**Transatlantic Implications: challenges and opportunities of Scottish Independence**

**Abstract**

This article explores the political and strategic implications of Scottish Independence for existing transatlantic security arrangements. It examines the potential obstacles Scotland would face during the transition to Independence and what this would mean for ongoing transatlantic relations. Notwithstanding any institutional, political and legal obstacles, the article argues that an Independent Scotland could enhance rather than diminish security in the Transatlantic region. A Scottish Defence Force (SDF) would require time to transition to full capability after Independence, however, Scotland's geostrategic position and political orientation would make it a key partner in international security cooperation across the Eastern Atlantic, High North, and North Sea, where it could take on a proactive role within existing regional security arrangements and strategic partnerships.

**Introduction**

On the 18th of September 2014 the people of Scotland the will vote in a referendum on Scottish Independence. The decision to vote 'Yes' or 'No' to independence will take place democratically, and the outcome will have to be respected by the Scottish and UK governments under the terms of the Edinburgh Agreement.[1] If Scotland votes 'Yes' it will secede from the rest of the United Kingdom (rUK) in 2016, becoming a new independent European state. While much of the independence debate examines domestic policy areas, a 'Yes' vote will have major implications internationally. As the referendum draws closer, the international dimension receives more attention, necessitating the assessment of the implications of a 'Yes' vote for Scotland's international relationships, and in particular, its

prospective membership in NATO and the EU as well as its strategic and political position in the transatlantic region.

Defence and security issues, and in particular, the future of an IS with regards to transatlantic security arrangements, have become increasingly important elements of the political debate in Scotland and throughout the rest of the United Kingdom (rUK). The question of the way an IS would relate to NATO has been particularly prominent in these discussions. Traditionally thought to be a weak spot on the pro-independence agenda, and most of all, in the Scottish National Party's (SNP) programme, the SNP overturned its long-term opposition to joining NATO at its 2012 National Conference.[2] This decision changed the parameters of the debate as it dispelled one of the pro-unionist key criticisms: that Scotland would try to free ride on the security provided by different Transatlantic security networks and be militarily isolated from its closest allies.

The SNP's long-term opposition to NATO had been underpinned by its anti-nuclear stance, and its conviction that it would not join the alliance because of its first-strike nuclear capability. Despite the SNP's new stance, membership is conditioned on the basis that Scotland's membership would be based on it being a nuclear free state. This has resulted in a new debate about whether Scotland would or should be allowed membership of NATO under these circumstances It has triggered subsequent questions regarding Scotland's ability on the one hand, and the rUK's political will to allow an IS on the other, to play a role in transatlantic security arrangements by cooperating on intelligence gathering and sharing and contributing to strategic and operational security provision across and beyond the transatlantic region. It has been noted repeatedly by critics of Scottish independence that from a security point of view it would create a number of political and strategic problems rather than simply posing an institutional or legal challenge, as has extensively been discussed in the context of the European Union (EU) in particular (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). These technical discussions will not be repeated here. The article instead seeks to address the question as to what the political and strategic implications would be of an independent Scotland (IS). By taking a clinical look at the challenges and opportunities of Scottish independence for the international context, it argues that there are a number of problems that an IS would need to deal with at the outset but that it could also bring a number of definitive advantages for transatlantic security. This provides reason to assume that Scotland would be openly welcomed as a full member of both NATO and the EU, and with

that, as an integral part of the transatlantic security network as well as of pertaining strategic partnerships.

The article proceeds as follows: The opening section provides an overview of the challenges Scottish Independence might pose for existing Transatlantic security arrangements. It examines the potential obstacles that Scotland might face in becoming a full member of NATO, but also a trusted ally to regional partners both within and outside the EU. The following section then proceeds to assess the strategic opportunities for Scotland and the possible benefits that Scottish membership of Transatlantic security arrangements. In doing so it looks at key areas where a Scottish Defence Force (SDF) could provide meaningful capabilities to its strategic partners. We do not dismiss that an independent Scotland would face a number of challenges in finding its place in international security structures. However, it is important to consider that in the event of independence the political and institutional obstacles of integrating in existing security arrangements would also be conditioned by an altered strategic environment, and by what IS can offer in strategic and political terms. Highlighting the added value that Scotland could provide to the alliance, the EU's CSDP and to regional security across the transatlantic, we argue that Scotland's political and strategic value provide the foundations for it to become an important partner and contributor, which would enhance rather than diminish Transatlantic stability and security.

**Challenges for Scotland are not insurmountable**

Several key aspects of Transatlantic security in which Scottish Independence might have problematic consequences for current EU and NATO members have been highlighted in the political debate. The most frequent arguments posited pertain to areas such as international terrorism and organised crime as well as the implications for intelligence cooperation. More prominently, however, particularly in the British domestic context, Scottish independence has been discussed in the context of the nuclear question and the potential implications for the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent. This is a key issue around which the primary disagreements between the British and the Scottish governments revolve. There have been allegations that Scottish Independence would force the rUK to unilaterally disarm its nuclear arsenal, which would place it in a difficult strategic position. Until recently, this was a hypothetical question, with analysis on this area being limited as a result.[3] The SNP's long-

term position against nuclear weapons and the Scottish Government (SG)'s intention to enshrine the illegality of nuclear weapons in a written Constitution have provoked the UK government to highlight this position as a serious impediment to Scottish membership of NATO.[4] This political dispute between the Scottish and the British government raises several questions: to what extent are these areas of real concern to those assessing the impact of a Yes vote in 2014? To what extent do these policy issues matter for the US and other NATO members? How will Scottish involvement in NATO and other Transatlantic security arrangements be received by the wider strategic landscape?

It has been postulated by some that an Independent Scotland (IS) would become a 'weak-link', from which Islamic, or possibly Irish, terrorist networks could attack the rUK (Chalmers 2012, 9). Arguing this point, British Home Secretary Theresa May (Conservative Party) has made the claim that Scotland would be at increased risk from international terrorism.[5] This was also echoed by former MI6 operative Baroness Meta Ramsay, who stated that Scotland was a "soft Target'.[6] This claim is grounded in the argument that Scotland would lack the intelligence apparatus with which to interface with counter-terrorism partners across the British Isles, and in particular, the wider Transatlantic region.[7] Consequently, it has been claimed that Scotland would not be a suitable candidate for becoming a partner in intelligence sharing – one of the key arguments of the SNP in the context of the independence debate.[8] As a recent report of the *Scotland Institute* highlighted, there is disagreement between the SG and London as to whether an IS would be up to the task, and doubt that other states – particularly rUK but also the USA among other key actors – would be willing to share all but the bare minimum of intelligence with the Scottish agencies.[9] The report argues:

> *Bluntly put, the US will hardly commit to intelligence sharing with an IS intent on nuclear disarmament, and the rUK, in turn, would be unwilling to act as a conduit passing on privileged material.*[10]

Those opposing Independence have signalled that the SG's and SNP's anti-nuclear stance would be a reason for Scotland to be denied membership in NATO or other regional security arrangements. As highlighted above, the SNP overturned its policy against membership of the alliance at its October 2012 National Conference but did so on the condition that Scotland would prohibit nuclear weapons from being based on its sovereign territory.[11] The debate surrounding whether this will prohibit Scotland's membership of NATO is now a key feature

in the current constitutional debate. Indeed, in one recent intervention into this debate, a report for *The Henry Jackson Society* has argued that there is an "incompatibility between the SNP's posture on nuclear arms, and the *NATO Strategic Concept.*"[12]

This view is echoed by Malcolm Chalmers, Special Adviser to the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, who noted in evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in the British House of Commons that "there would be little international sympathy, at least among the UK's traditional allies, were Scotland to insist that the UK's nuclear armed submarines leave its territory on a timescale that did not allow the rUK to construct alternative bases in England or Wales."[13] This is a perfectly reasonable position from a rUK perspective; one would also expect that other NATO members – particularly the US – would watch Scotland's negations over Trident's removal carefully. As a consequence, one can imagine a scenario where international pressure impacts on Scotland's negotiations with the government of rUK. If Scotland forced unilateral disarmament on the rUK – a probable outcome if Scotland chose to force removal in the short-term, then this would undoubtedly inhibit the chances of Scotland joining NATO as part of a transition to independence. If Scotland was to join NATO then signing up to the Strategic Concept's fundamental elements would be a necessary precondition.

However, it is worth pointing out that the SG and the SNP have so far not issued any statement suggesting that Scotland would not be willing to fulfil the criteria for membership. Rather, they have stated that membership of NATO would be sought, with the caveat that no nuclear weapons would be hosted on Scottish territory.[14] In fact, the SG and SNP have consistently highlighted the prospect of Scotland working in cooperation with rUK and other allies, and have pledged to "uphold existing international agreements" in an IS.[15] SNP leaders have regularly stated their intention to push for the full integration of an IS in international security partnerships.[16] Although the SG remains intent on its plan to ban nuclear weapons from Scottish territory in the event of independence, there is no indication that Scotland would thereby force the unilateral disarmament of rUK, or seek to force the diminution of British defence capabilities. The official position on this issue is simply to secure "the earliest safe removal of Trident from Scotland".[17] Indeed, the SG (2012) has stated publically that it would work towards removal in cooperation with the government of the rUK under the terms of the Edinburgh Agreement.

*Following a 'yes' vote in the referendum, it would be the responsibility of the Scottish and UK Governments to continue to work together... to agree the arrangements for the safe and timely withdrawal of Trident nuclear weapons systems from an Independent Scotland.* [18] (Sturgeon 2012)

Though the position of the SG and the SNP has consistently chimed with public opinion, there is no proposition for a fixed timescale for removal. The attitude rather signals the prospect for a negotiated settlement which would work in the interest of both sides. How long this would take will be determined by political expediency and the tone of negotiations. However, it is important to bear in mind that under the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Scotland would be prohibited from hosting nuclear weapons on its sovereign territory.[19] This is an important factor which would require the Scottish and rUK governments to work together to achieve during transition negotiations. It would be important for the SG to allow sufficient time for London to remove the nuclear deterrent but it is equally important to point out that it would be illegal under international law for Scotland to house Trident indefinitely. As a consequence, it is likely that there will be some pressure on both sides to ensure that negotiations are speedy and are conducted in an appropriate manner. Moreover, and regardless of the legal circumstances, while the present SG policy to make Scotland a nuclear free state has come under scrutiny it is unlikely that Scotland would be forced to allow nuclear weapons on its territory indefinitely when the majority of the Scottish Parliament and public opinion rejects this position. As Andrew Dorman (2012) has noted in written evidence to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, other NATO members have banned nuclear weapons from their territory and still add to the alliance by offering important specialisms as well as boots on the ground.[20] This has set a precedent which would make it difficult politically to reject in a Scottish/rUK context.

To subsume, if Scotland secedes from the UK it is to be expected that challenges will emerge not least because there will be political and strategic implications for all states operating in the transatlantic region. Nevertheless, in the event of a 'Yes' vote these challenges will have to be overcome. It is accepted that states rarely wish to actively alter the status quo unless it is in their interest to do so. However, this does not mean that they would not react favourably to a new actor entering the political and strategic arena. In such a scenario it is likely that the *realpolitik* of the international situation will quickly alter the balance and recondition the circumstances for Scotland to become an integrated member of transatlantic security

structures. If the SG provides the rUK with the appropriate time to find new facilities it is unlikely that Scotland will have to face insuperable challenges to enter full NATO membership. Scotland's Nordic neighbours in particular, but also other core members of the alliance and the EU, are likely to view Scottish Independence as an opportunity to capitalize on its geostrategic position and recognize this as an asset in defence and security matters directly affecting their national interests (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013).

**Opportunities for Scotland in a reformed alliance and a new security landscape**

Scottish NATO membership lies at the heart of the security-related debate about independence. A lot of the discussions have so far focused on the obstacles IS might encounter in this context based on the SG's stance on the nuclear issue, and with regard to the Scottish defence posture more generally. To assess the potential implications of independence and the negotiating position IS would most likely find itself in, it is important to acknowledge the dynamic nature of international security institutions. NATO's *Strategic Concept* of 2010 underpins the purpose of the alliance in its current makeup, but NATO as an organization has changed dramatically since its inception. Beginning life in 1949, NATO's core function up until the end of the Cold War was territorial defence of Western Europe, containment of communism and acting as a deterrent against Soviet aggression. While continuing to hold strategic oversight of the transatlantic region in the post-Cold War era, NATO has undergone significant changes and has assumed a far greater political role than originally conceived. While adjusting the organization to the new security landscape, NATO member countries had to deal with a range of factors and accompanying scenarios that were not foreseeable during the height of the Cold War.

The political and strategic implications of this transition have largely not been factored into the current debate in the UK, which has tended to discuss the role of NATO in an absolutist way: highlighting the limits of Scottish international reach as well as prospective capability shortfalls as potentially insurmountable problems while perceiving the alliance and all related security structures in the transatlantic region as some kind of static framework which an IS would be able to comply with or not at a certain point in time. However, NATO's transition from a defensive alliance to one which seeks to mitigate a range of diverse risks has very much bearing on the debate regarding Scottish membership of the alliance. The very fact that

today's NATO is more than a military alliance provides opportunities for an IS, which were not foreseeable in the recent past. Even more importantly, however, membership of an IS would also open new possibilities for NATO and provide the organization with new ways of capitalizing on the strengths and distinctive characteristics of its member countries and partners.

With regards to capabilities, as will be discussed in the final section of this article, Scotland would likely not need, nor be expected to provide, full-spectrum forces in order to qualify for NATO membership and/or to make a meaningful contribution to the EU's CSDP. It could rather make an important contribution to these organizations by providing relative strengths that support transatlantic security policies as they have evolved in the last two decades. Moreover, ongoing cuts to national defence budgets across NATO (with the exception of Norway)[21] and the EU take pressure off any aspiring member in the sense that even established core states in both organizations do no longer provide the strengths that placed them at the heart of transatlantic security matters in the first instance. This challenges the critical proposition that Scotland could be denied membership of either NATO or the EU based on any capability shortfalls or limitations to its defence posture. In an era of defence austerity paired with the reality of non-military security challenges becoming ever more prominent even for the alliance, one can legitimately question why Scotland would be excluded on these grounds (Flanders 2011). We suggest that contrary to critical propositions of an IS being unable to live up to the minimum requirements of membership, Scotland could in fact bring added political and strategic value to transatlantic security arrangements, including NATO and the EU's CSDP. Scotland would expect difficulties in negotiating memberships in NATO and the EU if the SG was seen to act irresponsibly with regards to rUK positions, particularly regarding nuclear weapons or any of the political and institutional parameters of accession. However, as pointed out above, it seems unlikely that the SG would take such a route in the first place. It is out of question that an IS would strive to be an integral part of the transatlantic security community and that the Scottish leadership would go out of its way to secure deals that place Scotland in a favourable position internationally.

In addition, just as the alliance has transitioned from a Cold-War model to one capable of dealing with twenty-first century security issues, it is also based on a core commitment to democracy and freedom, one that is also very much mirroring the normative underpinnings of European integration. As current Secretary-General, Rasmussen has underlined, "NATO is

far more than a military Alliance. NATO is a community of values. It is a family of nations that believes in freedom, democracy, and the rule of law."[22] Reflecting on NATO's change in emphasis in the post-Cold War era – from one which is purely defensive to one which stresses normative principles like freedom and democracy – into account, there is little reason why Scotland should, or would, be prevented from joining the alliance subject to post-independence negotiations. Scotland already possesses the political institutions and democratic credentials for membership in both NATO and the EU, and has the potential to be a valued ally and member state in the future. As Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, Director of the Danish Centre for Military Studies, points out, "When it comes to NATO and the EU, if Scotland wants it, it would not be in anyone's interest to not let them in. I find questions over membership to be a non-issue."[23] It is a position shared by Lars Bo Kaspersen, who comments that, the "European Union in general would strongly support Scottish membership and the same goes for NATO. I can't think of anyone who wouldn't think it was a good idea."[24] Besides Scotland's future in NATO, the technicalities and legal requirements of transferring EU membership to an IS are of course still subject to debate within the UK and the European Commission, but Scottish membership *in principle* seems a widely unchallenged scenario both internationally and domestically. The same goes for NATO membership. Coming back to the nuclear issue – the SG's intention to remove Trident from Faslane and Coulport – which some have highlighted as a potential deal breaker for Scotland, it can be assumed that a negotiated settlement whereby Scotland allows an appropriate timescale for rUK to remove Trident would allay concerns internationally that transatlantic security would be undermined by Scottish independence in this regard.

As noted above, it is prudent to assess Scottish membership from the basis that it is already an Independent state. The international system and the security environment of the transatlantic arena can adapt to change, and would, if faced with this situation. As the following sections highlight, Scotland's ability to make a valued contribution to NATO and the EU underpins the likelihood that membership of transatlantic security organizations is not just in the interest of Scotland but would also be met with international approval.

**Why Scotland is a good bet for transatlantic security**

As it does for other states in the transatlantic region, NATO provides a security guarantee which Scotland could not attain on its own. At present there are twenty-eight members of NATO, and it remains the security organization of choice for a majority of European states, be it as full members or associate countries like the post-neutral countries like Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden, which are members of NATO's Partnership for Peace. For small states with limited military capabilities, such as Denmark, Norway, the Central and Eastern European countries and an IS, membership in a military alliance can be particularly beneficial (Keohane 1969; Thorhallsson 2006). That said, as is exemplified by the Austrian, Finnish, Irish and Swedish cases, a small state like Scotland could exist without full NATO membership not least because there is no imminent territorial threat, and equally, no political pressure to become a member of the alliance. However, the majority of European states would expect the leaders of an IS to demonstrate their inclination and willingness for Scotland to join NATO, which could smooth Scotland's way into the wider European security framework.[25] Scotland's Nordic neighbours in particular – principally Norway, Denmark and Iceland –have already expressed their interest in Scottish membership of NATO. This has also been a key driver in the decision of the SNP to alter its stance on NATO membership at its October Conference (2012).[26] Remaining outside NATO would be much more costly financially, and pertinently, would make it much harder for Scotland to cooperate or even integrate with its key partners – most of all with the rUK, which is something the SNP has repeatedly declared as one of the key pillars of its potential future defence architecture.[27]

Potential Scottish membership in the EU in turn has so far mostly been discussed in the economic context. Despite a desire for a more integrated European security and defence framework, as has repeatedly been articulated in several key EU documents, Europe's security continues to be strongly underpinned by NATO. The capability development process within the EU is almost entirely modelled on NATO standards and frameworks of reference, and the institutional structures put into place to operationalize the EU's CSDP strongly mirror their NATO equivalents. That said, the EU has long taken over a more prominent role in non-conventional security matters, particularly in areas that are linked to its economic and political goals, areas where it has significant leverage. In the context of the post-Cold War security environment, membership in the EU has thus become nearly as strategically relevant

for European states as their relationship with NATO. Most European NATO members are also members of the EU or striving to join, like Iceland. This is only in part because of the hard security guarantees EU membership provides, such as through the mutual assistance clause introduced in the Treaty of Lisbon,[28] but more in the way it opens up avenues for cooperation and partnership that go beyond conventional security issues. These are based on the comprehensive backing it has as an organization with policy tools at its command, and which  cut across a variety of areas relevant for security provision (for example: migration, rule of law, human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, democracy promotion, judicial cooperation, prevention, and structural cooperation, among others). That said, the EU has also developed a strong profile as an operational security actor, with more than 30 civilian and military operations having been implemented since the inception of the CSDP little more than ten years ago.

An area worth highlighting in this regard is the recent development of an EU maritime policy, which has resulted in substantial operational involvement of EU forces e.g. in multi-national efforts at fighting piracy and organized crime at sea off the Somali coast. While NATO is operating in the same mission space with a very similar mandate, the EU's maritime operation 'Atalanta' has even taken on precedence as the more resourced and sustainable mission (Gebhard and Smith 2014). As will be discussed below, an IS could make an important contribution to this particular niche of the CSDP, complementing the variety of capabilities and crisis management tools the EU has at its command already. What seems important to highlight in this regard is that despite concerns that Scottish EU membership would need to be negotiated and would potentially place Scotland in an indefinite institutional position for some time, this would have a marginal impact on the way IS could contribute to CSDP operations. IS would, as many candidate countries and partners of the EU before, be included in the party of "contributing third states", which gives countries that are willing and able to be involved in international crisis management operations an avenue to contribute, granting them access to the same level of operational involvement as it is held by full members. IS would only be excluded from the political decisions taken in the Council of the EU but would in any given case have the opportunity to opt into contributing without having to overcome any political, institutional or even military obstacles. There is no reason to assume that IS would be denied such involvement after this has been common CSDP

practice with states that have a much more difficult political relationship with the EU, such as Turkey and even Russia.

Scottish membership of the EU as such is not the focus of this article but the implications of independence for transatlantic security are equally applicable to Scotland's relationship with the EU. Given the institutional, strategic and political overlap between NATO and the EU, Scottish involvement with the alliance would always also condition its potential contribution to the EU's CSDP as well as other branches of EU external action. The main argument here is again that Scottish membership would hardly be questioned *in principle* while of course certain legal and institutional obstacles would have to be overcome in the short term. Scottish incentives to fully integrate with existing transatlantic security structures are strong but it is important to also look more closely at how an IS would be positioned in a way that both NATO and the EU would want it as a member before now. One of the most pivotal arguments in this regard is related to Scotland's unique geostrategic position in the Northern Atlantic, which is the focus of the following section.

## Geostrategic implications of Scottish independence

As discussed in the sections above, there is little doubt that an IS would be welcomed internationally as an active part of the transatlantic security community. The SNP's attitude towards NATO and EU membership gives reason to assume that any political, legal and institutional challenges would not be insurmountable in the medium-term. What is more, Scotland is very well placed in terms of its geostrategic position at the outskirts of North Western Europe. Any strategic partner and security organization would struggle to deny that inclusion of an IS was to the benefit of not just the stability and security provision in the region itself but also to the interest of the transatlantic community more generally. Sitting at the heart of the North Atlantic area, Scotland's geostrategic position marks it out as a pivotal regional partner that could not just exert influence over the North and Irish Seas, but have potential strategic outreach across the Eastern Atlantic and the High North.

> *Scotland is usually seen as a peripheral country, stuck out on the north-west fringes of Europe. To military planners things look rather different. Scotland sits in a commanding position overlooking the vast expanses of the*

*north-east Atlantic. It lies on the shortest routes by air, sea and telecommunications from the USA to Europe, and it has large expenses of sparsely populated terrain suitable for military planning.* (Spaven 1983, 9)

Similar to the geostrategic position of Norway and Iceland, Scotland presents itself as a scarcely populated and geographically exposed territory with a vast coastline, which could be seen as a challenge and source of potential vulnerability. However, these significant circumstances also constitute a strategic potential that the alliance as well as the EU would be ill advised not to tap into. Since the end of the Cold War, geopolitical circumstances in the British Isles have changed to the North as well as to the South. The nature of security challenges has changed radically to the point where any credible military threat to the region has become close to unthinkable. Non-conventional security issues, such as global warming, environmental degradation, maritime pollution, resource scarcity and energy security have become more prominent even in the global perception, and this is reflected in the strategic outlook of adjacent states including Denmark, Norway, Iceland but also Ireland, Sweden and Finland. Out of the strategic actors in the region, Britain has so far placed less of a prominent focus on these new security challenges and the sub-region, while striving more distinctively towards keeping up a conventional defence portfolio and putting a lot of effort and resource into force projection that can be seen in the British contribution to operations with more global reach, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a small state, IS could typically be expected to place greater emphasis on the immediate geographical surroundings than a larger state like the UK would do (see Inbar and Sheffer 1997; Bauwens, Clesse and Knudsen 1996; Wivel 2005; Hey 2003). While this implies that Scotland would not be looking to mirror the British power politics approach it would also open up new avenues for Scotland to play a more proactive role in these areas of primary strategic interest. As is exemplified by the Nordic countries, and most notably, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, having political impact within transatlantic security organizations as well as strategic leverage across and beyond the region is neither necessarily linked to a robust military posture - including a nuclear capability or to any sort of definitive level of strategic assertiveness. The SNP has already highlighted that the Nordic states are of particular importance when it comes to developing a defence model for IS (Robertson 2013). Apart from geographical proximity, IS would in many ways be a suitable follower of the Nordic examples, most notably the one of Denmark and Norway. Both have been active and

compliant NATO members without trying to provide a full range of capabilities but instead focusing on a selective number of niche competences that helped them to establish themselves as credible and trusted allies. That said, an IS would unlikely sign up for a similarly high level of ambition as Norway and Denmark have demonstrated in recent years given that it would at the outset have to put greater effort into rebuilding basic structures for an independent Scottish defence apparatus. The Nordic states have not officially signalled their support of Scottish independence, however, the close proximity and shared strategic interest would make cooperation likely.  This which would have benefits for the region and it is likely that an IS would be welcomed and integrated into regional networks including, for example, Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO). (Bailes et al, 2013)

With regards to Scotland's role within NATO, the future of existing military infrastructure on Scottish territory is of course crucial. Scotland presently hosts a remote radar station at RAF Buchan as well as a site at Saxa Vord; both are integral components of present UK air defence. Other assets include the British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre, a facility which is used for subsea and surface operations and which would be useful for NATO, RAF Prestwick – home to the Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre, an air Traffic Control asset that monitors the UK's Northern Airspace. These and other assets, including the Joint Headquarters capability at Faslane which is utilised during NATO's annual joint exercises (Agile Warrior) would remain important to the rUK and other NATO states. These assets would be important to any NATO member as they would be to rUK. These and other military assets provide Scotland with existing facilities which are compatible with NATO structures and procedures. These, taken together with an IS potential to provide further military capabilities to regional and global missions underpin Scotland as an important geostrategic base.

**To what extent can an IS contribute militarily to Transatlantic security?**

An independent but integrated SDF would be an important partner for regional allies such as Norway and Denmark, the EU's CSDP, as it would for the alliance itself. Of course, much will depend on the final model of a SDF – it would first have to come to a negotiated settlement with the rUK (2014-16), and it would be essential that it undertakes a Defence and Security Review (2016). The SDF would be unable initially to take full responsibility for

Scotland's security and would require early assistance from rUK and Transatlantic partners (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). Nevertheless, it would be possible to work towards a 'horizon vision' for the SDF, where it would be able to offer a comprehensive defence and security apparatus which served to enhance regional security.[29]

This said, a future SDF would not start from scratch; it would build initially on what it negotiates with the rUK. Although Scotland's actual share of defence assets would depend on negotiations with rUK, its division would also be determined by what it has contributed to UK defence spend. Scotland would receive approximately 8.6% share of all military assets, providing the foundation from which to shape an independent defence structure. [30] Furthermore, it is likely that Scottish officials would seek compensation for items that Scotland did not need or want, but which its taxpayers had contributed. The UK's nuclear deterrent, the new Queen Elizabeth carriers, and the Joint Strike Fighter, fall under this category. Using this money in conjunction with the SNP's proposed £2.5 billion defence budget Scotland would have a comparative defence spend to other similar sized states in NATO.[31]

One of the key arguments presented by the UK government and pro-union groups is that an IS would not enjoy the UK's global strategic reach and power projection and would thus have less impact on world affairs. Whether or not Scotland has real input at present is an argument out with the parameters of this article. It must also be noted that the current reach of the UK is itself under significant strain from decreasing budgets and the cancellation and delay of important defence acquisition projects.[32] It is accurate in any case to assume that Scotland would not be able to develop the full-spectrum capability currently possessed by the UK. This has repeatedly been posited s a reason why independence would diminish Scottish security rather than increasing it. However, Scotland would not have to mirror UK military aspirations in order to assume a meaningful regional and international military role. As highlighted above, the changed strategic environment which Scotland would find itself in does not necessitate a full range of capabilities. Like other similar sized states, Scotland would be able to defend its core interests and engage with international partners by developing a defence force that builds on relative strengths whereby it can provide added value to Transatlantic security organisations. Scotland would have the opportunity to do what few other states are in a position to do: create a defence architecture that reflects new international priorities without being burdened by organisational barriers and strategic

legacies which hamper adaptation to new security threats. The SG would thus be able to underpin a SDF with an adaptive model where the services are suited to the strategic milieu it enters as an independent state rather than being determined by existing structures and dependencies.[33] An independent Scottish defence posture would also have the benefit of enabling Scotland to concentrate on areas that are of political and strategic interest, but which are currently not sufficiently undertaken by the UK. Taking these policy announcements on board, there is an argument to be made that a SDF would have the potential to enhance rather than diminish the security of the British Isles and the Transatlantic area.

The first strategic priority of the SDF would be to protect Scotland's territorial integrity and the safety of its people. Based on its geo-strategic position and its probable focus on the North Sea, Eastern Atlantic and High North, Scotland is likely to assess risks to its security differently from rUK. This has recently been confirmed by Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond, who has highlighted SNP plans to prioritise naval and air defence.[34] This, he argues, is "necessary to monitor and secure our offshore territory and resources – our oil and gas resources, fisheries protection, and safeguarding our coastal waters." What then, can Scotland offer?

It is likely that Scotland would seek to build a range of forces – land, sea, and air - which would enable it to participate with allies in international operations. However, as noted above, its geostrategic position combined with the changing strategic environment to its North mean that Scotland would be able to fulfil a role valuable to allies by assisting to secure the North Atlantic and High North. Priority investment in both naval and air assets would enable it to this, building capacity in areas where it could prioritise its own strategic interest whilst also providing valuable capabilities which underpin its ability to cooperate with allies.[35] This would provide a powerful case for membership of key defence organisations.

Although Scotland would be unable to provide the range of tasks undertaken by the UK forces, its geographical location puts it in a position where it can enhance maritime security currently lacking from a UK perspective. For example, Scotland's geostrategic position and its interest in developing a high-end naval capability make it well placed to participate in NATO's standing maritime groups. The purpose of these groups is to provide a continuous maritime capability for NATO operations, and have been described as being a "cornerstone

of NATO's maritime strategy".[36] The groups comprise two Immediate Reaction Forces (SNMCMG1 and SNMCMG2) as well as a Standing NATO Maritime Mine Countermeasure Group. While groups SNMCMG1 and SNMCMG2 can be deployed globally during wartime, SNMCMG1's main area of operation is in the Eastern Atlantic; it is currently led by Norway.[37] If an IS was serious about creating a high-end naval force it would be able to provide valuable assets in this context. The UK has not provided any assets to SNMG1 since 2009,[38] and it is therefore likely that Scottish involvement would be welcomed.[39] As a consequence of the UK's strategic focus towards the Middle East, and budget cuts which have seen the Royal Navy's surface fleet slimed down to 19 vessels, the RN does not presently base any major surface vessels in Scotland and has thus struggled to maintain security; the most obvious example being its inability to interdict a Russian carrier fleet, which sheltered only a few miles from the Scottish Coast in 2010.[40]

In terms of airpower, Scotland would also be well placed to fill existing security gaps resulting from cuts in the British MOD defence budget. There is debate about the level of capability required for a SDF air force; however, if Scotland is to meet the SNP defence aspirations then it may look to negotiate a fast jet capability, along with a range of other assets (Crawford 2012).[41] For instance, the decommissioning of the UK's Nimrod fleet in 2010 and the MOD (SDSR 2010) decision to scrap the Nimrod MRA4 programme has created a major capability gap – exposing large expanses of sea lanes without adequate security provision. If an IS was to take on this role, as suggested by SNP defence spokesperson Angus Robertson, it would provide Scotland with a powerful asset useful not just for NATO and the EU, but also for the rUK. Critics of the decision to withdraw the MRA4 capability have highlighted the downgrading of UK capacity to ensure adequate surveillance in the North Atlantic. This has, as a result, undermined UK and Transatlantic intelligence and security coverage, which is easily exploitable for those with the necessary knowhow. Indeed, the House of Commons Defence Committee (HCDC) SDSR and NSS report (2011) concluded that: "We deeply regret the decision to dispense with the Nimrod MRA4 and have serious concerns regarding the capability gaps this has created."

The acquisition of an SDF fleet of MPA would not be cheap, but these are assets that the SNP argue are necessary for Scottish and Transatlantic security. Moreover, what we know about the SG's defence plans suggest a highly integrated model where the services are able to fully integrate with each other in order to maximise military effectiveness. While the examples

highlighted above give an idea of areas where an SDF could build capabilities, enabling an IS to participate in regional and international missions, the SNP's focus on the North does not preclude the army from undertaking a role in Scottish and international security. The primary focus on naval and air forces reflect the immediate security environment that Scotland would find itself on Independence, however, a Scottish army – though the smallest of the services - would still be required to protect Scotland's infrastructure and territorial integrity. It is also likely that the army would be able to deploy as part of international missions. While Scotland would not be forced to participate in conflict situations, it has relevant experience and it is likely that an IS would participate in these as part of a larger force.

**Conclusion**

Although the official blueprint of Scotland's security and defence policy in the case of independence will be published in the Scottish Government's White Paper in November 2013, the SNP has already signalled its intention to join NATO, the EU, and to work in close cooperation with the Nordic States. The article has therefore set out to examine what challenges and obstacles would prohibit Scotland's path into Transatlantic security structures. As we highlight, Scotland will face obstacles and there will be pressure on the government of a newly independent Scotland to provide assurances to potential strategic partners. Although certain areas - such as intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism frailties - have been posited as reasons why Scotland's security would be diminished if independent, we suggest that Scotland would be able to provide added value by integrating within existing alliances. SNP policy now supports Scotland's membership of NATO and this and other arrangements would provide security oversight and shelter while Scotland fully transitioned to independence.

At present the biggest obstacle to NATO membership revolves around the SNP plan to constitutionally ban nuclear weapons from Scottish territory. It is likely that early Scottish membership of NATO will be hinged on its final position on Trident. However, as we note, although the SNP and SG have consistently chimed with Scottish public opinion regarding its anti-nuclear stance it has left open the door to negotiate removal of the UK's nuclear deterrent. It is correct that Scotland would expect difficulties of membership in international organisations if it was seen to act irresponsibly in negotiations with rUK, particularly

regarding nuclear weapons, however, based on declarations from the SNP and SG, there is reason to surmise that an IS would act responsibly in negotiations with London. The SG and SNP anti-nuclear stance is a factor and the IS would seek the removal of the rUK nuclear fleet. Yet, Scotland would not benefit from protracted negotiations and the SG have consistently expressed their desire to work constructively with the rUK, and have mooted its preference to have defence sharing agreements with rUK. Why Scotland would actively attempt to diminish the rUK or force the disarmament of its deterrent while actively seeking defence cooperation is open to question.

Taking these aspects into consideration we argue that Scotland would be well placed to provide added value to existing Transatlantic security arrangements. Its geostrategic position and political outlook, and its ability to fill existing military gaps once independent would also make it Scotland an important regional ally. When considering the changing geostrategic environment – especially in regard to new security risks and a growing strategic focus on the High North - leaving Scotland isolated would damage the existing security architecture more than accepting Scotland's membership. This is especially important in reference to Scotland's Nordic neighbours, who have strategic interests similar to Scotland and who are therefore likely to seek Scottish involvement in regional military structures. As we note, it will take time for an IS to transition from being part of the rUK, however this should not be thought of a a major barrier to membership if an IS set out why and where it can add specialist value of importance to members of Transatlantic security organisations.

**Bibliography**

Bailes, A., Þórhallsson, B. and R. Johnstone, 2013. Scotland as an Independent Small State: Where Would it Seek Shelter? Fræðigreinar Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 1-20.

Bauwens, W., A. Clesse and O. Knudsen (eds), 1996. Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe. London, Washington: Brassey's.

Chalmers, M., 2012. 'Kingdom's End?' RUSI Journal, Vol. 157, No. 3, 6-11.

Flanders, A. F., 2011. 'Building Security in an Age of Austerity', Military Technology, Vol. 35, No. 1.

Gebhard, C. and S. J. Smith, 2014, forthcoming. 'The Two Faces of EU-NATO Cooperation: Counter-Piracy Operations off the Somali Coast', *Cooperation and Conflict*.

Hey, J. (ed.), 2003. *Small States in World Politics. Explaining Foreign Policy Behaviour*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Inbar, E. and G. Sheffer (eds), 1997. *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Keohane, R. O. 1969. 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics', *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 02, 291-310.

Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 2006. *The Risk Society at War: Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salmond, A., 2012. *Scotland's Place in the World*. Hugo Young Memorial Lecture, 25 January 2012.

Spaven, M., 1983. *Fortress Scotland: A Guide to the Military Presence*. London: Pluto Press.

Thorhallsson, B., 2006. 'The size of states in the European Union: Theoretical and conceptual perspectives', *European Integration*, Vol. 28: No. 1, 7-31.

Williams, M.J., 2009. *NATO, Security and Risk Management: From Kosovo to Kandahar* Abingdon: Routledge.

Wivel, A., 2005. 'The Security Challenge of Small Member States: Interests, Identity and the Development of the EU as a Security Actor', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 43: 2, 393-412.

1 Edinburgh Agreement (2012); http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00404789.pdf. Accessed 14 May 2013. The agreement was signed by the British Prime Minister Cameron, Scottish Secretary of State Moore, First Minister of Scotland Salmond and Deputy First Minister Sturgeon 15 October 2012 to create a legal basis for the way the referendum takes place and is received by the parties involved.

2 Scottish National Party, Defence Policy Update (National Conference October 2012)

3 While this issue is still under represented in the literature, for an important exception see: Malcolm Chalmer and William Walker, *Uncharted Waters: The UK: Nuclear Weapons and the Scottish Question,* (East Linton; Tuckwell Press, 2001)

4 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-21028617. Accessed on 14 February 2013

5 'Independent Scotland at risk from terrorism', The Guardian, 24 March 2012

6 Baroness Meta Ramsay, cited in 'Scotland's Defence? An Assessment of SNP Defence Strategy'. Henry Jackson Society (July 2012), 26.

7 G. Rose , 'Independent Scotland a 'Terror Risk', *Scotland on Sunday*, 29 April.

8 Nicola Sturgeon HCS

9 Defence and Security in An Independent Scotland'. Scotland Institute (June 2013)

10 Ibid,  39

11 SNP Defence Policy Update

12 Scotland's Defence? An Assessment of SNP Defence Strategy'. Henry Jackson Society (July 2012), ???

13 Written evidence from Malcolm Chalmers to the Foreign Affairs Committee, 29 April 2013. Available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmfaff/643/643we08.htm

14 SNP Defence Policy Update (October 2012)

15 Interview with Angus Robertson.

16 Interview with Angus Robertson, ???

17 Nicola Sturgeon. Recent reports have suggested that the SG wishes the removal of Trident to begin immediately following a 'yes' vote. This is a factual error in The HJS[17]MSP, Deputy First Minister of Scotland. Letter to the House of Common's Scottish Affairs Committee enquiry 'The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident – Days or Decades

18 Ibid.

19 Non-Proliferation Treaty

20 Dorman, KCL

21 http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/fd/press-centre/Press-releases/new-armoured-vehicles-for-the-army/more-training-improved-readiness.html?id=704064

22 http://www.acus.org/natosource/nato-secretary-general-democracy-more-just-ballot-box

23 Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, cited in http://nationalcollective.com/2013/07/10/exclusive-scottish-eu-membership-straightforward-and-in-denmarks-interest/

[24] Lars Bo Kaspersen, cited in http://nationalcollective.com/2013/07/10/exclusive-scottish-eu-membership-straightforward-and-in-denmarks-interest/

[25] 'Defence Policy and the Scottish Constitutional Debate: Scottish Defence and Security After Independence'.

[26] Angus Robertson, 'The Case for Staying in NATO', *Sunday Herald*, 26 August 2012. Holyrood Magazine

[27] Interview with Angus Roberston. Holyrood mag

[28] Given that the Scottish would not lose their EU citizenship overnight (despite some of the scaremongering) there is no reason to assume that the EU member states would not step up for the safety of the Scottish people if, say, Scotland were under attack after independence and before any follow-up to EU membership was in place. The more likely scenario is that the Scottish government would negotiate a strategic partnership that would include these benefits and help bridge the time until Scotland can "re-join" the EU.

[29] The SNP have provided a baseline estimate of SDF forces at 15,000 regular and 5,000 for its reserve forces. Though smaller than comparators such as Norway and Denmark, the number is indicative of SNP aspirations and indication of what type of force it envisages. These numbers may alter subject to the final outcome of negotiations.

[30] MOD ssset register.

[31] SNP Defence Policy Update. The figure of 2.5 Billion is significantly higher than others, which range from.. It sits in contradistinctions to the lowest of 1,5. (Crawford &Marsh)

[32] SDSR + RUSI on JFS etc.

[33] New Zealand model.

[34] Salmond

[35] This would be far in excess of some forecasts. See Crawford and Marsh.

[36] NATO Allied Maritime Command's Deputy Commander, Vice Admiral Christian Canova (French Navy). http://www.mc.nato.int/PressReleases/Pages/Norwegian-officer-takes-command-of-SNMG1.aspx. Accessed on 28 July 2013.

[37] http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/aktuelt/nyheter/2012/norsk-fregatt-skal-lede-natos-maritime-s.html?id=704821

[38] PMQ

[39] http://www.mc.nato.int/PressReleases/Pages/NATO-Group-Conducts-Exercise-with-Norwegian-Navy-Ahead-of-Defence-Against-Terrorism-Mission.aspx)

[40] Wing commander

[41] Crawford and Marsh.