

Scotland in the World

Executive Summary

James Wilkie

Scotland in the World is one of four studies and policy proposals on Scotland's post-independence international political relations: at global level, within Europe, within the Commonwealth, and with its immediate neighbours in the archipelago of the so-called British Isles. It does not deal with economic and monetary relations.

This global survey starts with a review of the latest developments on the world stage, and in particular the ongoing development of a global system of governance through hundreds of international organisations under the general umbrella of the United Nations. It points out that Scotland's vital interests in the world cannot possibly be adequately protected without constitutional autonomy and a seat at the United Nations, which is the very hallmark of an independent state.

The global institutions now largely supersede corresponding European ones over a wide spectrum of activity. Scotland will eventually have to join around 50 essential international organisations that carry out functions of importance to the country and its people. This will also involve the signing, ratification and adherence to the terms of hundreds of treaties that now regulate international relations. Even the conduct of domestic policy must now be carried out in accordance with the international norms of pluralist democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Scotland will need a specialised diplomatic service to represent it around the world, even although the nature of diplomacy has changed over the years. The selection and training of members of the Foreign Service will have to be of the highest order if they are to be capable of upholding Scotland's interests in the world.

The functions of classical diplomacy, of representation and consular services, are still valid but have nowadays expanded to cover such tasks as export promotion, inward investment, cultural and educational exchanges at school and university level, research and development cooperation, and much more. The disadvantages of a smaller state can be overcome by extensive cooperation with partners as well as with the appointment of honorary consuls and other measures. The departmental structure of the Foreign Ministry is also discussed, and its role as a clearing house for activities abroad by government ministries and national organisations.

Scotland can play a large part in international humanitarian and development activities. Its programme of development cooperation should be concentrated on a few developing countries, and should provide quality assistance in engineering, education, agriculture, forestry, fishing and many other fields, making full use of the private sector.

Provision should be made for assisted places for students from developing countries at Scottish universities and colleges, and for service abroad by young Scottish graduates and technicians, including “associate experts” made available to the United Nations at subsidised rates.

All members of the United Nations are obliged by the UN Charter to provide military forces, resources and facilities for implementing and enforcing Security Council resolutions. Peacemaking and peacekeeping missions should be regarded as an integral function of the Scottish Defence Force, to be carried out only under the authority of the Department of Peacekeeping operations at the UN general Secretariat in New York.

Disaster relief and other humanitarian activities will be carried out under the auspices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at UN New York. Scotland should be prepared to assist the international community in emergencies ranging from the displacements caused by war, weather and natural disasters to the impact of such disruptions on health, hygiene, nutrition, education, and even basic shelter. Such humanitarian activities should be regarded as an integral part of military functions.

Scotland has more incentive than most nations to seek the abolition of weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRD). It should therefore play an active part in steps towards the control and eventual abolition of all CBRD weapons and their carrier systems, and should sign and ratify all of the relevant treaties to this end. The same applies to the so-called conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons, which because of their sheer numbers represent an even greater threat than the WMDs. Scotland may be drawn into the various informal regimes for controlling the export of substances and technology that could be used for the production of armaments in other countries.