opportunity to fight for their homeland and bring pride back to their heritage. “For Scottish younger sons,

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<sup>23</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 300.

<sup>24</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 128

<sup>25</sup> James Gray, *Scottish Population Statistics: Including Webster's Analysis of Population 1755* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh for the Scottish History Society, 1952), xvii: Out of the 1,608,420 Scottish citizens in 1801, 739,091 were males meaning there were 15% more females than males. The total population of England in 1801 totaled roughly 9,168,000 (Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, London: John Murray Publishing, 1826, 435). Using the same assumption of male-to-female ratio for England as in Scotland in 1801, the male population of England was estimated to be roughly 4,213,000 males.

prevented by convention from going into trade like some of their English equivalents, the path to glory was also one of the few available pathways to fortune.”<sup>26</sup>

The Second World War brought Scots and Englishmen closer than ever for a common cause, survival. During the war, the English and the Scots and the other Britons worked hand in hand to thwart German aggression against the British Isles, and the Scots gained considerable political prowess within the government in the process. Rosalind Mitchison states that “She [Scotland] had a particular advantage here, for the regional structure of government set up during the war gave extra and needed strength to the Secretaryship of State.”<sup>27</sup> With this rise in prominence, Scotland was able to look beyond its prior setbacks in British politics and focus on the task at hand, and this enhanced positive relations between England and Scotland.

The British government invested heavily in military facilities and installations within Scotland towards the end of World War II and into the Cold War era. These investments included the establishment of a nuclear submarine base and storage sites for SLBMs in Faslane and Coulport,<sup>28</sup> the expansion of the Royal Air Force’s nuclear delivery capabilities at RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Leuchars,<sup>29</sup> and the introduction of the Nimrod MR1 anti-submarine and maritime patrol aircraft at RAF Kinloss.<sup>30</sup> The importance of these programs and capabilities would have an indelible effect on the future of the UK armed forces as well as potential Scottish independence.

Scotland would become a hub for some of the most important capabilities for the UK defense force throughout the Cold War and into the 21st century. However, a shift in the political ideology and defense policy of the United Kingdom at the turn of the century has split Scotland apart from the rest of the UK. Chapter III discusses the origins of this

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26 Colley, *Britons*, 128.

27 Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 410.

28 “Resolution,” Global Security, accessed 04 October 2017, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/uk/resolution.htm>

29 “RAF Lossiemouth – History,” UK Royal Air Force, accessed 04 October 2017, <https://www.raf.mod.uk/raflossiemouth/aboutus/history.cfm>

30 “RAF Kinloss—The End of an Era.” UK Royal Air Force, 30 July 2012, <https://www.raf.mod.uk/news/archive.cfm?storyid=6535A649-5056-A318-A817A954E9F03688>



split as well as recent defense policy changes that reduced the size of the military within the UK. The importance of the aforementioned programs in Scotland has become even more prominent for the defense of the sovereignty of the British Isles.

The current motivation for secession from the United Kingdom by Scottish leaders dates back centuries, but it was not until recently that the traction for independence was given a serious chance. The political experiences and interactions between Scotland and England have shaped the rich political landscape that the SNP now tries to take advantage of. The history of mistrust among Scottish leaders towards the British government has fueled once again the flames of Scottish nationalism. This is an issue pertaining to the security of the United Kingdom. An independent Scotland would affect domestic affairs within the UK, but the effect on transatlantic security and the defense of the British Isles would be of far greater magnitude. As the next few chapters explain, the impact of the SNP's proposed defense policy and political views, along with the recent decisions made by UK policy-makers, could produce a substantial ripple effect on the security of Europe.

### **III. EFFECT OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE ON THE DEFENSE STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

How would an independent Scotland with ambitions to establish an effective defense structure affect the rest of the United Kingdom's armed forces and security policy? No policy-maker (or analyst) is able to predict precisely how a military force will be impacted through secession, but historical references and current security concerns could be used to formulate an educated hypothesis on the matter. Taking the SNP's initial defense policy proposals from its first attempt at UK secession in 2014, and assuming that the SNP will mirror those same policies for its next attempt at independence, this chapter examines whether an independent Scotland would be able to provide the necessary defense of its sovereignty against the current and prospective security concerns of the UK and Europe. Furthermore, this chapter explores the ramifications of such Scottish decisions on the status of the armed forces of the rest of the United Kingdom.

The UK government and the MoD have recently produced two reviews of their strategic defense and security policies which have allowed British decision-makers to set a course for the future defense of the UK. However, the content and premise behind these reviews seem quite different from each other owing to the changing security concerns in Europe, and the threat of Scotland's independence posed by the SNP. The changes from the UK's SDSR in 2010 to its 2015 review were significant in the fact that the UK shifted from entanglement in lengthy conflicts in the Middle East while trying to reduce its overall force size and modernizing its capabilities to a highly modernized force currently focused on security concerns within Europe.

The UK government has centered its latest defense policy on the modernization of its armed forces against greater threats closer to home than Afghanistan. This UK policy could help the efforts of the SNP in its attempt to procure defense assets for Scotland should another opportunity for independence arise. The SNP holds that its initial proposed defense and security policy in its first attempt at independence was not as robust as it should have been. Inheriting more maritime, land, and air assets, as the UK begins to shed its outdated

capabilities, would benefit the Scottish armed forces and SNP efforts to build a stronger and more capable force to defend Scotland's sovereignty.

#### **A. SCOTLAND'S POTENTIAL FORCE**

There are three main aspects to discuss concerning the SNP's vision of a defense policy and force posture for an independent Scotland. The first is the importance of outlining a stronger and better-equipped security and defense policy that would be able to handle the task of protecting Scotland's vital interests in the North Sea and Northern Atlantic region. The second is a defense budget comparable to other European countries with interests similar to those of Scotland. The final aspect involves defining an overall security policy with other European states with similar geostrategic interests in order to provide mutual assurances for protection.

In 2013, the SNP produced an extensive document outlining the vision and the process to a successful independent Scotland called "Scotland's Future: The White Paper on Independence."<sup>31</sup> In Chapter Six of this document the SNP described the defense policy and posture that it envisioned for Scotland to provide the necessary security of its sovereignty. The defense policy focused on protecting Scotland's main economic revenue and strongest resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the North Sea and Northern Atlantic Ocean. The maritime force would provide the bulk of the security to Scotland's oil and natural gas fields within its EEZ while its land and air forces would provide support to the maritime force through early-warning capabilities, coastal defense, and border protection.<sup>32</sup>

In designing its projected independence force, the SNP relied heavily on the assumption that Scotland would inherit capabilities and assets from the UK once independence was gained. In "Scotland's Future," the SNP stated that "we will inherit a share of existing UK defence assets, giving most of the equipment we need to establish Scotland's defence forces in the immediate post-independence period. The division of

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<sup>31</sup> This document was released in 2013 in anticipation of a Scottish referendum for independence scheduled for the fall of 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, Ch. 6.

assets and liabilities will of course need to be negotiated.”<sup>33</sup> It is unknown how well the defense negotiations would have gone for the newly established country, if it had gained independence in the referendum, or how future negotiations would go. Currently, there appears to be no evidence from the UK government about how asset negotiations would have been conducted or might proceed with an independent Scotland.

Scotland’s main revenue streams originate in the North Sea with the oil, natural gas, and fishing industries leading the way. Oil and natural gas extraction and sales generate between 17% and 20% of Scotland’s GDP.<sup>34</sup> Combined with the revenue totals from the fishing industry, Scotland in 2015 exported around \$40 billion worth of off-shore commodities, which accounted for around 47% of all exports for Scotland in that year.<sup>35</sup> The defense and security of these revenue streams constituted the basis for the initial maritime defense posture depicted in the 2013 “White Paper” publication. SNP leaders did not provide a more in-depth defense policy pertaining to broader international concerns, and the maritime force was geared toward the protection of Scotland’s EEZ.

Scotland’s economic prosperity relies on a strong off-shore industrial policy. The SNP stated that, “while projections of the price of oil and gas vary, everyone now acknowledges that Scotland’s oil and gas wealth is an extremely valuable resource and will last for a long time to come.”<sup>36</sup> To protect its primary revenue as a possible independent state in 2014, Scotland needed to fund and sustain a strong maritime defense posture. The SNP’s maritime force composition plan relied upon an inheritance of assets from the UK Royal Navy.<sup>37</sup> These assets included two Type-23 frigates, four mine-countermeasure vessels, two off-shore patrol vessels, six patrol boats, and multiple auxiliary support ships.

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33 Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 234.

34 “Oil and Gas,” Scottish Natural Heritage, 30 August 2017. <http://www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-coasts-and-sea/oil-and-gas/>

35 “Export Statistics Scotland,” Scottish Government, 30 August 2017. <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/Exports/ESSPublication>

36 Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 57.

37 Fleming and Gebhard, “Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security,” 317.

Scotland would have to recruit and maintain around 2,200 active and reserve personnel to operate these platforms.<sup>38</sup>

If Scotland received all the assets it requested from the UK, would these capabilities be enough to provide the security that Scotland needs to prosper? One could argue that a major factor in designing a naval force structure is the size of the maritime area of responsibility that needs to be secured. The North Sea covers almost 300,000 square miles and is generally separated into three EEZs belonging to Norway, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. The EEZ of Scotland would cover the majority of the region as it would stretch some 200 nautical miles around the territory into the North Sea and Northern Atlantic Ocean.<sup>39</sup> The burden placed on only two capable frigates to protect the entire EEZ of Scotland would be tremendous and most likely not attainable or sustainable. The smaller patrol boats and off-shore patrol vessels would not be capable of conducting constant patrols of the Scottish oil fields hundreds of miles off-shore.

Along with protecting Scotland's EEZ, Scottish maritime forces would also be handling coastal defense priorities. As Fleming and Gebhard observe, "Similar to the geostrategic position of Norway and Iceland, Scotland presents itself as a scarcely populated and geographically exposed territory with a vast coastline."<sup>40</sup> Scotland's physical coastline stretches out over 10,200 miles which makes for a lot of water to cover for security purposes. In comparison Norway uses 62 naval vessels to cover over 15,000 miles of coastline, while Denmark uses 90 vessels to cover only 4,500 miles of coastline.<sup>41</sup> The key for maritime protection for both Norway and Denmark is their membership in NATO. This blanket of security allows Norway and Denmark to continue North Sea and Atlantic Ocean operations with their current maritime forces. The SNP did envision becoming a member of NATO, a topic discussed in later chapters of this thesis.

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38 Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, Ch. 6

39 Scottish Government, *Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): Scottish Zone*, Marine Scotland Information, 21 December 2016, <http://marine.gov.scot/information/exclusive-economic-zone-eez-scottish-zone>

40 Fleming and Gebhard, "Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security," 315.

41 "The World Factbook: Norway and Denmark," Central Intelligence Agency, 29 August 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/no.html>

The land force composition was not a high priority for the SNP. This was evident in the “Five Defence Priorities listed for Scottish sovereignty.” None of the five priorities listed pertains strictly to the land force element of Scottish defense, while two of the five listed maritime defense as primary missions.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, even if a sovereign nation did not, owing to its specific circumstances, need a land force to provide border security, it would require land forces to participate in certain operations under UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, or other auspices.

The primary missions of the land-based forces of Scotland would be in direct support of the maritime effort in coastal and border protection, domestic security, and protecting national interests.<sup>43</sup> In 2013, the SNP estimated that it would require 3,500 military personnel at the onset of independence; the force size would grow to 4,700 within 10 years, providing Scotland with a viable force to protect all citizens while furnishing assets to international security operations conducted by alliances and coalitions.<sup>44</sup> The SNP estimates that the UK would allow Scottish citizens serving in the UK army and marines to serve in the Scottish forces and that Scotland would inherit two light armored and light artillery units, one engineering unit, one aviation unit, two communication units, and one transport, logistics and medical unit.<sup>45</sup>

The Scottish air force would inherit several key assets from the UK, but the SNP’s main asset priority for the air force was the purchase of multiple maritime patrol aircraft, a capability stripped from the UK air force in 2010. The capability to provide maritime patrol would be vital to Scottish defense force leaders. The SNP asserted in 2013 that “Scotland has been failed by decades of poor decisions. So we now have weapons that we do not need – like Trident – and lack assets that we do need – like maritime patrol aircraft.”<sup>46</sup> Along with a new maritime patrol aircraft platform, the Scottish air force would inherit 12

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42 Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 237.

43 Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 236.

44 *Ibid.*, 237.

45 *Ibid.*, 240.

46 *Ibid.*, 233–234.

Typhoon jets for Quick Reaction Alert missions, six C-130J transport aircraft, and the right to remain under NATO's integrated Air Command and Control (AC2) system until Scotland establishes an organic system of its own.<sup>47</sup> These assets would provide air support for maritime forces along with early-warning capabilities off-shore.

For Scotland to sustain an effective defense force, a sufficient defense budget would need to be approved and maintained. In 2013, the SNP estimated that Scotland could have afforded to allocate 2.5 billion British pounds from its GDP annually to fund the entire defense force. To understand the significance of this amount, this figure needs to be compared to the defense budgets of other European states with similar geostrategic interests, such as Denmark and Norway.

Scotland's total GDP in 2015 was 152 billion British pounds, including off-shore commodities.<sup>48</sup> The SNP's proposed 2.5 billion British pound allocation for defense spending means that Scotland would have allocated 1.6% of its GDP toward defense. This percentage is very similar to the estimated percentage of GDP that both Denmark and Norway spent on defense in 2015. NATO expense sheets show that Norway contributed 1.47% of its GDP toward defense while Denmark contributed 1.1%.<sup>49</sup> According to World Bank data, Norway spent 1.7% of its GDP towards defense, but does not compare with NATO's results with regard to Denmark's expenditures to defense.<sup>50</sup> With similar figures in defense spending as a percentage of GDP and economic interest in the oil fields of the North Sea and Northern Atlantic, one would expect that the SNP to propose a defense spending level similar to those of Norway and Denmark.

Despite the similarities in defense spending in terms of GDP percentage, Denmark and Norway have force compositions that differ from the proposed Scottish defense force.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>48</sup> Scottish Government, *Quarterly National Accounts Scotland: Quarter 4, FY2015*, Scottish Government, 4 May 2016, <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/QNA2015Q4>.

<sup>49</sup> "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017)," NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 29 June 2017, 8, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_06/20170629\\_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> "Military Expenditure Percentage of GDP: Norway and Denmark," World Bank Data, 25 August 2017, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=NO-DK>.

This is clear in the comparison of the maritime forces of Norway and Denmark with the SNP's projected maritime force described in its independence papers. Norway maintains 62 total naval vessels and deploys five frigates, six submarines, 16 patrol craft for North Sea operations, nine minesweeper vessels, and six maritime patrol aircraft in its maritime defense plan.<sup>51</sup> Denmark, on the other hand, operates 90 naval vessels and deploys nine frigates, eight patrol craft, six minesweeper vessels and three maritime patrol aircraft.<sup>52</sup>

Norway and Denmark have almost three times the number of vessels for EEZ protection and coastal defense that Scotland may have upon independence, plus the advantage of maritime patrol aircraft for North Sea surveillance. The numbers need to be taken with a grain of salt as Norway and Denmark are both members of NATO, and they have pledged forces to this security alliance, but the SNP did plan on seeking NATO membership originally, a topic that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

Under the assumption that the SNP would repeat the defense force structure that it proposed in 2013 in a second attempt at independence, two issues need to be understood. First, the size of the potential Scottish force would depend on how much the Scottish government would spend on defense. The smaller the sum, the greater the likelihood Scottish decision-makers would look elsewhere for enhanced security such as the rest of the UK (rUK), NATO, or both. As Andrew Dorman explains, "Commentators have made comparisons with Ireland, rather than the SNP's preferred analogies with Norway and Denmark, arguing that there is in fact no need for Scotland to spend so much on its defense and security, and that it could, in effect, freeload on others such as the United States and rUK."<sup>53</sup> The larger the defense force, the greater the sums that need to be allotted out of GDP for national defense, with less reliance on the rUK to provide such services.

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51 "2017 Norway Military Strength," Global Fire Power, 29 August 2017.  
[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=norway](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=norway).

52 "2017 Denmark Military Strength," Global Fire Power, 29 August 2017.  
[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=denmark](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=denmark).

53 Andrew Dorman, "More than a Storm in a Teacup: The Defence and Security Implications of Scottish Independence," *International Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2014), 683.



Second, the percentage of GDP allocated to the proposed Scottish defense apparatus would remain in line with the percentage of GDP spent for defense by Denmark and Norway. However, the Danish and Norwegian forces are considerably larger than the proposed Scottish force structure, especially the maritime force components. If the SNP envisioned Scottish membership in NATO, increasing Scotland's defense budget would not only enlarge the defense force's size, but would allow Scotland to reach the 2% defense spending target agreed upon by NATO members.

## **B. UNITED KINGDOM'S FLUCTUATING DEFENSE POLICY**

The United Kingdom is currently in the midst of modernizing its armed forces by replacing outdated capabilities with newer platforms, increasing its equipment compatibility with its allies, and filling in the defense gaps left open by previous defense policies. With regard to potential Scottish independence and possible inheritance of assets by Scottish defense forces, the rUK's conventional forces would not be as greatly depleted as one might think. However, it took a changing of the European security landscape (with factors such as Russian aggression and extremist terrorism) and the threat of Scottish independence to show the UK the proper course forward.

In 2010, the MoD produced a publication titled "Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty," outlining the government's security and defense priorities for the next five years.<sup>54</sup> This "Strategic Defense and Security Review" listed eight priorities in national security tasks, including "identifying and monitoring risks through coordinated early warning systems and horizon scanning, the requirement to keep the obligations of a member of the UN Security Council and a leading member of NATO, and protecting the UK both at home and abroad through a minimum effective nuclear deterrent."<sup>55</sup> In order to achieve its priorities, the Review recommended reducing its defense force while decommissioning certain current force assets to make room for its future assets. In addition, the British government would reduce the UK's nuclear stockpile to 180 warheads by

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<sup>54</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defense and Security Review*, Cm 7948, London: HM Government, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty*, 11–12.

2025.<sup>56</sup> Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman claim that, “the UK was effectively the first western state to undertake a complete defence and security review in the ‘age of austerity.’”<sup>57</sup>

For the maritime community this meant decommissioning four frigates and two aircraft carriers. The land forces would lose two of the 10 regional brigade HQ’s, and one of the six deployable brigades. Tank and heavily artillery equipment would be reduced by 35%. In addition, the MoD would decommission the entire Harrier attack jet fleet as well as discontinue the progress of the new Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft program.<sup>58</sup> Most of the capabilities identified to be removed did have replacement programs in place. The only exception was the Nimrod program, which was at the heart of the maritime defense strategy for the entire UK.

With a draw-down in capabilities and forces came the lack of necessity for bases and installations across the UK. The Nimrod and Harrier programs, for instance, were based at RAF Kinloss in Scotland. The RAF would no longer have any use for these bases and would subsequently shut them down.<sup>59</sup> Base closures have a lasting socio-economic impact on the region and often provoke serious backlash from the citizens that rely on business and income from these facilities. The MoD acknowledged the potential impact of base closures by stating that, “Our aim will be that our Armed Forces will continue to be based in a way which is sensitive to economic and social pressures and the needs of defence, our people and their families.”<sup>60</sup> The ramifications from base closures and force reductions on the livelihoods of Scottish citizens could only fuel the fire of secession

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<sup>56</sup> Nigel Biggar, “Living with Trident,” *Scottish Review* 10, no. 6 (May 2015), [http://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/sites/mcdonaldcentre.ox.ac.uk/files/content/living\\_with\\_trident\\_biggar\\_may-2015.pdf](http://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/sites/mcdonaldcentre.ox.ac.uk/files/content/living_with_trident_biggar_may-2015.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, “Smart Muddling through: Rethinking UK National Strategy beyond Afghanistan,” *International Relations* 88, no. 2 (March 2012), 213.

<sup>58</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty*. The reduction in maritime forces are listed in para. 2.A.5, the land forces in para. 2.A.8, and the air forces in para. 2.A.11.

<sup>59</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty*, para. 2.D.13.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2.D.14.

rhetoric. It is not clear, however, whether an independent Scotland would restore closed bases to active operational use.

The consequences of modernization and force reduction of the UK in 2010 were felt beyond the English Channel and the North Sea. Other European states watched closely the maneuverings of the UK's decisions and what its new military strategy would concentrate on. In 2010, Doug Stokes and Richard Whitman wrote that, "Europe currently has only two main strategic powers, France and the UK, with many other European militaries increasingly resembling so-called 'bonsai armies'. As such, the 'heavy lifting' involved in working to develop European grand strategy will naturally fall to these two powers."<sup>61</sup> The UK emphasized its importance in influencing international powers within the UN and NATO, but European Union observers generally saw the UK and France as the leading policy-makers for the military security of the EU, aside from the United States and NATO as a whole. The UK decision to cut forces in 2010 resulted in a weaker defense for the European Union and the alliance.

The approval of the first Scottish referendum for independence would have only further complicated the problem. As mentioned previously, the SNP assumed that the Scottish Defense Forces would have inherited defense capabilities well-established in the UK armed forces. The more dire issue for the rUK armed forces would have been the decrease in tax revenues created by the departure of Scotland as the rUK's GDP could have dropped by as much as one-twelfth from that of the UK.<sup>62</sup> The rUK could have increased its percentage of GDP allocations to defense, but this would have increased the already growing public debt and the mounting cost of possibly moving Trident out of Scotland, a circumstance discussed in chapter IV.

In response to unforeseen events that took place throughout the UK and in Europe since 2010, then Prime Minister David Cameron's UK government produced its 2015 Strategic Defense and Security Review (SDSR). The government reconfirmed Britain's

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<sup>61</sup> Doug Stokes and Richard Whitman, "Transatlantic Triage? European and UK 'Grand Strategy' after the U.S. Rebalance to Asia," *International Affairs* 89, no. 5, (2013), 1088.

<sup>62</sup> Dorman, "More than a Storm in a Teacup," 684.

position as a global power within the UN Security Council as well as standing tall with other NATO members in the face of Russian aggression in Crimea, among other security concerns. As Cameron stated, “the world is more dangerous and uncertain today than five years ago.”<sup>63</sup>

The shift in defense policy from austere measures in 2010 to meeting the defense spending requirements that NATO members expected in 2015 may be largely attributed to American lobbying. U.S. Chiefs of Staffs from the Pentagon along with then Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter pressed Prime Minister Cameron and his Conservative Party members to meet the spending requirements agreed upon by members of NATO.<sup>64</sup> Dorman, Uttley, and Wilkinson noted that the 2015 SDSR “would no longer need to be as brutal as its 2010 predecessor.”<sup>65</sup>

The new approach by the UK government sought to promote more cooperation with NATO agendas while combatting terrorism in the UK with an increase in intelligence collecting and sharing. The key points to come out of the 2015 SDSR for the armed forces were the UK’s continued commitment to nuclear deterrence against state-based aggression, its intention to continue to invest 2% of GDP on its defense to meet its NATO target, and its plan to increase funds for new equipment through 2025, including the purchase of nine new P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to be stationed at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the government announced that the UK would focus more on joint operations with the United States, France, and the other members of NATO on deployments to deter threats rather than deploying its forces on its own strategic agenda.<sup>67</sup>

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63 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, Cm9161, London: HM Government, 2015, 6.

64 Andrew Dorman, Matthew Uttley, and Benedict Wilkinson, “The Curious Incident of Mr. Cameron and the United Kingdom Defence Budget: A New Legacy?” *The Political Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (March 2016), 46–47.

65 Dorman, Uttley, and Wilkinson, “The Curious Incident of Mr. Cameron and the United Kingdom Defence Budget,” 47.

66 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, para 4.7, para 4.33, 6.

67 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, 4.38-4.39.

Against continued pressure from the SNP to put forth another referendum for an independent Scotland that could ultimately partition the Union, the UK armed forces have focused their efforts on developing a force that will work jointly with intelligence services and allies to combat threats and maintain UK national interests globally.<sup>68</sup> The UK has planned to invest heavily in new capabilities and equipment that would allow it to shed the older platforms and assets from its arsenal. In turn, the UK armed forces could sell these assets to other allies and allow a newly independent Scotland to inherit specific capabilities to fulfill the SNP's initial statement of requirements.<sup>69</sup>

The contents of the 2015 UK SDSR could give the SNP a chance to revise their initial defense structure vision for Scotland for the better. The UK government specifically describes the additions that the armed forces would be provided by 2025. This could give the SNP and Scotland's defense leaders an opportunity to obtain the obsolete assets and programs being discarded by the British government. For example, the Royal Navy will include two new aircraft carriers, new Joint Strike Fighters, three new logistic ships, and four new tankers to go along with its destroyer and frigate fleet.<sup>70</sup> What is not mentioned in the 2015 SDSR, but is now approved by the UK MoD, is the building of a new variant of frigates, the Type-26. These new frigates will replace eight older anti-submarine warfare Type-23 frigates currently commissioned.<sup>71</sup> With eight Type-23's becoming expendable, the Scottish defense force could well inherit the larger platform maritime capability that it envisions without diminishing the rUK's maritime force.

As for land and air forces, the UK government is also planning to expand its capabilities with an increase in force size and new armored vehicles and air platforms. To go along with its armored brigade, the UK will introduce two new Strike Brigades with

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68 Ibid., para 1.3.

69 Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, 234.

70 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, para 4.47.

71 UK Royal Navy, "Type-26 Frigates," UK Royal Navy, accessed 17 October 2017, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/the-equipment/ships/future-ships/type-26-frigate>.

new Ajax armored vehicles.<sup>72</sup> The air force will expand with the purchase of the Joint Strike Fighter to work in conjunction with the established Typhoon fighter aircraft currently based at RAF Lossiemouth. The biggest improvement for the security of the British Isles will be the purchase of nine new maritime patrol aircraft that will also be based out of RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. In 2017, the MoD announced a 2.12 billion British pound upgrade for RAF Lossiemouth to host both the new Joint Strike Fighter and the P-8 Poseidon aircraft by 2020.<sup>73</sup>

Through unintended consequences, the 2015 SDSR and the recent program additions announced by the MoD could allow the SNP to inherit a more robust Scottish defense force following a second referendum for independence, if the vote is positive. The UK armed forces will be gaining new capabilities and expanding current force structure in a way that might allow for specific programs and assets to become expendable, such as the aforementioned Type-23 frigate. By comparing the proposed Scottish defense force from 2014 to the capabilities of geostrategically similar states, the SNP should increase its estimated force size to defend its sovereignty. However, an increase in assets and materiel would require an increase in defense spending.

For Scotland to be able to provide the required security for its national interests and to protect its citizens as an independent state, the SNP would need to adjust its estimate on both the size of the Scottish defense force and the defense budget. To be successful in defense planning, the SNP should model its maritime force structure on the capabilities of Denmark and Norway. The greatest priority of Scotland's defense planners would be to increase the size of the maritime force. This might be accomplished by negotiating with the UK government to inherit more of its maritime assets that are currently under review for replacement. The newly independent Scotland might also increase its proposed defense budget to be able to sustain a larger force. In addition, the SNP's ambitions of Scotland

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<sup>72</sup> HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, para. 4.48.

<sup>73</sup> Ryan Maass, "UK MoD Reveals \$2.12B Upgrade Plan for Scottish Bases," *United Press International*, 27 February 2017. <https://www.upi.com/UK-MOD-reveals-212B-upgrade-plan-for-Scottish-bases/6191488214726/>.

becoming a member of NATO would be boosted as an increase in defense spending would increase the chances of Scotland meeting the 2% of GDP threshold of defense spending by all NATO members.

Most of the UK's armed forces would not be greatly affected by the emergence of an independent Scotland. The UK MoD has established a new course that would not be highly degraded if Scotland inherited specific capabilities and assets. However, the UK's defense policy and, more importantly, its power and influence on the international security stage could take a major blow from Scottish independence. With the SNP's desire to no longer allow the UK's Trident facilities to be stationed within the borders of Scotland, an independent Scotland could lead to a nuclear disarmed UK.

## **IV. FUTURE OF THE UK'S NUCLEAR DETERRENCE POSTURE**

The single most controversial concern with the possibility of an SNP-led independent Scotland would be the uncertainty about the future of the UK's nuclear weapons program based on Trident missiles and the Vanguard nuclear submarines that carry them. The SNP advocates removing nuclear weapons from UK bases in Scotland. Several challenges face the British government pertaining to its nuclear weapons bases potentially being forced to relocate, and some observers speculate that the cost of relocation could even lead the British government to completely abandon its nuclear weapons program. The nuclear disarmament of the UK would have significant political and security ramifications both regionally and globally.

This chapter discusses the reasoning behind the SNP's pursuit of a non-nuclear-weapon Scottish state as well as the expectations that the SNP has for the removal of the UK's nuclear weapons and platforms from Faslane and Coulport. Two questions then arise: where could the UK move its nuclear weapons to, and what would be the costs and benefits of these locations? The British MoD identified five possible locations, each of which faces significant challenges. Another option for the UK could be to negotiate with another nuclear weapon state for arrangements to maintain its program outside the UK. These options would present unique and unanswered questions. Given the expense and trouble of maintaining a nuclear weapons posture for deterrence, unilateral nuclear disarmament may not be out of the question for the British. This possibility is therefore examined at some length in this chapter.

In "Scotland's Future," the SNP clearly stated its intentions to remove the UK's Trident nuclear weapons program and Vanguard class nuclear submarines from Scotland: "We will continue to work in partnership with the rest of the UK in defence alliances to promote peace and security, but we will be able to remove Trident from Scotland's soil and stop paying towards the £100 billion lifetime cost of a new generation of nuclear



weapons.”<sup>74</sup> The SNP’s publication specifies an expeditious removal of nuclear weapons within the first term of the SNP following independence (approximately six to seven years).<sup>75</sup> However, analysts have suggested a timeline of 10 to 15 years or more for proper removal.<sup>76</sup> There is no certainty that the SNP’s support for this policy would remain in its second attempt at independence, but for the sake of analysis, this thesis assumes that the SNP would follow through on the intentions it expressed in its first attempt in 2014.

According to Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker, the British government was caught off-guard by the plans of the SNP, during its first attempt at independence, to remove the UK’s nuclear weapons from Scotland. As Chalmers and Walker explain,

the government did not anticipate the Scottish National Party’s (SNP) sweeping victory in the 2011 elections in Scotland – just twelve years after authority over many elements of Scottish domestic policy had been devolved to a re-established Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh ...nor did the UK government predict the SNP-led Scottish government’s subsequent call for a referendum in September 2014...and to use the new state’s sovereign authority to remove all nuclear weapons from Scottish territory.<sup>77</sup>

The threat to the UK’s current nuclear deterrence posture became genuine.

## **A. ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS FOR TRIDENT**

With the real possibility of Scottish independence at hand in the near future, the British government gave considerable thought to where it could move its Trident missiles and Vanguard submarines in England or Wales. These locations include HMS Devonport, Falmouth, Milford Haven, Portland, and Barrow-in-Furness.<sup>78</sup> Each of the five sites within the UK comes with its own unique set of difficulties for hosting a nuclear weapons program. The UK MoD has even considered the possibility of storing its share of nuclear-

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<sup>74</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, x.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Fleming and Gebhard, “Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security,” 312.

<sup>77</sup> Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker, “Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent?” 107–108.

<sup>78</sup> John Ainslie, “Trident: Nowhere to Go,” *Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, February 2002, <http://worldofstuart.excellentcontent.com/repository/Trident-NowhereToGo.pdf>.

armed Trident missiles and the British nuclear submarine fleet within the borders of the United States or France, under specific conditions. The appetite to move the UK's independent nuclear weapons system outside of British borders was not great within Whitehall, so alternatives within Britain would be preferred.

John Ainslie's article entitled "Trident: Nowhere to Go" describes in detail the UK's dilemmas if it had to move its nuclear weapons program out of Scotland in the event of Scottish independence.<sup>79</sup> The article was published by the Scottish Commission for Nuclear Disarmament, which "works for the abolition of all nuclear weapons in Britain as a step toward the global elimination of these weapons of mass destruction."<sup>80</sup> The group's intentions are to make Scotland a non-nuclear-weapon state. However, this article explains clearly facts and issues concerning each proposed relocation site, including both pros and cons.

The most suitable location is the Royal Navy base in Devonport, which is near Plymouth, England. Currently the base hosts the Royal Navy's Trafalgar class nuclear "hunter-killer" submarines along with the decommissioned Swiftsure and Churchill class nuclear submarines.<sup>81</sup> The facilities to sustain nuclear submarine operations are firmly in place at Devonport, but the hosting of nuclear-armed Trident missiles would be another issue.<sup>82</sup> According to the independent website, *Save the Royal Navy*, there are two possible alternative locations away from Devonport being evaluated by the UK MoD for hosting nuclear-armed Trident missiles: the land on the Anthony House estate across the River Tamar from Devonport and the Falmouth weapons depot some 40 miles away down the coast.<sup>83</sup>

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79 Ainslie, "Trident: Nowhere to Go," 14.

80 Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, "About SCND," 19 November 2008, <http://www.banthebomb.org/index.php/about-scnd/about-cnd>.

81 Jonathon Morris, "Devonport: Living Next to a Nuclear Submarine Graveyard," *BBC News*, 2 October 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-devon-28157707>.

82 Ainslie, "Trident: Nowhere To Go," 8–9.

83 Save the Royal Navy, "Why Relocating Trident Away from Scotland is Virtually Impossible," Save the Royal Navy Organization, 22 July 2016, <http://www.savetheroyalnavy.org/why-relocating-trident-away-from-scotland-is-virtually-impossible/>.

The most contentious obstacles to Devonport becoming the new home of the UK's ballistic missile submarine fleet and Trident missile program involve the cost to relocate and the proximity of the locations to large population areas. A common theme for relocation for the MoD is the cost to relocate the nuclear weapons program to any alternative site, which could cost several billion British pounds.<sup>84</sup> For Devonport specifically, the primary issue pertains to the proximity of a large civilian population to a potential nuclear site. The UK dictates a minimum distance from a local population to facilities housing its nuclear weapons.<sup>85</sup> However, the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulators do not state publicly what a minimum safe distance would be for storing armed Trident missiles at Devonport.<sup>86</sup> According to the Nuclear Information Service, "the MoD has concluded that the risks from 'societal contamination' that could result from a major nuclear accident were 'close to the tolerability criterion level.'"<sup>87</sup> Both sites within the vicinity of Devonport are substantially closer to major population areas than the current facility at Coulport. Moving to the site at Falmouth could even require the demolition of the villages of Flushing and Mylor on the Penarrow peninsula just to make room at the weapons depot facility for Trident.<sup>88</sup> Devonport could be the preferred site for hosting the Vanguard submarine force since the infrastructure for supporting nuclear submarines is in place. However, placing the UK's nuclear-armed Trident missiles within the same vicinity would be a major political hurdle for the government.

Milford Haven in Wales could be another candidate for relocation. The port entrance is deep and large enough to allow UK ballistic missile submarines to traverse.

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84 Scottish Affairs Committee, *The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident – Days or Decades?: Government Response to the Scottish Affairs Committee's Fourth Annual Report of Session 2012–13*, Scottish House of Commons, 8 January 2013, 2. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmsscota/861/861.pdf>.

85 Chalmers and Walker, "Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent?" 112.

86 "Nuclear Risks Rule Devonport Out as an Option if Trident Quits Scotland," Nuclear Information Service, 5 January 2013, <https://www.nuclearinfo.org/article/uk-trident-safety-operational-berths/nuclear-risks-rule-devonport-out-option-if-trident>.

87 "Nuclear Risks Rule Devonport Out as an Option if Trident Quits Scotland," Nuclear Information Service.

88 Save the Royal Navy, "Why Relocating Trident Away from Scotland is Virtually Impossible."

However, Milford Haven is the largest port for oil and liquid natural gas (LNG) imports to the United Kingdom. The port currently handles 30% of all imports of oil and LNG, and stores and refines 25% of all diesel and gas for Britain.<sup>89</sup> Constructing a new submarine base and a missile storage depot along with a weapons loading jetty in close proximity to oil and natural gas refineries could be too risky in case of an accident affecting either facility.

Another location under consideration could be the closed naval base at Portland in Weymouth Bay. As with Milford Haven, the waterways are suitable for nuclear-powered submarines to traverse, but the area around the former naval base is too small to house the entire submarine fleet. The expansion of this potential base would mean the destruction of recently completed projects, including the home of the UK's Olympic sailing team. In addition, there is currently no suitable site to build an armament depot for the Trident program. The British Army currently operates two armament ranges near Weymouth Bay that could hypothetically become suitable sites for hosting nuclear-armed Trident missiles. However, local officials and the MoD are not willing to convert those ranges to storage facilities for nuclear weapons.<sup>90</sup>

One final possible site for hosting the UK's nuclear weapons arsenal could be the very place where UK nuclear submarines are constructed, Barrow-in-Furness.<sup>91</sup> The infrastructure to house the submarines would not be the issue, but the geography could be. The channel leading into the installation is too shallow to allow two submarines to maneuver at any one given time. The dependency on daily tidal flows strictly inhibits the ability to deploy ballistic missile submarines while leaving them vulnerable to adversaries and the elements. On top of the shallow channel, another concern is the implementation of a lock system to reach the installation.<sup>92</sup> The locks further inhibit the flexibility required to deploy a submarine in a timely manner.

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89 Ainslie, "Trident, Nowhere To Go," 14.

90 Ainslie, "Trident: Nowhere To Go," 12.

91 Ibid., 14.

92 Ibid.

The next option for the United Kingdom would be to look at facilities and arrangements with one of its fellow nuclear Allies, the United States or France. Ainslie argues that there are three potential problems for the UK in basing its nuclear weapons program overseas. His first argument claims that the UK would violate Article I of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if it were to relocate its nuclear program to the United States or France. Article I states: “Each nuclear-weapon state party to the treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosives devices directly or indirectly.”<sup>93</sup> This argument by Ainslie is not solid in that Article I pertains to the *transfer* of nuclear weapons to another country. This implies relinquishing control over the weapons or allowing another country to have indirect control of the weapons. This also implies that weapons belonging to one nation cannot be housed in a facility under the control of another nation. If relocating its nuclear weapons program overseas were the way forward for the UK, the MoD would need to establish its own facility while maintaining British control over that facility in a foreign country. In principle, the UK could obtain control over a facility in a foreign country in order to continue to operate its nuclear deterrent.

The second argument that Ainslie introduces is the factor of nuclear independence. He believes that the proposition that British nuclear weapons serve as a symbol of greatness and give the UK independence from foreign aggression is a myth.<sup>94</sup> Could another country veto the employment of British nuclear weapons if they were housed within its borders? One could reasonably say that the UK’s nuclear weapons capability operating as an independent force from an overseas facility could be jeopardized in this case. By no means, however, does the UK intend to accept the ability of a host nation to block its control over its nuclear capability.

Finally, Ainslie’s last argument concerns the possible response by the public of the host nation to the placement of UK nuclear weapons within close proximity to population

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93 United Nations, “Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>

94 Ainslie, “Trident: Nowhere To Go,” 15

centers. The risk of a nuclear accident involving either UK missiles or submarines could be a major concern for the host nation. The pushback from constituents might be too great for the host government to bear.<sup>95</sup> It could be extremely difficult for the UK even to negotiate a plan for the storage of its nuclear weapons overseas. Although Ainslie wrote an article published by an organization committed to eradicating nuclear weapons from Scotland, some of his views seem to be based on concrete facts and sound reasoning as to the difficulties that would face the UK in relocating its nuclear weapons program overseas.

The United States and France are the only nations trusted enough by the UK to house the its nuclear ballistic missiles and ballistic missile submarine fleet, according to Chalmers, Walker, and Ainslie, among others. Whether either nation would be willing to accept even a temporary agreement to help the British is unclear. The arguments raised by John Ainslie and others would need to be addressed by the United States, France, and the UK. It is also necessary to examine the possibility of relocating nuclear weapons to the United States and France from the UK's point of view.

It would not be difficult to imagine joint UK/US nuclear programs operating at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base at Kings Bay. The option of hosting the UK's Trident missiles in the United States from the logistics side is rather clear. The United States and the UK already pool their serviced Trident D5 missiles (minus the nuclear warheads) at the same location at Kings Bay.<sup>96</sup> The facilities are in principle able to house the UK's Vanguard submarine fleet as well as U.S. SSBNs. However, there are many additional obstacles to moving the entire UK nuclear weapons program to the United States.

Nick Childs has raised particular problems that the UK would need to solve in order to establish a new Trident facility in the United States.<sup>97</sup> The first real problem for the UK would be sustaining its nuclear independence. Even though the United States and the UK

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>96</sup> Chalmers and Walker, "Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent," 112.

<sup>97</sup> Nick Childs "Britain's Nuclear Debate – A Home for Trident at Kings Bay?" *International Institute for Strategic Studies, Politics and Strategy* (blog), 19 October 2015, <http://www.iiss.org/en/politics%20and%20strategy/blogsections/2015-932e/october-8fa9/britains-nuclear-debate-a-home-for-trident-at-kings-bay-d679>.

share Trident missile servicing facilities, the British nuclear warheads are manufactured at the UK's Atomic Weapons Establishment located in Aldermaston, United Kingdom.<sup>98</sup> One must assume that the warheads manufactured in the UK are shipped to Coulport where they are placed into Trident missiles on the submarines located in Faslane. It could be very costly in terms of time and funding to secure the shipment of British nuclear warheads across the Atlantic to make the entire nuclear deterrent capability operational, if no other arrangements could be devised.

If the United States was the better overseas option for relocation, the UK might prefer that the entire program be operated out of Kings Bay. This would include operating its Vanguard class submarines, storing its nuclear warheads, and servicing its share of Trident missiles in facilities under strict UK control. With the entire infrastructure in place in the United States, the UK would still need to bring over its forces and contractors to maintain the capability and sustain operability.<sup>99</sup> This includes housing personnel and their dependents among other logistical necessities, which would be costly and would require lengthy negotiations on Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) between the United States and the UK.

The final argument that is raised by Childs involves political and strategic considerations. The United States ran nuclear weapons facilities near Holy Loch, Scotland, during the Cold War. However, the entire U.S. nuclear force structure was not based outside of U.S. borders. Rather, Holy Loch served as a forward operating base for the U.S. ballistic missile submarine program.<sup>100</sup> The move to Kings Bay for the UK would involve relocating almost the entire nuclear weapons program and capabilities structure outside of the United Kingdom. These implications would be detrimental to the credibility of the UK's control over its sovereign nuclear deterrent capability, and London would have to rely on a strong alliance with the United States to remain in place for decades to come.

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98 Childs, "Britain's Nuclear Debate – A Home for Trident at Kings Bay?"

99 Childs, "Britain's Nuclear Debate – A Home for Trident at Kings Bay?"

100 Ibid.

Some of the same arguments that are raised by Childs about relocating Trident to the United States apply to the potential move of armed Trident missiles to France. The difference would be that the UK could still station its ballistic missile submarine fleet at Devonport and sustain its pool of unarmed Trident missiles in the United States. This would result in a lower UK footprint in France, saving both time and money compared to the U.S. option.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, relations between France and the United Kingdom concerning policies on nuclear weapons have grown closer in recent years. In 2010, France and the UK signed a limited cooperation treaty pertaining to the construction and use of joint radiographic facilities. Matthew Harries holds that “Beneath the surface of this treaty, however, lies a story of significant strategic shifts.”<sup>102</sup> Relations between France and the UK regarding the operation of nuclear delivery systems during the Cold War constituted a complex subject in that France insisted on not participating in NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), and this remains French policy. Now, with shared concern about the risk of Russian aggression, France and the UK appear to be taking a different approach.

Strategically and economically, the decision to locate the UK’s nuclear weapons program to a joint facility in France, while operating its Vanguard submarines out of HMS Devonport, would make more sense than moving its nuclear weapons program to the United States. However, the same concerns about nuclear independence, political agreements, and logistical efficiency would still apply. As with the United States, if relations between France and the UK someday soured, the UK would find itself in a precarious position, with its stockpile of nuclear weapons in a facility distant from its shores and with London possibly unable to maintain complete control over its nuclear operations. The UK depends on Washington to sell it the use of SLBMs from a shared stockpile.

Proponents for the sustainment of an independent UK nuclear deterrence posture argue that the UK provides yet another layer of collective defense for not only NATO, but

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101 Chalmers and Walker, “Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent,” 112.

102 Matthew Harries, “Britain and France as Nuclear Partners,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategies* 54, no. 1 (2012), 7.



also for other nations that represent vital national interests for Britain herself. According to Nigel Biggar, the UK nuclear deterrence posture needs to remain independent for three reasons. First, the UK deterrence posture adds yet another counter to an aggressor's calculations to act in defiance of NATO protection or policy.<sup>103</sup> Three nuclear-armed states vice two within NATO allow the alliance greater leverage in any conflict or intervention that could lead to the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Second, Biggar states that the United States should not be burdened alone with nuclear deterrence for European security.<sup>104</sup> The UK would be able to complement not only French, but also U.S. nuclear capabilities against any ill-willed aggressor. Finally, interests between the UK and the United States might not always coincide.<sup>105</sup> The UK would find itself in jeopardy if the US-UK "special relationship" were to fall apart at a time when the UK was utilizing facilities within the United States to operate its Trident forces or depending on the United States to supply it with Trident SLBMs.

Chalmers and Walker have proposed an approach to the Trident relocation question that would allow the UK to maintain its nuclear posture and status in the international security arena. They recommend the option of the UK scrapping its nuclear ballistic missile program to focus on air-delivered weapon system options for nuclear deterrence.<sup>106</sup> This would allow the UK to forego focusing all its efforts and budget on relocating its Trident missile program and Vanguard submarines. The UK government has planned to replace the Vanguard class submarines with a new class of ballistic missile submarines, the Dreadnought class, with the first boat scheduled to be deployable by 2028.<sup>107</sup> The decision

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103 Biggar, "Living with Trident," 5.

104 Ibid., 6.

105 Ibid.

106 Chalmers and Walker, "Will Scotland Sink the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent," 113.

107 HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, para 2.20. The timeline for the first deployment is an estimate based on an article written by Jon Rosamond for the United States Naval Institute News site titled "UK Revives Dreadnought Name for Successor SSBN's." This article was published in October of 2016, <https://news.usni.org/2016/10/21/u-k-revives-dreadnought-name-successor-ssbns>.

to produce a next-generation ballistic missile submarine confirms the intention of the British government to continue its nuclear ballistic missile program for decades to come.

## **B. NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

If no solution could be identified for relocating its Trident missile program and ballistic missile submarine fleet, the UK could still possibly determine that nuclear disarmament is the only option left. The aforementioned decisions to produce a new class of ballistic missile submarines in conjunction with the further research into options to move the Trident program out of Scotland in the case of successful secession indicate that the British government is committed to maintaining its nuclear capability. However, the future of the UK's nuclear program could be derailed by nuclear disarmament. The consequences for the NATO and the United States of UK nuclear disarmament is discussed in Chapters V and VI, respectively.

The pros of disarmament mainly involve the increased savings to the defense budget against sustaining a nuclear weapons program. According to a non-government fact-checking organization in the UK, Full Fact, “the British government spends approximately 2 billion British pounds annually on sustaining Trident’s operability.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, the Trident program makes up 3% to 4.5% of the annual defense budget.”<sup>109</sup> In comparison, the British House of Commons officially stated that the annual expenditure for Trident in 2015–2016 was 2.1 billion British pounds, which equated to almost 6% of the total British defense budget.<sup>110</sup> These numbers have been steady for the last five years and will not change for fiscal year 2018 where the UK defence budget should be around 45 billion British pounds.<sup>111</sup> The annual savings from decommissioning Trident could help

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<sup>108</sup> Full Fact, “How Much Does Trident Cost,” *Full Fact: UK’s Independent Factchecking Charity* (blog), 14 July 2016, <https://fullfact.org/economy/trident-nuclear-cost/>.

<sup>109</sup> Full Fact, “How Much Does Trident Cost.”

<sup>110</sup> Claire Mills, *Replacing the UK’s ‘Trident’ Nuclear Deterrent*, UK House of Commons Library, Briefing no. 7353, 12 July 2016, 20.

<sup>111</sup> “Recent UK Defence Spending,” UK Public Spending Analysis, accessed 07 November 2017, [https://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/uk\\_defence\\_spending\\_30.html](https://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/uk_defence_spending_30.html).

the MoD cover some of its conventional priorities, such as increasing stockpiles of spare parts for its aging surface fleet.<sup>112</sup>

In the end, the total amount of savings that might be earned annually through nuclear disarmament is mere percentage points of the MoD's annual budget. To decommission the entire program would hardly be cost-free either. According to the British government, it could cost the government around 4 billion British pounds over five years to fully defuel Britain's share of Trident missiles, store Britain's nuclear warheads, and cover the daily costs of operations for maintenance facilities.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the British would look to scrap their planned SSBN replacement program at a cost of 31 billion British pounds through the life span of designing and manufacturing the newest Dreadnought submarine.<sup>114</sup> The UK would not save an extraordinary amount of money through nuclear disarmament in relation to other defense funding obligations. Arguments that nuclear disarmament would be beneficial to defense spending therefore appear to be moot. Biggar argues that, "if Trident were to be scrapped, there would be medium-to-long term savings but not immediately...annual costs of operation and maintenance would be offset by decommissioning costs."<sup>115</sup> The point is debatable, but one that would probably be highly politicized by anti-Trident lobbyists to Parliament.

The disadvantages of nuclear disarmament for the UK greatly outweigh any budgetary benefits that the British government might gain by becoming a non-nuclear-weapon state. As matters stand, the British can rely on their own nuclear deterrence options for national security purposes. Within Europe, the British would be able to maintain their strong security influence and power status within NATO by providing a powerful deterrent.

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112 BBC report released on 07 November 2017 (through Opensource.gov at: [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/EUR2017110107554641#index=25&searchKey=27817478&rpp=10](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/EUR2017110107554641#index=25&searchKey=27817478&rpp=10)) describing the increase in demand for spare parts for the Royal Navy surface fleet which are being met through "cannibalization" efforts off of ships under construction, delaying completion timelines.

113 UK Ministry of Defence, *Annual Reports and Accounts: 2014–2015*, HM Government, 16 July 2015, 163.

114 Mills, "Replacing the UK's 'Trident' Nuclear Deterrent," 35.

115 Biggar, "Living with Trident," 8.

In world politics, the UK would be able to uphold its persuasive influence within the UN Security Council and maintain its powerful position as a global actor.

The nuclear disarmament of the UK could entail many negative security implications for the entire transatlantic region. In his article entitled “International Reactions to the Scottish Referendum,” William Walker observes that specific states would be concerned for varying reasons. Walker states,

Within the U.S. government, there was concern that its most dependable and influential ally would be diminished by Scotland’s departure. In addition, the UK and by extension NATO might be weakened if the referendum resulted in a reduction of military capabilities including nuclear capabilities and greater reluctance to deploy military forces abroad.<sup>116</sup>

Walker also points out that France would have “no desire to become Europe’s only nuclear-armed state.”<sup>117</sup>

The disruption of the status quo pertaining to nuclear-armed states could have a deep effect not only on regional security concerns, but also on international political relations affecting both the rUK and an independent Scotland. In his article entitled “Trident’s Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom,” William Walker states that “the Conservative Party’s support for the deterrent is deep-seated, reflecting the political elite’s attachment of high value to Trident as a pillar of the transatlantic relationship and symbol of the UK’s desire to remain a great power with global reach.”<sup>118</sup> As long as the Conservative Party has a majority or near-majority of seats in the House of Commons, the SNP would have to deal with Trident being a primary factor in transatlantic relations and security.

Finding solutions to base its nuclear weapons program at either Devonport, Milford Haven, Portland, or Barrow-in-Furness is most likely to be the priority of the UK. However, the UK could still have the option to relocate overseas with some skilled political

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116 William Walker, “International Reactions to the Scottish Referendum,” 747.

117 Ibid., 747.

118 William Walker, “Trident’s Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom,” *Survival* 57, no. 7 (September 2015), 11.

maneuvering and exceptional negotiation tactics. In the event of Scottish secession, the British government would be determined to find a way to relocate its nuclear deterrent and sustain its powerful level of influence regionally and globally. For now, the British government is holding steady on its commitment to a nuclear-armed UK and, as mentioned before, has declared that a new generation of ballistic missile submarines will be built and deployed by the 2030s.<sup>119</sup> As with the potential impact on the UK conventional armed forces from an independent Scotland, the UK has planned to upgrade its nuclear capabilities while continuing to investigate contingency sites for its Trident program in order to mitigate the consequences of Scotland leaving the Union.

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<sup>119</sup> Ministry of Defence Policy Paper, *Dreadnought Submarine Programme: Factsheet*, HM Government, 20 January 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/successor-submarine-programme-factsheet/successor-submarine-programme-factsheet>.

## V. AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND AND NATO

Specific issues such as the proper level of defense spending as a percentage of GDP, the possible removal of UK nuclear weapons from Scotland, the “triple lock” military authorization policy, and continuing secessionism could create roadblocks to the SNP’s intention that an independent Scotland become a member of NATO. This intention was made clear by the SNP in 2013 in its publication, “Scotland’s Future,” which outlined the collective security positions of a sovereign Scottish state.<sup>120</sup> However, the assumption that all the current NATO members would accept Scotland in the Alliance may not be well-founded. Some NATO members could find contention with one or more of the aforementioned issues that could arise if Scotland sought NATO membership.

There is no argument that Scotland could be an important contributor to NATO’s transatlantic security policy and that Scotland could play a major role in the defense of the Nordic region. Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO has expanded its reach throughout Europe, with new allies that were formerly within the Soviet sphere of influence or that were republics of the former Yugoslavia. Between 1999 and 2017, NATO was active in a policy of enlargement that welcomed new members to the Alliance: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.<sup>121</sup> All of these nations are important for political and geostrategic reasons, and most have been reshaping and reforming their governments since the fall of Communism in Europe.

Scotland’s internal political dynamics differ in some respects from those of the aforementioned recent member additions to NATO. For instance, Scotland is pursuing secession from a union that has practiced parliamentary democracy for over 200 years. In addition, the United Kingdom is one of three NATO states that hold nuclear weapons in their arsenals, and the country’s leadership is exceptionally experienced in the politics of

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<sup>120</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Future*, 250.

<sup>121</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO’s Balancing Act*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace (2014), 281.

NATO and the European Union. Combining these dynamics, the recent slow-down in the implementation of Alliance enlargement policy, and the anti-nuclear weapon stance of the SNP, the road to NATO membership for an independent Scotland would be unique in its complexities.

Colin Fleming and Carmen Gebhard, two leading experts on British defense, security policies, and international relations at the University of Edinburgh, make the argument that “the Scottish membership of NATO would make strategic sense for the Alliance,” and that “NATO provides a security guarantee which Scotland could not attain on its own.”<sup>122</sup> This statement suggests that both sides would win in the acceptance of Scotland as a NATO member, but could Scotland conceivably defend its sovereignty without joining the Atlantic Alliance? The answer would depend on the new country’s commitment to a solid defense policy and on the budget implemented by a strong Scottish leadership post-secession.

#### **A. DEFENSE SPENDING PROMISE**

The challenge for the SNP in creating a strong argument for NATO membership would be demonstrating that its proposed defense spending would support a strong and credible defense force. Several defense models, both within and outside of NATO, could be suitable for Scotland to adopt and implement to boost its argument. The nations of Denmark, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden are the most comparable to Scotland in terms of relative population size (around five and a half million people), geopolitical commonalities, and/or geostrategic importance to transatlantic security.<sup>123</sup> They also share common economic interests and similar levels of defense spending. These aspects are vital to show how Scotland’s proposed defense policy in 2013 relates to its surrounding neighbors and security trends.

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<sup>122</sup> Fleming and Gebhard, “Scotland, NATO, and Transatlantic Security,” 308.

<sup>123</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book: The Indispensable Source for Basic Intelligence 2016–2017*, (Washington, DC: CIA, 2015): 211, 362, 558.

Economically speaking, according to 2016 data, these nations were relatively close in their defense spending as a percentage of GDP. Norway (1.7%),<sup>124</sup> Denmark (1.1%),<sup>125</sup> Sweden (0.97%),<sup>126</sup> and Ireland (0.3%)<sup>127</sup> all have less than 2% of their GDP allocated for defense funding. As mentioned in Chapter III, in its proposal in anticipation of the September 2014 independence referendum, the SNP allocated an initial budget of 2.5 billion British pounds to fund its defense policy.<sup>128</sup> How does this amount compare to the defense spending by Scotland's neighboring nations of Denmark and Norway (members of NATO), and Sweden and Ireland (Partnership for Peace members)?

The latest figures from the Scottish National Government give a GDP total of 152 billion British pounds in 2015.<sup>129</sup> That figure grew in 2016 by 0.4%, and Scotland has an economic forecast of continued growth for the near future.<sup>130</sup> If Scotland's GDP stagnated, the proposed defense budget from the SNP would be 1.6% of GDP. By comparison, Scotland would rank between Norway and Denmark in respect to the percentage of GDP dedicated towards national defense. This might lead NATO members to think that Scotland could hold its own in defense spending since it would be in the same ballpark with two NATO members that have not met the 2% of GDP goal.

Scotland's defense budget in terms of GDP percentage would also be higher than those of Ireland and Sweden, which are not members of NATO, but do participate in the Alliance's Partnership for Peace program. Sweden sustains a sizable defense force with

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124 Thomas Nilson, "Norway Hikes 2017 Defense Budget," *The Independent Barents Observer*, 08 November 2016. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2016/11/norway-hikes-2017-defense-budget>.

125 "Military Expenditures: 1988–2016," *SIPRI*, 14 August 2017. <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/milex-constant-2015-USD.pdf>.

126 Richard Tomkins, "Swedish Government to Increase Defense Spending by \$55M," *United Press International*, 19 Apr 2017. <https://www.upi.com/Swedish-government-to-increase-defense-spending-by-55B/6881492614059/>: Although the link and the title state that Sweden is planning to increase its spending by \$55 billion, the article is written and calculating only a \$55 million increase.

127 Jim Lee, "Defense Budget Increases, But Is It Enough?" *Flying In Ireland* (blog), 24 October 2016. <https://flyinginireland.com/2016/10/irish-defence-budget-increases-but-is-it-enough/>.

128 Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, para. 309.

129 Scottish Government. *Quarterly National Accounts Scotland, 2015 Q4*, accessed 21 August 2017, [www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/QNA2015Q4](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/QNA2015Q4).

130 Scottish Government. *Quarterly National Accounts Scotland, 2016 Q4*, accessed 21 August 2017, [www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/PubGDP/GDP2016Q4](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/PubGDP/GDP2016Q4).



almost double the amount of maritime vessels and triple the number of military personnel proposed by the SNP in 2013.<sup>131</sup> Ireland sustains roughly the same number of military personnel compared to the proposed Scottish defense establishment, but relies heavily on the UK to provide for its protection. As concluded in Chapter III, an independent Scotland would need to bolster its defense posture and policies to sustain a level of security necessary to prosper without relying on the rUK for security. NATO would be able to provide the necessary collective defense apparatus that Scotland might need if the SNP was unable to increase the country's own defense capabilities. However, NATO could recommend that Scotland increase its capabilities in order to provide a stronger case for NATO membership.

NATO members expect certain obligations to be met. For instance, all members have promised to spend 2% of GDP on defense by 2024. Norway and Denmark allocated less than 2% of their respective GDPs to defense in 2015<sup>132</sup> and 2016.<sup>133</sup> For Scotland to provide 2% of its GDP to defense (and not receive the criticism that Norway, Denmark, and others have incurred for not providing their fair share), Scotland would have to spend roughly 3.04 billion British pounds annually (using the 2015 GDP figures). An additional 540 million British pounds would need to be earmarked for defense spending beyond the SNP's initial estimate. These numbers would likely increase in the interim before a second referendum on independence. In terms of NATO's commitments regarding defense spending, Scotland would be comparable to other geostrategically similar members.

NATO members such as Denmark and Norway could take exception to the potential membership of Scotland based on GDP numbers alone. As discussed in Chapter III, the SNP did not propose a defense posture close to the current size of Denmark's or Norway's forces, yet would be able to sustain a level of defense funding equivalent to the

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131 "2017 Sweden Military Strength," Global Fire Power, accessed 09 November 2017. [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=sweden](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=sweden).

132 Kedar Pavgi, "NATO Members' Defense Spending, in Two Charts," *Defense One*, June 22, 2015. [www.defenseone.com/politics/2015/06/nato-members-defense-spending-two-charts/116008/](http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2015/06/nato-members-defense-spending-two-charts/116008/).

133 Ivana Kottasova, "These NATO Countries Are Not Spending Their Fair Share on Defense," *CNN Money*, July 8, 2016. [www.money.cnn.com/2016/07/08/news/nato-summit-spending-countries/index.html](http://www.money.cnn.com/2016/07/08/news/nato-summit-spending-countries/index.html).

levels maintained by Denmark and Norway. This could result in Denmark and Norway maintaining larger forces than those of Scotland to maintain regional security, with Scotland relying on its fellow NATO members' support to assist with security missions.

## **B. NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

A potential roadblock to future NATO membership for Scotland could be the SNP's call for removing the UK's nuclear weapons program from its facilities at Faslane and Coulport. In 2013, The SNP stated that "following a vote for independence, we would make early agreement on the speediest safe removal of nuclear weapons a priority," and that "Scotland would take [its] place as one of the many non-nuclear members of NATO."<sup>134</sup> This political agenda could have serious consequences for the United Kingdom's nuclear program and NATO's nuclear posture. As discussed in Chapter IV, the United Kingdom does not have a suitable alternative site in hand to house, maintain, and operate its Vanguard class submarines or its Trident missiles.

The power of NATO nuclear deterrence would be significantly downgraded if the UK abandoned its nuclear deterrence posture because the UK is a primary nuclear power for the institution, along with France and the United States. In its 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO states that "the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; 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."<sup>135</sup> The United Kingdom would see its influence in NATO diminish with its decision to abandon its nuclear weapons since the UK would no longer be able to provide additional deterrence for the Alliance. The burden of nuclear deterrence would then fall upon France and the United States, which would elevate the power position of both countries within NATO and on the UN's Security Council.

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<sup>134</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, 14.

<sup>135</sup> "2010 Strategic Concept," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 19 November 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_82705.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm), para. 18.

Scotland would not be spared from the repercussions of UK nuclear disarmament either, even if it was successful in its political efforts. According to William Walker, “The SNP would also be mistaken to believe that it could frustrate Trident’s replacement without political risk. It cannot pretend that conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia and broader shifts in international power structures are not happening and have no consequences for the party’s stance on Trident and NATO membership, or for its international reputation.”<sup>136</sup> The SNP’s political stance on removal of Trident could lead to a victory for the party, but not for the greater good of Alliance’s collective defense.

A nuclear-armed rUK would in principle provide Scotland as an Alliance member with the same deterrence protection as it would for other NATO members. However, Scotland’s membership in NATO might not be fully secure following the rUK’s nuclear disarmament. In certain hypothetical circumstances, some NATO members might see Scotland as the catalyst to the rUK’s nuclear disarmament dilemmas and might block the Scottish membership application until a satisfactory relocation solution is reached. William Walker believes this statement to be true, but argues that “coercing a non-nuclear state into providing bases for another state’s nuclear force – in effect pursuing a counter-disarmament policy – would not sit easily with the norms and rules of the international nuclear order.”<sup>137</sup> This argument would give the SNP a negotiating point to stand on. The SNP’s position nonetheless implies that an independent Scotland would like to enjoy the benefits of NATO nuclear deterrence protection without accepting associated responsibilities.

Perhaps the rest of the United Kingdom would not be willing to provide Scotland the necessary protection it has offered in the past and would thus hamper the efforts of the SNP to provide a suitable defense force on a limited budget. It is not clear to what extent the British government would allow a Scottish defense force to inherit or purchase conventional assets from the rUK. The basis of a collective defense policy could be thrown

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<sup>136</sup> Walker, “Trident’s Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom,” 8.

<sup>137</sup> Walker, “Trident’s Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom,” 24.

out over the contentious issue of the removal of the UK's nuclear weapons program from Scotland's sovereign territory.

### C. "TRIPLE LOCK" SYSTEM

In 2013, the SNP introduced a government defense policy known as "triple lock" pertaining to the authorization of the employment of Scottish armed forces in times of conflict. The triple lock policy contains three provisions for the deployment of Scottish armed forces outside of Scottish domestic uses. Scottish military action would need to be in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter, properly agreed by the Scottish Government, and approved by the Scottish Parliament.<sup>138</sup> This policy raises a few concerns about NATO membership for Scotland should the SNP include this same set of principles in its next attempt at independence. Certain elements of the proposed "triple lock" policy might run counter to current NATO policies concerning the use of armed forces to defend Allies against aggression.

The first provision of the "triple lock" policy pertained to a nation's inherent right to self-defense acknowledged in Article 51 of the UN charter, which states that:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.<sup>139</sup>

It is not coincidental that Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty contains the same language concerning individual and collective self-defense. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty declares that

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in

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<sup>138</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, 251.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations," United Nations Codification Division Publications, accessed 13 November 2017, Article 51. <http://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>.

exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.<sup>140</sup>

Therefore, the SNP's first provision in its "triple lock" policy should not be a major point of contention in negotiations for Scottish membership. NATO and Scottish policies concur with the UN Charter on the right of collective self-defense.

The last two provisions of the SNP's triple lock policy might hypothetically hamper membership negotiations. The two provisions were set in place to provide the Scottish political leaders (possibly the SNP) more control over the employment of the country's defense force. If government decisions to use force were subject to parliamentary approval, Scottish leaders would need to produce a majority for sending Scottish forces into conflict. Based on the SNP's proposal for an independent Scotland, this "triple lock" system would not impede NATO's collective defense should Scotland become a member of the Alliance.<sup>141</sup>

However, the SNP does not articulate the process by which the Scottish government would employ forces in response to aggression against a fellow NATO member. Would the NATO allies be confident that the Scottish government would be willing and able to provide forces in a crisis? One solution that the SNP could include in its next publication on Scottish independence might be derived from the current UK parliamentary constitution. Article 58 of Chapter 3 of the UK constitution specifies the arrangement that the British leaders have in place for employing Britain's armed forces in collective security contingencies:

There may be instances where the UK's international obligations require the Government to commit to action—for example to achieve collective security with fellow NATO members. In such instances it would be detrimental to the Government's position to be in doubt as to whether they

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<sup>140</sup> "The North Atlantic Treaty," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 4 April 1949, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm), Article 5.

<sup>141</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's Future*, 251.

can secure the commitment of Her Majesty's armed forces: ministers might therefore seek an exemption from the requirement to follow a formal parliamentary process.<sup>142</sup>

A provision such as this one in the British constitution, clarifying the option for an exemption from a formal process for the authorization to employ the armed forces, would be beneficial for the SNP to state in anticipation of its potential membership negotiations. Granted, some NATO members do require parliamentary authorization for the employment of force (for instance, Germany) following principles similar to those in the SNP's proposed "triple lock" policy. But the SNP's authorization policy as currently articulated lacks detail in the process description, and this could weaken the confidence in Scotland of fellow Alliance members.

#### **D. SECESSIONISM**

A successful Scottish secession from the United Kingdom could reignite or invigorate secessionist movements elsewhere in Europe. Belgium, France, Italy, and Spain in recent decades have all dealt with nationalist movements seeking to secede from the state. Belgium and Spain currently deal with separatist movements within their borders. Moreover, France faces nationalist movements in Corsica and New Caledonia.<sup>143</sup> The issue of secession is a sore one for many European states. If NATO members accepted the membership of a state that had seceded from another NATO member, claims of hypocrisy would be widespread. Some current NATO members might oppose Scotland's candidacy for fear of creating a precedent that could be exploited by other secessionists.

Arguably, the most visible secessionist movement in Europe today is that in Catalonia in Spain. On October 27, 2017, the political leaders of the autonomous Catalanian government voted in favor of seceding from Spain by a vote of 70 to 10. The Spanish government in Madrid did not sanction the vote, and therefore Spain did not

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<sup>142</sup> HM Government, *UK Constitution: Chapter 3 – Parliament's Role*, Constitution of the United Kingdom, accessed 13 November 2017, Article 58, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldconst/46/4606.htm>.

<sup>143</sup> "Europe's Separatists," *The New Indian Express*, 7 September 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2017/sep/08/europes-separatists-1653901.html>.

recognize this referendum as legitimate.<sup>144</sup> In response, the Spanish prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, removed Catalanian president, Carles Puigdemont, from his position and detained him for rebellion in support of a separatist movement.<sup>145</sup> Unlike the September 2014 referendum about Scottish independence, the Catalans did not have support from the ruling government to hold such a secession referendum, a factor that created more turmoil within the region. Due to these circumstances, Spain would probably oppose accepting an independent Scotland as a member of NATO should the question arise.

Other NATO members that might balk at approving membership for Scotland include Belgium, France, and Italy, which are all dealing with secessionism from various groups. According to the *New Indian Express*, Belgium is dealing with the New Flemish Alliance aiming “for the eventual creation of a Flemish republic,” while (as mentioned above) the French are dealing with independence movements in New Caledonia and Corsica.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile, Italy continues to deal with separatist movements based on financial and economic concerns in regions in the northern part of the country.<sup>147</sup> All of these countries could potentially block a consensus vote for Scottish membership in the Alliance.

According to the Deutsche Welle News Agency, there are currently eight separatist movements active in Western Europe, including Scotland. The other movements reside within members of NATO. The active movements would put NATO members with secessionist issues in a precarious position if they accepted Scotland as a member. It would be hypocritical and imprudent in the eyes of some NATO allies for nations such as

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144 Laura Smith-Spark and Claudia Rebaza, “Catalonia Government Dissolved after Declaring Independence from Spain,” *CNN*, October 28, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/27/europe/catalonia-independence-spain/index.html>.

145 “Barcelona Protest Calls for Release of Jailed Catalan Independence Leaders,” *The Guardian*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/11/barcelona-protest-calls-for-release-of-jailed-catalan-independence-leaders>.

146 “Europe’s Separatists,” *The New Indian Express*, 7 September 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2017/sep/08/europes-separatists-1653901.html>.

147 Sabrina Muller-Plotnikow, “Beyond Catalonia, Separatist Movements in Western Europe.” *Deutsche Welle News Agency*, September 30, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/beyond-catalonia-separatist-movements-in-western-europe/a-40761144>.

Belgium, France, Italy, and Spain to approve membership for Scotland while not recognizing self-determination within their own borders.

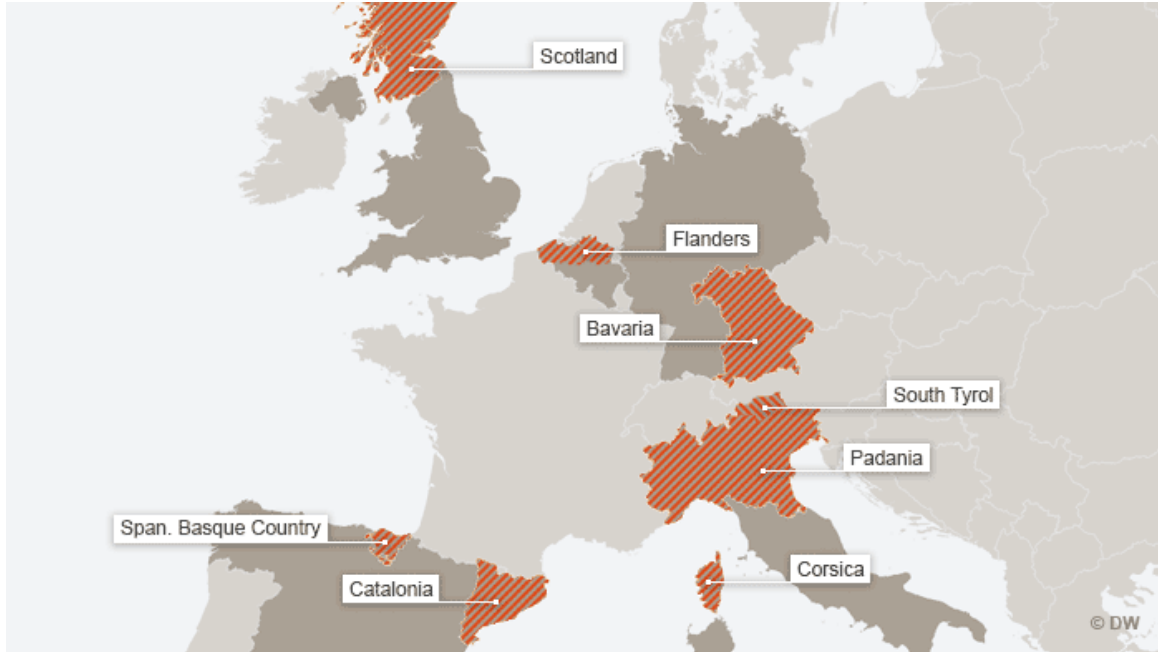


Figure 1. Active separatist movements in Western Europe as of September 2017.<sup>148</sup>

#### E. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING SCOTLAND AND NATO MEMBERSHIP

NATO membership for an independent Scotland might not be an easy road for the SNP to travel. Four issues would arise for the Scottish government with a proposal to join NATO upon secession from the UK. First, the SNP would need to increase its proposed defense budget in order to gain approval from current members of NATO since the SNP's initial estimate was below the 2% of GDP for defense spending commitment by members of NATO. As noted above, in comparison with Allies with similar geostrategic characteristics, Scotland's proposed defense budget as a percentage of GDP was consistent with their levels of defense spending, if not better. In addition, the SNP should continue to

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<sup>148</sup> Muller-Plotnikow, "Beyond Catalonia, Separatist Movements in Western Europe."



bolster its proposed defense effort with increases in spending. Making Scotland's armed forces more robust would enable the country to satisfy its burden-sharing obligations.

The second issue concerns the UK's nuclear deterrence program and the possibility of nuclear disarmament if no solution could be agreed upon for relocating the Trident missile program and Vanguard submarines out of Faslane and Coulport. If the independent Scottish government and the rest of the UK (rUK) could not find a viable solution to relocate the rUK's nuclear program, the rUK could lose its standing within NATO, while NATO could lose a major contributor to the Alliance's nuclear deterrence posture. It could be in the best interest of the SNP to negotiate better terms for removing the rUK's nuclear weapons from Scotland such as lengthening the required time for removal, and assisting with the economic burden of relocating the Trident program from its current facilities to others, preferably within the rUK.

Thirdly, Scotland's commitment to the Alliance could be questioned in relation to the terms of employing force in response to invocations of NATO's Article 5. Scottish decision-makers might not be willing to send Scottish forces to an area of conflict that has no direct impact on Scottish national interests and therefore could veto force employments based on the constitutional right of the government. Is this a policy that NATO members could trust? The same question could be asked about any of the NATO Allies. The SNP would need to be more explicit about its "triple lock" policy concerning authorization for employing its armed forces in order to gain the confidence of other NATO members concerning collective defense.

The final factor revolves around the possible reemergence of nationalist movements for secession among smaller political or ethnic groups seeking their own independence. Countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, and Spain continue to battle secessionists yearning to break away to form their own sovereign countries. Established governments might hold that allowing Scotland to do so by supporting its efforts to join NATO would be hypocritical and imprudent. The backlash would not be welcomed and thus Scotland might find some pushback from these members in its efforts to join the Alliance.

Unfortunately for the SNP, it cannot mitigate this factor since its goal to join NATO depends on Scotland becoming an independent state by seceding from the United Kingdom.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

US commentary and opinion on Scotland's potential independence in 2014 was quite limited, even from scholars and defense officials that expressed the most concern over the secession of Scotland from the United Kingdom. European scholars seemed to care more about official U.S. opinions on the impact of Scottish independence on future transatlantic security issues. The possible effects of a second attempt to win Scottish independence should not go overlooked by any nation that favors continuing the Alliance-based security arrangements of the North Atlantic region. Whether the SNP would change none of its proposed defense policies in a future attempt to gain independence or would shift some of its policies on defense in pursuit of better security policies for all states involved, the potential impact of an independent Scotland should be studied in depth. This chapter considers policies that the SNP could introduce to advance its cause.

Many observers have suggested that the United States is shifting its foreign policy focus away from European affairs due to frustrations with European defense policies. In 2016, Tim Oliver and Michael John Williams wrote that "long-running U.S. unease at low levels of European defense spending has reached a point where U.S. willingness to commit to Europe's security has been thrown into doubt."<sup>149</sup> There is speculation that the United States is taking less interest in European collective defense and becoming more entrenched in Asian affairs, but the fact remains that the United States needs to remain dedicated to NATO and to its special relationship with the UK. Dismissing either NATO or the UK (or both) would weaken any strategy the United States might try to pursue in Asia with respect to national security.

U.S. diplomats and other policy-makers would be wise to understand the potential impact of Scottish independence on U.S. national interests and security. A divided United Kingdom could entail specific consequences for U.S. security and foreign relations. For instance, how could the United States oppose a nation seeking independence through

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<sup>149</sup> Tim Oliver and Michael John Williams, "Special Relationship in Flux: Brexit and the Future of the US-EU and US-UK Relationship," *International Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2016), 551.

self-determination from the United Kingdom when the United States itself achieved the same objective in the 18th century? Yet, how could the United States not object to a break-up of the most important political and defensive ally that the United States has ever had? This dilemma could arise in the near future as a consequence of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The United States benefits from a unified United Kingdom for its transatlantic security concerns. The status quo works quite well for the United States with a strong European ally in addition to France providing a capable conventional defense force and nuclear deterrence to the collective defense apparatus of NATO. As explained in previous chapters, the depletion of British defense forces, premature nuclear disarmament, and jeopardized NATO capabilities could become major concerns for the national interests of the United States.

One could be quite concerned if the United States was unaware of the potential partition of its closest defense ally in Europe. This was the case in September 2014 when a reporter from the UK reported that there was “no buzz in Washington” about Scotland's vote for independence coming two weeks later.<sup>150</sup> The ramifications for the United States of an independent Scotland could affect U.S. foreign policy and transatlantic security interests just as much as it could the UK and NATO. Yet, there seemed to be no anxiety in 2014 in Washington about the possible consequences of an independence referendum vote.

The Obama administration understood the potential risks of Scottish independence, but did not openly comment on them. As a former CNN White House producer, Kevin Liptak, explains, the administration produced only “a few sentences of official U.S. reaction” to Scottish independence just months before the actual referendum was held.<sup>151</sup> He also states that “the United States is following the advice column carefully: don't take sides, keep your opinions to yourself, and avoid getting dragged into the fray.”<sup>152</sup> The

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150 Nicky Wolff, “‘Scotland's what?’ U.S. caught napping as Scots prepare to vote on independence,” *The Guardian*, 9 September 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/16/politics/us-scotland-vote/index.html>.

151 Kevin Liptak, “Obama Weighs in on Scottish Independence Vote,” *CNN Politics*, 18 September 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/16/politics/us-scotland-vote/index.html>.

152 Liptak, “Obama Weighs in on Scottish Independence Vote.”

ramifications of Scottish independence on U.S. national interests and transatlantic security seemed lost on higher-ranking officials, who kept silent.

The significance of an independent Scotland was not lost on the editorial board of the *Washington Post*. In October 2012, the board published an article explaining why separating Scotland from the UK would damage the interests of the United States. The article stated that Scotland would not be part of NATO, that the SNP intended to remove nuclear weapons from its territory, and that Britain could lose its seat on the UN Security Council.<sup>153</sup> However, the article misinterpreted the facts about the consequences of an independent Scotland. The claims that the SNP did not want Scotland to be a member of NATO and that the UK would lose its seat in the UN Security Council were both mistaken, while the statement about the SNP potentially removing nuclear weapons from an independent Scotland was correct. U.S. officials in Washington might have missed the article, but the Scottish government did not overlook it.

In response to the *Washington Post* article, Sir Alex Salmond, then First Minister of Scotland, wrote a rebuttal of his own in this newspaper. Salmond rejected the statement that Scotland was not willing to be a member of NATO, but acknowledged the intention to remove nuclear weapons from Scotland.<sup>154</sup> In addition, Salmond defended his party's security strategy and compared the SNP's proposed defense forces to those of other members of NATO. In Salmond's words, "Would the same be said of European nations such as Norway, smaller than Scotland, or Denmark, almost identical in size? As it happens, these two countries combined flew more air sorties in the internationally sanctioned action in Libya than did the United Kingdom."<sup>155</sup> However, Salmond did not seem concerned about the consequences of a divided UK for the United States. Rather,

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153 "Scottish Independence Vote is Part of a Worrying Trend," *Washington Post Editorial Board*, 20 October 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/scottish-independence-vote-is-part-of-worrying-trend/2012/10/30/4c320fb2-1896-11e2-a55c-39408f9a0ab3\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.84a881bc11ba](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/scottish-independence-vote-is-part-of-worrying-trend/2012/10/30/4c320fb2-1896-11e2-a55c-39408f9a0ab3_story.html?utm_term=.84a881bc11ba).

154 Sir Alex Salmond, "Why an Independent Scotland Deserves U.S. Support," *Washington Post*, 7 December 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-an-independent-scotland-deserves-us-support/2012/12/07/694ba79a-3a4a-11e2-8a97-363b0f9a0ab3\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.504065b720f3](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-an-independent-scotland-deserves-us-support/2012/12/07/694ba79a-3a4a-11e2-8a97-363b0f9a0ab3_story.html?utm_term=.504065b720f3).

155 Salmond, "Why an Independent Scotland Deserves U.S. Support."

Salmond focused on appealing to the American people and the principles that guide the United States such as the right to self-determination and democratic standards.

European scholars have attempted to forecast the impact of Scottish independence both before and since the first independence referendum in 2014. Most of these experts worked within or wrote for institutions based in Europe, but this did not deter them from analyzing the potential impact on the United States. For instance, John Hemmings, a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics, suggested that “Scottish independence would affect transatlantic security at two levels: at the five eyes, intelligence-sharing level, and at the NATO level.”<sup>156</sup> Indeed, intelligence sharing would be affected with Scotland on the outside of the UK, and this could have important maritime and international security implications for the United States. However, there is no legal obstacle to the United States forming a bilateral intelligence-sharing agreement with Scotland in order to keep situational awareness in the North Sea and the North Atlantic. This process would be greatly enhanced if Scotland became a member of NATO.

Andrew Dorman examines the consequences of the rUK pursuing nuclear disarmament, notably the possibility of diminishing political and military power of the rUK concerning the United Nations.<sup>157</sup> Could the rUK lose its UN Security Council seat due to nuclear disarmament? Could the United States lose its primary ally in the Security Council to balance against Russia and China? Probably not, but the factor is still one to consider. The most likely effect of UK denuclearization on the political spectrum would be the alteration of the balance of power within Europe. A second Scottish referendum on independence would stem from the UK leaving the EU, thus creating a possible political landscape of a less powerful UK not in the EU. The United States would see its most formidable ally in Europe politically depleted and less influential in European affairs, and Washington might lose a close ally in nuclear deterrence if events led the rUK to abandon its nuclear weapons.

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<sup>156</sup> John Hemmings, “Scottish Independence Would Have a Negative Impact on Security,” *The London School of Economics and Political Science* (blog), 17 September 2014, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/scottish-independence-would-have-a-negative-impact-on-security/>.

<sup>157</sup> Dorman, “More Than a Storm in a Teacup,” 688.

Some observers have suggested that the British government would be willing to call the SNP's bluff on the removal of Trident from a newly independent Scotland. William Walker describes a belief within London that

“Scotland would surely be impelled to succumb to pressure and concede the nuclear force's stay in the Clyde [Faslane], especially if it wished to gain entry into NATO, since it would need to establish favourable economic and political relations with the rest of the UK, and with the United States and other powerful actors.”<sup>158</sup> This implies that a formidable and dangerous showdown could ensue relating to the maintenance and operation of Britain's nuclear posture should Scotland secede from the UK. The United States would probably take a great interest in the possible relocation of Trident.

With reference to Brexit, Tim Oliver and Michael John Williams conclude that “A British departure from the EU would complicate these relations [with the EU and the United States], but not undermine them unless it were compounded by other crises and changes to both the EU and the United States that have the potential to drive them apart.”<sup>159</sup> Such a crisis could be prompted by the abandonment of nuclear weapons by the rUK because new facilities could not be negotiated or procured in response to Scottish demands that these nuclear weapons be removed from sovereign Scottish territory. Such an outcome might not be far-fetched, and it could create anxiety for the United States concerning transatlantic security.

Brexit might not be gravely harmful to the United States if the only consequences concerned the UK leaving the EU while US-UK and US-NATO relations remained strong. If Brexit were the catalyst to a second Scottish independence referendum, would the United States be more critical of Brexit? William Walker maintains that “Scotland's departure from the UK is not expected to result in upheaval or crisis in world politics,” and that “the UK's power might be diminished, but not dramatically, since it would lose less than one-

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158 Walker, “Trident's Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom,” 22.

159 Oliver and Williams, “Special Relationship in Flux: Brexit and the Future of the US-EU and US-UK Relationship,” 565.



tenth of its wealth and population.”<sup>160</sup> This conclusion is straightforward in terms of demographics and economics, but not on transatlantic security.

Nevertheless, things have changed since the first independence referendum was conducted. For one, the UK MoD has come to realize the importance of sustaining a strong defense force and structure. This is apparent in a comparison of the 2015 Strategic Review with the 2010 version. The improvements could be due to the genuine threat beginning in 2012 from the SNP. The nuclear problem would still loom large for the UK in the event of a new Scottish independence referendum because alternative locations still require more study. Moreover, the security landscape within Europe has also changed with increased pressure from Russia in the east and the influx of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa in a context of terrorist plots and actual attacks.

There are two scenarios to consider involving a second independence attempt. The first revolves around the premise that the defense planners of the SNP would change nothing from its defense policy proposal in 2014. The second scenario includes some changes by the SNP in its defense policy decisions that would serve as better negotiation factors and bargaining chips for fulfilling its promises to Scottish citizens.

The United Kingdom has conducted a substantial revision of its defense force strategy following the threat of independence from Scotland in 2013–2014. The 2015 UK Strategic Review, as mentioned in Chapter III, describes a new MoD effort to upgrade most aspects of its forces and compete again as a conventional military power and independent nuclear weapons state. If Scotland achieved independence in its second attempt, the United Kingdom would be in a better position to transfer some of the defense capabilities that the SNP has suggested that the Scottish defense force ought to inherit from the UK. In this case, the United States would not lose much in the Scottish secession, because the UK would retain a strong military apparatus not only in support of the United States, but in support of NATO as a whole.

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<sup>160</sup> William Walker, “International Reactions to the Scottish Referendum,” 758.

The United Kingdom would not be greatly affected by the proposed defense force structure of the independent Scottish armed forces. The best approach for the SNP in this case would be to increase its initial estimate of the capabilities necessary for an independent defense force not only to provide its own national security, but to demonstrate that it is capable of providing a credible source of defense for allies as well. Whether the SNP would negotiate bilateral defense agreements with geostrategic partners in Europe or with the United States or even become a member of NATO, Scotland would need outside help to provide for the protection of its national interests. To achieve this goal, a formidable conventional force would be necessary. The SNP's vision in 2013 of a Scottish defense force is inadequate and would need to be more robust in a second attempt at independence.

The SNP's stance on the removal of UK nuclear weapons from Scotland, should it become independent, would have major repercussions, as explained in Chapter IV. For the United Kingdom, this means finding a suitable location to house and operate not only its Trident missile program that carries nuclear payloads, but also its Vanguard and future Dreadnought submarine force that deploys the missiles around the world under the UK's Continuous-at-sea Deterrence (CASD) mission. The timeline given by the SNP of six to seven years from independence for complete removal is unacceptable for the UK, because London would need more time to solve the problem of establishing an alternative site for its nuclear program. The issue might then become a possible motivation for the UK to renounce its nuclear weapons.

During a joint press conference at Clyde Naval Base in Faslane, Scotland in September 2017, the British Defense Minister at the time, Sir Michael Fallon, and the NATO Security General, Jens Stoltenberg, responded to a journalist's question as follows:

**QUESTION:** Andrew Kerr, BBC Scotland. Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, reaffirmed our commitment yesterday to one thing: nuclear weapons out of Scotland. If Scotland became an independent country what would that mean for the UK's nuclear deterrent and to the Secretary General as well please?

**MICHAEL FALLON:** But first, as I understand, the SNP position seems very confused now. They want to join NATO. NATO is a nuclear alliance and our nuclear forces, French nuclear forces, and the American nuclear

forces are part of NATO's nuclear alliance. The SNP needs to sort out where they really think. The nuclear deterrent here today keeps Britain safe. It keeps NATO safe as well and Scotland is part of that.

**JENS STOLTENBERG:** The nuclear deterrent is essential for NATO's deterrence and that makes us all safe and the reason to have strong deterrence is to prevent war, is to avoid conflict, and is to send a clear message to any potential adversary that an attack on NATO will trigger a response from the whole alliance and the cost would be much higher than the benefits. So that helps make the UK safer, but also all NATO allies safer.<sup>161</sup>

As of this writing, the UK has not identified a specific site to relocate its nuclear weapons program. Certain sites within the UK have been considered as possibilities, but (as previously mentioned) all come with significant costs and risks. Even the hypothetical solution of relocating the program outside the UK's borders would entail hurdles and roadblocks that probably would not be surmounted within the timeline given, except perhaps on a temporary basis. The UK's nuclear disarmament could affect the prestige and power position of the UK in international politics. NATO would lose one of its three nuclear deterrent powers, leaving the United States and France to carry the burden.

As for the United States, the loss of a nuclear-armed ally could significantly affect the role of U.S. nuclear deterrence as well as U.S. influence within NATO and the UN since the UK's prestige would be diminished. One possible option for the United States would be to host key elements of the UK's nuclear weapons program temporarily in exchange for a longer timeframe from the Scottish government for the removal of the UK's nuclear weapons, SLBMs, and SSBNs as well as for the new independent Scotland to provide some financial incentive to building a more suitable site within the rUK. Such a gesture of goodwill on the part of an independent Scottish government could buy some positive support from the United States and the rUK for Scottish membership in NATO.

With this option, the parties involved would achieve a positive result for their national security interests. Scotland would become a non-nuclear weapons state with

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<sup>161</sup> Joint Press Conference at Faslane by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, with UK Secretary for Defence Sir Michael Fallon, 29 September 2017 – Last updated: 02 October 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/opinions\\_147470.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/opinions_147470.htm).

improved prospects of becoming a member of NATO. The United Kingdom would retain its nuclear weapons deterrence capability and international power status in NATO and the United Nations, and the United States would not be heavily burdened with increased nuclear deterrence responsibilities for NATO. Washington would keep the UK as a close powerful ally in support of transatlantic security. Eventually, the UK would need to solve its relocation problem, but with extra time, financial support, and effort, operating nuclear weapons from within the borders of the rUK would be achievable.

Scotland would benefit greatly from membership in NATO, while NATO members would see the benefits in having a strong Scottish influence and military alliance in support of the collective defense effort. However, as discussed in Chapter V, several factors would come into play with the secession of Scotland from the UK. Scottish leaders would have some options to negotiate with to increase the country's chances of membership in NATO. First, Scotland would need to provide the proper level of defense spending in order to meet NATO's commitment to each member allocating 2% of its GDP to defense. The SNP's initial estimates of defense spending during its first attempt to gain independence would place Scotland well within the level of defense spending by members of NATO that share common geostrategic circumstances with Scotland, as discussed in Chapter III and Chapter V. Increasing Scotland's defense spending estimate in its next attempt to achieve independence would allow the SNP not only to surpass the 2% of GDP threshold, but also to provide the Scottish defense forces much needed bolstering in assets and capabilities.

Second, the Scottish government would need to be more realistic about its estimated timeline for removal of the rUK's nuclear weapons program from Faslane and Coulport. Allowing for more time and possibly supporting financially the relocation effort would dissuade the MoD of the rUK from contemplating nuclear disarmament, which could have major repercussions, as explained in Chapter IV.

Thirdly, the SNP should revise its conventional force employment authorization policy known as the "triple lock" system.<sup>162</sup> Clearly articulating the intentions of the

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<sup>162</sup> The "triple lock" principles are discussed in Chapter V.

Scottish government concerning the employment of Scottish forces for the collective defense of an alliance would give members of NATO and other allies more confidence in Scotland's reliability.

The final factor might not involve any options that Scotland could control. The reservations about secessionism in several members of NATO could lead to a denial of membership for Scotland. If countries such as Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain allowed an independent Scotland to join the ranks of NATO (or even the EU), secessionists (and proponents of state unity) within these nations would cry foul, and this could fuel even more discontent with the host government. If independence were achieved, Scotland would have seceded in a non-violent and democratic manner from the United Kingdom. The same might not be said about secessionist movements elsewhere in Western Europe.

If NATO membership was not an option initially upon independence for Scotland, a spot in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program might be. From a geostrategic viewpoint Sweden is comparable to Scotland in some respects, and Sweden participates in the PfP. The Scottish government would be able to mirror the Swedish defense model of close cooperation with NATO. Eventually, NATO membership might become a reality for Scotland. However, in the interim, becoming a partner in PfP would be a good first step towards that goal.

There is no certainty that Scotland will gain its independence from the United Kingdom, either in the near future or the long term. William Walker believes that "Scottish independence is inevitable – only its timing is uncertain."<sup>163</sup> History has shown that a recurrent struggle for Scottish sovereignty away from British rule has progressed through many centuries. The latest attempt to gain formal independence shows that the will of the SNP is as strong as ever. The attempt in 2013–2014 allowed the SNP to publicize its plan for the defense of an independent Scotland. Both its plan and its ambitions for independence fell short, however. If the SNP were to make a second attempt at

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<sup>163</sup> Walker, "Trident's Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom," 14.

independence, whether due to an unpopular Brexit package or sheer political will, a more robust defense structure, a more responsible nuclear stance, and a better articulated collective defense policy would be highly desirable.

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