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**SOME THOUGHTS ON AN INDEPENDENT SCOTTISH
DEFENCE FORCE**

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Introduction

The Scottish Centre for War Studies was established by the University of Glasgow in 1996 to promote research in, and understanding of, war in all its aspects. It aims to establish contacts between the academic community and the wider world. Its activities include seminars, study days, and conferences. This, however, is the first publication for which it has assumed direct responsibility.

'Some thoughts on an independent Scottish Defence Force' is a particularly appropriate paper with which to begin. This is not just because the Centre is based in Scotland and aims to provoke debate there, as well as further afield. It is also because ideas on the defence policy of an independent Scotland have remained remarkably ill-developed. The only recent contribution of substance has been the Scottish National Party's consultative document, 'The Defence of an Independent Scotland'. But when that was published in May 1996 press commentary focused on its proposals in relation to the Scottish regiments to the exclusion of its broader implications. This is not unusual. It can be argued that too much of the defence debate in Britain as a whole since the end of the Cold War has marched to the agenda set by regimental amalgamations. The loss of familiar titles is probably more emotive in Scotland than elsewhere: indeed one of the legitimate charges that even Scottish Unionists might level at Whitehall is a failure to grasp the sense of proprietorship that characterises the feelings of many Scots in relation to the armed forces, and in particular to the regiments of the Scottish infantry.

It is precisely that sense that the armed forces in Scotland are as much part of Scotland's identity as, say, its legal or educational systems, that makes it important to quantify what a defence for an independent Scotland might look like. This paper is not a party political document. It should not be read as an endorsement of an independent Scotland by the Scottish Centre for War Studies. Furthermore it is only a preliminary step towards what - if it becomes a realistic proposition - will require much more development and refinement. It might be argued that what is contained here is both parochial and hypothetical - of little interest beyond Scotland, and irrelevant even there given the current state of the devolution debate. Such conclusions would be wrong. This paper has a broader remit. It is, in the abstract, an attempt to define what constitutes a sufficient defence force for a comparatively small but developed state without any obvious enemies. To that extent, this paper can be read as a possible template for other nations in the post-Cold War world.

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Introduction

The Labour Party's apparent commitment to establishing a devolved Scottish Assembly has made Scottish devolution, and by extension Scottish independence, very much a live issue in political circles. Whilst a future devolved Assembly as presently envisaged would have no say in matters of foreign and defence policy, full independence for Scotland would radically alter the position. As yet, relatively little exploration has taken place into the defence implications of Scottish independence, or indeed its effect on the structure and makeup of the British Armed Services. Should, for example, the Scottish National Party (SNP) ever achieve its declared aim of an independent Scotland within a federal Europe, there will almost certainly be a call for a distinct and independent Scottish Defence Force, separate from the current British Armed Services. It would also seem likely that such a force would need to be formed, in the main, from the Scottish "share" of Britain's Armed Forces.

In the current political context, perhaps now is a suitable time to take a preliminary look at this issue, examining some of the possible options for a future Scottish Defence Force (SDF). This essay will therefore attempt to examine how Scotland might organise its Defence Force in general, and Army in particular, in the hypothetical circumstances of her gaining independence from the United Kingdom. A possible timeframe and political context will be discussed, together with a brief look at likely social and economic developments. Possible roles, organisation, and deployment of the projected SDF will be discussed. In constructing this hypothetical model comparisons will be made with the defence forces of Denmark, Norway, and Eire, those countries which arguably provide the closest suitable comparators. Although a certain amount of speculation is inevitable, the article will argue that an independent SDF is both necessary and feasible, but will not examine in any detail whether it is *affordable*. That aspect will be left to those expert in the field.

Background and Context

What makes Scotland different from the rest of the UK in general and England in particular is, to state the obvious, its history and culture. Historically, an independent Scotland is the norm and political union with England, Wales, and Northern Ireland is an aberration. Scotland has only been fully integrated in the UK since 1707, and before that was an independent entity since at least 843 AD, when the Pictish and Scottish kingdoms were united under Kenneth McAlpin. Therefore, very roughly, Scotland has been an independent country for approximately three quarters of its existence. Its difference, and to some extent its collective sense of separateness, was preserved after the Union of 1707 by retention of its own church, legal and educational systems, and to a certain extent by retention of its own language and dialects. The point is, of course, that we should see the renewed desire for political independence as an aspiration to return to the status quo; independence for Scotland represents a return to the norm and not a radical departure from it.

Nevertheless, a credible modern political context is essential before attention is turned to the main military subject. In his excellent television documentary *Independence Day*,¹ George Rosie had Scotland achieving its independence on 1 May 2007 after a gradual process of political alienation from the rest of Britain. This is as good a date as any on which to base discussions here. Let us assume, therefore, that on that date the Union between Scotland and England is dissolved and that, rather optimistically perhaps, all the necessary negotiations to separate the two parts of the former UK politically, economically, and socially have been successfully concluded. After 300 years Scotland stands **once again as a proud and independent nation** in its own right. Crucially for our present purposes, **agreement in principle has been reached that an independent SDF be created from those elements in the former UK Armed Forces which can be justifiably claimed to be Scottish.**

Before going on to look at how the SDF might be constituted, however, we need to look at a number of external factors which will determine the size and shape of military organisations, or indeed whether Scotland has them at all. The most pressing requirement is to attempt to define the strategic context in which Scotland might find itself; in other words, what are the likely military and political threats to its new won independence? Although relatively small, poor, and sparsely populated, Scotland's geographic position bestows upon it a certain geo-strategic importance in regional terms. The country is well placed to exert influence over sea routes from the North Sea into the Atlantic and also the northern exit from the Irish Sea, and is well endowed with naval and air base facilities from which to patrol such routes far out into the Atlantic as required. It also retains the historically important attribute of being a staging area conveniently located off the coast of mainland Europe, one particularly valuable to the USA during the two World Wars. In terms of other strategic assets, oil and to a lesser extent gas are clearly the most important. No matter how the Scottish/English border was extended into the North Sea on independence², Scotland would retain the lion's share of the UK's currently known oil reserves. It has been estimated that oil and gas has already contributed some £27 billion net to the UK economy, and thus these energy sources are a vital asset to an independent Scotland.

Potential military threats to the independence of Scotland and to its strategic assets would seem to be low. In the 1995 *Statement on the Defence Estimates*, the British Government judged that "in the period immediately ahead" there would be no direct strategic military threat of attack on the UK, that the risk of an attack on a NATO ally requiring a British military response was very low, as was the risk of a threat developing to Britain's Dependent Territories.³ Whilst the period over which this might apply is usually assumed to be 10 years, it can fairly safely be applied to the subsequent period when we have speculated that Scotland could find itself an independent country. It is most unlikely, therefore, that Scotland would be under any *major* military threat in the earliest years of its existence at least. Of course, there would always be the possibility of terrorism or economic disputes. The oil and gas installations in the North Sea, plus their associated shore installations, offer opportunities for "spectaculars" to those anxious to publicise their cause on the world stage. Access to fishing has led to conflict in the past, and is likely to do so again in the

¹ *Independence Day* was screened by Scottish Television on 1 May 1996, and repeated by popular demand on 5 May 1996.

² A subject dealt with in some detail in *Independence Day* (see above).

³ House of Commons (1995) *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995* (HMSO: Cm 2800): 26.

future as competition to exploit diminishing fish stocks escalates. Scotland would need to be able to defend such assets.

However, overall most commentators consider that the military threat to an independent Scotland is likely to be "close to zero" and "likely to be limited to infringements of coastal integrity and security of oil rigs". It could be argued that such security concerns could be met with enhancements to the police or perhaps some sort of gendarmerie, and the question therefore arises whether Scotland actually requires armed forces at all. We must be clear, therefore, on the wider functions of armed forces generally. This very question has recently been tackled by David Chuter, Research Associate at the Centre for Defence Studies.⁴ To summarise his work, he suggests the following answers. Firstly, armies (and indeed armed forces) are required to ensure the survival of the state against internal enemies. In effect, it is the state's "ultimate argument". In addition to this, there are a host of other tasks assisting the civilian authorities, like assisting with disaster relief, counter terrorism, and so on. Secondly, armies guard the state against external aggressors, and act as "the political affirmation of sovereignty and identity which results from a visible determination to define and patrol frontiers and areas of interest with military forces". This includes policing of airspace and sea routes and, particularly important for independent Scotland, the safeguarding of oil and gas installations amongst other things.

The third major reason for having armed forces is to promote stability in regions of the globe where a state has political, economic, or strategic interests. This does not necessarily mean the despatch of military forces, either unilaterally or as part of a coalition or alliance, to impose the state's will on another by force. Much more likely is the achievement of political ends by low level military assistance, exchange training, military links through attendance at foreign staff colleges, and diplomacy, the latter a traditionally role of the visiting warship in a foreign port. Beyond these three reasons, argues Chuter, the use of armed forces becomes largely a matter of choice, and is often a case of participating in operations like peace support operations under the auspices of organisations like the United Nations. Use of armed forces in such voluntary ventures can enhance a state's standing and prestige and gain it a "seat at the conference table" when international matters are debated or resolved. All of these purposes are relevant to independent Scotland.

If we accept, therefore, that there *is* a clear requirement and purpose for armed forces in an independent Scotland, we can now turn attention to how they might be organised and deployed and what roles they might be expected to undertake. This is a suitable point at which to discuss the appropriate levels of military operations in which a SDF might be configured to participate. The spectrum of conflict in which armed forces operate ranges from diplomacy ("showing the flag" and "forward presence") via peacekeeping and intervention operations all the way to general war. It is highly unlikely that any nation, with the possible exceptions of the USA, Russia, and perhaps China, would participate at the general war level outside of an alliance or coalition. Other potential operations for the UK armed forces at present, for example the reinforcement of Dependent Territories and military garrisons overseas, are unlikely tasks for the SDF; Scotland is unlikely to have, or want, dependent territories or garrisons overseas. But, for reasons outlined above, the SDF *is* likely to become involved in the full gamut of operations at the lower end of the scale, and

⁴ Chuter, D (1996) "What Are Armies For?" in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1996* (London: Brassey's): 415-424.

have the potential for involvement at higher levels as part of regional or international military alliances and coalitions.

The security structures within which the SDF might participate are already in place. There would appear to be no obvious reason why an independent Scotland should not be part of NATO, the WEU, and the like, unless of course one or more of current members have interests in keeping her out. It is possible, for example, that if the parting from the rest of the UK was acrimonious, or there were difficulties over agreement on certain issues, that pressures could be brought to bear by the rump UK via NATO or the WEU to bring Scotland into line. So, while barriers to Scotland's acceptance in established alliances and organisations do not seem to exist at present, its automatic acceptance into such institutions cannot be assumed: in this context, it is interesting to note that Ireland and Denmark only have observer status in the WEU, while Norway is due to become an Associate Member.

Against this background, an independent Scotland's security and defence policy might be based on the following roles: the internal security of Scotland, generally in support of the police, military assistance to the civilian community, and the support of tasks given priority by the civilian community; defending Scottish territory on land, at sea, and in the air against intrusion and attack; maintaining Scotland's political, economic, and cultural freedom of action, and protecting Scottish rights and interests; and the pursuit of Scotland's wider security interests and the fulfilment of international defence obligations. These four broad roles are hardly likely to raise eyebrows, and have similarities to existing UK Defence Roles (DR) listed in the *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1996*⁵, and to those of other nations such as Norway and Denmark. With these roles in mind, the possible structure, organisation, and deployment of the SDF can be explored.

Possible Organisation of the Scottish Defence Force

The defence roles suggested above indicate that the SDF will by necessity and convention comprise three Services - the Scottish Navy (SN), the Scottish Air Force (SAF), and the Scottish Army (SA). In addition, most informed military commentators now agree that future military operations are likely to be joint and most probably combined.⁶ Therefore, common sense dictates that the highest organisational elements of the SDF must be joint, probably in the form of a Department of Defence incorporating the Joint Headquarters SDF, which would probably be best located in or near Edinburgh close to the seat of Government.⁷ The Service element would be headed by a Chief of the Scottish Defence Staff (CSDS), a post which could be rotated through the three Services. Edinburgh Castle would be the most appropriate location symbolically for the Joint HQ, but pressures of space and poor access might rule it out. There are numerous other sites which might be suitable; the Army's present Headquarters, at Craigiehall just west of Edinburgh, would also be a possible site for the Joint HQ. The CSDS would command the three Services via their Service Chiefs. It is to these three Services that we must now turn our attention. Ignoring traditional order of precedence, the SN and SAF will be discussed first in general terms, followed by a more detailed look at the SA.

⁵ House of Commons (1996) *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1996* (HMSO: Cm 3223): Annex A.

⁶ Joint operations are those involving two or more of the three services, while combined operations are those involving military forces of more than one nation.

⁷ Assuming, of course, that Edinburgh remains the capital.

The Scottish Navy

Clearly, although not a traditional maritime nation in the sense that England has been historically, independent Scotland's geo-strategic location and strategic economic assets dictate that it requires a Navy. In the absence of an immediately recognisable threat to these assets, however, it is virtually impossible to make a cogent argument for the size of Navy required. The best that can be reasonably achieved in this "threat vacuum" is an educated guess at how the SN will look, using a general assessment of likely tasks plus comparisons with the navies of countries of similar size and disposition.

The Royal Navy still has a significant presence in Scotland in 1997, although it has reduced in recent years in the wake of Options for Change and the Defence Costs Study. Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England, and Northern Ireland has his headquarters at Faslane on the Clyde, and there are approximately 5,000 regular RN personnel permanently stationed in Scotland. Rosyth Naval Base, which until comparatively recently was the home of four Type 42 destroyers and over 30 smaller naval vessels,⁸ was reduced to a Royal Navy Support Establishment in 1995. Most warships were relocated to Portsmouth in November of that year, though a few went to Faslane. The major RN presence is therefore on the Clyde at Faslane and Coulport⁹, where two Vanguard Class (Trident) nuclear submarines, 5 fleet submarines, and 9 minehunters and patrol craft are based.¹⁰

Scotland is unlikely to want to retain any part of Britain's nuclear deterrent on independence and would wish it to be withdrawn from Scottish waters. This clearly makes sense; it would be a hopeless economic burden on such a small country and of decreasing credibility in the post Cold War era. Aircraft carriers are out for similar economic reasons. In exchange for giving up her share of these strategic assets, Scotland might be able to secure most of the vessels it requires for her national and regional defence needs. Policing sea routes and defending against foreign naval aggression calls for a submarine capability, and four nuclear or conventionally powered attack submarines would probably fit the bill.¹¹ Three or four frigates of the anti submarine/anti aircraft type would also seem to be about right for tasks like maritime diplomacy, control and escort of shipping, and providing a Scottish contribution to regional and international alliances as required.¹² A number of patrol vessels are needed for fishery protection and patrolling of oil installations, perhaps a dozen in all of all types. Equally important are minehunters or mine counter measures vessels (MCMV), for a fledgling independent nation needs to trade and open shipping routes are vital. Again, it is hard to put a number on this requirement, but in the order of five or six would seem appropriate. Add odd miscellaneous craft like auxiliaries and survey vessels and the SN

⁸ Royle, T (1995) "Scotland and Defence" in *The Anatomy of Scotland*, edited by M Linklater (Edinburgh: Chambers): 68.

⁹ There is also the Royal Naval Air Station at Prestwick and HMS Condor in Arbroath, where 45 Commando Royal Marines is based.

¹⁰ House of Commons (1996), op cit, Annex B.

¹¹ Working on the principle of two operational, one training, and one refitting.

¹² According to the *Statement of Defence Estimates 1996*, the UK currently has 12 Type 42 destroyers and 24 Type 22 and 23 frigates. Three or four frigates for the SN represents a modest share bearing in mind that independent Scotland would have no requirement for Trident or aircraft carriers.

might consist of some 30 odd ships, which is more than Scotland's "share" of the RN in absolute terms but, taking into account the type of ships envisaged, probably close enough in terms of "value". Its strength lies somewhere between the Danish Navy, with roughly 40 ships, and the Irish Navy with seven.¹³ And, lest anyone think it too large for the infrastructure, there were 52 assorted warships based in Scotland as recently as 1992.¹⁴

Scotland has almost an embarrassment of actual or potential bases for its Navy. Although the RN's presence today is limited to Rosyth and Faslane/Coulport, and indeed the former facility has seen much publicised downgrading over the past few years, Loch Ewe, Scapa Flow, and the Moray Firth have all been used in the past. No doubt a certain amount of investment would be required to bring the necessary facilities up to date and to the standard required, but it seems highly unlikely that the SN will be searching for a home. And, with approximately 10% of the RN being recruited from Scotland, it does not seem likely that it will have to look far for its sailors either. The training of its sailors, however, may prove problematic for the SN, in the early years at least. It may be that, like many other small, emerging nations, it has to send most recruits abroad for training until the appropriate schools and training establishments are set up in Scotland.

The Scottish Air Force

Rather like the case for the SN, in suggesting exactly how the SAF might be organised, equipped, and deployed one has ultimately to resort to a combination of informed hypothesis and comparison with similar nations. Control of airspace, the protection of population and strategic assets from attack from the air, and the ability to project power regionally and if need be internationally are some of the major reasons why an air force is necessary. In addition, one of the main lessons of modern warfare is that denying an enemy unrestricted use of the air is a prerequisite of successful operations on land and sea. Scotland would need to be able to call on an air force capable of all these functions, and once again a significant part of the requirement could be found from the Scottish share of the RAF. A useful starting point is provided by an examination of what the RAF actually has in Scotland.

The RAF's main stations in Scotland are at Leuchars in Fife, Lossiemouth, and Kinloss, both in Moray. These three stations house between them two squadrons of Tornado GR1B strike/attack aircraft, two squadrons of Tornado F3 air defence fighters, and three squadrons of Nimrod MR2 maritime patrol aircraft. In addition, Lossiemouth is base to two training squadrons equipped with Tornados and Jaguars, whilst Kinloss has another three Nimrod aircraft for the same purpose. Nine Sea King Search and Rescue (S&R) helicopters are at Lossiemouth, and there are early warning and communications facilities at RAF Buchan, RAF Benbecula, and RAF Saxa Vord on Shetland. Finally for our purposes here, 48 Sqn RAF Regiment, equipped with the Rapier missile system, provides low level air defence (LLAD) and is based at Lossiemouth with detachments elsewhere.¹⁵ All this indicates a significant RAF presence in Scotland, both in terms of equipment and infrastructure. However, there are some important air capabilities missing altogether, mainly in the fields of air transport, support helicopters, and close support/ground attack.

¹³ *Facts About Denmark: The Armed Forces* (1995) Information Branch, Headquarters Chief of Defence) and *The Military Balance 1995-96* (IISS).

¹⁴ Royle, T (1995) op cit, 68.

¹⁵ House of Commons (1996), op cit, Annex D.

The SAF's requirement would demand aircraft from all capability areas. For air defence and strike attack a multi-role aircraft like the F16 would seem to make most sense, and indeed this is the type chosen by a number of smaller countries including Denmark and Norway. Scotland probably needs about four squadrons to tackle both tasks, but in the short term the existing Tornado F3s and GR1Bs would fit the bill. It is doubtful whether independent Scotland would want to replace these with Eurofighter when it becomes available; although clearly an immensely sophisticated aircraft, it is probably too capable, and too expensive, for a small nation's more modest needs. For maritime surveillance a squadron of the Nimrods would be sufficient, and the remainder would no doubt return south of the border. There would be a requirement for other reconnaissance assets, and perhaps Scotland would look for a share of the 40 or so Tornado GR1As and Jaguar GR1A/Bs in the RAF's inventory. The same applies to offensive support aircraft - ground attack to the layman - and the SAF would need something like a squadron's worth of Jaguars from the RAF's 80 odd Jaguar and Harrier aircraft configured for this role. However, it is in the areas of transport, tankers, and helicopters that the RAF in Scotland is lacking, and on the constitution of the SAF the new organisation would have to be most careful to receive the appropriate share here: it would need at least three VC10 or Tristar tankers and a half squadron of Hercules transports, plus a dozen or so transport helicopters of the Puma or Wessex type.

These sorts of aircraft types in the numbers suggested might make up the bulk of the SAF, giving a total of some 8 squadrons, or approximately 100 aircraft in all. To this would be added the existing Scottish University Air Squadron holdings, a sprinkling of requisite training types, and the Sea King S&R helicopters already stationed in Scotland.¹⁶ This compares with approximately 10 squadrons, albeit of different types, stationed in Scotland at present. In broad terms, therefore, there would appear to be an adequate infrastructure to accommodate the SAF. And, with roughly 14% of the RAF recruited from Scotland, there would not appear to be any real problem with personnel either. Rather like the SN, however, the SAF may have to train its personnel elsewhere until training facilities are established. This is unlikely to present major problems, for many nations are only too happy to assist as part of their diplomatic and foreign policies.

The Scottish Army

The Army is the most visible and instantly recognisable of the Services in Scotland. Tradition and popular mythology has it that Scotland has always contributed more than its fair share of recruits to the Army but, whilst this may well be true in recent times and in times of national crisis epitomised by the two World Wars, it has not always been the case. In 1830, for example, Scotland supplied some 13.6 per cent of the Army, considerably more than her proportional share calculated on population, but by 1879 this had dropped to less than 8% where it stayed until at least 1912. Given that the population of Scotland was roughly

¹⁶ For comparison, Denmark fields four fighter squadrons of F16 fighters, one transport squadron of Hercules C-130 and Gulfstream GIII aircraft, one squadron of Sea King S&R helicopters, and approximately 30 Saab T17 training aircraft. They are accommodated at three air bases, with three others, plus eight civilian airports, available in wartime. (Source: *Facts About Denmark: The Armed Forces*. (Information Branch, Headquarters Chief of Defence, Denmark.))

10.5% that of Great Britain during the same period, clearly Scotland was under contributing, in quantity at least.¹⁷

Be that as it may, recent calculations indicate that Scotland contributes roughly 13% of the modern British Army. Although Scotsmen and women are distributed throughout the arms and services, it is the infantry regiments of the Scottish Division which spring quickest to mind. After the defence cuts of Options for Change¹⁸ the Scottish Division contains six regiments; in order of precedence, they are the Royal Scots, the Royal Highland Fusiliers, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Black Watch, the Highlanders, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Taken together, and at full manning levels, they contain some 3,500 officers and men. To this must be added the other Scottish regiments and battalions of the Regular Army. The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are Scotland's only Regular cavalry regiment and have been equipped with Challenger main battle tanks over the last few years. In the Royal Artillery, 40 Field Regiment rejoices under the title of "The Lowland Gunners", while 19 Field Regiment describes itself as "The Highland Gunners". We should be clear, however, that while both of these organisations have many of the trappings and traditions usually associated with Scottish regiments, and whilst they may draw a significant proportion of their manpower from Scotland at any one time, they are not strictly Scottish regiments in the classic sense. The intra-Corps posting of individuals which characterises groupings of units like the Royal Artillery dictates that, at certain stages in a soldier's career, he can be posted to any appropriate unit, no matter where it recruits primarily.

The Scots Guards pose a particular problem. Historically a two battalion regiment¹⁹ with a tradition stretching back to 18 March 1642 when it was first raised by Archibald, 1st Marquis of Argyll, this Regiment has spent much of its recent history in and around London and the South East of England. From here it has taken its fair share of ceremonial duties interspersed with operational tours in Northern Ireland alongside its sister regiments in the Brigade of Guards. The Scots Guards were last stationed in Scotland at Redford Infantry Barracks in Edinburgh in 1994, where the 2nd Battalion went into "suspended animation". Before that the 2nd Battalion were stationed in Edinburgh in 1971-74 and the 1st Battalion also in Edinburgh in the mid 1960s. Notwithstanding that they recruit regularly throughout Scotland and their home headquarters is in Edinburgh Castle, some observers have suggested that their long sojourn south of the border has resulted in a dilution of their Scottish identity. Many Scots Guardsmen hail from outwith Scotland, although many claim tenuous Scottish ancestry, and they tend to be officered by a breed who vigorously defend their Scottish connections but are generally indistinguishable from their peers in their socio-economic milieu. More recently it has been suggested that, on Scotland gaining independence, they would be best left where they are as a quasi-mercenary Scottish regiment in the British Army much along the same lines as the Gurkhas. Given the popular perception that they have somehow become tainted by their long association with England this would seem by far the best solution. Should Scotland need a Guards regiment then there is nothing preventing one being raised from scratch.

There are a number of other units in the support and logistic areas which affect or claim Scottish links, but for the purpose here we need not go into detail. The basis of the SA, therefore, would be provided by the six infantry battalions of the Scottish Division plus the Royal Scots Dragoon

¹⁷ Spiers, E M (1980) *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longman): 48-49.

¹⁸ The name given to part of the Government's cost cutting process after the end of the Cold War.

¹⁹ The 2nd battalion was placed in "suspended animation" under Options for Change.

Guards and the two Royal Artillery regiments previously identified. This indicates that the SA would consist of two regular brigades which, if supporting arms and organisations are included, would add up to approximately 10,000 men and women. On top of this one would have to add increments for the divisional level of command, the Army's command structure itself, central recruiting, pay, and personnel functions to name but a few of the multitude of support functions requiring manpower. Although it is extremely difficult to be accurate in such a speculative view, an all up strength of 12,500 would seem to be the realistic minimum for the SA.

Organisation

Coincidentally, the present organisation of the British Army in Scotland sits happily with this hypothetical arrangement of the SA. Army Headquarters Scotland is at Craigiehall, near South Queensferry west of Edinburgh. It presides over two brigade headquarters; 51 Highland Brigade located in Perth and 52 Lowland Brigade in Edinburgh Castle. In turn these brigade headquarters look after units in their respective areas of responsibility. The brigades are not, however, capable of commanding units in the field on operations and therefore differ fundamentally from the classic fighting brigade. They are considerably under-resourced and undermanned in comparison, and currently are only able to function in representative, administrative, and training roles. Below them at unit level there are usually three regular Scottish infantry battalions stationed in Scotland at any one time performing ceremonial, training, and reinforcing functions for the British Army as a whole.

The proposed organisation of the SA fits reasonably well into this existing infrastructure. An Army HQ already exists, although it would need considerable restructuring to enable it to exercise proper operational command of its formations and units. Both 51 and 52 Brigades, their pasts firmly entrenched in Scottish military history and tradition over two World Wars, would form a suitable basis for the two regular brigades of the SA. One might speculate that 51 Highland Brigade could be the lighter brigade of the two with three infantry battalions and an artillery regiment, while 52 Lowland Brigade would lean towards the heavier end of the spectrum with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards providing the armour, two or three infantry battalions, and the other artillery regiment in support. Obviously there could be a number of variations on the theme, but a structure based on two deployable brigades would seem to make some sense.

Locations

Where would the SA be located? The HQ locations have already been mentioned and it is clear that they would not be right for an operational Army. The Army HQ could remain at Craigiehall, but this location lacks the prestige and image which this organisation might desire after independence. Perhaps Edinburgh Castle might be more appropriate, if not chosen for the Joint HQ SDF, although as already discussed severe space and access restrictions might dictate that many of the HQ's functions might have to be carried out at satellite locations. The negative impacts of this might to some extent be countered by modern communications technology. However, it is clear that both brigade HQs would have to move to take on an operational role. There are a number of options open to both, including perhaps the moving of HQ 52 Lowland Brigade to a location on the west of Scotland to redress the current east/west imbalance of Army locations.

Regimental and battalion locations present a different problem. Currently there are only three main barracks in use - Fort George near Inverness and Redford and Dreghorn Barracks in Edinburgh. These house three infantry battalions between them. Clearly this represents only part of the requirement of the SA model presented here, and other locations need to be identified. Some redundant and underused barracks spring to mind - Redford Cavalry in Edinburgh, Cameron Barracks in Inverness, and Bridge of Don in Aberdeen. All of these, and others like them, need varying amounts of money spent on them before occupation. Other sites offer possibilities; Benbecula could house a major unit although it isn't everyone's ideal posting location, and there are some ex-RAF stations which could be adapted for Army use. In addition, the former MoD range area at Kircudbright probably has room for a battalion sized barracks although a new build would be required. Some support units might be located at the present logistic facility at Forthside near Stirling.

The major problem is where to locate the armoured and artillery regiments of the SA. There are no suitable barracks for such units in Scotland. Their barrack locations should ideally, but not essentially, be near their likely training areas; this is in itself a challenge and will be discussed later. However, it is the equipment intensive nature of their role which demands barracks with special servicing, transportation, and logistic facilities which is the nub of the problem. Vehicle hangars and servicing bays are required, as are fuel and ammunition facilities and special transportation requirements, for example suitable railheads or port facilities. None of these currently exists and they would prove extremely costly to provide. Whilst these problems are not insurmountable, there appears to be no easy solution.

Equipment

As with the SN and SAF, the SA would be provided initially with equipment "inherited" from the British Army on independence. Thus Scotland's only armoured regiment, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, would most likely find itself mounted in Challenger 2 tanks. This would be (in 2007) a relatively modern main battle tank (MBT) with a powerful 120mm gun comparable to those fielded by other European nations. It is not necessarily the ideal vehicle, however. The production run of this particular tank is likely to be relatively small due to Britain's inability to date to sell it in numbers abroad. The SA might be better advised to seek the benefits of the economies of scale accruing to other manufacturers. France, Germany, the USA, and Russia produce tanks which are as good or better in far larger quantities and would be only too pleased to sell their wares to an independent Scotland on favourable terms, including perhaps setting up an indigenous production facility.²⁰ Alternatively, it may be that potential roles for the SA may dictate that MBTs are not the equipment of choice for Scotland's armoured regiment, and it will seek to re-equip at an early date with something more suitable for the less intense end of the warfighting spectrum. In these circumstances the choice of potential vehicles is immense, both tracked and wheeled, and the scale of choice forbids further speculation. In essence, though, suitable armoured vehicles are likely to be available off the shelf at competitive prices on the international market, particularly from Eastern Europe. Denmark and Norway, for example, have bought Leopard 1 tanks from Germany.

²⁰ Many manufacturers offer to do exactly this when competing for new tank contracts.

Similar arguments apply to artillery and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs). The SA is likely to inherit one regiment of AS90, a self-propelled 155 mm gun on a tracked chassis designed for armoured warfare in Europe. Again, this will be a relatively modern equipment comparable to artillery systems fielded by other armies and suitable for the SA's armoured brigade as described here. The artillery regiment of the lighter brigade might be equipped with FH70, a towed 155mm piece which is airtransportable. One other important capability traditionally provided by the Royal Artillery is low level air defence (LLAD). In the British Army today this is provided by a combination of the Rapier system²¹ and the shoulder launched Javelin and more modern Starstreak. The latter system can also be vehicle mounted. Quite how LLAD would be organised in the SA is a matter of preference. Options include perhaps one battery of each artillery regiment equipped for this role, or alternatively a separate unit could be established and its assets allocated to formations as required.

The basic infantry equipment - rifles, mortars, anti-tank missiles - with which the infantry battalions of the SA might find themselves equipped are likely to be perfectly adequate. Of all the arms and services of the British Army the infantry are probably the best equipped. In the Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) the British infantry has a real winner, and no doubt the SA would be grateful to mount one of its infantry battalions in it. It has the ability to operate across the warfighting spectrum from general war to peace support operations as recent service in the Gulf and Bosnia can testify. Other battalions would initially have to settle for something less, perhaps even the old FV432 armoured personnel carrier (APC) which is already pretty long in the tooth. The only problem with Warrior is training - tracks equal damage. Some might prefer a wheeled vehicle to carry infantry.

There are many other aspects of the SA's possible equipment inventory which are worthy of further exploration. In particular, communications, engineer, and helicopter support equipment are vital areas to which serious thought must be given. However, space prevents further discussion here. Suffice to say that, overall, the SA would seem likely to be adequately equipped on its initial establishment but its likely employment post independence might prove its inventory less than ideal in the medium to long term. There are, however, many defence manufacturers competing in the international market for military hardware. It would be surprising if the SA were not able to re-equip itself to its own satisfaction in the future if funds and political will are available.

Training

The training facilities for the SA present some major problems. Scotland has an abundance of training opportunities for light forces in rugged and demanding terrain. Much use of this has been made in the past, and indeed many units of the British Army still travel to Scotland to train. There are a number of suitable training areas across the country and much use has also traditionally been made of sympathetic private landowners who allow military use of their land for this purpose. There are also suitable ranges for field firing of artillery, tank, and air defence weapon systems at Kirkcudbright and Benbecula. The main deficit lies in the total lack of suitable training areas for mechanised forces. Anyone who has seen Salisbury Plain or Soltau in north west Germany in its heyday will know the damage that manoeuvring armoured forces inevitably cause. There is no such training area in Scotland and any attempt to set one up in any political circumstances short of

²¹ Rapier also equips some of the RAF Regiments.

national emergency would meet a storm of protest from environmentalists and ecologists, and rightly so.

The obvious solution, of course, is to train the SA's mechanised forces outside Scotland. There is **nothing revolutionary in this proposal**; the British Army regularly trains in Canada at its permanent training establishment there, for example, and until recently the Bundeswehr's tanks used ranges at Castlemartin in Pembrokeshire. The SA could have similar arrangements, perhaps in exchange for other states training their light forces in Scotland. There would probably be a requirement to keep a quorum of military hardware permanently abroad to facilitate such training, rather like the British Army presently having tanks, IFVs, artillery systems and so on at the British Army Training Unit at Suffield (BATUS) in Alberta, Canada. The training of the SA's mechanised forces, therefore, is problematic but not impossible.

The Scottish Ballistic Missile Force

Before concluding this speculative review of how the SDF might be organised, it is well worth considering the utility of ballistic missiles (BM), particularly in a strategic context. Aside from its submarine borne nuclear deterrent, Britain does not have BMs in its military arsenal. However, they are fielded by many other countries, and for good reason. They have excellent "reach" and can strike deep into enemy territory, and recent improvements in their guidance systems have made them increasingly accurate. They can carry a variety of warheads, including chemical and biological payloads, which can be seen as cheap alternatives to nuclear ones, for deterrent purposes. Equally importantly, the infrastructure they require can cost considerably less than maintaining a reasonably serious fleet of modern strike aircraft. Finally, if mounted on mobile launchers they are relatively resilient to counterattack, they have an all weather capability, and they can be built indigenously relatively cheaply.

Such attributes have made BMs the weapon of choice for many third world countries, but the SDF might also find them an important asset in its armoury. The obvious question is, of course, against what targets would Scotland aim its BM deterrent? The same question might now be posed with respect to Britain's Trident missiles, and no answer is offered here. We must also remember that deployment of BMs has often heightened tensions as they have been regarded as a new and worrying aggressive threat. The Cuban Missile Crisis is probably the most extreme example of this, and more recently the pattern has been repeated in Cyprus. Nevertheless, should Scotland decide it needs a non nuclear strategic deterrent then perhaps BMs offer an affordable solution. Such a deterrent would not require a large number of missiles and launchers, or indeed personnel. Maybe around a dozen launchers and fifty or so missiles would suffice, and thus the Scottish Ballistic Missile Force (SBMF) would not be large, perhaps around battalion size at the most.

Comparison With SNP Defence Policy

Not surprisingly, the only other defence policy model for an independent Scotland has been produced by the SNP. No other political party yet acknowledges that Scotland might become independent, although privately some of these party members hold different views. Compared to its predecessors, the SNP's consultative document "The Defence of an Independent Scotland" (1996) is a quantum leap forward. It is a logically structured and sensible, if rather general,

exposition of how that Party suggests an independent Scotland could go about organising its defence. This has taken the other main parties by surprise, and their collective response to the SNP's proposals has yet to rise above playground level.

In general terms there is broad agreement between the thrust of the SNP's defence policy and what has been suggested here. The roles the SNP has defined for the SDF - ensuring the protection of Scotland even when there is no major external threat, insuring against a major threat to Scotland and its allies, and contributing to promoting the world's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and stability - are roughly the same, if a little more broadly expressed. It "recognise[s] a strong anti-nuclear policy", which in effect means both that nuclear weapons will be shunned, which clearly makes sense, and also that the SNP might find it hard to belong to NATO whilst it continues to embrace the principle of nuclear deterrence, which may not be quite so sensible. NATO maintains the USA's (and Canada's) security interest in Europe and Scotland would be well advised to join the fold; to have the world's only true superpower as an ally is an enviable insurance policy.

The SNP has also suggested that the SDF would be organised as a joint force from the outset; in other words, current British inter-service rivalries would be alleviated by clear demarcation of roles, abolition of "cross service arms",²² and the establishment of all service training organisations wherever possible. It also plans to have a joint service staff college, which the party has suggested might be in a university, an international peacekeeping college, and a joint SDF headquarters. These are all sensible ideas which may be achievable. The SDF would have the opportunity to organise itself from scratch, drawing on experience of the known weaknesses and anachronisms inherent in the British military system.

What the SNP has proposed for its SDF (Navy) is similar to that outlined in the section above on the SN, only the total number of vessels is considerably larger. It proposes a navy which includes 4 frigates, 4 diesel submarines, and a selection of patrol vessels, minelayers and mine counter measure vessels and so on, a total of 60 ships approximately. This figure, however, includes a larger number of small patrol craft than thought necessary in the model previously described here - 31 against 12 - and herein lies the major difference. Perhaps the SNP is being a bit over enthusiastic when it comes to the size of its navy. That said, it recognises clearly that the infrastructure could, with some investment, probably cope with this number of vessels. One only wonders how they might employ all of them in peacetime.

SNP proposals for an air force are broadly in line with the thoughts expressed above in the section on the SAF. It has identified a requirement for 13 squadrons of aircraft, while we have proposed 10 for the SAF. The difference can be explained by the SNP's decision to have all aircraft flown by their SDF (Air Force), and therefore it includes a squadron of naval ASW helicopters and a squadron and a half of anti-tank and observation helicopters dedicated to army support in its total. In essence the two proposals are very similar. Certainly, the infrastructure identified can cope with its suggested aircraft numbers, although once again some investment is likely to be required to accommodate a different aircraft inventory from that currently present in Scotland.

²² That is where, for example, helicopters are flown by the RAF, Army Air Corps, and the Fleet Air Arm, or where basic recruit training is carried out separately by the RN, RAF, and British Army.

It is in the SNP proposals for their SDF (Army) that the major differences occur. It has proposed an Army of some 9000 regular soldiers which includes no less than 9 infantry battalions. In addition to the six Scottish infantry battalions identified earlier, SNP plans include the Scots Guards²³, a commando battalion (no doubt based on 45 Royal Marine Commando at Arbroath), and the disassembling of the Highlanders back into its constituent parts of the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Gordon Highlanders. This last decision is clearly based on political and emotive factors, not military ones, and is probably no more than a political pledge which the SNP feels it must honour. The problem of total numbers of soldiers which 9 battalions would seem to throw up is solved by changing the structure of the battalions. The SNP plans to have only 2 battalions at a "normal" strength of 650 men, designated as "lead battalions", while the remainder contain 420 soldiers each. This is fine, although 420 men is close to, or indeed below, the minimum manning strength required for some UN battalion size taskings. However, similar problems will be encountered by the British Army's new Type 38 armoured regiment established manpower strength of 471, only 50 more than the SNP proposed battalions. This has not been considered a showstopper in the British Army, so may not be for the SDF.

The SNP has also planned for two armoured regiments, one in tanks and one mounted in lighter armoured vehicles. Again this makes sense, although recent discussion internally seems to indicate that opinion is moving away from favouring the tank towards reliance on more mobile systems like armoured cars and helicopters. It clearly recognises the training and damage problems which come with having tanks in the inventory. Artillery is catered for by one heavy self propelled artillery regiment and one field artillery regiment with towed guns, and an anti aircraft regiment is also planned. Finally, the SNP plan recognises the need for logistic units and plans for a number of battalion size units to provide the requisite skills. All in all the SNP's plan for the SDF is sound if a bit thin on detail, but no doubt the Party would wish to consult military experts (both in and out of uniform) before setting out the minutiae of its defence proposals. There is, however, one immediate problem facing the SNP plan to establish the SA on independence; presently Scotland produces some 13% of the regular British Army as already mentioned. Calculated against the current strength of the Army this indicates that some 15,000 or so Scots would be eligible to serve in the SDF if they so wished. We have suggested previously that 12,500 regulars is probably a realistic strength for the SA. The SNP policy plans for only 9,000 regulars, and the management of the downsizing that would be necessary is fraught with difficulty. That said, not every Scot in British uniform might want to transfer to the SDF, so the problem could solve itself.

Accommodation and training is covered somewhat skimpily in the current SNP policy document but the problems are clearly acknowledged. It states correctly that there is probably sufficient accommodation for the size of SDF it proposes, but notes that refurbishment is required to bring a number of disused or redundant barracks up to standard. It also advocates the continuation of reciprocal training arrangements with other nations which we have already noted as particularly important for the training of the armoured and mechanised formations of the SDF. It also identifies that for some specialist individual training it may be necessary for some personnel to go abroad, with the rest of the UK particularly in mind.

Finally, the SNP policy document does not consider BM or a BM arm for the SDF or SA. Perhaps this is because current planning is understandably based mainly on the traditions, roles, and

²³ Whether this is the existing organisation or a new one raised in Scotland is not clear.

equipment of the British Army, but BM have a utility which the SNP should at least consider. As previously discussed, BM have a number of attributes (not least of which is reasonable cost) which make them very attractive to the armed forces of smaller nations. They might well provide an inexpensive alternative to more costly and vulnerable weapons.

Conclusions

When all is said and done, there are three basic questions which have to be asked about the armed forces of an independent Scotland; are they necessary, are they feasible, and finally are they affordable? As we noted in the introduction, the question of *affordability* has not been considered in this piece in any detail as there are others much more expert in the field and better equipped to comment. We hope they feel moved to do so in due course. As to whether armed forces are *necessary*, it is clear that they are, and only the foolhardy would adopt a position of unarmed neutrality and trust in the lack of aggression and political ambition in others towards a defenceless state. To reiterate, armed forces are required to ensure the survival of the state against internal and external enemies and promote and safeguard its global interests. Armed forces are also a badge of statehood, a statement of sovereignty and political independence which can be recognised worldwide. In essence the SDF would be independent Scotland's final resort when persuasion and diplomacy had failed. Not to have armed forces at all could be taken as a sign of weakness and lack of resolve.

Establishing the SDF would also be *feasible* given the resources available to an independent Scotland. The country currently provides, perhaps contrary to the historical trend, more than its share of manpower to all three Services; approximately 13% of the regular Army, 14% of the RAF, and 10% of the Royal Navy. The real problem might well be how to reduce the present numbers of Scottish servicemen and women to a number appropriate to the lesser military ambitions of the small regional power that Scotland would be. In terms of locations and bases the SDF would generally be well provided for, with a choice of HQ locations for the Force as a whole, sufficient air bases in Leuchars, Lossiemouth, and Kinross (with the option of using civilian airports too rather like Denmark does), and more than ample existing or potential naval bases. Perhaps the SA faces rather more of a problem than do the other two Services, for it is clear that some financial expenditure is required to upgrade, modernise, and in some cases rebuild Scotland's existing Army bases. The training of SDF armoured and mechanised formations also poses some problems as there are no immediately apparent suitable training areas within the country, but training abroad may be a possible solution, albeit a potentially expensive one.

In the final analysis, of course, quite how and where the SDF would be established would depend on a number of external factors. Chief amongst these might be the perceived level of threat to the new (or, more correctly, restored) nation and the demands of other major Scottish government departments like health and education. These very factors are affecting the British armed forces today and it is unlikely that they will change much in the timeframe in question. Once again this brings us to the question of affordability on which we do not comment further. However, there seems little doubt that should the Scottish government have the political will to establish the SDF along the lines suggested in this article that it could be done, always assuming, of course, the continuing support of the electorate. A SDF would seem to be both a necessity for a truly independent

Scotland and its establishment is certainly feasible, although clearly not without its problems. There seems little doubt that Scotland could have its SDF should it wish so to do, always assuming of course that the requisite financial provision would be forthcoming. While the final decision would ultimately lie with the Scottish electorate, those who currently dismiss the idea without careful consideration of the issues need to think again.