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Evaluating the SNP's Defence Policy Vision for an Independent Scotland: Suitability for Foreign Policy and International Dynamics

Abstract. This paper offers a thorough assessment of the Scottish National Party's (SNP) defence strategy, as expressed within the framework of its vision for a self-governing Scotland. The analysis rigorously evaluates the degree to which the SNP's planned defence strategy is in line with and reinforces its broader foreign policy goals within the context of international relations. The SNP's defence policy revolves around three key commitments: the creation of a conventional defence force, a significant focus on maritime security, and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons from Scottish land. However, this vision is not without its challenges. The article examines the significant internal and external obstacles, such as resource constraints, the requirement for political agreement, and the possibility of relying on the remaining military forces of the United Kingdom. These challenges highlight the potential difficulties in implementing the SNP's defence policy. Furthermore, the paper explores the complexities associated with Scotland's prospective membership in NATO and the European Union, as well as the broader implications for its international standing. The findings indicate that although the SNP's defence policy is ambitious and ideologically consistent, substantial strategic modifications are needed to make it feasible and efficient.

Keywords: Scottish National Party (SNP); defence policy; Scottish independence; foreign policy; nuclear disarmament; NATO; international relations; military capabilities; strategic defence.

1. Introduction

The defence policy of the Scottish National Party (SNP) plays a pivotal role in its broader vision for an independent Scotland, seeking to establish a distinctly Scottish security framework that reflects the nation's global aspirations. At the core of this policy is a clear and resolute rejection of nuclear deterrence. The SNP wants a traditional defence force that is tailored to Scotland's unique security needs. This way of doing things makes it clear that Scotland wants to be a peaceful, non-nuclear state that works to keep the peace around the world and make sure things stay stable in Northern Europe.

As part of its defence policy, the SNP wants to create a small but effective Scottish Defence Force (SDF). The main goals would be to protect maritime areas, keep territorial borders safe, and take an active role in international peacekeeping missions. Although the SNP says it will stay neutral on nuclear issues, it does plan to apply to join NATO. This view has caused a lot of debate in Scotland and around the world.

This paper seeks to critically assess the suitability of the SNP's defence policy in advancing Scotland's foreign policy objectives within the complex dynamics of international relations. This analysis will evaluate key policy components, including the proposed strategic defence review, the economic consequences of transitioning Scotland's defence industry, and the geopolitical challenges presented by the UK's remaining influence. The objective is to offer a detailed comprehension of how Scotland's defence policy would operate in reality and to what degree it aligns with the overarching aim of establishing a sovereign and globally esteemed Scotland.

2. Key Aspects of the SNP's Defence Policy

The SNP's defence strategy is not just about security but also about aligning with its broader political goals. This approach is distinct and tailored to Scotland's specific needs, with a strong emphasis on maritime security, international peacekeeping, and responsible defence funding. The SNP's defence policy reflects its broader political goals, particularly its advocacy for Scottish independence. Here are the critical aspects of this unique defence policy:

► **Focus on a Conventional Defence Force:**

The SNP wants Scotland to have a regular defence force if it becomes independent. Instead of being part of the UK's overall defence system, this force would be set up based on Scotland's specific needs and security worries.

The proposed Scottish Defence Force (SDF) would be moderate in size and specifically designed to meet Scotland's geographical and strategic requirements. Its primary focus would be safeguarding territorial boundaries, ensuring maritime security, and actively participating in international peacekeeping endeavours.

► **Nuclear Disarmament and Opposition to Trident:**

A cornerstone of the SNP's defence policy is its strong opposition to nuclear weapons. The party is committed to the removal of the Trident nuclear missile system¹ from Scottish territory, viewing atomic disarmament as a moral and strategic imperative (Grant, 2013).

The Scottish National Party's (SNP) anti-nuclear stance has its origins in the pacifist movement and the Scottish people's rejection of the United Kingdom's nuclear facilities in Holy Loch and Faslane, which date back to the 1960s. As nuclear weapons were considered an infringement by the British government, this attitude was morally justified and connected to Scottish sovereignty. While Gordon Wilson attempted to sway the SNP towards NATO in the 1980s, disarmament remained central to Scottish identity, and the party's anti-nuclear position conflicted with NATO's nuclear deterrent policy. Many people in the party, including John Finnie, quit in protest at this policy change, which was made for political reasons before the 2014 independence vote. The SNP's stance against nukes and NATO's reliance on deterrence are at odds with each other because many Scots support NATO but are against nukes (Wilson, 2024).

Since the SNP has changed its mind a lot, it has gained credibility in the defence sector but also caused a lot of heated debate, especially about Scotland's long-term role in the UK's Trident nuclear program and how that might affect the possibility of Scotland becoming independent.

¹ Trident is an operational system of four Vanguard-class submarines armed with Trident II D-5 ballistic missiles designed to deliver thermonuclear warheads. See Grant (2013), especially chapter IV, 68, for more information regarding the removal of the Trident nuclear deterrent.

There is also political unease about what might happen to the rest of the UK (rUK), which depends on the Faslane base as a nuclear safeguard. Some SNP members, like Alex Salmond, have said that getting rid of Scotland's nuclear weapons could start a larger process of disarmament in the UK and maybe even France. Nevertheless, people who are against it, like former politicians Liam Fox and Malcolm Rifkind, have said that it could be seen as hypocritical for Scotland to want to stay under NATO's nuclear cover while giving up its own nuclear weapons (Grant, 2013).

► **NATO Membership:**

While opposing nuclear weapons, the SNP supports Scotland's membership in NATO², recognising the benefits of collective security. Nevertheless, this position has sparked controversy inside the party and among the Scottish people, primarily since NATO is an alliance equipped with nuclear weapons.

The SNP's policy proposes that if Scotland becomes independent, it will pursue NATO membership on the condition that it does not allow nuclear weapons on its territory, similar to the position of other NATO members who do not possess nuclear weapons, such as Norway or Denmark.

► **Strategic Defence Review:**

The SNP wants a full Strategic Defence Review (SDR) for a Scotland that is independent. The goal of this review is to find out what Scotland's security needs are and what the best size, organisation, and roles should be for the Scottish Defence Force (SDF).

The SDR would investigate the possibility of defence collaboration with neighbouring nations and international entities, highlighting Scotland's contribution to regional security.

► **Emphasis on Maritime Security:**

Given Scotland's extensive coastline and maritime interests, the SNP significantly emphasises maritime security. The proposed SDF would likely have a strong naval component to protect Scotland's maritime borders, fisheries, and energy infrastructure. The policy also suggests the potential for

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization – a collective defence military alliance formed in 1949.

cooperation with other North Atlantic nations³ on marine patrol⁴ and surveillance.

► **Economic Impact and Defence Industry:**

The SNP recognises the economic ramifications of defence policy, specifically the possible effects on Scotland's defence sector and associated employment.

The party's agenda aims to facilitate the shift of Scotland's defence industry from its current focus on supplying the UK military to serving the SDF and maybe other global markets. This would require a change in emphasis from high-end, large-scale weaponry to defence technology that is better suited to Scotland's requirements.

► **International Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Missions:**

The SNP's defence policy highlights a commitment to contributing to international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, reflecting Scotland's desired role as a responsible global actor. The SDF would be structured to participate in such missions in cooperation with the United Nations and other international bodies.

► **Defence Spending and Budgeting:**

The SNP advocates for a defence budget proportional to Scotland's size and economic capacity, with the goal of finding a balance between essential defence expenditures and other public priorities.

The policy suggests that an independent Scotland would aim for a defence budget similar to that of other small, non-nuclear European countries⁵.

³ As of today, there are 32 countries that are members of NATO. They are mostly from North America and Europe. See NATO. (2024, March 11), *NATO member countries*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

⁴ The NATO maritime domain is aimed at three functions: strategic, security and war-fighting. The maritime patrol ensures this function. See NATO. (2023, August 03), *NATO's maritime activities*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_70759.htm for more information.

⁵ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Italy are the notable European nations that are pro-nuclear disarmament. See more at United Nations, *United Nations Disarmament Commission*. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/institutions/disarmament-commission/>.

► **Collaboration with Neighbouring Countries:**

In line with its emphasis on diplomacy, the SNP supports collaboration with neighbouring countries, particularly in the Nordic and Baltic regions⁶, to address shared security challenges. The party envisions close cooperation with the rest of the UK on defence matters, even in the event of independence.

Overall, the SNP's defence strategy is influenced by its vision of an autonomous Scotland dedicated to global peace, security, and prudent use of defence resources. The SNP's defence policy is characterized by three essential characteristics that embody a uniquely Scottish approach. These aspects include focusing on non-nuclear status, developing conventional forces specifically designed to meet Scotland's requirements, and a strong dedication to promoting world peace and security.

3. Internal and External Obstacles to Achieving SNP's Defence Policy Aims

As Scotland contemplates the possibility of independence, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has outlined an ambitious defence policy aimed at ensuring the security and sovereignty of the nation. However, significant internal and external challenges stand in the way of achieving these goals.

► **Internal Obstacles**

■ **Resource Limitations:**

The SNP's ambitious defence plans include significant investments in defence infrastructure, workforce, and equipment, such as frigates, submarines, and aviation capabilities.

The SNP intends to allot approximately **£2.5 billion a year** for defence, a substantially smaller amount than the UK. The initial £2.5 billion cash commitment might strain Scotland's finances, especially in light of other post-independence priority areas. Opponents claim that this budget, especially considering rising personnel costs, may not cover the planned force

⁶ See Mary Hilson (2019, 25 February), *The Nordic Region*. Nordic region is defined as consisting of five sovereign states: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are labeled as Baltic states. For more information, see Romuald J. Misiunas, James H. Bater (2024, August 14), *Baltic States*.

structure and operating expenses (Dorman, 2014). It is because when compared to the present British defence budget, the pay needed to recruit personnel for the Scottish military forces is likely to be greater. It is already difficult for the present British military forces to recruit new members. Therefore, the Scottish government would need to increase wages to compete. That means less money for weapons and operations and more for personnel in the defence budget.

Furthermore, the Scottish infantry units have had trouble recruiting in the past. In the past few years, not many people have been hired from Scotland. Only 6.6% of officers and 6.5% of other ranks have been hired from Scotland, which is much less than the rest of the UK. This means that Scotland will have a hard time reaching its goal of building a permanent force of 15,000 soldiers and an extra 5,000 in reserves (Dorman, 2014).

Additionally, given that most of the UK's military training facilities are located outside of Scotland, a newly independent nation would have to make substantial investments in building its own training infrastructure or negotiate continuous access to these facilities with the UK. Personnel and operational expenses would rise even more as a result of this.

Any economic downturn or unforeseen expenses could strain resources. Strong economic policies and efficient administration are necessary to fully realise the financial benefits of leasing bases and guarantee that they sufficiently support the defence budget (Crawford & Marsh, 2012).

Moreover, a lack of a defined strategic direction results from the SNP's Growth Commission report's contradictory defence budget and force size assumptions. This discrepancy may compromise the integrity and viability of their defence strategies.

According to *Cameron*⁷, the SNP's defence budget and manpower levels are not supported by in-depth strategic analyses. He raises doubts about the viability of attaining the desired defence capabilities within the allocated budget, pointing to possible cost understatements and capability overestimations (*UK Defence Journal*, 2018).

Additionally, the average compensation of £20,000 for military personnel is substantially less than what is required, indicating a misinterpretation of defence economics. Besides, local procurement laws may restrict access to cutting-edge machinery and technologies now provided by UK partnerships

⁷ A former British Army officer and the founder of Scotland in union.

(*UK Defence Journal*, 2018). Spreading overhead costs over a smaller force would be challenging due to Scotland's lack of economies of scale compared to the UK (*Scotland analysis*, 2014).

■ **Public Opinion & Political Consensus:**

Achieving political consensus within Scotland on the SDF's size, scope, and function might be difficult. Different political factions and public opinions may have varying priorities and visions for the defence policy. Ensuring sustained political support and public backing for defence spending and policies is crucial for the SDF's long-term success.

The idea of leasing military bases to other countries, particularly the rUK⁸ or NATO, may not be universally accepted within Scotland. The SNP's own CND paper, "Guantanamo on the Clyde"⁹, opposes such arrangements, reflecting a faction within the party and public that may resist prolonged foreign military presence (Allison, 2020).

In Scotland, there is a great deal of controversy around nuclear weapons, especially the Trident submarines at HMNB Clyde¹⁰ (Allison, 2020). It may have an impact on political agreement and popular support for the SNP's defence plans. Resistance may result in political difficulties and possible postponements or limitations on executing defence plans pertaining to base usage and nuclear disarmament.

Senior military officers, legislators, and government officials diverge significantly on the objectives and parameters of the Integrated Security, Defence, and Foreign Policy Review. Essential decision-making procedures have already been delayed due to this internal strife (*UK Defence and Security Review*, 2020).

⁸ rUK- The rest of the UK (discounting Scotland)

⁹ SNPCND (Scottish National Party Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) is a group for SNP members who are also members of Scottish CND, working to achieve a nuclear weapon-free, independent Scotland. "Nuclear Guantanamo on the Clyde: The plans to keep Trident on the Clyde in an independent Scotland" is one of their papers published in July 2020. [nuclear-guantanamo-on-the-clyde-v9.pdf \(snpcnd.scot\)](#)

¹⁰ His Majesty's Naval Base, Clyde, is one of three operating bases in the UK for the Royal Navy.

■ ***Dependence on rUK Military Capabilities:***

Following independence, it is unclear what will happen to Scotland's defence industry. The industry depends heavily on contracts from the UK Ministry of Defence, and the loss of these contracts might have a substantial negative impact on the economy and job market. The SNP's interest in cooperative procurement with other nations is thought to be a sensible strategy, but it needs to be well-planned to prevent delays and cost overruns.

A well-funded, unified system supports the UK's fleet of modern fighter jets (like Eurofighter Typhoons), naval ships, and nuclear deterrents (Trident submarines). On the other hand, the proposed forces in the defence policy consist of a small air force (six Hercules C-130J transport planes and twelve Eurofighter Typhoons), a limited navy (two Type 23 frigates, four mine countermeasures vessels, and four to six patrol boats), and an initial army brigade (Dorman, 2014). There are concerns over these troops' capacity to carry out all required defence duties, such as conducting operations abroad and promptly responding to crises.

A significant component of the SNP's security strategy is its reliance on standard military bases and capabilities with the rest of the United Kingdom. If Scotland and the rUK have different foreign policy goals, this might give one side a veto over the other's defence initiatives (Grant, 2013).

Moreover, since it would no longer be qualified for UK defence contracts or gain from the UK's worldwide defence engagement and reputation, the survival of the defence sector in an independent Scottish state may be a worry.

► **External Obstacles**

■ ***International Perceptions and Relationships:***

Scotland's ties with its neighbours, especially the UK as a whole, would be crucial. After independence, negotiating defence and security cooperation agreements may present difficult diplomatic situations.

The UK's status as a significant global player enhances its capacity to influence international affairs. An independent Scotland, as a smaller state, would inherently have less leverage and fewer opportunities to shape international policy and decisions, impacting its ability to protect and promote its national interests on the global stage. It would lose the influence derived from the UK's established status within the international system. Scotland

would need to start from scratch in forming alliances, building relationships, and forging its international reputation.

Furthermore, reaching agreements with the UK on leasing arrangements, especially regarding sensitive sites like HMNB Clyde, will require delicate diplomacy and may face resistance from UK policymakers (Crawford & Marsh, 2012).

Following independence, Scotland would have to bargain with the UK over shared defence facilities like HMNB Clyde and RAF Lossiemouth¹¹ and more extensive defence cooperation inside NATO (Allison, 2020).

If there are conflicts regarding the existence of nuclear submarines, defence commitments, or asset sharing, negotiating these issues may prove difficult. This may have an impact on Scotland's defence strategy and capacity to function within larger defence frameworks.

■ *NATO & European Union (EU) Consideration:*

The SNP assumes that an independent Scotland would inherit membership in both NATO and the EU, but this is contested by the UK government and various international bodies. Although Scotland's automatic admittance to these organisations is dubious, membership in them is essential for maintaining international cooperation and collective security.

However, the stance on nuclear weapons and leasing bases will impact Scotland's relationship with NATO. There is a contentious issue regarding the hosting of nuclear submarines at Faslane. This stance might not be okay with NATO because taking away the UK's nuclear deterrent from Scotland could make the UK rethink its own nuclear strategy. The UK may not be able to build similar facilities to those at Faslane quickly. This could have strategic effects on NATO's nuclear weapons as a whole. Members of NATO, especially the US, might be hesitant to accept a new member that is against nuclear power but hosts important NATO assets like Faslane.

¹¹ Royal Air Force Lossiemouth in Moray, north-east Scotland, is one of the two RAW Quick Reaction Alert stations which protect UK Airspace. See more information at: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/stations/raf-lossiemouth/>.

While McDonald¹² prefers a nuclear-free Scotland, McEleny¹³ proposes a phased withdrawal of nuclear assets based on agreements and timetables – defence. Nevertheless, an independent Scotland must navigate the complex process of gaining NATO membership while possibly opposing nuclear deterrence (Allison, 2020).

Cameron doubts NATO would readily accept an independent Scotland due to its potentially weakened defence posture and reduced budget compared to the 2% GDP expectation for NATO members. He also notes the ambiguity regarding Scotland's EU membership and potential conflicts with EU requirements (*UK Defence Journal*, 2018).

Legal and political facts also call into question the idea that Scotland could immediately become a member of NATO. Scotland would have to ask to join NATO and get approval from all current members. Some members, like Spain, might not let Scotland join because they do not want to support separatist movements in their own countries, like Catalonia.

Moreover, Brexit¹⁴ has complicated Scotland's potential path to EU membership, and integrating into EU defence structures may require adherence to EU defence policies that could conflict with SNP's national defence priorities. If Scotland wanted to join the EU, it would have to match its defence policies with those of the EU. This could cause problems with the SNP's plans for national defence. For instance, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) calls for defence cooperation and joint military operations. This could mean that Scotland needs to give more resources than its small defence budget allows.

■ *Geopolitical Uncertainty:*

Global and regional security dynamics could impact Scotland's defence policy. Unpredictable geopolitical events or shifts in international alliances could necessitate rapid defence strategy and expenditure adjustments.

¹² SNP Defence Spokesman and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee Stewart McDonald MP.

¹³ Cllr Chris McEleny, a former defence worker and a member of the Scottish Shipbuilding and Aerospace Committee for a number of years.

¹⁴ Britain's Exit or Brexit was the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union which officially took place on 31 January, 2020. The UK has been the only sovereign nation to have withdrawn from EU.

Dependence on global supply chains for military equipment and technology could expose Scotland to vulnerabilities in times of international trade tensions or conflicts (Crawford & Marsh, 2012).

The geopolitical landscape could expose Scotland to new strategic vulnerabilities. As already mentioned, Scotland's desire to have nuclear weapons removed from its territory could cause the possible postponement of its entrance to NATO. If the talks drag on, Scotland will no longer have the full protection provided by NATO, which might undermine its security position. When countries like Montenegro joined NATO, the process involved several years of negotiations and reforms to meet NATO's defence standards. A similar situation would likely arise for Scotland.

Besides, without a full range of military power, Scotland will have to rely on allies to protect its national security, especially in areas like air defence and maritime security. This dependence could leave Scotland open to threats from other countries, especially if political ties break down or if there are wars in the North Atlantic.

During the transition time, Scotland's economy could be put under a lot of stress, leaving it open to economic pressure from bigger countries or instability caused by changes to the defence budget. Furthermore, internally, there could be significant political and public opposition to the continued presence of UK or NATO military assets, especially nuclear weapons. This could lead to domestic instability and protests. The Scottish government would face pressure from factions advocating for complete demilitarization or non-alignment, potentially weakening its position in negotiations with the UK or NATO.

Ensuring robust defence capabilities in such a scenario requires sustained investment and international cooperation. Emerging global threats, such as cyber-attacks or terrorism, necessitate advanced and adaptive defence mechanisms, which might strain an independent Scotland's proposed budget and resources.

4. Suitability for Foreign Policy and International Relations

The SNP encounters significant challenges in aligning its defence policy with the broader foreign policy objectives essential for an autonomous Scotland. The SNP's goal for Scotland to have a regional role in Northern Europe is not supported by a comprehensive defence policy that includes necessary

tactics and risk assessments to guarantee national security and effective international participation. In addition, it lacks concrete strategies for achieving its diplomatic objectives or engaging in humanitarian endeavors. This section analyzes the key concerns in the SNP's defence strategy pertaining to its appropriateness for foreign policy and international relations.

► **Establishing New Alliances and Partnerships**

As discussed earlier, an independent Scotland must establish new international alliances and partnerships to ensure its security and influence. The existing UK alliances, such as NATO and strategic partnerships with global powers, provide substantial benefits that Scotland would no longer automatically enjoy. Establishing equivalent relationships would be challenging and time-consuming.

■ ***Impact on Foreign Policy***

While ensuring parliamentary oversight, the “triple lock” mechanism¹⁵ may reduce Scotland's armed forces' adaptability and rapid responsiveness in critical situations, affecting international joint operations and crisis management (Dorman, 2014). Before sending Scottish troops abroad, the system that the Scottish government wants to use for authorizing military activities would need to be approved by parliament, agreed upon by the government, and in line with the UN Charter. This gives much oversight undoubtedly, but it might make Scotland's military less flexible and quick to act in foreign crises that happen quickly. As an example, if Scotland wanted to help with operations led by NATO or the EU, the triple lock might take longer to make decisions and make it harder for Scotland to participate in joint military actions successfully. This might make Scotland less appealing as a reliable partner in foreign groups.

Moreover, the delay in forming new alliances could leave Scotland vulnerable in the initial years of independence, reducing its ability to engage in international diplomacy and protect its national interests effectively.

¹⁵ The triple lock states that the use of Scotland's armed forces must be: 1) in accord with the UN Charter; 2) properly agreed by the Scottish government; 3) approved by the Scottish parliament.

► **Reduced Global Influence**

The UK's status as a significant global player enhances its capacity to influence international affairs. An independent Scotland, with a smaller economy and military, would inherently have less leverage on the global stage.

■ *Impact on Foreign Policy*

Scotland's reduced influence could limit its ability to contribute to and shape international policies and agreements. Moreover, without clear and immediate membership in NATO and the EU, Scotland's ability to exert influence in international forums would be limited. Scotland might struggle to secure a seat at the table in key international defence and security discussions, which could affect its ability to protect its national interests, particularly in the early years of independence. This diminished role could impact its foreign policy objectives, particularly in areas requiring strong international collaboration.

► **Dependence on External Allies**

Smaller states often rely heavily on the goodwill and support of more prominent allies for their security. This dependence could constrain Scotland's foreign policy flexibility, making it more susceptible to external pressures and less able to pursue an independent course.

■ *Impact on Foreign Policy*

Scotland might have to align its foreign policy with the interests of more powerful states, reducing its ability to pursue a truly independent course. This could constrain Scotland's diplomatic flexibility, especially when larger allies' interests diverge from Scotland's own. Scotland's reliance on more significant allies could lead to compromises in its foreign policy, as it may need to align more closely with the interests of these allies. This dependency could limit Scotland's ability to assert its own priorities in international affairs. For instance, Norway, despite being a NATO member, often has to balance its own foreign policy with that of its more powerful NATO allies, particularly the US and the UK. As Norway is an important part of the security of the area and its economy depends on exports, especially oil and gas, it needs to keep good relationships with these bigger countries. This dependence makes it harder for Norway to make decisions that might go against the strategic

goals of the US or UK, especially when it comes to military action or planning for regional defence (Almliid, 2024).

► **Competitive International Defence Market**

The Scottish defence industry would need to compete in a global market dominated by major economic powers. This increased competition could hinder Scotland's ability to secure lucrative defence contracts, impacting its financial stability and defence capabilities.

■ ***Impact on Foreign Policy***

Economic challenges in the defence sector could weaken Scotland's overall defence posture, reducing its ability to contribute to international security initiatives. This limitation could affect its standing and influence in global organisations and alliances.

► **Economic Scale and Defence Capabilities**

The economies of scale¹⁶ provided by the UK's integrated defence system offer substantial benefits, including cost efficiencies and comprehensive capabilities. An independent Scotland must replicate these capabilities on a smaller budget, potentially compromising its defence effectiveness.

■ ***Impact on Foreign Policy***

Budgetary constraints could limit Scotland's ability to maintain a robust and versatile defence force, impacting its participation in international military operations and peacekeeping missions. This reduced capability could diminish Scotland's influence and credibility in international forums.

5. Conclusion

The defence policy of the Scottish National Party for an independent Scotland is ambitious, as it aims to establish a unique and non-nuclear character for the nation in the global arena. Nevertheless, the implementation of

¹⁶ For more information, see HM Government. (2023, March). *Integrated Review Refresh 2023*.

this policy encounters substantial obstacles that have the potential to compromise its efficacy. Internally, the suggested allocation of funds for defence and the size of the Scottish Defence Force (SDF) could not be enough to fulfil the strategic requirements of a sovereign nation, especially considering economic limitations and the requirement for political agreement. From an external perspective, the intricate geopolitical challenges of forming new partnerships, especially with NATO and the European Union, while also considering the potential reliance on the military infrastructure of the rest of the United Kingdom, pose significant obstacles.

The SNP's goal is philosophically consistent and in line with Scotland's desire for peaceful and responsible participation in global affairs. However, it lacks the essential strategic clarity and practicality to achieve maximum effectiveness. Addressing internal and external problems is essential to ensure that Scotland's defence strategy not only corresponds with but also improves upon its foreign policy objectives. Substantial modifications in resource distribution, strategic planning, and diplomatic involvement are required to translate this vision into a feasible and enduring reality for an independent Scotland.

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