

# The Scottish National Party's Defence Policy

*NATO membership and the SNP's nuclear  
headache*

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The Scottish National Party's Defence Policy: NATO membership and the SNP's nuclear headache

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Scottish National Party logo on the previous page: Usage is clarified and approved by the SNP Headquarters, Edinburgh.

# Abstract

This thesis examines the Scottish National Party (SNP) with respect to two of its most defining defence policies: its opposition to nuclear weapons, wanting to rid Scotland of the UK's nuclear deterrent based there, and its policy regarding a Scottish membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). It is a historical analysis of how the policies developed from the SNP's national breakthrough in the late 1960s, leading up to a discussion of the current situation where the party is playing a leading role in the ongoing campaign ending in an independence referendum on 18 September 2014. This inquiry argues that most scholars, journalists and military experts have understated the SNP's morally founded opposition to nuclear weapons, implying, for example, that the party would give up its policy in a situation where the rUK and NATO demanded it. By analysing how the policies have developed in the last four to five decades, we stress that the antagonism against nuclear weapons is deeply rooted in morality and therefore not easily negotiable in a possible settlement negotiation between Scotland and the rest of the UK. The NATO policy, however, has been much more wavering, from staunch opponents of a Scottish membership, to the current policy of wanting to apply if Scotland becomes an independent state, though only on conditions of removing the UK's nuclear deterrent from Scotland. This last aspect underlines why it has been important to look at both policies, since they are very much intertwined, though with very different developments and foundations.



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Eirik Sæther, Oslo. December 2013





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# List of abbreviations

CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

HC Deb – House of Commons Debate

MoD – Ministry of Defence

MP – Member of Parliament

MSP – Member of Scottish Parliament

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

rUK – The rest of the UK (discounting Scotland)

SNP – Scottish National Party

SP OR – Scottish Parliament Official Record



# Chapter 1: Introduction

Angus Robertson described NATO as a 'sound organisation'. Why have we not endorsed that 'sound organisation' for 30 years?

Jean Urquhart<sup>1</sup> speaking at the SNP National Convention in October 2012

The Scottish people could in 2014 bring about the creation of the first independent Scottish state since the 1707 Act of Union with England. The electorate will on 18 September be asked the following question: 'Should Scotland be an independent country' (Scottish Parliament *SP Bill 25B: Scottish Independence Referendum Bill*)? The Scottish National Party (SNP) is the reason why there is to be a referendum at all and therefore at the forefront of those hoping that a majority votes 'Yes'. The SNP has since 2007 constituted the devolved Scottish Government, four years later winning a majority of seats at Holyrood (the Scottish Parliament). The victory in the 2011 Scottish general election secured a Scottish parliamentary support of holding an independence referendum.

Traditionally, defence has been viewed as one of the central functions of any state (Jamison), though there are states with hardly any defence. This has, however, not been suggested by any major British political party, the SNP included, which would have been out of line with Scotland's 'martial' tradition, as we will get back to in a later discussion. As independence became a real possibility, issues related to defence and security emerged as essential parts of the public debate in Scotland and the United Kingdom (UK). Consequently, the SNP's defence policy was placed under scrutiny, criticised for lacking a realistic and coherent plan for a future independent Scotland. We will in this inquiry analyse two of the most defining defence policies which the SNP is known for: its opposition to nuclear weapons and its attitude to a Scottish NATO membership. To understand its current and possible future positions, we need to look at their historical foundation. How have these policies developed since the SNP's national breakthrough in the late 1960s?

An initial question might be raised as to why we are not discussing the entirety of the SNP's defence policy. By limiting the research to the aforementioned issues, we believe the party's special position within the British party sphere is better highlighted. Defence has broadly speaking been a fairly consensual undertaking in British politics, given limited attention in election campaigns and public debates. The effect has been a lack of attention and interest in

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<sup>1</sup> Former SNP Member of the Scottish Parliament, now an independent having quit the party over its new NATO policy (*BBC News Online* "MSPs John Finnie and Jean Urquhart quit SNP over Nato policy")

the SNP's defence policy - from the media, scholars and political opponents. For that reason, defence has not been prioritised by the party in question either, with the exception of the two issues which we will analyse. Why this is will be discussed in-depth. We will also discuss the more overall SNP defence policy since this at times contrasts the clarity of speech when it comes to for instance its anti-nuclear stance, especially visible as we move closer to our present time. The public pressure as to what a Scottish Defence Force will contain and function in an independent Scotland was the root cause behind the 2012 defence policy update and a renewed NATO policy.

One might also question the necessity of analysing the SNP's policy on nuclear weapons and NATO in the first place. In fact, such an in-depth historical study, combined with a study of the current political situation, has not been undertaken as far as this researcher has been able to find. Based on the material consulted, we argue that the party's opposition to nuclear weapons has its foundation in a deep and sincere moral opposition which is often understated by both previous and present scholars, journalists and political opponents. Secondly, in case of the SNP winning the independence referendum, Scotland and the rest of the UK (rUK) would have to begin negotiations of how to settle the political, economic and social implications of independence. Seeing how a Scottish delegation would consist of SNP representatives, the SNP's policies regarding nuclear weapons and NATO would be core issues in the negotiations between Scotland and the rUK, most likely involving inputs from NATO. Having said that, the inquiry does not rely on the outcome of the independence referendum per say. It is equally interesting what the SNP might do if the outcome is a continuation of today's devolved system; will they continue with the same policies, or seek more devolved powers? Will they continue their favourable view on NATO or return as critical opponents, while still pushing for a removal of the UK's nuclear deterrent from Scotland? It is also a fact that the line between devolved and reserved powers might seem clear, but where the Scottish Government, for example through their influence on planning permits and environmental protection, could influence the UK's nuclear weapons bases since they are all situated in Scotland (see Chalmers and Walker 54). A devolved Scottish government could also be seeking increased influence over reserved matters. Seeing how opposition parties are not witnessing an upsurge in their popularity and many Scots believe the SNP have done well in the Scottish Government, a demand for more devolved powers might be the next political debate in case of a continuation of the United Kingdom.

This study's initial interest in the SNP's defence policy stemmed from a defence policy update the SNP passed at the 2012 SNP national convention. We will give our analysis of why this policy update was deemed necessary. Journalists reported on the SNP's apparent U-turn when it came to their thirty years opposition to an organisation which based its defence on nuclear deterrent, now suddenly wanting to remain a member if Scotland won its independence. How was this possible while retaining its hostility to the UK's nuclear deterrent, which since the 1960s has been based in the Clyde area, some miles north of Glasgow?<sup>2</sup> This and other aspects are discussed here, a thesis which is both a historical analysis and an analysis of current events and policies. The independence referendum is an on-going and hotly debated issue with strong partisan views. This brings with it some challenging dilemmas. There have been a number of publications in recent years on the question of Scottish independence where defence is touched upon; scholarly, journalistic and governmental. Since sources vary in terms of their aim - presenting an argument or providing factual information, the reliability has at times been difficult to establish. Not too surprising, the nearer we get to the independence referendum, the more partisan the reports have become – on both sides of the campaign.

## Literature and sources

Several works have been published where the SNP is studied and analysed, often in relation to the overall topic of Scottish nationalism and its revival in the last 50 years. Christopher Harvie, a former professor in History and from 2004 Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the SNP, is one of the most acclaimed and cited scholars when it comes to Scottish nationalism. His historical research is critically acclaimed, but as a precaution it could be useful to keep in mind his current affiliation to the party. The last edition was published in 2004 and therefore lacks an up-to-date perspective. When it comes to more in-depth discussions of SNP policies, Gerry Hassan has been an important contributor. In 2009, Gerry Hassan (ed.) published *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power*, a selection of articles by various contributors on aspects of SNP's modern history, policies and relations to Westminster after devolution. Mitchell, Bennie and Johns published their book *The Scottish National Party: Transition to Power* in 2012, which was the first extensive membership survey of the SNP, making use of both interviews of higher ranked members and quantitative

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<sup>2</sup> See Map 1 and 2 in the Appendix p. 72.

surveys mailed to all SNP members. This research could be very useful to understand the foundation of the modern SNP. As we can see, the academic attention given to the development of SNP policies has been very limited. Defence is not an issue which has been given much discussion in any of these studies, which should be seen as some of the most extensive.

If we look at the topic of UK defence, a recent and acclaimed publication from 2010 by Robert Self, *British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945*, gives a good understanding of the circumstances of how new nuclear weapons systems were purchased. As with other scholars, Self gives no analysis of Scottish reactions and viewpoints of these purchases. This perspective can be found in Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker's seminal book from 2001, *Uncharted Waters: The UK, Nuclear Weapons and the Scottish Question*. They are seen as some of the foremost experts on Scotland and defence issues, particularly when it comes to nuclear weapons. This is the only major scholarly work that has discussed the SNP's nuclear weapons and NATO policy. In their book they stress that Scotland has a special importance when it comes to the UK's nuclear deterrence and discuss what the inclinations might be in the future: what will happen in an independent Scotland? Could the nuclear arsenal be moved to another location if Scotland decides on removing them? How might this affect Scotland and the rUK's relationship? What about Scotland and NATO?

Since Chalmers and Walker are the only scholars that have discussed these issues in relation to the SNP, they will naturally be the most used secondary source in this inquiry. Based on their research, we are able to make use of well-covered areas such as the historical discussions regarding where to base the UK nuclear deterrent, highlighting a specific Scottish point of view when it comes to opposing nuclear weapons and the role devolution have had on the issue of nuclear weapons in legal terms. We believe that the SNP's point of view needs a deeper analysis than they were able to provide, writing three pages on each issue where they specifically connect it to the SNP. This could lead to an understatement of the SNP's opposition against nuclear weapons. Although they too argue that the party's opposition was based on ethical considerations, we claim that their later analyses take too lightly on this foundation. One such example was when they listed what they saw as probable Scottish strategies in a future independence settlement with the rUK and concluded that the SNP would give up its resistance in these negotiations with the rUK to gain favours in other settlement issues. This inquiry claims that they understated the deep, moral foundation which



this opposition is built on, just as recent political commentators and military experts have done. Therefore, this thesis ends with suggesting three alternative strategies an SNP-led delegation might take and the effects each strategy could have on Scotland and the rUK.

Seeing how the only scholarly discussion was published twelve years ago, some of the perspectives they discuss are also outdated. Claiming that a majority SNP would not come about because of the Scottish election system of proportional representation is one such example (Chalmers and Walker 31). A last, and related, remark needs to be connected to the ongoing referendum campaign. The SNP's defence policy has received more attention than ever before, leading to a policy update in 2012, followed by a recently published White Paper in November 2013, which will be thoroughly covered in this thesis. We try to contextualise this policy update based on having studied how the issues have developed throughout the SNP's history. This has, for obvious reasons, not been done academically yet.

Due to this topic only being studied as part of Chalmers and Walker's more overall study of nuclear weapons and 'the Scottish Question', while other academic works only touching upon the SNP's defence policy, this thesis relies on a number of primary sources, not least as we move beyond the millennium marker, limiting the amount of secondary sources. First of all it should be noted that the sources studied do have some limitations to what they might tell us, such as internal party processes and discussions. These could have told us a great deal more on the policy processes for the issues at hand. Having said that, one category of primary sources looked at has been conventional speeches, which could highlight some of these possible disagreements within the party. Other official SNP documents studied and referred to are election manifestoes, recorded speeches and policy papers such as the 2012 'Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update' (enclosed in the Appendix p. 77-79). White Papers published by the Scottish Government, since the SNP formed the Scottish Government in 2007, have also been of great importance, as have parliamentary debates where SNP representatives participated, both from the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament. These various sources have been used to form a more substantial understanding of the development of the SNP's policies in question than what have previously been done. The overall purpose has not been to analyse the correctness in their arguments, claims or statements, but to know how the party's stance in these issues has developed, both in sheer politics and rhetoric. As a consequence, biased facts, statistics or circumstances have not been specific topics of investigation, though often brought into the discussion if challenged by

political opponents. Newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, UK governmental papers and documents from various House of Commons committees have been looked at in this regard. Newspaper articles have been studied and is referred to in great numbers since it is highly relevant to know how and what party representatives promoted to the public, and how the SNP was portrayed by the media. A variety of quality newspapers have been chosen, which might have differing points of departure that could have an impact on the coverage; if it is based in Scotland or England; professing support for Scottish independence or a pro-Union stance; critical or supporting of the SNP before and after they formed the Scottish government. There will not be a discussion of each newspaper or article since the topic at hand has not been to analyse the correctness of the coverage. Mostly, articles which are highlighted provide a fair view of the coverage at the time.

## **Structure**

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Two main chapters follow this introductory one. Chapter two will look at how the SNP's defence policy regarding nuclear weapons and NATO has developed from the late 1960s up to the new millennium. Chapter three is devoted to the recent and current years of what I have called 'the governing SNP'. This period stretches from the early 2000s, also covering some years before they entered the Scottish government. How has the transformation they have undergone to become a governing party, now a majority government, changed their defence policy? The study ends with a concluding chapter, which will also be asking some questions that might be an interesting approach for future investigations of the Scottish National Party. Before we turn over to the first main chapter we will provide a short overview of the SNP since devolution.

The Scottish National Party has not been a national party of significance for much more than a decade looking at their overall electoral achievements in British politics (see Table 1 in the Appendix p. 73). Even though they are an old party, celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009 (Hassan 1), they struggled to be taken seriously by party opponents and the media before the Scottish Parliament opened its doors in 1999. According to Chalmers and Walker, the SNP evolved into 'a more conventional political party rather than a political movement, shedding some of its radicalism on the way' (47). We will, however, claim that this process started earlier in the policy fields analysed in this thesis. By broadening their scope politically, and developing more consistent policies in all political areas, the SNP was finally taken

seriously by voters, opposition parties and the British media as an important political voice in matters related to Scotland. They felt ready to govern.

In 2007, the Scottish electorate went to the polls to elect their Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) for the third time. The SNP managed to become the largest party, winning 47 out of 129 possible seats, the Labour Party winning 46 (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 10 and Table 2 in the Appendix p. 73). Regardless of how narrow the victory was, the SNP formed a minority government. The leader of the SNP, Alex Salmond, sought to get ‘support policy by policy across [the Scottish Parliament’s] chamber’ (Robertson *Why Vote SNP* 4).<sup>3</sup> In the 2011 Scottish general election, the SNP managed something Chalmers and Walker saw as ‘unlikely’ due to Scotland’s election system of proportional representation (32): they won a majority in the parliament, winning 69 seats (see table 2 in the Appendix p. 73). This victory meant that the party had enough support to finally go ahead with their plan of holding an independence referendum (*BBC News Online* "Scottish election: SNP wins election"). Finally, the SNP’s dream of an independent Scotland was within reach.

This is the situation in which Scotland finds itself today. In 2012, in the Edinburgh Agreement, the Scottish Government and HM Government (UK Government) agreed to ‘allow a single-question referendum on Scottish independence to be held before the end of 2014’ (HM Government and Scottish Government).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Outtake of a speech by Alex Salmond in May 2007, printed in Robertson’s book.

<sup>4</sup> To read the agreement in its entirety follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/david-cameron-signs-historic-deal-granting-scottish-referendum>

# Chapter 2: SNP's defence policy prior to the 'governing SNP'

To understand the current party and its policy on defence, we need to take a look at the developments prior to the emergence of 'the governing SNP'. The time period studied in this chapter ranges from the 1960s up until the end of the 1990s and the start of what this study sees as the road to the SNP's 'governing period' in 2007, which is covered in the next chapter. The SNP had its first national breakthrough in the late 1960s, making it a natural starting point. It was also the decade when Scotland was chosen to host the British and American nuclear weapons. In this chapter, we will look at why the nuclear deterrent was based in Scotland to begin with, before presenting a short overview of the UK's nuclear weapons systems in the years in question. After that the SNP's defence policy regarding nuclear weapons and NATO will be discussed and analysed. This section is divided chronologically, starting with the 1960s and 1970s and continuing through what this thesis analyse as SNP's various defence policy phases into the new millennium.

## The Firth of Clyde: Home to the UK's nuclear deterrent

Many Scots, including the SNP, have seen the continued presence of the UK's nuclear deterrent as yet another way of exploiting Scotland and its people. Chalmers and Walker, however, underlines that 'nuclear submarines need bases of a very particular kind and complexity' (12). It was the Clyde area's geography and topography that was the main reason it was chosen as a location to host several nuclear bases.<sup>5</sup> The lochs<sup>6</sup> at the Clyde could meet such requirements, despite being only a few miles from Glasgow.

The first nuclear submarines were based there back in 1961, when the United States two years in advance requested a place for their new submarines carrying the Polaris nuclear missiles (Chalmers and Walker 12-17). Due to its limited range of 1200 miles,<sup>7</sup> their supply ship and submarines needed a closer location to the Soviet Union than any US territory could offer. The Clyde area had several advantages according to the Americans: access to deep water; the

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<sup>5</sup> See map 1 and 2 in the Appendix p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> Scottish Gaelic word for 'lake.' According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, it means 'an arm of the sea, especially when narrow or partially landlocked' (ordnett.no)

<sup>7</sup> Just over 1900 kilometres

nearness to Glasgow meant easy access to a transatlantic airfield and it was large enough to handle the American personnel and their families (13). According to Chalmers and Walker, Prime Minister Macmillan displayed some major concerns since Glasgow in 1960 had seen an upsurge in the support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), formed in 1958 (8, 15). In a draft letter from Prime Minister Macmillan to President Eisenhower, PM Macmillan seemed to be clear about the Scottish feelings towards basing it on the Clyde: ‘The placing, so to speak, of a target so near to Glasgow would give rise to the greatest political difficulties and would make the project almost unsaleable in this country.’<sup>8</sup> Even so, there does not seem to have been any discussions of basing options outside Scotland (13). After some further negotiations, the US won through with its request, turning Holy Loch into a submarine base for American nuclear weapons. In return, the UK was given permission to buy the Skybolt ballistic missile as an upgrade to its own nuclear deterrent (Self 203). Scotland, the Clyde area and its lochs was from then on base to nuclear submarines.

### **Polaris Missile System**

In 1962, the Skybolt program was suddenly cancelled by the Americans (Self 203). The Macmillan government then decided that the Polaris nuclear missile system the Americans used would be the UK’s best option. Where the Skybolt program was based on a fixed facility on land, Polaris missiles used submarines to decrease the vulnerability to the Soviet Union’s new ballistic missiles (Chalmers and Walker 9). Initially, President Kennedy and the US Government was not pleased with the plan (Self 202-04). According to Robert Self, it was only when Prime Minister Macmillan threatened to withdraw from NATO, leaving the organisation in jeopardy, that Kennedy agreed to deliver Polaris missiles to the UK (204). In 1963, the government formed a group that would search for the best possible location for their upcoming nuclear submarines, needing a berth for the submarines and separate facilities for storing and maintenance of the Polaris missiles (Chalmers and Walker 18). With clear criterias, the working group ended up with a shortlist of ten possible sites (18-22):

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Chalmers and Walker p. 15.

- Devonport (England)
- Falmouth (England)
- Milford Haven (England)
- Loch Ryan (Scotland)
- Faslane at Gareloch (Scotland)
- Loch Alsh (Scotland)
- Fort William (Scotland)
- Invergordon (Scotland)
- Rosyth (Scotland)

According to Chalmers and Walker, a study of each site followed, which by the end rejected eight out of ten sites on various grounds.<sup>9</sup> The two remaining candidates were Rosyth and Faslane, with the latter being selected on operational grounds put forth by the Admiralty (Chalmers and Walker 20-21). Rosyth was to become dockyard for submarines needing refitting (26). When the main base was selected, Coulport<sup>10</sup> was chosen as the site to store the nuclear missiles not in use, formally called the Royal Navy Armaments Depot (RNAD). In 1968, the first Polaris submarine patrol took place and Scotland was officially hosting the UK's nuclear deterrent, something it would continue to be in the decades to come.

### **Trident Missile System**

The decision to purchase the replacement for the ageing Polaris submarines was taken by the first Thatcher government in 1979, using the previous Callaghan government's report on the issue as well as further considerations after coming to power (Self 207-08). They decided on purchasing the American Trident Missile System, continuing with a submarine-based deterrent. The decision was taken by a small group of cabinet ministers, informing the whole Cabinet only the day before the public announcement (Self 208). There does not seem to have been any major discussions on where to locate the submarines, mainly due to the existing facilities at Faslane and Coulport. Chalmers and Walker could not find any evidence that the devolution discussion in the late 1970s and the devolution referendum in 1978, ending in rejecting devolution for the time being, had any influence on encouraging a more substantial location debate (23).

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<sup>9</sup> See Chalmers and Walker pp. 17-22 for a detailed description.

<sup>10</sup> See Map 2 in the Appendix p. 72.

There was little opposition to the purchase from backbenchers, regardless of its substantial cost (£5 billion). According to Robert Self, this can be subscribed to the sudden Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas day the same year (208). The final cost of the Trident, however, increased due to American military upgrades. The UK had to buy an upgraded version, Trident II, which Robert Self describes as ‘more sophisticated than Britain needed’ (209). By 1990, the estimated costs increased to £9.38 billion. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in 1991, the foremost reasoning for the costly system was gone. John Major, the conservative Prime Minister from 1990, went ahead with Trident after some adjustments, mostly assigned to the new reality the UK faced, noting the large amount of money that was already spent on it (Self 209).

New Labour won the general election in 1997 by a landslide.<sup>11</sup> In the 1998 *Strategic Defence Review* the government claimed a 70 per cent reduction in Trident’s explosive power, achieved by reducing the amount of warheads and missiles carried by each submarine (Dodd 31). 4 December 2006, Tony Blair held a speech in the House of Commons stating that the aging Trident system needed to be upgraded and that the decision to do so needed to be taken soon if the UK wanted to retain her nuclear deterrent (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 04 December 2006 Vol 456 Cols 21-24"). ‘Our independent nuclear deterrent is the ultimate insurance’, as Blair said. He estimated the costs to be £15-20 billion. We will have a closer look at how the SNP participated in this latest debate in chapter 3.

## **SNP’s nuclear reaction and wavering NATO policy**

In terms of defence policy, the question of NATO membership and the nuclear deterrent has played a major role for the SNP. Since defence and security have always been matters reserved to the UK Government, the SNP has had little influence and thus received minor attention, at least until their governing period. As Chalmers and Walker say:

The Government in London has not had to justify its monopoly against vanishing need to police a worldwide empire, the diminished threat to UK security after the end of the Cold War, the greatly reduced danger of war with other European states (an external danger which played an important role in

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<sup>11</sup> See Geddes and Tonge’s *Labour’s Landslide: the British General Election 1997* for a thorough discussion and election analysis.

the formation and maintenance of the Union in times past) ... These realities have presented the Scottish National Party with obvious problems (36).<sup>12</sup>

As a result, the SNP has historically shown little interest in the area of defence, the strong opposition to nuclear weapons and at various times NATO being exceptions. This in itself has limited the amount of sources available, clearly visible in the limited academic interest shown in the matter.

When trying to promote a credible defence policy, the SNP has always been concerned of not upsetting the substantial Scottish military establishment and tradition, such as the Scottish Regiments. Because of the difficulty manoeuvring in the public sphere, not wanting to offend important interests in the Scottish society or seem weak on security, the party has tried to avoid an outright debate of how an independent Scotland might defend itself, never giving much detail to its defence policy, resulting in what some see as an incoherent and unrealistic defence policy, as will be exemplified throughout this inquiry. Instead, the SNP have much rather wanted to discuss economic or social issues, including slogans such as 'It's Scotland's oil!' from the 1974 election campaigns (Harvie 175-81), thus resulting in a more developed and 'mature' policy in these areas. The years following the end of the Cold War, and as a consequence major restructuring in the British defence forces, were good examples of some of the challenges facing the SNP. There were many Parliamentary debates in the House of Commons, as this investigation will give evidence for, where the party's wish to retain defence jobs in Scotland was inconsistent with its fundamental nuclear weapons policy. The SNP's nuclear weapons policy has also been the one major defence issue that for decades has signified their distinct Scottishness. Chalmers and Walker claim that 'it has usefully diverted attention from awkward questions about Scotland's and the UK's conventional defence' (37), which this thesis fully agrees with when it comes to the earlier decades covered. Their NATO policy has always been strongly linked to its policy which entails unilateral nuclear disarmament, despite the party's shifting policy regarding NATO. Their turnaround at last year's national convention has made it a very important part to study.

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<sup>12</sup> See Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* for more on the importance of war to the forging of a British identity and nation.



## The 1960s and 70s

Richard Finlay describes the early 1960s, before the SNP's first parliamentary seat was won, as a period where they sought to create a clearer political identity and a more 'coherent electoral strategy' (27). During these years, the party saw the need to widen its electoral appeal across the Scottish political spectrum, consciously removing policies that could be unpopular in the Scottish electorate at large. John McAteer, the national organiser in the party, told *The Times* in 1969 that the SNP was a 'party of the right, the left and the centre' (Sharpe). In reality, the party placed themselves in the middle of the Scottish political landscape with a social democratic profile, according to Finlay 'suspicious of both big government and big business' (27-28).

The national breakthrough came as Mrs Winifred Ewing, known as Winnie Ewing, won the Hamilton seat in the November 1967 by-election (Wood). That victory was an important one for the party, raising the awareness of Scottish issues in the House of Commons, clearly stated in an article from *The Times* published in May 1969:

Less than a month ago the main interest in Scotland – for the Scots, the English, the Irish and the Welsh and internationally – was Scottish nationalism. Heads, it had been said, had throbbed continuously for almost two years in Westminster and Scotland to the beat of the nationalists' success, as a parliamentary seat and 101 council places were won (Sharpe).

The year 1967 would be the beginning of a time when the SNP managed to have continuous presence in parliament, although with several setbacks over the years (See Table 1 in the Appendix p. 73). Although the party would never become a UK government party, it would have a certain blackmail potential (Mitchell 32-33). The potential was their threat of winning ever more Labour seats, as the 1974 general elections was evidence of. The 1974 February general election resulted in a hung parliament,<sup>13</sup> with the Labour Party forming a minority government. Having no political tradition for minority governments, Prime Minister Harold Wilson called for a new election to be held in October that ended in a working majority of three MPs for the Labour Party, while the SNP increased its vote by almost ten per cent, winning eleven seats and over 30 per cent of the Scottish votes (see Table 1 in the Appendix p. 73), sending shockwaves throughout Britain's political establishment. According to Mitchell, 'Winnie Ewing has frequently recounted Michael Foot's comment to her that it was not the eleven SNP MPs who were elected in October 1974 who worried him but the many

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<sup>13</sup> No party has an overall majority in the House of Commons.

Labour seats in which the SNP occupied second place' (32-33). Defections and by-election defeats in the spring of 1976 lead once more to a Labour minority government. By opening up for a devolution debate in the late 1970s, the Labour government wanted to show its support towards Scotland, probably hoping to stem the SNP's continued growth. Devolution's end result was the 1978 referendum on devolution, which due to the Cunningham clause<sup>14</sup> did not win through in Scotland.

The late 1960s and 70s was also the time when the SNP understood the need to stand out from the established UK political parties. The SNP found their distinctness through their defence policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament. Chalmers and Walker stated that the party's policy needed to be understood as genuine moral concerns and not simply populist claims to win votes, an analysis this thesis supports and will give evidence for. While claiming it early on in their book, we find that their discussion and concluding remarks understated the consequences such a foundation might involve if Scotland was to enter settlement talks with the rUK in a post-independent situation. Since the deployment of American submarines in Holy Loch in 1961 and the 1963 decision to base UK's nuclear weaponry at Faslane, a Scottish pacifist tradition started to develop in the coming years that challenged the more known Scottish martial tradition (37).<sup>15</sup> The SNP managed, with their special position in the political landscape as the only exclusively Scottish party, to front this growing anti-nuclear and military movement which had manifested itself in for instance a substantial Scottish support shown towards the CND.

Just three months after Winnie Ewing won the election in 1967, she asked the first of several parliamentary questions that related to the issue of the American base at Holy Loch, asking for an inquiry about the placing of a nuclear base near a densely populated area in Scotland ("HC Deb 31 January 1968 Vol 757 Cols 327"). On 10 March 1969, in a House of Commons debate about navy estimates of the years 1969-70, Winnie Ewing put forward the SNP's policy on nuclear weapons in clear terms:

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<sup>14</sup> The clause, named after the MP George Cunningham who was responsible for it, stated that more than 40 per cent of the entire Scottish electorate needed to vote for devolution. The result was 32.85 per cent in favour and 30.78 against (Harvie 186-87)

<sup>15</sup> See Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* for a thorough discussion on the importance of the rather substantial Scottish contribution to Britain's army (historically). Richard Finlay claims, in his contribution to the book *Scotland and the British Empire* from 2011, eds. John MacKenzie and T.M. Devine, that Scots was seen having a key role in the British military up until the late 1960s.

The Polaris programme and the expenditure on it are a misuse of Government funds. It defends no one from anything. It is immoral in its intrinsic nature, because, apart from the risk that it brings everyone living around the boundaries of Holy Loch from various types of accident, it is asking mankind to risk world suicide. It should never be in any part of the United Kingdom, but I wonder why it was sited opposite the dense population belt of Scotland ... Nuclear weapons are often nuclear targets, and Scotland very much resents being target No. 1<sup>16</sup> (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 10 March 1969 Vol 779 Cols 1090-91").

Winnie Ewing's parliamentary speech is defining of how the party fronted their nuclear weapons policy in the late 1960s and 70s. It is equally telling of the fundamental idea the SNP policy making has been based on in subsequent decades. The SNP's profound opposition to nuclear weapons has its base in considerations of morality: nuclear weapons are intrinsically wrong in every aspect and should never be accepted. This view can be compared to how many environmentalists look at nature having intrinsic value all on its own and therefore needs protection. This understanding has always been contrary to popular opinion in the British political establishment where nuclear weapons can be understood as having a positive extrinsic value: they did defend Britain against the Soviet Union and will continue to defend Britain against other enemies in the future. The distance between these moral standings should not be understated, even though it often has been. After having studied newspaper articles, commentaries and parliamentary speeches from political opponents, we have noticed an understatement of how deeply rooted the SNP's anti-nuclear policies truly are, presuming that an SNP-led independent Scotland would have to allow British nuclear weapons to be based there because political realities says so. This inquiry argues that many simply fail to grasp that the SNP's nuclear policy has never been realpolitik; it has been and still is ideological in its nature. This clarification is important to have in mind to apprehend SNP's defence policy in general. This is also essential to remember as we move closer to our present time, since this inquiry will argue that the SNP and its prominent spokespersons have struggled to combine this principled position with the party's other defence policies and foreign policy interests. But does that necessarily lead to an abandonment of the party's nuclear weapons policy? We are not as convinced of that outcome as others, as will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> In a debate about defence spending in July 1974, Winnie Ewing used much of the same wording as five years earlier. She wants to look at the Polaris nuclear base not as a budgetary question but as a 'way of making us Target No. 1' which 'does not suit the people of Scotland' (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 02 July 1974, Vol 876 Cols 317").

In the same speech, Ewing stated the party's rejection of NATO as a 'policy based on principle' now and in a future independent Scotland ("HC Deb 10 March 1969 Vol 779 Cols 1090-91"). In the 1960s, the party argued for Scottish neutrality on par with Sweden and Ireland (Finlay 28). Finlay sees these years as the breeding ground for the difficulties the party will have in relations to NATO in the coming decades. A year after Winnie Ewing's flaming parliamentary speech, in 1970, the SNP took their first U-turn as they became pro-NATO on certain conditions such as becoming nuclear free, a stand they continued throughout that decade (Chalmers and Walker 44-45). The SNP's views on NATO changed back and forth until the late 1990s when it can be seen as consistent until the 2012 national convention.

In May 1975 George Reid, SNP MP, elaborated more than usual on the party's defence policy in a general debate about defence. The SNP's view on nuclear bases on Scottish soil was once again made clear. Most interesting, though, is that he also elaborates on the reasoning behind the party's NATO policy:

While the nuclear members of NATO may not value Scotland's defence contribution to NATO quite so highly if nuclear facilities, including over-flight and transit facilities, are withdrawn, our position at the base of the northern gap gives us a powerful negotiating hand. Norway and Denmark have a non-nuclear relationship with NATO, and it is likely that this precedent will allow Scotland to make similar provisions for herself after independence ... My party is firmly committed to alliance partner status ("HC Deb 07 May 1975, Vol 891 Cols 1536-39").

As will be seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, the arguments used by MPs in the 70s were reclaimed after last year's policy change. A central aspect of the SNP's political strategy, comparisons with countries of a similar size to Scotland, is thus also reflected in their defence policies. Norway and Denmark in particular were emphasised due to their positions within the organisation as non-nuclear states and their comparable military size and budget. The SNP's budget for an independent Scottish defence force would be £350 million a year according to a *Times* journalist who in 1976 reported on an unpublished internal SNP report (Leigh). Getting a cost estimate of an independent Scottish defence force was highly unusual. Although this was leaked, what a Scottish defence force might consist of was still uncertain.

The SNP ensured media coverage on their more untraditional methods of approach as well. In 1971, the SNP sent a letter to the US Government demanding £500 million for its use of Holy Loch as a base for its submarines carrying Polaris nuclear missiles for 10 years (The The

Times, staff reporter). The article quotes the letter which said that '[t]he majority were against the siting of a nuclear base within a few miles only of the centre of Scotland's population ... We demand that the United States Government withdraws its base completely from the River Clyde and from Scotland.' Journalists would also report on how prominent party representatives would speak their mind when the Scottish nuclear bases were on the agenda. A journalist from *The Times* reporting from the party's national convention in 1973 writes about the strong feelings in the matter of nuclear weaponry. William Wolfe, the National Convenor (or leader) of the party called the American base at Holy Loch 'totally unnecessary' and the British Polaris missiles for a 'degrading English status symbol' (Chartres).

In the 1960s and 70s, the party clearly communicated a persistently negative attitude to nuclear weapons in general, apparently out of genuine moral concerns; it was intrinsically wrong because of the greater good of mankind. This stood in clear contrast to how the nuclear arsenal was understood by its supporters and the UK government: it had an extrinsic value as a means of defending the British public against the Soviet Union. The SNP mixed this clear senior ideology with the policy of seeking a future independent Scotland; Scottish versus English interests. The SNP wanted to stand out from the Scottish branches of the Labour and Conservative Party by trying to communicate the UK's nuclear weaponry and bases as England's continued suppression of Scotland. They were 'a degrading English status symbol', as earlier cited by *The Times* journalist John Chartres, questioning if the UK government in London had the Scottish people's interests at heart by making Scotland 'Target No. 1'. The SNP's NATO policy can be understood as more realpolitik and less ideology in the 1970s compared to previous years, supporting a Scottish membership, conditional of having the UK's nuclear deterrent removed from Scotland. This policy change, however, also brought with it a new dilemma; that of trying to combine membership in a defence organisation whose first line of defence was nuclear weapons, with the SNP's goal of unilateral disarmament. This is much of the same dilemma they face today as a later discussion will highlight.

### **Post '79 election: radical changes**

In March 1979, the SNP voted against the Labour Government in a vote-of-no-confidence, tipping the weight 311-310 in favour of the motion put forth by Margaret Thatcher.<sup>17</sup> Prime

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<sup>17</sup> See HC Deb 28 March 1979 Vol 965, cols 461-590 for the debate in question. Donald Stewart from the SNP used the failed devolution referendum to reason why his party voted as it did (cols 488-492).

Minister Callaghan had to call for an election. The decision to vote against Labour was not a popular move. The party experienced a dramatic loss in the 1979 election, losing nine out of eleven seats in the House and a third of its vote (See Table 1 in the Appendix p. 73). Part of the blame can also be subscribed to losing the devolution referendum and thus being associated with a lost cause, originally initiated by the Labour Party (Mitchell 36). The loss brought with it a more radical party profile, clearly visible in its defence policies.

Before the 1979 general election, the party had been described by a journalist in *The Times* as 'an extremely moderate independence party: pro-NATO, pro-Queen and Commonwealth and for a mixed economy' (Hetherington "SNP launch manifesto in sombre mood"). Compared to the following parliamentary period, this was probably a fair description. In the 1979-1983 parliamentary sessions, the SNP became more radical resulting from a faction within the party known as the '79 Group'. Although small in numbers, the group was by reporters seen as a 'party within a party' (Hetherington "Radical Scottish Nationalists seek leading role"). They believed that to win the next election (and preferably in time win enough to call for an independence bid) the party policy needed to be more left-wing, socialism being one of its three pillars (Mitchell 39; Torrance "The Journey from the 79 Group to the Modern SNP" 163). The party did in this period adopt policies put forth or supported by the group that meant a clear move left-of-centre in its profile. At the 1981 national conference the group, as an example, managed to get the majority of members to allow civil disobedience as a mean to end 'British misrule' (Hetherington "SNP decides on disobedience to end 'misrule'"). David Torrance claims that the group, in hindsight, probably had less influence than often given credit, basing his argument on the many 79 Group policies that did not become official party policy. What is not discussed by Torrance, however, is the impact they had on how the party was portrayed and understood by the media and consequentially its potential voters. These years should also be compared to previous ones and those that followed.

The early 1980s was also the time when the UK needed to decide what its future nuclear deterrent should be. As discussed earlier, the Trident D4 missile or Trident I was the preferred alternative to replace the Polaris missiles. In a parliamentary debate in July 1980, where the

Secretary of State for Defence announces that Trident D4 is the best system to acquire, Donald Stewart, one of two SNP MPs at the time,<sup>18</sup> asked the following question:

Is the Secretary of State aware that, given the lack of funds for the objectives that should be the aims of a civilised society, the diminishing of the social services and the descent of the home front into recession quickly, to spend this money on this weapons system is a tacit acceptance of the Nazi philosophy of guns before butter? ("HC Deb 15 July 1980 Vol 988 Col 1240")

The party's rhetoric also changed as a result of the more radical policies, becoming more radical and to some extent more extreme, as exemplified in the above quotation. Trying to create a linkage between the British nuclear deterrent and the Nazis is at best a creative wording intended to provoke. The message Donald Stewart gave in that speech is telling of another development in the SNP's arguments. Compared to the previous decade, the party's new-found focus on economic arguments against the deterrence was something new. A journalist from *The Times* reported back from the 1980 SNP national convention commenting on the party's hope that the economic recession would benefit the party's new profile (Faux). It is important, though, to underline that party statements and HoC speeches by prominent members continued to state the deep moral concerns with regards to nuclear weapons. The new strategy from the 1980s, however, included more than the basic moral standpoint.

Trident I was never acquired since the US' increased military spending under Reagan quickly developed the Trident II, the D5 missile, in 1981. In a HoC debate in March 1982, the House was asked to support the Government's decision to buy the upgraded Trident missile as the replacement for the aging Polaris system. The Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott, justified it by claiming it would be essential for the country's security and the most cost-effective compared to other solutions. A submarine-based system was also the only possibility to ensure 'credibility into the twenty-first century' (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 29 March 1982 Vol 21 Cols 21-22"). Donald Stewart gave the SNP's stand and in comparison to the Polaris debates in the 1970s, the SNP had clearly adopted a wider approach. As always, moral and specific Scottish issues were important, as Stewart stressed in his speech to the HoC; the SNP was in 'total opposition to Trident and to nuclear weapons generally, especially those based on Scottish soil ... This programme will meet tremendous opposition, which will be compounded if there is any attempt to station it in Scotland' (col. 49). Stewart continued

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<sup>18</sup> Donald Stewart was regarded as one of the more moderate party politicians, having internally opposed the 79 Group.

by claiming that the security and economic burden Trident II would have on the country was too great. The cost of continuing with a nuclear deterrence would result in a worsened conventional defence force, pointing to the situation in the British navy (Cols 47-50).

The NATO policy was also more pronounced left-of-centre and radical after the 79 election. At the 1981 annual conference the SNP decided to once more front a Scottish withdrawal from the organisation, wanting 'armed neutrality' (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 28). Chalmers and Walker calls the party 'aggressively anti-NATO' in this period (44). The party leader, Gordon Wilson, known for having a more pragmatic approach, opposed this policy change. A *Guardian* article cited Wilson arguing that 'the meek may inherit the earth; the weak rarely do. There is no benefit in being picked off one by one' (Hetherington "SNP delegates vote to pull out of NATO"). A large majority of the delegates disagreed with Wilson, deciding that 'multinational disarmament talks over the past 30 years had been a dismal failure' (Hetherington "SNP delegates vote to pull out of NATO"). This policy change corresponded to the Cold War becoming colder as both the US and USSR increased their military spending, leading to the CND experiencing increased popularity and media attention (Chalmers and Walker 10; Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 30).

### **Rollback to pragmatism and on to the new millennium**

At the national conference in June 1982, Gordon Wilson wanted to get rid of the '79 Group'. In a conference speech he threatened to resign unless the party banned all groups within the party (Hetherington "SNP storm as Left faces ultimatum from chair"). A few days later the SNP did as Wilson requested; 308 votes to 188 (Hetherington "SNP gives fringe groups three months to quit"). From 1983, Wilson's SNP wanted to be seen as a moderate left of centre party and not socialist. Their nuclear weapons policy was the one policy area where pragmatism never was an issue before, during or immediately after these turbulent years. In the election manifesto for the 1983 general election the SNP claimed that 'Scotland is covered with nuclear bases and military installations', been placed there 'without the consent of the Scottish people' (cited in Chalmers and Walker 38). At the same time they do not want to use less on defence but 'divert resources to strong and efficient conventional forces' (38). This would continue to be the party's policy in the years to come. The 1983 national conference resulted in a further rollback to pragmatism. Wilson wanted this to be the case with the



party's NATO policy as well. His wishes for a pro-NATO party was none the less defeated by a big majority (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 30; Stead).

SNP in the late 1980s was a party less focused on defence and security policies as the Cold War dampened and the initial parliamentary and public debates about purchasing the Trident missiles were over. Instead, a renewed devolution debate ended in the SNP rejecting to join the 'Constitutional Convention' which the cross-party pressure group Campaign for a Scottish Assembly had created (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 31). This rejection was partly founded in the fear of a new setback similar to the 1978 referendum aftermath. The SNP issued a press release stating that 'Scotland lost out in 1979 because of a rigged referendum ... the SNP cannot take part in a rigged Convention' (as cited in Torrance *Salmond: Against the Odds* 107). Instead, 'Independence in Europe' would become the SNP's new focus, first laid out by the prominent member and MP Jim Sillars in his 1986 book *Scotland: The Case for Optimism*. If Scotland was to become an independent member of the European community, Scottish separation from Britain would be less controversial and seem less problematic (186-90). This is similar to arguments used by political commentators to explain the SNP's new NATO policy. By 1988, the party adopted the slogan and was wholeheartedly pro-Europe; their 1992 election manifesto was headlined *Independence in Europe: Make it Happen Now*. By that time, defence and security policy was also back on the party's agenda.

The new decade brought with it a changed world order. The end of the Cold War meant a full review of the British defence forces, aimed at reducing military spending. Reduction in spending meant restructuring and downsizing the British military forces. This also instigated a renewed awareness to the British nuclear deterrence. The old enemy and main justification to a continued British deterrent was gone, at least according to the likes of the SNP and the CND. The changed defence realities arose only a few years before the Trident II submarine-based missiles would be phased in.

The old United Kingdom strategy, dominated by the cold war and nuclear weapons, must now be either justified or altered to meet changed circumstances. Is the Minister entirely satisfied with the current nuclear defence strategy, or does he admit that those changed circumstances now demand a root-and-branch review of our defence requirements? ... The Government's policy is to supply even more nuclear weapons which cannot be used, while at the same time dismantling infantry regiments that provide the only effective method of operation (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 17 June 1993 Vol 226 Cols 1059-1087").

The citation above stems from Andrew Welsh, SNP MP for Angus East, in a 1993 HoC debate on the 1992 Statement on the Defence Estimates. The SNP viewed the planned amalgamation of Scottish regiments as a provocation as long as the nuclear deterrent was still operational. The restructuring involved an argumentative challenge for the SNP, as we will now see. Defending the Scottish regiments and Scottish defence industry involved having to take part in and contribute more to defence debates than they had previously done. With mixed success, the SNP tried to portray a more coherent defence policy, which still lacked in detail, when confronted to do so by opposing MPs. The 1990s debate of where the coming Trident nuclear submarines should refit and refuel their nuclear reactors is a fitting example of the party's dilemma:

Rosyth in Scotland was the service dock to the Polaris nuclear submarines from the 1960s and was in the 80s assigned the duty to refit the Trident submarines. Having developed the dockyard to fit the new and much bigger submarines, Devonport in Plymouth, England was surprisingly chosen instead in 1993 to much upheaval from the Rosyth naval workers and Scottish politicians (See Cusick, McGregor and Arlidge as examples of the newspaper coverage at the time). In a parliamentary debate on 24 June 1993 about the government's decision, Alex Salmond, the party leader, held a long speech attacking it for being a political and not financial or strategic decision as was claimed by the government, implying that Scotland once again was being ripped off by Southerners: 'No doubt the Secretary of State for Scotland would use the phrase that he used in a Scottish newspaper this morning—a phrase that I would never use—and describe them as the "bloody English"' (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 24 June 1993 vol 227 col 523-27"). His other main argument was that Scotland would lose hundreds of jobs and a substantial income for decades to come. He was challenged by Raymond Robertson, Conservative MP for Aberdeen South, asking how the SNP could even talk about guaranteeing jobs for the Rosyth workers based on their own defence policy of a nuclear-free Scotland (Col 525). The Minister of State Jonathan Aitken called Salmond's speech a 'hypocritical performance' (Col 546). Mr Salmond defended himself by claiming that 'Rosyth in an independent Scottish context would be a non-nuclear first-line base. An independent Scotland—[Interruption.] Believe it or not, Denmark, which is a similar maritime country to Scotland, has naval bases and dockyards' [*sic*] (Col 525). When confronted, this was among the standard phrases used by SNP MPs. Their defence budget in an independent Scotland would allow for all existing facilities to remain open and jobs to be safe. Claiming it is a long way from giving sound evidence of how to actually achieve it – an

exercise many argue the SNP is yet to master. Another interesting contribution to the debate was uttered by the SNP MP Andrew Welsh, asking if the Minister (Mr Aitken) had ‘secretly joined the CND’. He continued by claiming that he had ‘near enough created a nuclear-free Fife ...’ and ‘left Scotland with the unemployment’ (Col 546).

The Rosyth dilemma, as this author has found to be a fitting name, is characteristic of the SNP in the 90s. It is interesting how the SNP was outraged by the thought of nuclear weapons and at the same time outraged of having fewer of them on Scottish soil because this would lead to unemployment. It begs the question: what would be the most important if you had to choose? Interestingly, the SNP was met with claims of an apparently similar contradictory since the party in 2012 changed its NATO policy, once again supporting a Scottish membership to an organisation which bases its defence on nuclear deterrence while proclaiming a non-nuclear Scotland. According to the SNP, however, they would not have to choose since Rosyth would continue to function as a non-nuclear base, as Alex Salmond argued. This was often claimed, though without giving any detailed plan for an independent Scottish defence, therefore arguably only providing vague guarantees. This debate stands as a good example of why the SNP was careful participators in defence discussions. At a time when the Scottish defence industry was still of great importance to the Scottish economy, the SNP wanted to focus on ‘the bloody English’ and not their own policy, though when challenged guaranteed a different outcome if they governed an independent Scotland. Another important point we want to stress is that the 1990s seems to be the decade where their nuclear policy for the first time was put up against other SNP policy interests such as the Scottish economy and the need for jobs, which the Scottish defence industry provided in great numbers. It had always been problematic, but previously no one debated it or used it against SNP MPs.

Perhaps as a result of the aforementioned dilemma, this inquiry finds that the SNP’s nuclear strategy witnessed a slight, but nonetheless important development during these years, modifying how they would implement its policy of a nuclear-free Scotland. In the 1992 general election manifesto the party stated that ‘an independent Scotland will *immediately withdraw* from the UK’s Trident programme, and will order nuclear weapons and installations off our soil [emphasis added]’ (1992 *General Election Manifesto*). In comparison, the 1997 general election manifesto stated that ‘we will *negotiate a phased but complete withdrawal* of Trident from the Clyde and invest our savings from this costly, deadly and unnecessary

nuclear deterrent in conventional defence as well as other priorities including health and education [emphasise added]' (*1997 General Election Manifesto*). The end result would of course be the same in both manifestoes: a nuclear-free Scotland. Implying a phased withdrawal and thus a less confrontational approach broke with their decades-long policy of immediate removal once in power. This may suggest a need on the part of the SNP to portray a more coherent and well-thought out political agenda. Although a 2012 report from the HoC Scottish Affairs Committee concluded that nuclear weapons situated in Scotland actually could be 'disarmed within days and removed within months' (3), the difficulties such a policy would meet are substantial. Taking into account that the rUK does not want to disarm, which would be the end result in that scenario, is a significant objection to this a solution. This and more will be discussed in the last section of chapter 3 about the realities, as of today, of the SNP's nuclear and NATO policy in an independent Scotland.

The late 1980s and 1990s was also a time of debate in the SNP on their defence policy of armed neutrality, voting to remove it on the 1987 national convention. The new policy suggested some sort of cooperation with neighbouring countries, without giving any details to what this might imply, only that it was not as a member of NATO. Yet again Gordon Wilson wanted the party to become pro-NATO as they had been in the 1970s, but was voted down by a big majority of the delegates (*The Guardian* "SNP turns away from neutrality"). In the coming decade, the party modified its policy yet again, suggesting that they would 'inherit the Treaty obligation on NATO membership<sup>19</sup> [but then] negotiate to disengage from the NATO command structure [because it was] inconsistent with the SNP non-nuclear defence policy' (*Scottish National Party 1992 General Election Manifesto*). By 1997, the election manifesto stated much of the same doubts: '... our opposition to nuclear defence will make our continued participation in nuclear alliances difficult. We therefore propose to negotiate a phased withdrawal from NATO' (*1997 General Election Manifesto*). By then, however, the party nonetheless suggested a closer relationship with NATO remaining a member of the organisation's 'Partnership for Peace' programme and the North Atlantic Co-operation Council<sup>20</sup> (*1997 General Election Manifesto*).

It is important to stress that the SNP's attitude towards NATO remained highly critical, keeping its non-membership vision for Scotland intact. It was, however, not an easy stand to

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<sup>19</sup> In itself a rather dubious statement, reclaimed after last year's pro-NATO turnaround. As we will discuss in the next chapter, this may not be as straight-forward as the SNP believes.

<sup>20</sup> The NACC was replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council the same year (NATO)

take. The Kosovo war in 1998-99 proved to be a critical test of this. The party experienced a political storm over a televised speech that Alex Salmond held on the *BBC* on 29 March 1999, only five weeks before the first Scottish parliamentary election.

Alex Salmond's speech was according to David Torrance the first time that the SNP 'had been given such an opportunity', broadcasted 'just before the Six O'Clock News' (*Salmond: Against the Odds* 180). While other political parties and leaders strongly supported NATO's Kosovo intervention, Alex Salmond and the SNP did not. In his speech, Salmond characterised NATO's bombing as an act of 'dubious legality' and 'unpardonable folly', drawing a historical line back to London's experience during the Second World War (*Salmond: Against the Odds* 181). As would be expected, the reactions came immediately. The Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said Salmond was 'the toast of Belgrade' and 'simply unfit to lead ... a Scotland led by him would be isolated', while Tony Blair slated Salmond's remarks as 'shameless' and 'totally unprincipled' (Ritchie). It did not help the SNP's situation that the Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milosevic, thanked Salmond for 'condemning Tony Blair's aggression' (*BBC News Online* "Serbs praise Salmond"). A columnist in *The Guardian* wrote the following a few weeks after the speech: 'there is only one certain fact in politics, and this is that you mustn't criticise any war that your country is involved in ... support it or be damned' (Chancellor). Only two days after the televised speech, Alex Salmond felt the need to write a comment in response to the massive attacks, calling Labour's reply a 'barage of invective, smear and personal abuse', stressing that he had 'never stinted in [his] criticism of the Serbian dictator' and that he was 'strongly in support of our servicemen and women' (Salmond "We've got it all wrong").

The speech is an example of the SNP's argumentative style of using big words to accentuate a point, as already discussed earlier in this chapter. It also serves as a good example of some of the reason why the SNP has always been careful of not making defence or security an issue in elections, not counting nuclear weapons. This time, however, the SNP was responsible for making the first election for a devolved Scottish parliament about 'high politics' (Harvie 237). Prior to the Kosovo debacle, the SNP had been pulling ahead of Scottish Labour in opinion polls. After the speech and subsequent row, Labour was within reach of winning an absolute majority (Harvie 237). The final election ended in Labour winning 56 out of 129 MSPs, with the SNP experiencing a strong campaign finish after the big media debacle, winning 35 seats and 27 per cent of the votes (see Table 2).

The development from professing armed neutrality to the late 90s policy of retaining membership to NATO's Partnership for Peace was important for the SNP in several ways. First of all, I analyse it as part of Alex Salmond's plan for the SNP to appear more responsible and coherent in its profile. Although he first and foremost pointed to the necessity of having a sound economic policy, as this was the bottom line of all policies, he also stressed the need for the party to keep its radicalism on core issues such as nuclear weapons (Torrance *Salmond: Against the Odds* 140). Despite this, this thesis finds that the adjustments in SNP's approach to the nuclear deterrent and the more substantial development in its NATO policy did take some of the edge off. The Kosovo debacle showed, however, that the SNP's defence views could attract much attention if promoted to the public – an attention the SNP did not want at the time. Credibility is everything when being confronted by political opponents, commentators, voters and experts, especially when it comes to defence and foreign policy. And lack of credibility has always been one of the critical objections against the SNP; its defence policy has not been seen as plausible in an independent Scotland.

Finally, we will address the 1998 *Strategic Defence Review White Paper*. In the SDR, the UK government brought forth a complete review of the British armed forces, structure and security context, as promised by Labour in their 1997 election manifesto (Dodd 9). Its aim was to modernise Britain's armed forces when entering a new century, claiming that post-Cold War there was 'no direct threat to the UK ... its dependent territories or its western European allies', thereby witnessing a new defence reality, while at the same time warning against 'terrorism, drugs and organised crime' (14). Britain would be best protected in the future by continuing its membership of NATO and stated the government's 'commitment to maintaining a nuclear deterrent', although making some adjustments to it; one example was a reduction in the number of warheads on each submarine, resulting in a 70 per cent reduction of its explosive power since the Cold War (Dodd 31). This was of course not enough for the SNP. In the parliamentary debate about the defence review, Margaret Ewing wants to know '... why are we only cutting in half the number of Trident nuclear warheads? Why do we not set a model example for the rest of the world, so that we can genuinely argue the case for non-proliferation' (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 08 July 1998 Vol 315 Col 1088")?

Contributions from two Labour MPs in the parliamentary debate on the defence review are interesting last statements. These outtakes sum up how the Scottish nationalists' distinct Scottishness, both in terms of policies and points of view, have been met at Westminster since

Winnie Ewing's 1967 victory. The Labour MP for Eastwood, Jim Murphy, said that this review had 'again highlighted the absolute lunacy of an independent Scotland, a separation of the forces and their payment and the creation of two foreign armies, two foreign navies and two foreign air forces' (Col 1088). The Secretary of State for Defence, George Robertson replied by stating the following:

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Nothing better highlights the fantasy world of the separatists in Scotland than the concept of a separate Scottish army, navy and air force—presumably with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) as the commander-in-chief (Cols 1087-88)

We have now looked at how the SNP's nuclear weapons and NATO policies developed from their national breakthrough in the late 1960s until a new Scottish political reality came about with devolution. We have found both similarities and differences in how they developed. The policies was at times analysed as part of more overall party developments, such as the profound radical edge after the 1979 general election, and a gradual rollback to more pragmatic policies as we moved closer to the new century. At the same time, there were some noticeable differences in how each policy developed. The SNP's nuclear weapons policy was morally founded and non-negotiable from the outset. Combined with a distinct Scottish point of departure, its opposition to nuclear weapons ensured distinctness to the other Westminster parties which the SNP continued to front throughout the period in question; why was Scotland host to American nuclear weapons at Holy Loch, joined by the UK Polaris and later Trident nuclear weapons systems? If London-based politicians wanted weapons of mass destruction, why not base them south of the border? As we have seen, similar timeless remarks were frequently uttered by the SNP. This inquiry has, however, also found evidence for arguing an expansion in both the SNP's focus and rhetoric. From the 1980s, the SNP started to point to the substantial amount of money the UK spent on its nuclear deterrent, seeing it as a waste and wanting to spend it on conventional defence instead. The broadened focus was combined with a rhetorical adjustment from a supposedly SNP-led independent Scotland. Instead of immediately throwing out Trident, the 1997 manifesto professed a more gradual withdrawal which would come about after negotiations with the rUK government. In total, the adjustments in focus and rhetoric could be seen as an SNP wanting to be perceived as a more realistic alternative. Overall, though, the SNP's fundamental idea of nuclear weapons being morally wrong was just as strong in the late 1990s as the late 1960s: nuclear weapons are wrong and the UK's nuclear deterrent must be removed from Scotland. How it might come about was slightly modified.

The SNP's NATO policy and attitude to the organisation was much more shifting. To sum up, the SNP was against a Scottish membership in the late 1960s; pro-NATO on condition of removing Scotland's nuclear bases in the 1970s; profound anti-NATO after 1981, professing armed neutrality on the likes of Ireland and Sweden, while in the late 1980s removing the wish for armed neutrality while still being against NATO; semi-against NATO from the mid-1990s wanting to withdraw as a member state, but remain as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme. The apparent difficulty the SNP had of portraying a consistent policy must be related to the party's nuclear weapons policy. NATO was a defence organisation using nuclear weapons as its foremost deterrence. At the same time, NATO was never a controversial organisation in the UK public debate, including Scotland. In the 1970s, as given evidence for, the party wanted to retain membership on certain conditions, arguing that both Norway and Denmark was members while taking a stand against nuclear weapons. As long as Scotland became nuclear free, the SNP deemed this a safe position. As the party became more radical in the early 1980s its NATO policies turned more fundamental as well. Overall, this opposition to a Scottish membership prevailed until last year's policy update. As this investigation will give evidence for in the next chapter, the party's policy and rhetoric after last year's defence policy update has obvious similarities to the 1970s' SNP.



## Chapter 3: SNP's Defence Policy: Transition to Power<sup>21</sup>

As we cited in chapter 1, Chalmers and Walker argued that devolution had turned the SNP into a 'conventional political party rather than a political movement, shedding some of its radicalism on the way' (47). As it was argued in the previous chapter, at least when it comes to the SNP's policies on nuclear weapons and NATO, removing some of their radical edges was a process starting earlier than that. We argued that it began around the time that Alex Salmond was elected leader in 1989. It could even be claimed to start as early as 1983, when Gordon Wilson managed to remove some of the most radical elements of the party, such as policies inspired by the '79 Group'. These policy issues' development was therefore not a direct result of the Scottish Parliament opening its doors in 1999. Devolution, however, appears to have had a significant effect on the image the Scottish public had of the Scottish National Party. It also appears to have created a distinct Scottish political culture across all parties that was different than that of Westminster (Chalmers and Walker 47), as will be noticeable in a later discussion.

In this chapter we will look at the SNP's position and policies on NATO and nuclear weapons since the opening of Holyrood, the devolved Scottish Parliament. Devolution was the start of the most important and interesting phase in SNP history, what this inquiry has called its 'governing period'. Creating a Scottish minority government, after winning the 2007 Scottish general election, was a milestone for the party. Its re-election four years later, now a majority government, was another major development, one which results in the independence referendum of 2014. The mid-2000s was also a time of renewed focus on nuclear weapons as Britain needed to decide on a replacement, a public debate where the SNP were given the opportunity to promote its anti-nuclear policy. The discussions thus far leads up to an in-depth look at the SNP defence policy update of 2012, followed by a discussion. The chapter ends with some last remarks with respect to the newly-released Scottish Government White Paper released on 26 November 2013.

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<sup>21</sup> This chapter has borrowed the very apt title 'SNP's defence policy: Transition to Power' from Mitchell, Bennie and Johns book *The Scottish National Party: Transition to Power*. The title gives emphasis to the processes leading up to the SNP entering government and winning re-election, resulting in an independence referendum and a revised SNP defence policy.

## Becoming a governing party

Scottish politics since the late 1990s are synonymous with devolution. The first Scottish parliament since the 1707 Act of Union was of course an important milestone for many Scots. As discussed in the previous chapter, the SNP did not fully agree on the role such an arena could play towards its number one goal which was Scottish independence. The SNP focused on its policy of 'Independence in Europe' as the referendum campaign and debate was launched anew in the late 1980s, a mere decade after it fell flat the first time. After the 1997 general election, Alex Salmond managed to persuade his fellow party politicians to 'not obstruct devolution' even though independence was their primary goal (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 31).

When seen in hindsight, the Scottish Parliament has been a big success for the SNP, turning it into a much bigger and more professional organisation (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns 36; Mackay 79-80). Holyrood gave a much higher number of SNP members an opportunity to have a parliamentary career as an MSP, in 1999 winning thirty-five seats. If we compare that to the SNP's Westminster elections in the previous twenty years, they only managed to win between two to six seats in UK general elections (see Table 1 and 2 in the Appendix p. 73). Devolution has arguably also functioned as a stepping stone to the SNP's dream of Scottish independence. Without a devolved parliament and a Scottish SNP-led government, Scotland would not host an independence referendum in 2014. It also helped to alter the public's image of the party as their MSPs and Ministers were seen as responsible, helping to alter the SNP's image as a consequence (Mackay). What this inquiry sees as most significant, however, is that Holyrood was first and foremost a new forum to discuss, develop and make clear the party's policies on issues that were devolved as well as policies that were reserved to Westminster. The SNP has been criticised by the Scottish Labour Party, the Scottish Conservative Party and the UK government because of its eagerness to use Holyrood for discussing and voting on reserved matters such as UK's nuclear deterrent and involvement in the Iraq War.<sup>22</sup>

The next section looks more closely at the SNP's opposition in the many military operations the UK took part in during the first few years of the new millennium. Although this inquiry, strictly speaking, has an in-depth look at the development of the SNP's nuclear weapons and NATO policies, a few words need to be said about their overall defence vision at the

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<sup>22</sup> This will be given evidence for and discussed later in the chapter, in section 3.1.2 about the 2005-2007 Trident debate and section 3.2 concerned with more recent developments in SNP policies.

beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as these were the overarching defence issues at the time. The SNP's views of Scotland participating in war resemble their longstanding moral standpoint on nuclear weapons.

The SNP's opposition to the Kosovo intervention, more specifically Salmond's speech, could be seen as his biggest miscalculation as leader of the SNP, as discussed in chapter 2. The words which he used to describe the intervention were not exactly received with standing ovations throughout Scotland, the SNP losing ground as the forthcoming Scottish election was turned into a 'high politics' election about foreign and defence policies – the SNP's weak spot. That experience did not turn them into a champion of war, though, rather the opposite. Instead, the party firmly established itself as a strong supporter of the UN and military operations sanctioned by the UN, by some probably perceived as an anti-war party, as when SNP MSPs encouraged the US to take a cautious approach only days after the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 (*BBC News Online* "Military options: SNP viewpoints"). This resembles other SNP policies based on ethical considerations and not popular demands, similar to the two policy issues studied in this thesis.

The party's 2001 General Election Manifesto's chapter on defence accentuate the UN profile, stressing that Scotland's focus was to be on 'conflict resolution, peacekeeping and humanitarian relief' through various international organisations such as the UN. It also promised to 'promote the study of the theory and practice of peacekeeping' and to 'oppose any involvement in a possible US National Missile Defence Programme' (*Scottish National Party 2001 General Election Manifesto*) Some of these elements was touched upon in the 1997 election manifesto as well, but had not been nearly as prominent. The reasons behind this development could be several, one being that the SNP wanted to make its defence policy more similar to that of the Scandinavian countries as it had done for years in terms of policy on matters such as economy and social systems. Most of the wordings seen above could just as well have been a summary of Norway's foreign policy. This could in turn give credibility to SNP's defence vision as a realistic option to other UK political parties. Seen in combination with their nuclear weapons and NATO policy there was danger of being perceived as weak when it came to defence and security. It is a fact that an independent Scotland would probably have to take a role similar to that of its Scandinavian neighbours due to Scotland's limited military size and capabilities. One major difference was still

unmistakable, however: the SNP continued to stress their intentions of leaving NATO after independence (*2001 General Election Manifesto*).

The SNP's strict UN approach to international conflicts was evident in 2003 as the UK government supported the US' Iraq invasion. This time, in comparison to the Kosovo situation, the party felt they had a more valid case in criticising, with an apparently strong opposition in the Scottish public. John Swinney, party leader, used his 2002 SNP national convention speech to stress that 'it is the world community - through the United Nations - that must decide on the appropriate measures ... So let me be very clear. Unilateral action by the United States or bilateral action with the United Kingdom is simply not acceptable' (Swinney).

On 16 January 2003, motion S1M-3760, lodged by John Swinney, was debated and voted upon at Holyrood. During his introductory speech he proclaimed that:

Like many others in Scotland today, I fear that there can be only one conclusion: the US and UK Governments are pursuing an inevitable path to war. I believe that it is our duty to steer the Government away from that inappropriate approach ... Crucially, Mr Blix said that, in the course of the inspectors' work, "we have not found any smoking gun". In other words, no evidence of weapons of mass destruction has yet been found and no material breach of [UN] resolution 1441 has been proved (Scottish Parliament Official Report "SP OR 16 January 2003 Cols 14013-21").

According to a *BBC* article, the SNP 'had hoped to embarrass the prime minister by winning a debate at Holyrood over a matter which is strictly reserved to Westminster' (*BBC News Online "Holyrood has its say on Iraq"*). As far as this inquiry has found, it was among the first times that Holyrood was used as a way of criticising and opposing the UK Government on matters reserved to Westminster. Scottish Labour MSPs backed their Westminster MPs and ensured, together with Conservative MSPs, that the motion fell by 16 votes. A month later, a worldwide anti-Iraq war demonstration was arranged, the CND being one of the organisers in Britain (*BBC News Online "Organisers hail anti-war protest"*). In Scotland, John Swinney was one of the main speakers at the Glasgow rally, described by police officials as 'the biggest protest [in Glasgow] since the anti-poll tax demonstrations in March 1990' (*"Organisers hail anti-war protest"*). If the SNP hit the wrong note in opposing the Kosovo intervention they definitely hit the right one five years later, at least morally, since no evidence of any weapons of mass destruction was ever found (Borger). They have later used

the Iraq War as an argument for Scotland to break the Union. In its 2010 election manifesto it said that:

The actions of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in taking us into the illegal war in Iraq exemplify why we need this new approach – we can't allow the mistakes that were made over Iraq to happen again (19).

In the May 2003 election the party did, however, experience a decline, down from 27 to 20 per cent and 35 to 27 seats at Holyrood (see Table 2 in the Appendix p. 73). It was the 'new' protest parties such as the Scottish Green Party and Scottish Socialist Party that improved the most. This could probably be linked to the SNP becoming a part of the establishment in Scottish politics since devolution, losing some of its protest voters as a result. The 2003 election did also become a high politics' election similar to the Scottish election four years earlier.

In the 2005 UK general election, the SNP won six seats, an increase of two from the previous election while at the same time losing three per cent in total Scottish votes, ending with 17.7 per cent (see Table 1 in the Appendix p. 73). As devolution found its footing in Scotland, the SNP MPs at Westminster became less important (Lindsay 101-02). Most policy areas were devolved to Holyrood and as a consequence the Scottish media attention was directed to the SNP's MSPs instead of its Scottish MPs – that is, until nuclear weapons was once again given major attention in Scotland.

### **Renewing Trident: 2005-2007**

By mid-2000, the UK government had to decide on the future of its nuclear deterrence. In their 2005 general election manifesto, Labour said they wanted to retain the UK nuclear deterrent, 'at least until the current system reaches the end of its life' (HM Government. Ministry of Defence. Foreign and Commonwealth Office 9). In other words, as seen from the position of the Labour Party, renewing the country's nuclear deterrent was not an obvious decision. A number of questions from opposition MPs and Labour backbench MPs on the issue of replacement, arguing against it when it ends its cycle, were part of this discussion.<sup>23</sup>

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer and most likely the next Prime Minister, put forth his support for renewing Trident in his Mansion House speech on 21 June 2006. Labour

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<sup>23</sup> A debate such as HC Deb 24 March 2004 Vol 419 cols 280-304 about the Non-proliferation Treaty Review produced a number of Labour MPs which spoke against a renewal.

backbenchers, the CND and other anti-nuclear organisations were not pleased with his endorsement and the lack of public debate was an increasing worry, as voiced in a response to the Brown speech (*BBC News Online* "Brown backs Trident replacement"). *The Guardian*'s Murray Armstrong headlined one of his commentaries 'Where is the Trident debate?', stating his worry that Labour and the Conservatives agreeing could mean that 'any debate in parliament will be a mere formality'. The same newspaper wrote in its 22 June 2006 leader that 'until now the decision-making process had been tiptoeing stealthily through the corridors of Whitehall' (*The Guardian* "Labour at the Crossroads")

On 30 June 2006, a cross-party Defence Committee<sup>24</sup> published a report on the matter, six months before the government's White Paper was released. It sought to 'encourage and inform the public debate' since the Ministry had not done so (House of Commons. Defence Committee *The Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: The Strategic Context: Report, together with Formal Minutes, Oral and Written Evidence* 3). The defence committee provided a number of challenges for the Ministry of Defence, who had refused to participate in the committee's report, where the most important challenge was for the Ministry to provide a full discussion of the usefulness of the deterrence in the future. The Defence Committee also discussed 'The Scottish Question'<sup>25</sup> as a possible threat to a renewed deterrence or an extension of the existing system in its written evidence (*The Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: The Strategic Context: Report, together with Formal Minutes, Oral and Written Evidence* Ev. 63, 76), although not including it as a specific reference in the final report.

The premises were finally set up in the UK government's '*The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*' White Paper, presented to the House in December 2006. A decision to purchase a new nuclear deterrent needed to take a generational perspective, as experienced with both Polaris and Trident. The generational perspective is touched upon in the report's first few pages:

Some argue that we should put off this decision. But one is necessary because the present submarines will start to leave service in the early 2020s, and we have to decide now whether we want to replace

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<sup>24</sup> No SNP MPs were members.

<sup>25</sup> By which they meant that it was vulnerable to 'the lack of any practical alternative to the Royal Navy base at Faslane in Scotland for berthing the larger submarines capable of firing Trident missiles. If pressure builds for nuclear weapons to be removed from Scotland, as some Scottish Parties and anti-nuclear groups are determined to achieve, Trident or its replacement might be turned out of Faslane with no other suitable berth in sight' (Ev. 63).

them. Delaying a decision would risk a future break in our deterrent protection ... We estimate that it will take around 17 years to design, manufacture and commission a replacement submarine ... It is not possible accurately to predict the global security environment over the next 20 to 50 years (HM Government. Ministry of Defence. Foreign and Commonwealth Office 5-6).

The White Paper does discuss possible options to a submarine-based system, but ends up rejecting them on various grounds (34-39). The Scottish Question is not, however, touched upon at all. When analysing the submarine-based system, it simply states that 'some modernisation of submarine infrastructure at Faslane and Coulport' is needed (38). An approach such as this was what Chalmers and Walker warned against; The UK government had to make clear that a real discussion had taken place and that they acknowledged Scotland's special position (67-71). When this was yet again ignored, the SNP knew how to take advantage of the situation, as the two House of Commons debates in December 2006 and March 2007 will give evidence for, the latter also involving a vote.

On 4 December 2006, the Prime Minister made his statement to the House of Commons on the government's decision to maintain a nuclear deterrent, not mentioning Scotland once (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 04 December 2006 Vol 456 Cols 21-24"). The SNP defence spokesperson, Angus Robertson, was given time to ask the PM one question:

Given that Scotland has a national Parliament not a parish council, will the Prime Minister give an assurance that he will respect the Scottish Parliament when it votes against the stationing of nuclear weapons in Scotland (Col 32)?

The Prime Minister answered that he would always respect the Scottish Parliament, a polite remark which might come across more provoking than respectful, giving an impression of the typical nonchalant English attitude towards Scotland. Both Tony Blair and Angus Robertson knew, of course, that Holyrood formally has no real powers over the UK's nuclear deterrent. Strategically, however, ignoring Holyrood could also be a mistake. Focusing on the Scottish people as an entity with a voice and a right to determine what goes for Scotland has been one of the most successful and often used tactics by the SNP. This underlying notion is evident in all policy matters, not just defence policies, and has been a recurrent theme in parliamentary business, election manifestoes and other sources such as newspaper comments etc.

The main parliamentary debate and later vote of supporting the government's decision took place on 14 March 2007, with much media attention. Although the number of Scottish MPs had been reduced from 72 to 59 as a result of devolution, they stood for a disproportionately

high number of speeches. From the SNP, leader Alex Salmond (House of Commons Hansard "HC Deb 14 March 2007 Vol 458 Cols 349-52") held the main speech on behalf of the party, with Pete Wishart asking a question to the MP William Hague, Shadow Foreign Secretary for the Conservative Party (Col 318).

Alex Salmond used a range of tactics in his speech against a renewal of Trident. First, he mocked the British need of 'deserving the best'. He claimed 'it is about virility and vanity, aspiring to that superpower status' (Col 349). To exemplify his point, he used a situation from the 1980s 'Yes, Minister' comedy TV show where Minister Jim Hacker and the bureaucrat Sir Humphrey disagreed on Trident. After the initial sarcastic remarks, Salmond wondered 'why on earth we have it in the first place', since the Foreign Secretary 'tells us that that system amounts to 1 per cent. of the nuclear weapons in the world ...' (Col 349). Salmond then turned to the SNP's main argument, which carries the same underlying notion of the Scottish people's right to its own voice, distinctly different to the rest of Britain:

I want to speak about civil society in Scotland. Members will recall that Scotland is, after all, to be the scene of the deployment of this new weapons system for the next 50 years, so what the people of Scotland think about it might be of some interest and concern to the House. It is not just that 80 per cent. of people oppose it; throughout Scottish civic society, people are pointing out, led by the Scottish Trades Union Congress, that it is unacceptable (Col 350).

Alex Salmond continued by saying that 'the Scottish National party has been rock-solid consistent in its opposition to nuclear weapons throughout the history both of the party and of nuclear weapons' (Col 351), a claim which must be seen to be largely correct as seen in the previous chapter. At the end of his speech, Salmond gives an interesting warning to the Prime Minister:

[The Prime Minister] said that there was a serious risk of Scottish independence. We believe that it is a fantastic opportunity, but if it is a serious risk, why do people want to put their nuclear weapons in a country that could shortly be independent? Is that really a risk that this House would like to take? (Col 352)

Looking at the main elements of Alex Salmond's speech, there are some of the statements that stand out as of particular interest in our context. Criticising the government's fear of Britain losing its influence if it becomes a non-nuclear state was a common theme in SNP argumentation. The 2006 HoC Defence Report highlights a disagreement among its members on whether Britain's continued influence in the world was a valid argument in itself for



retaining Trident (*The Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: The Strategic Context: Report, together with Formal Minutes, Oral and Written Evidence* 16-18). We would argue that this discussion should be seen in relation to Britain's 1950s 'need' to retain its importance even though the British Empire crumbled; having a British nuclear deterrent entailed a seat at the table alongside the US and USSR.

Salmond also claimed that 80 per cent of Scots disapproved of Trident, a remark frequently stated by the SNP. Opinion polls have on average shown more opposition among Scots than rUK respondents when asked questions about nuclear weapons or a Trident renewal (Ritchie and Ingram 23). Frequently claiming – as the SNP has done - with utmost certainty that 80 per cent of the Scottish population are against it is another matter. Results have not been that consistent, often very much dependent on the questions asked, a well-known problem with opinion polls in general. If a specific cost is stipulated, support drops significantly. In 2006, a poll conducted by *The Times* showed a 40 per cent support among Scots, with 50 per cent among all UK respondents, when asking if you would keep Britain's nuclear weapons (Ritchie and Ingram 24). A *More4* poll in 2007, asking respondents if they supported a Trident renewal if it cost £25 billion, only showed a 25 per cent support, with similar results among all UK respondents. When the Scottish CND arranged a poll in 2007 - where the price for a Trident renewal was stipulated to £50 billion – the support in Scotland dropped to 20 per cent. In 2013, another Scottish CND poll claimed a £65 billion cost and support dropped further to 15 per cent (Ritchie and Ingram 24).

Finally, Salmond's 'warning' to the Prime Minister is especially interesting when seen in connection with the White Paper's lack of discussion of 'the Scottish Question' and the many official reports released since the SNP became a Holyrood majority party after the 2011 Scottish general election. Chalmers and Walker's clear warning from 2001 about the necessity of taking 'the Scottish Question' seriously in the decision-making process in the future should also be pointed out. By not acknowledging it at all, the SNP promoted itself as the only political voice of Scotland, a missed opportunity to a Labour government relying on a strong electoral support among Scottish voters.

The 14 March 2007 vote ended with 87 Labour MPs rebelling, despite the Secretary of State Margaret Beckett's last effort to calm backbenchers by stressing that this vote would not bind

later parliaments (Cols. 309-10).<sup>26</sup> In the end, the government needed Conservative MPs' votes to win, a fact *The Guardian* firmly pointed out (Wintour). It also revealed a distinct Scottish voice as a majority of MPs representing a Scottish constituency rejected to replace Trident (*BBC News Online "Scots Labour MPs rebel on Trident"*). Having studied the Westminster debates, we now need to look at how Holyrood, with the SNP as a frontrunner, also played an important role during these years.

Even though the decision regarding Trident was a reserved matter, this did not, of course, prevent the Scottish Parliament from discussing it, as well as any other issue reserved for the UK Parliament. The SNP would only gain on having Holyrood discussing the issue of Trident, at the expense of Labour. Since its second session started in May 2003, there have been several Trident debates at Holyrood, strongly supported by SNP MSPs. Between 2005 and 2007 there were no less than five debates on the issue of a Trident renewal. However, actually passing a motion of rejection was not commonplace. On 24 March 2005, the Scottish Parliament debated Roseanna Cunningham's<sup>27</sup> motion S2M-2640 (see Appendix p. 74). The Parliament passed an amended version, with Labour and Conservative MSP's votes, entirely different from the original wording (Appendix p. 74). On 4 May 2006, the Scottish Parliament debated motion S2M-3866 (Appendix p. 74-75) lodged by a Scottish Green Party MSP. One SNP MSP argued strongly against what he called 'the son of Trident'; since terrorism was the most likely threat to the UK, he did not see 'how a suicide bomber who is intent on martyrdom would be stopped because we have Trident on the Clyde' (Scottish Parliament Official Report "SP OR 04 May 2006, Cols 25222-23"). The SNP wanted to include an amendment to the motion, stating that 'the best way to ensure that nuclear weapons are removed from Scotland is for Scotland to become an independent nation.' The motion was not passed. 28 September 2006, Roseanna Cunningham's motion S2M-4864 (Appendix p. 75) was debated, but yet again no motion or amended motion was agreed upon. 21 December 2006, less than three weeks after Prime Minister Tony Blair tried to justify the government's decision in his HoC speech, and SNP MP Angus Robertson 'threatened' with a Holyrood rejection of it, Nicola Sturgeon from the SNP had her motion S2M-5355 (Appendix p. 75) debated. Neither the motion nor any amendment was passed.

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<sup>26</sup> The Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Margaret Beckett, stressed that the Parliament only had to decide in principle about a renewal. Later parliaments would take the final decision regarding the warheads (what is known as the Main Gate decision, the 'no turning back' decision) (Col 299).

<sup>27</sup> Representing the SNP

Getting a motion passed in the matter was almost impossible, as depicted above. Conservative MSPs were true supporters of a nuclear deterrent while Labour Party representatives most likely found it difficult voting against their own government. The apparent impossibility of getting a motion passed was the case until the May 2007 Scottish general election, when they lost their majority. From then on, anti-nuclear parties such as the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Green Party were in majority. The result of this change was evident on 14 June 2007 when motion S3M-169 was debated (Appendix p. 75-76), lodged by a Scottish Green Party representative. A Liberal Democrat proposed to amend the motion by adding: ‘... recognises that decisions on matters of defence are matters within the responsibility of the UK Government and Parliament’ (Appendix p. 76). The amended motion was agreed upon with 71 supporting votes. All SNP MSPs supported the motion, together with the Scottish Green Party, the Liberal Democrats and four Labour MSPs. All 16 Conservative members voted against, while the rest of Labour representatives abstained, underlining the difficulty many felt.

The wordings in the proposed motions highlight the limited influence the Scottish Parliament has in matters concerning areas reserved to Westminster. They include phrases such as ‘wishes to register strong opposition’; ‘believes that the UK should not seek to replace’; ‘calls on the Scottish Executive to seek an early assurance from the UK Government’; ‘calls on the UK Government not to go ahead at this time with the proposal in the White Paper’; etc. (see Appendix p. 74-76 for the complete wordings). Nonetheless, having the debates and at last agreeing on a motion created much media attention in Scotland (see *BBC News Online* "MSPs stage heated Trident debate", *The Scotsman* "Holyrood defies Westminster over Trident submarines replacement" and *The Daily Telegraph* for examples). As the SNP entered the Scottish Government, tensions increased considerably between Holyrood and Westminster/Whitehall, a point we will return to below.

When Chalmers and Walker published their book in 2001, nuclear weapons had not yet been on the agenda in the Scottish Parliament. They therefore discussed why this had not happened, suggesting for example that the Parliament had been preoccupied with devolved matters, or that Scottish Labour was cautious of upsetting the Blair Government or its Westminster MPs. A third possibility raised was directly related to the SNP, which knew it would not get the support it needed by Scottish Labour MSP's and therefore did not want to ‘undermine its claim that political opinion in Scotland strongly favours Trident's removal

from the Clyde' (59-62). Before moving on, we want to point out some political developments that could help to explain why this changed in the years following Chalmers and Walker's analysis.

By 2005, Holyrood was a much more established political arena than in its first couple of years. The main reason to the increased parliamentary attention must be related to the approaching decision time on whether to retain or scrap UK's future nuclear deterrent. By that time, the SNP were probably also better aware of how to use the Scottish Parliament to their advantage, knowing that the media attention and public awareness towards Holyrood proceedings had increased since the opening of the devolved parliament. As it became clear that the UK government wanted to renew the system, SNP MSP's eagerness to discuss Trident could therefore be analysed as a tactical move. Tony Blair's New Labour project had already lost support in Scotland as a result of the Iraq War and by discussing Trident in Holyrood the SNP put pressure on Labour MSPs, who were forced to choose between voting against motions calling for an end to nuclear weapons in Scotland and voting against its own government. By abstaining to vote, as seen on a large scale on 14 June 2007, Labour professed to the Scottish electorate that they did not know how to handle the delicate issue.

## **Governing Scotland: recent developments**

Retaining nuclear weapons in Scotland did much damage to Labour's popularity among the Scottish electorate and was a major contributor to the SNP winning 36.4 per cent of the votes in the May 2007 Scottish parliamentary election, an increase of 15.5 per cent since 2003 and a historic victory for the Scottish National Party (see Table 2 in the Appendix p. 73). Securing 47 seats, one more than Labour and a gain of 20 was an outstanding election result. The party's election campaign was later described by Colin Mackay as 'the most professional campaign in its history' (Mackay 86). This resulted in the SNP entering a minority Scottish government. How the election victory affected the Holyrood-Westminster/Whitehall relationship was effectively described by Sandra White, SNP MSP, in the 14 June 2007 debate. She reminded her fellow MSPs of 'the powers that we have over transport, planning and the legal system. This Parliament can do lots of things to thwart the progress of Trident with the legislative tools at our disposal' (Scottish Parliament Official Report "SP OR 14 June 2007 Col 712").

As the SNP entered government, the available resources to promote their vision of independence increased considerably. It gave them an opportunity to start writing official government white papers embellishing their case for independence, where Scotland's possible defence, security and foreign policy could be envisioned in a more convincing manner than the party policy had managed thus far. One of the first things the new SNP government did was to start what they called 'a national conversation', described by First Minister Alex Salmond in the foreword to a report called *Choosing Scotland's Future: A National Conversation: Independence and Responsibility in the Modern World*:

I therefore propose that we have a national conversation on our future to allow the people of Scotland to debate, reflect and then decide on the type of government which best equips us for the future. This paper is intended as the starting point and inspiration for that conversation (Scottish Government *Choosing Scotland's Future: a National Conversation: Independence and Responsibility in the Modern World*).

This national conversation involved a discussion of other possible solutions than SNP's number one goal of independence. In the report, the SNP government did say its preferred end-result was just that, but by discussing the other options it showed how far the SNP had come since its more radical and fundamentalist days. It could also have been a strategic necessity since they governed without a majority in Holyrood.

Defence and foreign affairs were integral parts of this first of several reports published by the Scottish government in the years to come. The report pointed to an independent Scottish defence as one positive implication of independence (*Choosing Scotland's Future: a National Conversation: Independence and Responsibility in the Modern World* 22-24). The essence of the report was its promotion of matters where Scotland could have its own voice, which was impossible under the current devolved system. In the first of only two bullet points under the defence section it stated, among other things, that Scotland would be able to decide to remain within NATO or 'opt, like Ireland and Sweden, for a defence posture outside a nuclear-armed alliance but within other co-operation bodies' (23), obviously preferring the last option. The other bullet point dealt exclusively with the nuclear deterrent:

An independent Scotland could accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state ... Scotland could not then possess nuclear weapons. The nuclear-armed submarines of the Royal Navy would have to be removed from Scotland (23).

That the official Scottish government at once started to work on and release reports on non-devolved matters increased the tension between them and Westminster/Whitehall. In the 2008 *Government Evidence to the Commission on Scottish Devolution*, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) acknowledged that issues where the current Scottish government and MoD have ‘views or policies that are at odds’ are challenging. It continued by warning against the working group ‘Scotland Without Nuclear Weapons’ which was set up by the Scottish government in 2007 after the 14 June debate and vote, whose mandate was to find a solution within the devolved system (HM Government 49). The remarks by the MoD attracted some media attention at the time (see for example *The Scotsman "MoD shoots down Holyrood's battle to block Trident"*).

The major follow-up to the 2007 paper came two years later in the 176 page long report *Your Scotland, Your Voice: a National Conversation*, a discussion of the options and opportunities for Scotland in the future: status quo, with perhaps a few more devolved powers; full devolution (often called ‘devolution max’);<sup>28</sup> independence (*Your Scotland, Your Voice: a National Conversation* 3-4). Chapter 8, ‘A Stronger Scotland’, looked at the defence and foreign policy possibilities under each option, showing a marked preference towards the independence option. This section is an example of the importance questions regarding nuclear weapons and NATO have continued to play for the SNP. One of the main defence arguments used to support independence was that it was the only option where Scotland would have complete control of any final decisions, specifically mentioning nuclear weapons and non-membership of NATO as examples (118-120). It stated that Scotland ‘could choose to focus on non-nuclear domestic defence and security and specific overseas peace-keeping operations’ (121). Other than that, however, there were no details on what a Scottish defence force might look like or realistically cost. The 2009 report was, as we see it, not very insightful other than some fine words and vague wishes. This did not stop the SNP from stating the following in its 2010 UK general election manifesto: ‘Options for Scotland’s defence with independence are set out in the Scottish Government’s White Paper *Your Scotland, Your Voice*’ (2010 *General Election Manifesto* 20). Another recent example of the SNP’s vagueness comes from Angus Robertson, MP and SNP’s defence and foreign affairs

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<sup>28</sup> With ‘devolution max’, Holyrood would be ‘responsible for raising, collecting and administering all (or the vast majority of) revenues in Scotland and the vast majority of spending for Scotland’ (*Your Scotland, Your Voice: a National Conversation* 29), while at the same time a policy area such as defence would remain reserved to the UK nation-state (117).

spokesperson, in his book *Why Vote SNP*, published in the run-up to the 2010 election.<sup>29</sup> One of its chapters was devoted to the SNP's defence policy. Here he mentioned Norway as an example of a non-nuclear country with a strong navy, implying that Scotland could have an equivalent type and size of defence force. Since Norway is a member of NATO, Robertson also pointed to Sweden as an example of a non-nuclear, non-NATO country, but which takes part in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme (90-91), similar to the SNP's position at the time.

As seen thus far, the SNP had for decades tried to avoid an outright political discussion about the totality of its defence plans, only promoting certain core elements such as being anti-nuclear and to some extent anti-NATO. This had not stopped political opponents, especially in the 1990s, from criticising the SNP for lacking a consistent policy and asking for concrete plans for a Scottish defence force. Despite this increased interest from opponents, the SNP never gave much attention to the critique, making some slight changes to its two core specialities only, as described more fully in the previous chapter. By 1997, the SNP wanted an independent Scotland to join the Partnership for Peace program, while retract<sup>30</sup> as a NATO member, a stand that lay firm until October 2012. Its nuclear weapons policy evolved from demanding an immediate withdrawal into to the late 1990s suggestion of a 'phased withdrawal' of UK's nuclear deterrent, which later manifestoes and policy papers termed 'a safe removal'. The rest of the SNP's defence policy was never easy to grasp – and the SNP mostly got away with it.

The media started to take notice of this and to comment upon the SNP's silence after the 2007 election victory. Alan Cochrane, *The Daily Telegraph's* Scottish editor, for example, wrote a column contribution headlined 'SNP shoot themselves in the foot as they talk of defence and armed forces', where he criticised the SNP for being 'coy about its policy for defending an independent Scotland' and for claiming a resemblance to the Norwegian defence force which based all its defence on its NATO alliance, an organisation the SNP was opposed (Cochrane "SNP shoot themselves in the foot as they talk of defence and armed forces"). But it was their 2011 Scottish general election victory that truly turned the tide. The SNP's majority win was

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<sup>29</sup> Part of a book series where high-ranking MPs or politicians of all major British parties published a book about his or her party in the run-up to the 2010 election

<sup>30</sup> The SNP's understanding of Scotland's international position post-independence, amongst those claiming an automatic membership to NATO, thereby needing to withdraw its membership, is part of a subsequent discussion.

predicted to lead to an independence referendum of some kind in the next parliamentary session, which the SNP also announced it would. Alex Salmond spoke to the Scottish Parliament through his First Minister's Statement on 26 May 2011, where he lay out 'the Government's vision for the next five years', including an independence referendum (Scottish Parliament Official Report "SP OR 26 May 2011 Cols 65-75"). The SNP's dream of an independent Scotland was closer to reality than ever before. As a consequence, the pressure on the party to state its defence plans increased considerably, increased considerably from journalists, commentators, political opponents and experts.

As far as the SNP's defence policies are concerned, the last two years can be divided into two fairly distinct periods: before and after the October 2012 SNP National Convention. This division is based on having looked at the media coverage, mostly newspaper articles where the SNP were given an opportunity to comment or reply. Between the election victory and the 2012 Convention, the SNP's overall strategy seems to have been the same old strategy of evasion and denial, as seen when the SNP was challenged by former military high-ranking personnel. In an article published 19 October 2011 in *The Scotsman*, Sir Richard Dannatt, a former general and head of the British army, called on Alex Salmond to be 'honest and transparent', criticising the SNP for not laying out a detailed plan or holding talks with the UK government over possible Scottish defence plans (*The Scotsman* "Ex-army chief in attack on SNP's defence plans"). Replying, a spokesperson for First Minister Alex Salmond pointed to the 2009 *Your Scotland, Your Voice* White Paper which according to him discussed defence 'in detail', while Angus Robertson, MP and defence spokesperson, evaded the issue and said 'the question is really over the commitment of the UK parties to a defence presence in Scotland at all' ("Ex-army chief in attack on SNP's defence plans"). *The Scottish Express* published an interview on 21 December 2011 with Admiral Lord West who said 'Alex Salmond is guilty of having not even addressed the defence issues ... He's sleepwalking into disaster' (Gill). Angus Robertson dismissed Lord West's comments wanting him to 'explain why, during his own period of office, Scotland's armed forces saw so much decline' (Gill). Ten days later, *The Scotsman* published an interview with Colonel Clive Fairweather, former deputy commander of the SAS unit,<sup>31</sup> who worried because 'the SNP's lack of strategy for the future defence of Scotland will leave the country badly exposed' (*The Scotsman* "Scotland will need own SAS, warns colonel"). Angus Robertson replied:

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<sup>31</sup> SAS: Special Air Service, a unit under the British Special Forces (see <http://www.army.mod.uk/specialforces/30603.aspx> for more information)



Scotland already has military personal, equipment and infrastructure – what has been lacking is proper investment, with much of Scottish taxpayers' contribution to defence not currently spent in Scotland. With independence, Scotland can and will match the defence spending and capabilities of Norway and comparable European neighbours, providing professional, conventional forces ... With independence, there will be a real boost to defence, providing broader capabilities in Scotland ("Scotland will need own SAS, warns colonel").

Articles such as *The Daily Telegraph's* 'Alex's Army is already coming under not-so-friendly fire', published 20 January 2012 (Cochrane) and *The Scottish Herald's* 'SNP urged to "come clean" on separate defence plan', published 28 January 2012 (Devlin), were other examples of the increasing spotlight placed on what was claimed to be a lack of a credible defence policy on the part of the SNP.

### **SNP's 2012 National Convention: policy update**

As the SNP's 2012 national convention was approaching, reports about possible changes to the party's defence policy started to leak out; the SNP looked as though it might revise its views on a Scottish NATO membership. *The Guardian* (Carrell "Independent Scotland could join Nato, say SNP sources"), *The Scotsman* ("Phillips O'Brien: SNP defence policies depend on being in Nato"), *The Times* (Macleod) and *BBC News Online* ("SNP 'considers Nato policy change'") exemplifies how major news corporations covered this development within the SNP. Most of them focused on tensions within the party rank and file about this possible policy shift. Becoming pro-NATO would be the most significant change to the SNP's defence policy in decades. Since the late 1990s, the SNP's policy had been more or less stable.

Angus Robertson was the main defender of the need for the SNP to update its policies 'in the run-up to and beyond the independence referendum' (Robertson "2012 SNP National Convention speech on NATO"). With this policy update the SNP would send 'a strong message about our intention to ensure that Scotland is nuclear free, that we support an appropriate conventional defence and that we wish to be good neighbours and allies' ("2012 SNP National Convention speech on NATO"). Robertson proceeded to argue that the change was a consequence of internal debates within the SNP, inputs from military experts and visits to neighbouring countries, especially mentioning its northern neighbours. Before opening the debate, Robertson underlined that a Scottish NATO membership was 'totally conditional on agreement about the withdrawal of Trident ... as speedily and safely as possible' ("2012 SNP National Convention speech on NATO").

Some of the staunchest opponents were the MSPs Jean Urquhart and John Finnie, who days later quit the party as a result of the defence policy update (*BBC News Online* "MSPs John Finnie and Jean Urquhart quit SNP over Nato policy"). The former argued that 'we cannot have it both ways. Those who have spoken for NATO want you to pretend it's just a small thing, but it isn't' (Urquhart). The convention passed the motion in support of the policy update with 426 against 332 votes (*BBC News Online* "SNP members vote to ditch the party's anti-Nato policy"). Although it was very controversial among those who voted at the conference, Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' membership survey showed that 55 per cent of SNP members 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that NATO membership was in Scotland's strategic interest, while only 23 per cent 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' (132). Similarly, opinion polls have suggested a strong Scottish majority in support of NATO. *The Scotsman*, for example, found that three quarters of voters supported the SNP's change of NATO policy (Peterkin), suggesting that on this issue, the SNP had been out of tune with the Scottish electorate, another evidence of the inquiry's overall argument that the SNP's policies were based on conviction rather than populist policies.

The 2012 'Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update',<sup>32</sup> contained less than 800 words yet was the most detailed defence plan released by the SNP. The party clearly wanted to present a more coherent and credible defence plan. Underneath follows an excerpt from the resolution:

- An independent Scottish government led by the SNP will commit to an annual defence and security budget of £2.5bn.
- The Scottish armed forces will comprise 15,000 regular and 5,000 reserve personnel, operating out of Faslane, which will be Scotland's main conventional naval facility.
- All current bases will be retained.
- The Scottish defence and peacekeeping forces will initially be equipped with Scotland's share of current assets including ocean going vessels, fast jets for domestic air patrol duties, transport aircraft and helicopters as well as army vehicles, artillery and air defence systems.
- A sovereign SNP government will negotiate the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane.
- Security cooperation in our region functions primarily through NATO, which is regarded as the keystone defence organisation by Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the United Kingdom. The SNP wishes Scotland to fulfil its responsibilities to neighbours and allies. On independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO.

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<sup>32</sup> Full text available in the Appendix page 77-79.

- An SNP government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty.

Source: Resolution to SNP Conference: Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Update, Appendix p. 77-79.

We have already looked at some of the main reasons behind this policy update. The SNP experienced an increased media attention and critique because of its apparent lack of detail and coherence come independence. Another reason could be the need to come across to potential Yes-voters as strong on security, especially if we consider the updated NATO stand. By embracing NATO, although still not unconditionally, uncertain voters could deem it safer to vote 'Yes' in the referendum. Statements from party officials, such as Angus Robertson in his convention speech, claimed that the revised NATO policy came about after internal debates, military advice and visits to neighbouring countries such as Norway, Denmark, Ireland and Iceland.

Since the policy update, Alex Salmond held no less than two speeches in 2013 expanding on how his party looks at Scotland having its own defence. On 9 April he was invited to talk at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC during a trip where he wanted to 'strengthen economic links with America, to discuss Scotland's constitutional future, but most of all to mark the lasting friendship between Scotland and the USA' (Salmond "Scotland as a Good Global Citizen"). The speech focused in particular on the SNP's new NATO policy, 'an issue of particular interest here in Washington', and the rationale behind why Scotland needs to be a NATO member. Issues such as Scotland's important geographical position, with substantial oil and gas reserves and neighbouring countries being members were highlighted; 'It makes sense for Scotland to work within NATO on such important issues' as the First Minister put it. At the same time he made it clear that the SNP wants Scotland to have a written constitution which 'include safeguards', such as only participating in military actions which are sanctioned by the UN. The other cornerstone in the SNP's Scotland would be to safely remove the UK's nuclear deterrent, requiring a 'careful discussion with the UK government and our NATO allies. An independent Scotland would not be a global superpower. But we would be a good global citizen' (Salmond "Scotland as a Good Global Citizen").

The second speech on the subject of Scotland's defence was held 25 July 2013. Here, Alex Salmond talked about Scotland's six different unions, which it participates in as part of the UK:

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. The political and economic union | 4. The currency union             |
| 2. The social union                 | 5. The union of the Crowns        |
| 3. The European Union               | 6. The defence union through NATO |

(Salmond "First Minister's Speech at the Public Discussion Shetland").

According to Salmond, it is only the first union which will cease to exist if the SNP has its way. The social union 'has never been determined by government' and will continue on the basis of the shared culture, history and language which Scotland and the rUK shares. The other four unions 'are ones which the SNP would propose to maintain'. With regards to defence, Salmond builds the rest of the speech on what the SNP sees as 'three key advantages of independence': Scotland would (1) 'no longer be tied to UK policies' (Salmond made a special mention of the Iraq War and the removal of Trident); it would (2) 'enable us to develop new, more relevant capabilities' (wanting Scotland to turn its attention towards its waters in the north and cooperate closely with for instance Norway); and lastly, (3) Scotland 'could create a new and more consensual approach to the defence strategy of the country' (working more closely with the Scottish Parliament than what apparently is the UK tradition). The next section will provide an analysis of the SNP's newfound defence policies in wanting to remain a NATO member conditional of a removal of the UK nuclear deterrent.

### **Pro-NATO and anti-Trident: Sheer ideology or a realistic alternative?**

Juggling the pro-NATO policy with a continued policy to remove Trident has become a difficult discussion for the SNP to participate in. By embracing NATO, although conditional on removing Trident, the SNP most likely contemplated it would help to remove the image as an anti-war party that was weak on security and defence. Would the doubters vote 'Yes' if they were unsure of the security in an independent Scotland? The reactions since the October 2012 convention have been substantial, to say the least. All the major British and Scottish newspaper and media corporations have published comments and analyses by political and military experts, especially focusing on the SNP's newfound embrace of NATO coupled with its continuing struggle to get rid of Trident and its successor. How is NATO, a nuclear weapons-based alliance, compatible with the SNP's want for unilateral nuclear disarmament? The SNP has been ridiculed because of this apparent inconsistency, criticised for being an unrealistic stand to take. In the next section of this chapter we will address the question of whether this is the case.

First of all, the SNP's decades-long belief that Scotland would 'inherit its treaty obligations with NATO' has been challenged in recent months. This understanding has been present in the SNP for decades, as we have pointed out when discussing previous SNP election manifestoes. No precedence exists of how the process of Scotland separating from the UK would be classified: would Scotland secede from the United Kingdom, creating a new Scottish state while the United Kingdom would be thought of as the successor state? Or would the 1707 Act of Union be formally dissolved, creating two new legal entities in Scotland and the rUK? In April 2013, The House of Commons Foreign Policy Committee released its views on the UK's foreign policy implications if Scotland was to become an independent state. They concluded that 'it is not in the gift of either Scottish or UK politicians to determine unilaterally which state would inherit particular international rights and obligations in the event of Scottish independence' (5). It does believe, however, that the rUK 'would be considered by the international community to be the continuing state' (5).<sup>33</sup>

The discussion which follows next will not distinguish between the two possible outcomes (if Scotland secedes or if it would create two new legal entities), other than acknowledging that Scotland's relationship to NATO would be uncertain. There is no precedence on such a situation, but Chalmers and Walker argued that both countries' 'accession would ultimately depend upon the consent of member states' (83). Chalmers and Walker believed that if the rUK was thought of as the successor state they would simply keep the UK's membership and position. If the rUK became a new legal entity, NATO would almost automatically give them a membership either way based on their substantial military assets and historical role within the organisation (83). The practical implications would therefore more or less be the same. Scotland's position 'would be more problematic' in any case. The outcome would most likely depend on Scotland meeting the organisation's nuclear and conventional military criteria, amongst them accepting NATO's overall nuclear weapons strategy. Scotland would also be dependent on the rUK and US' wants and wishes, with the latter's attitude depending on the formers (84). The recent year's public debate has verified the difficulties described by Chalmers and Walker in 2001. If we include the SNP's opposition to Trident in the equation it gets even more complicated.

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<sup>33</sup> If interested, Chalmers and Walker provide a more thorough discussion of what international legal standing a new Scottish and rUK state could get (73-99): 'States cannot simply announce their arrival on the international stage and decide for themselves how they will engage with the existing community of states. They have to be accepted into that community and its institutions through various rites of passage of both a political and legal nature' (Chalmers and Walker 73)

*The Daily Telegraph* quoted NATO's former secretary general, George Robertson, on 10 April saying that Scotland needs to 'support nuclear weapons' to be acceded to the organisation (Cramb). On 15 August, the same newspaper reported that NATO headquarters had informed the Scottish Government that 'countries wanting to join are not allowed to "import" existing military or territorial disputes into the alliance' (Johnson), thereby implying that without a mutually agreed solution to the Trident issue Scotland would not be accepted into NATO. In October 2013, the Ministry of Defence published an extensive analysis of Scotland's defence, both its current position of being a part of the UK and its own analysis of possible future issues. It sends a clear message to the SNP, warning that the party's current position 'risks undermining the collective defence and deterrence of NATO Allies, and would represent a significant complication to its membership' (HM Government. Ministry of Defence 11). It is important to have in mind that such a warning needs to be seen in relation to the UK being staunch defenders of the status quo, and therefore their analysis being politically charged. This can be exemplified by a contrary view given by the Danish politician John Dyrby Paulsen in a recent interview with the Scottish newspaper *The Press and Journal*. Here, Paulsen says he believes that '[Scotland] would be invited to be a part of [NATO] and you would have to say "no" if you didn't want it, rather than say "yes" to get it', reasoned in Scotland having been part of the organisation since its beginning (Ross). He continued stating that, in his view, Scotland forcing the rUK to remove Trident was not a problem. The SNP has used this interview as evidence of it being right in its own understanding of the issue at stake. Angus Robertson commented on the SNP's website:

John Dyrby Paulsen has spoken as a leading authority on NATO and EU matters and from a position of clarity and logic, underlining that of course Scotland would be welcomed in both organisations. He also backs our view that removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland would in no way jeopardise that membership, as it would put Scotland in the same position as the vast majority of NATO member states who will not host nuclear weapons (Scottish National Party "Independent Scotland will be 'natural' NATO member").

What the outcome might be is uncertain,<sup>34</sup> but in essence it depends on two scenarios. Chalmers and Walker believed that Scotland could give the rUK an incentive to actively support Scotland's wish of automatically attaining, at least in practical means, membership to organisations such as NATO or the European Union. The incentive would be a right to keep

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<sup>34</sup> Though, as we will see in the last section of this chapter, the SNP seems to have been informed by NATO that they would need to apply for a membership.

Trident at Faslane (99). Demanding it withdrawn would ‘remove this incentive’, even to the extent that Scotland ‘may need Trident to establish a favourable international wind’ (99). This assertion forms the basis of their concluding remarks as well, where they compared the SNP with how the Labour Party shifted from wanting unilateral nuclear disarmament, fronted by Labour-leader Michael Foot in the early 1980s, he being a ‘lifelong CND supporter’ (Chalmers and Walker 10), to once again supportive of the UK’s deterrent in the late 1980s (160-61). According to Chalmers and Walker’s analysis, then, both Scotland and the rUK would gain politically on letting Trident stay at Faslane. They conclude that Scotland could not force the rUK to disarm, while the rUK could not base its nuclear weapons in a foreign state which did not cooperate, suggesting a form of stalemate which would need a solid framework to function. In an article published in April 2012 in the Royal United Services Institute’s *Briefing Paper*, Malcolm Chalmers continued to argue that since Scotland would need a ‘good standing with its neighbours’, the SNP would be willing to take a gradualist approach to the issue as a bargaining power to get concessions on other areas of a settlement agreement, for example demanding the rUK’s support when approaching the EU or NATO (Chalmers).

We have argued that the SNP’s opposition towards harbouring nuclear weapons has always been part of their core ideology and is very much linked to their goal of Scottish independence. Having nuclear weapons on the Clyde has for the SNP been the foremost symbol of why Scotland needs its independence. This cannot be compared directly to the Labour Party’s ‘on and off relationship’ with nuclear weapons in the 1980s, as Chalmers and Walker do in their concluding remarks. While the party has become ever more pragmatic and similar to the established UK political parties, as their newfound embrace of NATO is an example of, its nuclear weapons’ policy has in essence not changed at all, although rhetorically it has varied slightly throughout their history, as pointed out in Chapter 2. Understanding how absolute this is for the SNP is essential when trying to analyse the effects of their current policy, regardless of what they could gain politically on the international stage of accepting Trident and its successor. Judging from the party’s history, parliamentary business and recent years in government it seems highly unlikely that the SNP would accept an unlimited basing of Trident and its likely successor at Faslane and Coulport on the Clyde. The SNP has actually proposed to ban nuclear weapons on Scottish soil through including it in a written constitution (Scottish Government *Scotland’s Future: from the Referendum to*

*Independence and a Written Constitution*).<sup>35</sup> That in itself highlights the crucial point of the explicit sovereignty a national state has to rule in its own territory. Therefore, we find reason to conclude that any basing of nuclear weapons in Scotland for an unlimited time would not take place if the SNP was the sole negotiator on behalf of the Scottish government. A follow-up to such a claim would then be to figure out what possible alternatives the SNP and the rUK would have when negotiating.

We find that there are three alternative strategies for an SNP-led delegation. The first strategy involves demanding a safe removal of any nuclear weapons as soon as possible. If that was to be the outcome the consequence would almost certainly be a forced nuclear disarmament of the rUK. This was the conclusion in the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee's report from 2012, *The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident-Days or Decades?* They were given a timetable from the CND, which was in turn judged reasonable by several expert witnesses on the basis of both countries cooperating. It said that all nuclear warheads could be safely removed from Scotland within two years, while deactivating them could be done in a matter of days (House of Commons. Scottish Affairs Committee 9).

Consequently, the report concludes that:

If the Scottish Government insisted upon the removal of the nuclear deterrent from Faslane by the 'speediest safe transition' then it would mean the armed submarine on patrol would be recalled, and in effect, Continuous At Sea Deterrent would stop. The UK at that point would no longer be able to operate its nuclear deterrent and it is not clear how quickly the UK could restore Continuous At Sea Deterrence (13)

Interestingly, First Minister Alex Salmond has in interviews implied that this is in fact an expressed wish: 'Far better it was curtains for Trident, I would say' (Carrell "Independent Scotland would not house Trident missiles, says Alex Salmond"). This wish was restated in the November 2013 Scottish government's 670 page long White Paper *Scotland's Future* which we will look at in the last section of this chapter. The reason it would end in disarming the UK's nuclear deterrent comes down to there not being any alternative bases to Faslane and Coulport anywhere in the UK that could be used in the timeframe of two years. The first strategy could very likely lead to Scotland not obtaining membership to NATO. To re-quote *The Daily Telegraph* article's sources at the NATO headquarters: 'countries wanting to join

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<sup>35</sup> This was re-stated in a newly-released Scottish Government White Paper from November 2013 (*Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*).



are not allowed to “import” existing military or territorial disputes into the alliance’ (Johnson). To retaliate, the rUK could refuse to accept a Scottish membership. This does not mean that the SNP would automatically back down. Its current policy says quite explicitly:

An SNP government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons ... In the absence of such an agreement, Scotland will work with NATO as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme’ (Policy update, Appendix p.79).

Another possible SNP strategy would be to agree on a limited transition period to allow the rUK to find new sites and build suitable facilities. It is uncertain what the actual timeframe would be for a political process such as this. Finding new sites which are acceptable for the immediate surroundings, region and politicians, and then building these sites, could take a substantial amount of time. Experts claimed in the HoC Scottish Affairs Committee’s 2012 report that facilities could be finished in 10-20 years, but only at enormous cost. The lower end of that timescale is dependent on ‘an enormous amount of resources, no objections and cross-party support’ (18). William Walker<sup>36</sup> stated twenty years as a minimum (18). The House of Commons Defence Committee released its report on the implications of independence in September 2013, supporting the 2012 report that it ‘would take several years and billions of pounds’ to replicate Faslane and Coulport anywhere else in the UK (*The Defence Implications of Possible Scottish Independence* 34). The outcome of this strategy would therefore involve a continued Scottish nuclear base for the next two decades or so after Scotland obtained its independence. The next step for the SNP negotiators and leadership would be to first approach its national convention to get a majority agreeing on such a timescale. In the next general election they would then have to approach its supporters and voters with the prospect of another two decades of nuclear weapons on the Clyde. Based on how strongly rooted the anti-nuclear policy is in the party and amongst its core supporters it is at least doubtful if the party leadership would have the audacity to do it; the party would probably lose a substantial amount of votes as a result. The timespan required could therefore be too much for the SNP to accept, which could make this strategy a difficult one to implement. Even if the SNP was to agree on giving the rUK two decades to build and move their nuclear weapons from Scotland, the uncertainty of the rUK actually finding new sites could lead to the rUK deciding on not renewing the current Trident Missile System at all. In practice, then, the rUK would be given the right to keep the current system operational until it

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<sup>36</sup> William Walker, who co-wrote Chalmers and Walker’s *Uncharted Waters* from 2001.

reaches the end of its life. Such a strategy would most certainly make a Scottish NATO application less difficult than the first one, as a result of the Scottish government's apparent willingness to compromise. If the rUK were seen as not willing to compromise, they could easily be thought of as unfair by other non-nuclear NATO members.

A third SNP strategy would be dependent on the rUK deciding to give up its nuclear deterrent, thus solving the SNP's nuclear headache. If that was to be the outcome, a Scottish NATO membership would be seen as unproblematic, at least from a NATO perspective, as long as Scotland met all other military requirements. Scotland's opposition to nuclear weapons would not exclude Scotland from joining since there are several NATO members that oppose nuclear weapons both in principle and to having such weapons on their territory, Norway and Denmark serving as obvious examples. The likelihood of the rUK giving up its own deterrence is not discussed in this paper, but should not be discounted. As the Ministry of Defence wrote:

The UK Government has made it clear that it is not planning for Scottish independence. If the result of the referendum were to lead to the current situation being challenged, then options would be considered, but any alternative solution would come at huge cost. It would be an enormous exercise to reproduce the facilities elsewhere. It would cost billions of pounds and take many years (HM Government. Ministry of Defence 63).

This third alternative could be a more realistic alternative than perhaps most people acknowledge if cost estimates of a prospective relocation were deemed too high, seen in relations to a rUK defence budget possibly meeting demands of further budgetary cuts as a result of worsened economic prospects, or simply due to difficulties in finding suitable places anywhere else on the British isle.

### **The Scottish Government's November 2013 White Paper on Independence**

Two weeks before this thesis went to print, on 26 November 2013, the Scottish Government published its long-awaited White Paper headlined *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*. According to the SNP it was the 'most detailed blueprint for an independent country ever published' (Scottish Government "Press Release: Independence - 650 questions answered"; Salmond and Sturgeon), which is probably accurate since it stretched over 670 pages. Defence was of course one of the topics covered in a document which aimed at answering any questions doubters might have, while meeting allegations from

the unionist campaign. Defence issues are part of chapter six: 'International relations and defence', providing much of the same overall arguments that the SNP has earlier proclaimed, only more detailed. It spread over almost 20 pages and about 5.500 words, a substantial increase from the 2012 defence policy update which covered less than 800 words (see Appendix p.77-79)

The chapter begins by stating that defence is 'one of the most pressing reasons for independence' (*Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland* 232). The first argument it brings up is the case of nuclear weapons, both its moral wrongness and budgetary expenses, once again stressing its importance to the SNP. It is also identified as one of five defence priorities for an independent Scotland (237). The White Paper stated the following with direct regards to Trident removal:

This Scottish Government would make early agreement on the speediest safe removal of nuclear weapons a priority. This would be with a view to the removal of Trident within the first term of the Scottish Parliament following independence [which would end in May 2021].

The detailed process and timetable for removal would be a priority for negotiation between the Scottish Government and the Westminster Government. However we have noted the work undertaken by the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which suggests that Trident could be dismantled within two years (*Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland* 247).

If one was to analyse the wordings, one should note the firmness when it comes to the end goal of making Scotland a non-nuclear weapons state. Exactly when this would come about is vaguer, stating it is 'a priority' in an independence settlement, while pointing to a preferred timescale of 6-7 years at the most. The SNP's intentions, policy and stance in a possible settlement negotiation comply with the analysis given in this inquiry, looking fairly similar to the second negotiation strategy just outlined in the previous section, with a gradualist approach to the current Trident issue. The outcome, on the other hand, of the SNP's limited timeframe is more alike the first strategy which this thesis outlined; wanting it removed before 2021 would in reality involve disarming the UK due to the rUK needing at least 15-20 years to find new sites and build the complex facilities needed. Therefore, a timeframe of less than seven years would in practice not differ much from the CND's two-year timeframe. That this is seen as a welcomed outcome by the current SNP government can be found in part five

of the White Paper, the ‘Q&A’ section.<sup>37</sup> One of the sub-sections is titled ‘Nuclear weapons and disarmament,’ where question 314 asked if ‘the removal of Trident from Scotland [would] result in its decommissioning’ (475). The answer was that ‘it is the Scottish Government’s preference to see Trident decommissioned ...’ while at the same time underlining that this would in the end be up to the rUK government to decide. It does, however, highlight the SNP’s fundamental point of view when it comes to ridding Scotland of all nuclear weaponry.

If we look at the related issue of a Scottish NATO membership, the SNP seems to have done a slight policy change when it comes to obtaining membership, most likely after having met with NATO representatives:

Following a Yes vote in 2014, the Scottish Government will notify NATO of our intention to join the alliance and will negotiate our transition from being a NATO member as part of the UK to becoming an independent member of the alliance (250).

The new SNP stance is that it does not proclaim an automatic Scottish membership to the organisation as it previously has done; a Scottish application would be necessary, as many experts have claimed and as we discussed earlier. The essential point for the SNP, however, still lays firm:

Scotland would take its place as one of the many non-nuclear members of NATO. The Scottish Government is committed to securing the complete withdrawal of Trident from an independent Scotland as quickly as can be both safely and responsibly achieved (251).

The main text in the White Paper does not take issue with the possible dilemma of the rUK government (and possibly NATO) demanding a longer intermediate period before the rUK was forced to move its nuclear deterrent, or in worst case demand a permanent basing on the Clyde, as a premise of welcoming Scotland into the organisation. This is, however, touched upon in the Q&A section. Question 282 asks if ‘NATO members with nuclear-armed vessels [will] be allowed to enter Scottish waters or dock at Scottish ports’, whereby the SNP’s answer is that ‘it is our firm position that an independent Scotland should not host nuclear weapons and we would only join NATO on that basis’ (464). As a consequence, if the SNP has to choose between hosting nuclear weapons and join NATO or removing them while not

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<sup>37</sup> The Q&A, ‘questions and answers’ section consists of 650 questions and answers about independence, spread over 200 pages. Some answers are factual while others are answered by giving the current SNP government’s views.

becoming a member of NATO, the SNP is still quite explicit in its preference, as seen in its answer to question 285:<sup>38</sup>

The removal of Trident nuclear weapons from Scotland will require negotiation with Westminster and liaison with NATO. But the aim of the current Scottish Government is clear – to secure the speediest safe removal of Trident from Scotland and to join the 20 (of 28) countries who are members of NATO without either possessing or hosting nuclear weapons.

We believe that a non-nuclear independent Scotland operating within NATO will be preferable, to the UK, NATO, and our other neighbours and allies, to a non-nuclear Scotland outside of the alliance (Scottish Government *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland* 465).

The White Paper was received with both critical remarks and admirable praise, stressing how splitting the case of Scottish independence is. One of the most pronounced objections raised by journalists at the press conference on 26 November was the apparent lack of adverbs such as ‘perhaps’, ‘maybe’ or ‘fingers crossed’ (to use Nick Robinson’s wording).<sup>39</sup> The many critical remarks came about, as we see it, as a result of the 670 page document still being only the SNP’s approach to independence and not a final answer to how Scotland would look like after independence – as it arguably tries to convey. Too much would in the end depend on the rUK’s approach to the settlement negotiations and the compromises that is reached. This was a remark that William Walker also highlighted in an interview with the *BBC* (*BBC News Online* "Viewpoints: Experts on White Paper"). While one have to agree with the critical remarks, it should not be forgotten that any white paper made by only one of the two sides necessarily stresses its point of departure, especially considering that it involves the most dividing matter in British politics in a very long time.

In this second main chapter we have looked at how the Scottish National Party’s nuclear weapons and NATO policy developed in what this inquiry chose to call the party’s ‘governing period’. It also included a few defining years before the historic 2007 Scottish election victory where the SNP went through a ‘Transition to Power’. The years since Holyrood arranged its first debates have been the most exciting and significant in the party’s history. This has also had an impact on the two defence policy aspects analysed here, most clearly seen in last year’s policy update and the recently published White Paper on independence. The former

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<sup>38</sup> The question was: ‘Will NATO membership make it more difficult to secure the removal of Trident?’ (Question 285).

<sup>39</sup> BBC political editor. This quote is from the press conference which was streamed on the Scottish Government’s websites on 26 November 2013.

came as a consequence of the increased attention and pressure to portray a more coherent and credible defence policy, detailed out in the November 2013 White Paper. Wanting an independent Scotland to remain as a NATO member was the most significant new policy coming out of the 2012 SNP National Convention. Combined with a continued opposition to the UK's nuclear deterrent, we provided a discussion of the policies, which highlighted that this opposition should not be understated as we argue has been and still is the case in reports and among the few scholars that have done research on nuclear weapons and 'the Scottish Question'. This claim was not weakened by the Scottish Government's White Paper *Scotland's Future* released in November 2013, a few weeks before this thesis went to print.

# Chapter 4: Conclusion

The Scottish National Party celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, which could also be the beginning of an independent Scottish nation.<sup>40</sup> With that in mind, this inquiry wants to broach two of the most defining policies in the party's history, its opposition to nuclear weapons and to NATO. To be able to understand and analyse the policies of today we need to look at how they came about and which foundation they were built on. This investigation therefore set out to look at, discuss and analyse how these defence issues developed in the years since the SNP's national breakthrough in the late 1960s right up until today, leading up to a discussion of the current policy of opposing nuclear weapons while retaining a Scottish NATO membership.

The development up to the new millennium was covered in the second chapter. This was deemed a natural division line since the opening of the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, marked the start of a transition to what this inquiry has called 'the governing SNP'. In this chapter we could see that the two policy issues developed both in correlations with the more overall party policy phases, and separately from each other. The former was mostly visible in the 1979-83 parliamentary period. As was the case with many of the SNP's policies at the time, its nuclear weapons and NATO stand hardened and was seen as having a radical edge distinctly different from the years prior to the 1979 election and to some extent later years. That being said, this thesis found evidence suggesting that each policy issue had its own characteristic developments as well. The SNP's staunch opposition to nuclear weapons had its foundation in ethical considerations and thereby non-negotiable. That does not mean it was a static policy. There was an expansion in party focus and rhetoric when debating nuclear weapons, especially visible from the early 1980s and onwards; economic arguments against the UK deterrence supplied the moral ones. In the 1990s, this inquiry found evidence to suggest a change in rhetoric's as well, especially related to a more gradual approach to the issue of ridding Scotland of nuclear weapons, now wanting to negotiate with the rUK government in such a situation. Overall though, the SNP never forgot its principled basis for its political position.

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<sup>40</sup> The latest Ipsos MORI poll from 18 September 2013 found that 31 per cent would vote 'yes', 59 per cent 'no' and 10 per cent 'undecided' (<http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3267/No-change-in-Scottish-referendum-voting-intention.aspx>). *The Scotsman* released an opinion poll on 8 November where '29 per cent back independence and 47 per cent back the Union' (<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/scottish-independence-47-support-union-poll-1-3177800>)

Its NATO policy was far more shifting, especially up until the mid-1980s, shifting between being for or against a Scottish membership to the organisation. The persistent dilemma for the party was always due to NATO's persistence of basing its defence on nuclear weaponry. Since the 1981 national convention and until the 2012 equivalence, the SNP never wanted a Scotland to retain its membership as an independent state. Besides that, the attitude towards the organisation varied from being resolutely anti-NATO in the early 80s to wanting a membership of the Partnership for Peace programme.

Chapter 3 covered what we see as 'the governing SNP', including the defining years since devolution in 1999. With this chapter we wanted to give more emphasis to the process leading up to today's situation with a majority SNP-led Scottish government, arranging the referendum in 2014, and point to the more central reasons why the SNP issued an updated defence profile in 2012, more or less continued in the November 2013 White Paper on Independence. The period between the late 1990s and 2012 was characterised by the policies steadfastness; no major adjustments in either issue. This matched the more stable political situation in the party's other policy areas as the SNP found its space in the political establishment in the years following devolution. The Trident debate between 2005 and 2007 ensured a renewed attention to the role of nuclear weapons and must be seen as a defining debate for the SNP. It managed to create distance between the SNP and Labour, helping to secure the 2007 Scottish election victory. Winning re-election as a majority party in Holyrood four years later was a historical achievement. The 2011 win marked the start of increased media and political pressure on the SNP to provide the public with information on how Scotland might defend itself if the outcome is independence. As a result, the SNP seem to have felt pressured to update and promote a more substantial defence policy, now suggesting a continued Scottish NATO membership on condition of removing all nuclear weapons from its shores.

On the basis of these findings there are a few remarks that we believe have either been understated or overstated by both earlier and current scholars, political commentators and opponents. When it comes to the SNP's nuclear weapons policy, this inquiry would claim that it's sincere and morally-founded opposition has often been understated, especially noticeable in the current public debate and recent reports which analyse Scotland's possible defence options. Most of the contributions this thesis has looked at assumed that the SNP would give up its opposition and allow the rUK to keep Trident at the Clyde simply because the rUK and



NATO would want to keep it there. They analyse the party's NATO position on equal standing as its attitudes to nuclear weapons. Based on the research and discussion done here, we are not convinced that such an outcome is the only likely outcome and would claim that the SNP is less pro-NATO than the media debate and military reports have based their analysis on. That is why we wanted to include our alternative strategies which an SNP delegation could take assuming that a majority SNP government would not accept a permanent basing of Trident and its possible successor. We do not find that this section was weakened by the latest and most detailed post-independence plan from the SNP, the independence white paper, rather the opposite.

Another interesting find is the connection between the current policy situation and previous ones. In the 1970s the SNP wanted to retain Scotland's NATO membership conditional of Scotland getting rid of all nuclear weapons, a stand identical to the 2012 defence policy update. Both the 1970s' policy and the present policy use[d] Denmark and Norway as the foremost examples of how Scotland would find its role within the organisation; they would all be non-nuclear states with similar-sized populations, military capacities and a shared geographical position. The First Minister Alex Salmond has stated that an independent Scotland would turn its gaze to the north, stressing its connections with its Scandinavian neighbours when it comes to defence policy. This seems to correlate with the party tactics on other policy areas as well, though not explicitly discussed in this thesis. Another similarity is related to the initiators to a policy update when it comes to the SNP's approach to NATO; in the 1980s, Gordon Wilson, then party leader, was the one pushing for a change in its NATO policy. This relates to the recent development, where the leadership was the driving force behind the 2012 modification, though this time around rather successful. The reasons were probably the same in both situations in wanting to ensure that the SNP was less likely to be classified as weak on security and defence if it embraced NATO on its own conditions.

At the very end, we need to give some pointers to future research and what we see as fruitful objectives to study further. We wrote in the introductory chapter about the lack of academic interest thus far, consequently limiting the amount of sources which have challenged and raised new questions related to specific SNP policy areas, not least its defence policies. This study wanted to give a greater understanding with respect to two of the party's most defining policies. The relatively narrow scope, analysing the development of two sub-policies, means that there are several aspects of the SNP's overall defence policy which could be interesting

to research, such as giving a full analysis of how the SNP sets out a Scottish Defence Force (SDF) in the latest White Paper from November 2013. One could do a comparison to military reports on the reality of the SNP's envisioned SDF and discuss if it is a realistic 'blue-print' of a Scottish defence. Another interesting study, more related to the topic of this thesis, could be to look at how the party's nuclear weapons and NATO policy develops as a result of the 2014 referendum. In case of independence there would be a need to discuss the settlement negotiation, both the process and outcome. Did the SNP, as an example, give way to the rUK's need to base its deterrent in Scotland? If so, why and what did they gain? How did the party and voters react? If they remained firm; how did that affect Scotland's relationship to the rUK and NATO? If Scotland was to continue within the UK, a similar study could be undertaken, studying how the two policies developed; perhaps was the pro-NATO policy yet again altered to a more critical stance?

The independence referendum on 18 September 2014 could be a historic new beginning for British society - or it could be a forceful reminder of how strong the historical, cultural and political bonds the Scots share with their fellow citizens south of the Scottish border. No matter the outcome, the Scottish National Party will play an important political role in the coming years.

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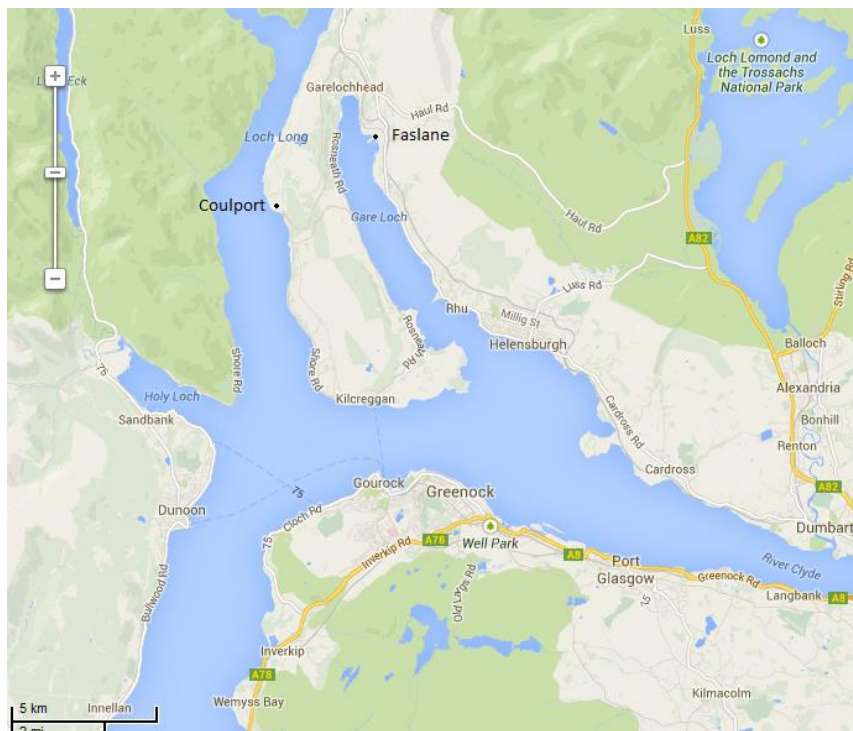
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# Appendix

Map 1: The UK



Map 2: The Firth of Clyde



Source: Google Maps (<https://maps.google.co.uk/>)

**Table 1: SNP candidates and share of the vote in UK general elections, 1966-2010**

<b>Election</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Lost deposits</b>	<b>Share of Scottish vote (%)</b>	<b>Mean vote in seats contested</b>	<b>Seats</b>
1966	23	10	5.0	14.1	0
1970	65	43	11.4	12.8	1
1974 (Feb.)	70	7	21.9	22.1	7
1974 (Oct.)	71	0	30.4	30.4	11
1979	71	29	17.3	17.3	2
1983	72	53	11.8	11.8	2
1987	71	1	14.0	14.1	3
1992	72	0	21.5	21.5	3
1997	72	0	21.9	21.9	6
2001	72	0	21.1	21.1	4
2005	59	0	17.7	17.7	6
2010	59	0	19.9	19.9	6

Source: Mitchell, Bennie and Johns (21)

**Table 2: Results of Scottish Parliament elections, 1999-2007**

<b>Elections</b>	<b>Constituencies</b>		<b>Regional list</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Votes (%)</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Votes (%)</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Votes (%)</b>	<b>Seats</b>
1999	28.7	7	27.0	28	27.1	35
2003	23.8	9	20.9	18	20.9	27
2007	32.9	21	31.0	26	36.4	47
2011	53.5	53	45.4	16	44.0	69

Source: (Scottish Parliament "2011 Election Results: Results Analysis") election result website

## **Scottish Parliamentary motions and voting results: Trident debates 2005-2007**

### **24 March 2005: Motion S2M-2640 lodged by Roseanna Cunningham (SNP):**

I move,

That the Parliament is opposed to the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Scotland; believes that the existing Trident nuclear system which costs almost £1 billion annually to keep in operation should be scrapped; recognises that a decision on the replacement of Trident will require to be taken within the next UK Parliament; further recognises that the cost of replacing Trident would be over £20 billion, and wishes to register strong opposition to any proposal by Her Majesty's Government to procure a replacement for the Trident nuclear system.

*Motion S2M-2640.4 (amendment) proposed by Scott Barrie (Labour):*

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges that defence and national security are matters reserved to the UK Parliament and acknowledges, in the words of the Government's Strategic Defence Review, "the goal of the global elimination of nuclear weapons"; welcomes the many moves taken to reduce the number of weapons in the world including UK support for the convention to ban anti-personnel landmines, end-user certificates and other restrictions on the arms trade and the significant reductions in the UK's nuclear weapons stockpile; notes the position of the Scottish National Party, in favour of withdrawal from the United Kingdom and NATO; recognises that withdrawal from the United Kingdom and from NATO would put at risk 25,000 direct MoD jobs in Scotland, 6,000 more dependent on MoD contracts and 12,000 more jobs supported by the military presence, and notes that between 2000 and 2004 the MoD placed 2,500 contracts in Scotland worth around £2 billion, all of which would be at risk under the SNP.

*Amendment was passed:* 59 for, 50 against, 1 abstained. Only Labour and Conservative MSPs voted for the amendment.

### **04 May 2006: Motion S2M-3866 lodged by Chris Balance (Scottish Green Party):**

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the United Kingdom should not seek to replace the Trident nuclear missile system; notes that in 2005 the UK Government reaffirmed its commitment to all its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1967 (NPT), including its legally binding obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith; agrees with the

legal opinion of Rabinder Singh QC and Professor Christine Chinkin of Matrix Chambers on 19 December 2005 that any replacement of the Trident system would constitute a material breach of Article VI of the NPT, and calls on the Scottish Executive to seek an early assurance from the UK Government that it will fully comply with our legal obligations in respect of the NPT and that it will not seek to replace the Trident nuclear missile system with another weapon system of mass destruction.

*The motion was not agreed to*, with several amendments being proposed and voted down.

**28 September 2006: Motion S2M-4864 lodged by Roseanna Cunningham (SNP):**

I move,

That the Parliament believes that there is no justification for the renewal or replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system.

*Motion was not agreed to*, with several amendments being proposed and voted down. One amendment was voted down: 56 for, 57 against, 4 Labour MSPs abstained to vote.

**21 December 2006: Motion S2M-5355 lodged by Nicola Sturgeon (SNP):**

I move,

That the Parliament notes the publication by the UK Government of its White Paper on the future of the Trident nuclear missile system on Monday 4 December 2006; recognises the need for a full debate to explore the military, economic and political consequences of Trident renewal and believes that a convincing case can be made, in military, economic and political terms, for the non-replacement of Trident, and calls on the UK Government not to go ahead at this time with the proposal in the White Paper.

*Motion was not agreed to*, with several amendments being proposed and voted down.

**14 June 2007: Motion S3M-169 lodged by Patrick Harvie (Scottish Green Party):**

I move,

That the Parliament congratulates the majority of Scottish MPs for voting on 14 March 2007 to reject the replacement of Trident and calls on the UK Government not to go ahead at this time with the proposal in the White Paper, The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent.

*Motion S3M-169.4 (amendment) proposed by Mike Rumbles (Liberal Democrats):*

I move,

That the Parliament congratulates the majority of Scottish MPs for voting on 14 March 2007 to reject the replacement of Trident, recognises that decisions on matters of defence are matters within the responsibility of the UK Government and Parliament and calls on the UK Government not to go ahead at this time with the proposal in the White Paper, *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*.

*The amended motion was agreed to: 71 for (SNP, SGP, LD and some Labour MSPs), 16 against (Conservative MSPs), 39 abstained to vote (Labour MSPs).*

Source: Scottish Parliament Official Report for the given dates.



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

### **October 2012**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A long-standing national consensus has existed that Scotland should not host nuclear weapons and a sovereign SNP government will negotiate the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane which will be replaced by conventional naval forces.

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

independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO. An SNP government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty of which all its members are signatories, and further that NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in Unsanctioned operations. In the absence of such an agreement, Scotland will work with NATO as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme like Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland. Scotland will be a full member of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE).