

# An independent Scotland's place in the world



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# Summary

Scotland is a nation, with a long history and its own unique geography, reaching out into the North Sea and the North Atlantic. Our connections stretch across the border to England, and the rest of the United Kingdom, out into the Arctic and around the world. With independence, Scotland will become a new sovereign state on the world stage – the world's most northerly non-Arctic country – with strong relationships with our nearest neighbours and closest friends in these isles.

Independence will mean that Scotland takes its place in the international community; alongside 193 other United Nations member states, able to join the European Union, with the powers necessary to protect its citizens and prosper in the global economy.

Independence would also mean that Scotland gets to determine the type of state it wants to be on that world stage – one that acts based on its values and principles, promotes human rights and development, and builds partnerships with other countries and international organisations to address global challenges. An independent Scotland would be a good global citizen, working towards peace and security in the interests of Scotland's people.

This summary, of the eleventh paper in the 'Building a New Scotland' series, sets out this Scottish Government's proposals for an independent Scotland's place in the world. The full publication provides more details on these proposals, an analysis of the evidence that informs them, as well as references to sources.

## Defence, peace and security in an independent Scotland

The defence and security of its people is the first duty of every independent country's government. This paper sets out how an independent Scotland would benefit from a modern, effective and flexible defence and security capability.

An independent Scotland would have its own armed forces, supported by a modern contract for personnel and strong support for veterans. Decisions on future forces capability would be informed by a comprehensive, expert-led Defence and Security Review. This would ensure that planning and capability were responsive to the threat environment and geopolitical challenges in play at the point of independence. This would be aligned with Scotland's priorities as an independent country – joining NATO, committing to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and building a collaborative, mutually beneficial defence and security relationship with the UK as well as other key strategic partners.

This Scottish Government proposes that an independent Scotland would apply to join NATO and would seek discussions with NATO leaders at the earliest opportunity following a vote for independence. It would commit to defence spending of 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), recognising NATO's enduring commitment to invest in defence capabilities.

As part of the EU, this Scottish Government would also participate fully in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Scotland would contribute to missions that support global peace and security, and in doing so, join the family of nations fully committed to the international rules-based system and multilateralism.

The third pillar of an independent Scotland's defence and security policy would be our relationships with our nearest neighbours in the United Kingdom and Ireland. An independent Scotland would build on our strong relationships with the other nations and governments across these isles to ensure our mutual safety.

This Scottish Government would make it a cornerstone of defence policy that an independent Scotland would only participate in overseas military operations that are lawful, approved by Scottish Ministers, and authorised by the Scottish Parliament. Furthermore, nuclear weapons should be removed from Scotland in the safest and most expeditious manner possible following independence. Neither of these proposals would prevent Scotland's ability to act in self-defence or join NATO.

## **An independent Scotland as a good global citizen**

Within the constraints of the existing devolution settlement, Scotland is already doing what it can to be a good global citizen. Scotland is playing its part in tackling global poverty, climate change and threats to human rights and equality protections.

With the full powers of independence, this Scottish Government would commit to meet the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income on official development assistance (ODA) and establish a new ministerial portfolio dedicated to international development. An independent Scotland would also be able to enshrine the 0.7% commitment in law. This would give Scotland a sizeable aid budget with which to make an impact in the world's poorest countries.

As an independent country with its own voice, and its own seat in multilateral organisations, Scotland could also do more to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises, making a positive contribution to the planet and its people. Scotland could join its voice with others, including those in the Global South, to champion their perspectives on climate justice and advocate for global vaccine equity or for debt relief.

And as an independent country, Scotland could negotiate directly, and become a state party to treaties, conventions or agreements which the UK has not signed or ratified. These include the Revised European Social Charter, which provides a range of rights on pay, workers' rights and representation, and working hours, amongst others. As an independent country, Scotland could work with like-minded partners to advance an ambitious, progressive agenda and secure agreements in international forums aligned with our values and interests.

## **Networks for the future**

Independence would mean building on existing networks around the world, as well as developing new ones.

Independence would, for the first time, enable Scotland to have a dedicated diplomatic network devoted to promoting and protecting Scottish interests. Alongside providing the necessary consular support for our citizens, these networks would promote Scotland as a hub for innovation, trade and investment. Following a vote for independence, this Scottish Government would begin building the capacity of our overseas consular and diplomatic network, as well as the functions necessary for defence and international security, while continuing to develop our ability to support Scotland's trade and investment. An independent Scotland could build on its strengths to design an international footprint reflecting Scotland's priorities in the 21st century, amplifying our voice and ensuring we capitalise on the new powers and responsibilities that independence would bring domestically and internationally.

## Conclusion

Independence would enable Scotland to renew and strengthen its existing relationships on these islands and around the world and to develop cooperation with new partners in order to protect and promote the security and prosperity of the people of Scotland.

Independence would give us the chance to contribute more on issues like international development, climate change and the environment.

Scotland already makes a contribution on the world stage, where we can. With the powers of independence, we could build on our strengths and take our place as a state among equals in the global community.

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# Foreword by the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

Independence for Scotland will allow our country to join the global community of nations. That will mean that, for the first time in the modern era, Scotland will represent itself on the international stage.

In this paper, the eleventh publication in the 'Building a New Scotland' series, the Scottish Government outlines what independence will mean for our place in the world; for the way we conduct ourselves internationally; for how we will play a full part in a range of international organisations; and for how we will contribute positively to peace and security as a responsible global citizen.

Scotland has a long history of being an outward-looking nation, and we are clear about the country we want to be – providing development assistance to the most vulnerable overseas, safeguarding human rights, upholding the international rules-based order and supporting and promoting Scots and Scotland around the world.

For an independent Scotland, the UK will always be our closest friend and ally.

On many issues we will agree, such as our condemnation of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. And this Government would ensure that Scotland plays its full role in European and North Atlantic security through membership of NATO.

But there will also be times when independence will mean Scotland's distinctive voice will be heard. It seems inconceivable that an independent Scotland would have agreed with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Scottish Government has consistently called for a ceasefire to stop the killing of innocent civilians following Hamas's barbaric attacks in October last year.

The Scottish Government also believes the best future for Scotland is to be a member of the EU, whereas there is no realistic prospect of any UK Government in the foreseeable future reversing the damage of Brexit.

Europe, indeed the world as a whole, is facing huge challenges, from the existential threat of climate change to the major economic, energy and security challenges of our time.

The Scottish Government believes those challenges are best faced through more, not less, co-operation with our fellow Europeans and the wider international community. That co-operative approach and a willingness to play our part in international institutions and organisations is both in our own national interest and offers the opportunity to contribute to a better world.



I hope the proposals in this paper, covering issues such as core internationalist values, international relations and defence policy will help stimulate debate over the kind of country we aspire to be, and I look forward to engaging with as many people as possible as we discuss Scotland's future.



**Angus Robertson MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution,  
External Affairs and Culture

# What our proposals would mean for Scotland

An independent Scotland would prioritise promoting and protecting the security and wellbeing of people in Scotland; promoting human rights and international development around the world; and offering leadership on the climate and environmental crises. Participation in the rules-based international system as an independent sovereign state would support the protection of Scotland, our people and our prosperity.

Independence will mean Scotland takes its place in the international community. The proposals in this publication are designed to allow **Scotland** to:

- pursue Scottish interests internationally, focusing on the issues that matter most to the people and businesses of Scotland, guided by our values
- be properly represented when decisions are made internationally, with a seat at the table at the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and other important global and regional forums, and with a network of diplomats representing Scotland's interests around the world
- cooperate with partners around the world to advance our shared objectives and, through joining NATO, enhance our collective security and demonstrate our solidarity by playing our full part in addressing global challenges
- build on our strong reputation as a good global citizen, and as a great place to live, work, study and do business, by working with like-minded partners on shared goals and by fostering a welcoming environment for people and businesses
- have the adaptability to thrive in the global economy, with our assets – from energy resources to the talents of our people – in high demand around the world and used to benefit Scotland and all who live here

# What our proposals would mean for you

We would use the full powers of independence to ensure that Scotland is secure, prospers in the global economy, and builds strong relationships with partners across the world. The proposals in this publication are designed to allow **you** to:

- live in a safe and secure country, with the defence and security capabilities, personnel, institutions and international relationships necessary to defend our national interests
- take pride in a country that acts internationally on its values and principles and demonstrates global leadership, including by committing to the safe and expeditious removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland
- benefit from Scotland taking its place in the world, not least by regaining your European Union citizenship and the right to study, work and live across the EU
- share in the prosperity of a country that flourishes internationally, trading freely and attracting talent and investment from around the world
- access Scottish consular support wherever you need it in the world, including via the pooling and sharing of EU members' consular networks

# Introduction

In this, the eleventh publication in the 'Building a New Scotland' series, the Scottish Government outlines its proposals for what independence could mean for Scotland's place in the world. How would Scotland conduct itself on the international stage? How could we contribute positively to peace and security as a responsible global citizen? How could we play a full part in a range of international organisations?

New independent states joining the international community of nations is neither unprecedented nor unusual – it is a well-trodden path taken by many countries over the last 75 years. When the United Nations (UN) was established in 1945, it had 51 members; today it has 193.<sup>1</sup>

Scotland becoming independent will mean that we would be able to represent ourselves on the international stage in our own right. We would be able to deepen the partnerships we already have, work hard to develop new ones and, through all the work we do, fully reflect the values we seek to promote.

In contrast, the UK Government's approach to many foreign policy issues in recent years has been seen by some as a retreat from positive, values-based engagement.<sup>2</sup> The way the European Union (EU) referendum and its aftermath were handled and Brexit has been implemented has been detrimental to the people of Scotland.<sup>3</sup> The UK Government's Global Britain agenda has also been seen to have had adverse effects on some of the most vulnerable in the world, as demonstrated by the cuts to vital international development assistance and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>4</sup>

Scotland being taken out of the EU against its democratic wishes is having a harmful impact economically and socially.<sup>5</sup> Independence is the only realistic way for Scotland to regain EU membership. A return to the EU as a sovereign state would allow us to re-join the world's largest single market, one around seven times bigger than the UK.<sup>6</sup> The full prospectus for our EU membership, including an independent Scotland's contribution to EU foreign policy, is covered in 'Building a New Scotland: an independent Scotland in the EU.'<sup>7</sup>

More generally an independent Scotland would seek to be an open, engaged and positive international partner.

The first section considers how an independent Scotland could contribute positively to regional and global peace and ensure the nation's safety and security. It considers how membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU could strengthen partnership working in these areas. It also sets out this Scottish Government's position on the nuclear weapons currently based in Scotland.

The next section illustrates how an independent Scotland would ensure the country would be properly defended by a modern, effective and flexible defence and security capability. Comparisons with similar-sized countries are given as an indication of the potential scale of our future armed forces. This section also covers Scottish serving personnel and veterans, and discusses support for and transition into an independent Scotland's new armed forces.

The paper goes on to cover an independent Scotland as a 'good global citizen'. It describes Scotland's existing approach to international aid and tackling climate change and it explores how independence could allow us to do much more. It sets out how Scotland would honour its existing international commitments on human rights and protections. Building on the proposals set out in 'Building a New Scotland: Migration to Scotland after independence,'<sup>8</sup> it explores how, with full powers, an independent Scotland could design a fairer and more streamlined asylum and refugee system, one which treats people with dignity and respect.

The next section sets out how an independent Scotland would be strengthened by the opportunities of open global trade arrangements within the EU's umbrella trade policy. An independent Scotland – open, outward-looking and engaged – would seek to emulate the success of comparable independent countries, helping to create a better country for our own citizens and making a positive contribution to addressing global challenges.

The final section describes the strong relationships Scotland already has in these islands, across Europe and internationally. Independence would allow these partnerships to flourish. While Scotland already has many of the key institutions and structures needed to be a successful independent country, becoming independent will mean the development of other state infrastructure. This will include building a diplomatic network which can ensure that Scottish citizens and businesses travelling, working and trading internationally are properly represented.

# A strategic approach to defence and security in an independent Scotland



## Key points

The defence and security of the nation and its people is the first duty of every government, and this will be no different in an independent Scotland.

This Scottish Government proposes that an independent Scotland would apply to join NATO. Scotland would seek discussions with NATO leaders at the earliest opportunity following a vote for independence.

Upon rejoining the European Union, this Scottish Government would commit fully to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and would work collaboratively on issues of defence and security with the nations of these islands to ensure our mutual safety.

This Scottish Government would introduce constitutional provisions to ensure that in an independent Scotland, deployments overseas on military operations would only take place if they were lawful, approved by Scottish Ministers, and authorised by the Scottish Parliament.

This Scottish Government believes that nuclear weapons should not be based in Scotland and should be removed from Scotland in the safest and most expeditious manner possible following independence.

An independent Scotland would invest in the core capabilities of its armed forces.

The defence and security of the nation, its people and resources are the first duty of every government. How we protect our people, territory, critical national infrastructure and way of life from threats will be a key question for a newly independent nation.

The threats we face today are arguably more complex than ever and have significantly changed over the past 10 years.<sup>9</sup> The conflict in Ukraine has shown us that hostile nations still pose a catastrophic threat to democratic values and our way of life. Cyber-attacks pose risks to our critical infrastructure, economy, people and democracy. And of course, all societies are having to face up to the consequences – including the security consequences – of climate change.<sup>10</sup>

In confronting these challenges there are choices which an independent Scotland can make that would enhance our nation's security. This Scottish Government proposes an approach to defence and security policy that reflects our broader values, with an emphasis on collaboration and building collective security. As an independent country, Scotland would be able to choose to defend our interests and support our allies in a manner commensurate with the threats we face.

This section focuses on the principles and policies which this Scottish Government proposes would underpin the defence and security arrangements for an independent Scotland. The subsequent section sets out the tools and capabilities the armed forces of an independent Scotland will need.

## Scotland's geography of defence

Our defence and security needs are not only defined by the threats we face. A significant factor when planning our capability is the geography of Scotland.

Scotland shares land and sea borders with the rest of the UK; maritime boundaries with Ireland, Norway and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands), as well as a significant high seas boundary. It is surrounded by almost two thirds of the current UK's domestic maritime Exclusive Economic Zone and the fourth largest sea area of the core EU.<sup>11</sup> These waters are home to significant conventional and emerging renewable energy assets as well as the basis of our fishing sector.<sup>12</sup>

Our nation projects into the North Atlantic at a strategically vital location. Sea routes from the Arctic into the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean, and sea lanes stretching from Northern Europe to the wider world are on our doorstep. Scotland also occupies a prominent position in relation to the major air and communications routes between North America and Europe.

Being an Atlantic nation, on the north-west of Europe, and in close proximity to many EU and NATO member states, an independent Scotland would be the world's most northerly non-Arctic nation, with a substantial coastline and sea area<sup>13</sup> and a clear interest in contributing to the stability and defence of the region.

However, many of the current and emerging threats facing Scotland are digital rather than physical in nature. So, alongside a strong focus on our geography and location, our defence and security capabilities must also be able to address these emerging threats.<sup>14</sup>

## Pillars of defence in an independent Scotland

This Scottish Government would frame the future defence policy of an independent Scotland around the following objectives:

- securing Scotland's borders, land, airspace and sea, deterring attacks and protecting our citizens and assets from threats
- supporting Scotland's communities and civil authorities to respond to emergencies and contribute to resilience
- protecting Scotland's national interests and economic wellbeing, alongside the key values and underlying principles that support Scottish society and our way of life
- contributing internationally to the protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democratic values, peace and security
- protecting Scotland's national interests by being an active partner in collective security

To achieve these objectives, this Scottish Government believes that the best guarantee of security and stability for an independent Scotland is through strong relationships with our neighbours in these islands, Europe and the North Atlantic.

Following a vote for independence this Scottish Government would seek to align development of any Scottish military capability with the broader strategic objectives of Scotland, NATO, the EU and the UK.

### 1. NATO membership

An independent Scotland would play its part in building collective security and capability.

The case for supporting NATO's collective defence arrangements<sup>15</sup> has been reinforced by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This has caused a number of nations to reassess their defence requirements, especially with regard to defence spending, and prompted the decisions of Finland and Sweden to apply for NATO membership, with Finland becoming NATO's 31<sup>st</sup> member state in April 2023.<sup>16</sup>

This Scottish Government would seek NATO membership for an independent Scotland via NATO's 'open door' policy<sup>17</sup> and would:

- commit to defence spending of 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), recognising NATO's enduring commitment to invest in defence capabilities
- align with NATO's defence principles, contributing to the global alliance as an active partner

- work with neighbouring members in defence of the North Atlantic and High North region, with a likely focus on the strategically important Greenland–Iceland–UK (GIUK) Gap
- provide conventional forces to NATO operations in support of Treaty objectives and participate in joint exercises conducted by NATO and by neighbouring countries, including the UK, EU and Nordic states
- contribute forces to NATO and UN-led international humanitarian and peacekeeping missions
- work with NATO allies towards worldwide nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

Scotland would seek accession talks with NATO at the earliest possible stage following a vote for independence, to begin the established stages of negotiating NATO membership.<sup>18</sup> This would be closely coordinated with a comprehensive and expert-led Defence and Security Review, ensuring that our planning and capability aligned with the requirements of NATO membership.

## **2. EU membership and a commitment to the Common Security and Defence Policy**

Membership of the EU would be the second key component of the defence strategy of an independent Scotland.

On regaining EU membership, this Scottish Government proposes that an independent Scotland in the EU would commit fully to the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP),<sup>19</sup> contributing to missions that support global peace and security. In doing so an independent Scotland would join the family of nations who are fully committed to the international rules-based system and multilateralism.

The CSDP sits within the EU's wider Common Foreign and Security Policy, which in the words of the EU itself allows "Member States to tackle challenges they cannot solve alone and ensuring the security and prosperity of EU citizens."<sup>20</sup>

The EU's approach to security and defence policy involves deploying a combination of civilian and military activity and assets. It plays an important role in peace-keeping operations, conflict prevention and the strengthening of international security.

The EU's Strategic Compass for Defence and Security,<sup>21</sup> launched in March 2022, sets out a shared assessment of the strategic environment in which the EU is operating, together with plans to improve the EU's ability to act decisively in crises and to defend its security and its citizens.

The EU and NATO work closely together,<sup>22</sup> thereby strengthening their ability to tackle shared challenges and ensuring value for money from member state contributions. In recent years cooperation has intensified in reaction to new and emerging threats such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

This Scottish Government firmly aligns itself with the EU's and NATO's collective and collaborative approach to security and defence. As an independent EU member state and NATO ally, Scotland would be a committed and active member of international security and defence structures, including the provision and sharing of resources to bolster our collective security and defence.

An independent Scotland would also be an active member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>23</sup> and the UN, contributing to operations and missions to maintain or restore international peace and security, thereby safeguarding the freedom and security of Scotland and our people.

### 3. A mutually beneficial relationship across these islands

An independent Scotland's position, sharing a landmass with the rest of the UK and proximity to Ireland, demands, as a matter of common sense, cooperation on issues of defence and security. This happens between the UK and Ireland now.<sup>24</sup> An independent Scotland's most enduring defence and security partnership would be with the UK and Ireland and would require working collaboratively to ensure our mutual safety.

An early aim, following a vote for independence, would be to establish the joint readiness, capability and intelligence sharing mechanisms to support the security of these islands and our wider alliances, as well as arrangements for the transition to independent Scottish military capability.

As the '[Building a New Scotland](#)' series makes clear, independence would enable Scotland to thrive as a globally-connected nation, while preserving our deep connections with our closest neighbours, from which a mutually respectful and mutually beneficial partnership can be forged.

### Future defence policy and democratic oversight of overseas deployments

This Scottish Government would also set as a cornerstone of defence policy that an independent Scotland would only participate in overseas military operations that are lawful, approved by Scottish Ministers, and authorised by the Scottish Parliament. This Scottish Government would therefore introduce a constitutional process to ensure that deployment overseas on military operations would only take place if it was:

1. in accordance with the UN Charter
2. agreed by Scottish Ministers as a matter of collective responsibility and as being in line with domestic law, and
3. approved by the Scottish Parliament

This would in no way prevent Scotland's ability to act immediately in self-defence in the event of armed attack (Article 51 of the UN Charter<sup>25</sup>) and nor would it conflict with NATO's Article 5 commitment to collective defence.<sup>26</sup>

### A nuclear-free Scotland

It has been the longstanding position of this Scottish Government that nuclear weapons have no place in an independent Scotland.<sup>27</sup> In this world of heightened tension, the risk of deliberate or even accidental use of nuclear weapons, with its grave humanitarian and environmental consequences, cannot be ignored.

'Building a New Scotland: Creating a modern constitution for an independent Scotland'<sup>28</sup> proposed that the interim constitution should place a duty on the post-independence Scottish Government to pursue nuclear disarmament. This would mean that immediately upon securing a vote for independence, the Scottish Government would pursue negotiations with a view to securing the safe and expeditious removal from Scotland of the nuclear weapons based for over half a century less than 30 miles from Glasgow, Scotland's largest population centre, at HMNB Clyde (Faslane). No other country has based its entire nuclear arsenal in the territory of another state for an extended period.

The costs of maintaining and replacing nuclear weapons are prohibitive. These submarines and their missiles are now being replaced and the cost estimates vary widely. A House of Commons 2023 report<sup>29</sup> quoted a range of estimates including one from the Nuclear Information Service which calculated the costs of replacement out to 2070 at £172 billion.<sup>30</sup> Average in-service costs for Trident capital and running costs, including the costs for the Atomic Weapons Establishment, currently equate to around 6% of the UK defence budget – approximately £3 billion for 2023/24, based on planned defence expenditure.<sup>31</sup>

By making different choices on nuclear weapons, Scotland's defence spending could instead be focused on conventional forces and national security and intelligence infrastructure. In doing so, we would be better placed to respond to the threats we face in the modern world, while also investing in building a fairer more dynamic independent economy.

Furthermore, this Scottish Government does not regard the removal of nuclear weapons from Scottish soil as an obstacle to an independent Scotland's aims of gaining membership of NATO. Only a minority of NATO members host nuclear weapons.<sup>32</sup> An independent Scotland's position would therefore be similar to the approach of most NATO member countries, which neither possess nor host nuclear weapons. Finland's accession to NATO in April 2023<sup>33</sup> highlighted that hosting nuclear weapons is not a precondition for membership.

# Defence and security capability in an independent Scotland

## Key points

By independence day, a comprehensive, expert-led Defence and Security Review would be completed, ensuring that we develop the capabilities needed to protect and defend our borders, citizens and democracy.

The armed forces of an independent Scotland would comprise land, sea, and air components overseen by a Joint Forces Headquarters.

Following negotiations, an independent Scotland would inherit significant military establishments and infrastructure. These establishments would support the armed forces of an independent Scotland and, with agreement, would also continue to be available to our international partners.

This Scottish Government would design a 'contract' for serving personnel that would clearly show how a role in Scotland's armed forces would be appealing and flexible, with modern pay and conditions. Our offer would include continued strong support for veterans.

This Scottish Government would establish a robust and proportionate security and intelligence body for an independent Scotland – the Scottish Security and Intelligence Agency.

## Developing Scotland's defence capability

Independence will allow Scotland to mould the shape, size and structure of the Scottish Armed Forces. It would provide Scotland with the ability to meet our own national objectives and tackle current and emerging threats. This would also provide a historic opportunity to recast Scotland's defence forces in a way which is representative of our needs. This section provides this Scottish Government's view on how the armed forces of an independent Scotland might be structured and the capabilities they may require.

## A Defence and Security Review

Ahead of a lawful vote for independence, the Scottish Government would begin the work needed to inform our future capability requirements. This Scottish Government would commission a comprehensive Defence and Security Review, alongside a strategic threat assessment informed by expert advice that takes account of current, evolving and anticipated threats, geopolitics, and technological developments. These would provide expert analysis and recommendations for the size, shape and specific capabilities that Scotland should plan for when building its armed forces. This Scottish Government would support the idea of Multi Year Defence Agreements, which would bring together political parties and relevant stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure robust and durable defence and security plans.

Both the Defence and Security Review and the strategic threat assessment would be informed by the strategic assumptions identified elsewhere in this paper – Scotland's intention to join NATO, the EU, and build a collaborative mutually beneficial defence and security relationship with the UK and our key strategic partners.

The commissioning of the Review and a strategic threat assessment will therefore be key to understanding and developing the full detail of an independent Scotland's defence capability.



## What a Scottish defence capability could look like

By independence day the government of an independent Scotland would ensure that capability was in place to secure Scotland's borders, land, sea and airspace. In addition to undertaking a strategic Defence and Security Review and threat assessment, other priorities following a vote for independence would include:

- identifying arrangements for joint working with the UK for a transitional period, and a timetable for UK forces to gradually draw down their presence in Scotland as our independent capability builds up, while recognising that our most enduring security partnership will be with the UK
- the creation of a Joint Forces Headquarters at Faslane that would lead the build-up of our armed forces
- establishing a high level of confidence in our capabilities across Scotland, the UK, the EU and with NATO to allow our key allies to understand and trust our capabilities

Building on these initial priorities, and without presuming the outcome of any future assessment, the broad shape of an independent Scotland's initial capability is expected to include the following elements:

- a land component, with units whose role would be to operate on the frontline of any operation. This would mean a mix of infantry, artillery, and combat service support units such as medics, engineers, and logistical troops
- a maritime component that would focus on Scotland's strategically important geographical location that sees us bordered by the North Sea, and the North Atlantic.<sup>34</sup> Our maritime forces would patrol and secure our territorial waters while protecting critical national infrastructure such as the subsea cable network that surrounds Scotland. Given our strategically important location as the most northerly non-Arctic nation our maritime defence measures would support not just Scotland but also our allies
- an air component that would consist of aircraft and supporting infrastructure able to undertake core tasks, such as securing Scotland's airspace, transporting personnel, materials and equipment by air, both across Scotland and overseas, protecting our territory and armed forces from a range of threats

Interoperability (i.e. the ability for military personnel or equipment to operate effectively together) will be essential to meeting the strategic aims of an independent Scotland. The development and design of forces capability will rest on ensuring interoperability between land, sea and air as well as with our allies in NATO and the EU, further strengthening Scotland's case for NATO membership.

## Comparator nations

The findings and recommendations of a future Defence and Security Review and the strategic threat assessment will inform the development of an independent Scotland's capability. The approach taken by countries of similar population size to Scotland (5,436,600)<sup>35</sup> gives a realistic indication of the scale of capability an independent Scotland could need.

Table 1, below, offers a comparison of the size of the armed forces in five countries – Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. These countries are comparable to Scotland based on their location in North Europe, population size, values and international partnerships, though of course their own histories and geographies have led them to make decisions suited to their own circumstances.<sup>36</sup> They also share a number of common features in relation to their army and land forces. They have a mix of infantry, mechanised infantry, reconnaissance and air defence capabilities, supported by infantry fighting vehicles, tanks and other vehicles and operate multi-role combat aircraft and a varying mix of maritime patrol, transport, rotary and other aircraft.<sup>37</sup>

**Table 1:** Defence spending and personnel figures for comparable countries to Scotland

	<b>DENMARK</b>	<b>FINLAND</b>	<b>IRELAND</b>	<b>NORWAY</b>	<b>SWEDEN</b>
<b>POPULATION*</b>	5,920,767	5,601,547	5,275,004	5,553,840	10,483,647
<b>% GDP SPEND (2022)</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>1.34</b>
<b>Defence spending – USD billion</b>	<b>5.06</b>	<b>5.82</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>7.43</b>	<b>8.07</b>
<b>ARMY</b>	8,000	13,400	6,750	8,300	6,850
<b>NAVY</b>	2,250	3,150	750	4,600	2,350
<b>AIR FORCE</b>	3,000	2,700	700	4,300	2,700
<b>Reserves</b>	44,200	238,000	1,600	40,000	10,000

\*Population figures are based on demographic statistics taken from the US Census Bureau

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2023. Abingdon: Routledge, 2023

While we anticipate that a transitional period would be required to build up to the level of capability deployed by these long-term and well-established armed forces, these comparators show that countries of Scotland's size can, and indeed do, have substantial militaries capable of defending territories while providing support to collective defence arrangements.

In November 2013, the Scottish Government published 'Scotland's Future'.<sup>38</sup> This paper set out a phased approach to increasing capability over a 10 year period post-independence, with the aim of having 15,000 regular, and 5,000 reserve personnel after 10 years.

Table 1 demonstrates that the Scottish Government's 2013 proposition<sup>39</sup> would place Scotland near the middle of the range of the comparator countries above. It is worth noting, however, that some of the comparator countries have policies that we would not seek to replicate – use of compulsory military service or the idea of a citizen militia. Both Finland and Norway also share a land border with Russia, which has significant implications for their defence policy.

While we believe the force size estimates produced in 2013 remain reasonable, the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has emphasised the degree to which the global security situation has evolved and may do so further. In that context, it is important to re-emphasise that the shape and size of Scotland's armed forces would be decided by a comprehensive Defence and Security Review to allow decisions to reflect the most up to date threat and capability assessments.

Table 2 provides an overview of comparator countries' naval vessel capability. These countries operate a significant fleet of medium to large combat vessels with a varying mix of frigates, corvettes and, in some cases, submarines, supported by widely varying fleets of inshore craft.

**Table 2:** Naval vessel capability for comparator countries to Scotland

<b>Naval vessel</b>	<b>DENMARK</b>	<b>FINLAND</b>	<b>IRELAND</b>	<b>NORWAY</b>	<b>SWEDEN</b>
<b>Submarines</b>	-	-		6	5
<b>Destroyers</b>	3	-	-	-	-
<b>Frigates</b>	2	-	-	4	-
<b>Patrol &amp; Coastal Combatants</b>	12	20	6	13	150
<b>Mine warfare</b>	6	8	-	4	7
<b>Amphibious</b>	-	52	-	-	11
<b>Logistics &amp; Support</b>	12	7	2	6	15

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2023. Abingdon: Routledge, 2023

While the illustrations above largely focus on conventional military capability, Scotland will also need to draw on our existing experience to develop the technological capabilities required for modern warfare, in areas such as cyber, national security and intelligence which are covered later in this paper.

## Defence footprint

According to the UK Ministry of Defence, in August 2021, there were 113 military establishments across Scotland (not including Service Family Accommodation).<sup>40</sup> These range from air defence radar at Royal Air Force Saxa Vord in the far north of Shetland to the Kirkcudbright Training Area in Dumfries and Galloway. There are major military bases such as His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde at Faslane, Leuchars Station on the east coast and RAF Lossiemouth in Moray.

These establishments will be in the sovereign territory of an independent Scotland, which would be free to determine how best to use them to support our armed forces, as well as, through formal agreements, those of our allies, including the UK. Scottish waters, military bases and training areas would continue to be available to host some of the world's largest multi-national training exercises<sup>41</sup> and our excellent facilities and challenging terrain could be used by our allies as part of Scotland's contribution towards ensuring our mutual security.

This Scottish Government proposes that Faslane would be Scotland's primary naval base, home to a range of conventional maritime forces. It would also act as the joint headquarters of the Scottish defence forces.

## The offer to Armed Forces personnel

The armed forces of a democratic nation are nothing without the dedication of the people willing to serve their country. The Scottish Government recognises that an independent Scotland cannot ask hardships of those who serve without ensuring that they, and their families, get the utmost support in return.

Mere acknowledgement is not enough. Our serving personnel should be clear about what they can expect in return for the solemn commitment they have made. It is not acceptable that those who are prepared or have been prepared to lay down their lives in defence of their country may struggle – both when serving and as veterans – to use their skills, develop a good standard of living and to access the public services available to everyone else.<sup>42</sup>

This Scottish Government would take a responsible approach to the transfer of serving UK defence personnel to a Scottish Armed Forces. At the point of independence, no UK service personnel would be compelled to take up a post within the Scottish Armed Forces. Given the need for a period of transition for both Scottish defence forces and the armed forces of the UK, the manner of the transition would be the subject of responsible negotiation between the Scottish and UK governments at that time.

In an independent Scotland, this Scottish Government would redesign the 'contract' with our serving men and women, making a role in the armed forces appealing and flexible, with modern pay and conditions, including by:

- making an offer to those serving that makes the Scottish Armed Forces an attractive and competitive career choice, with a clear and comprehensive package for them and their families, that provides development opportunities when serving and clear career pathways when returning to civilian life – removing the cliff face of transition many face<sup>43</sup>
- giving our armed forces personnel a voice in the decisions that affect them on matters such as housing, health and education for our armed forces community in Scotland

- respecting and supporting family life by designating a home base in Scotland throughout their career
- integrating service personnel within their communities as much as possible during and after their military career, with a focus on removing unnecessary barriers and streamlining health, housing, education and skills and other key services
- supporting this integration while ensuring continuity of medical care and education and development of career paths that match with relevant sectors in civilian life. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) partnership has already worked to map some military qualifications to the SCQF and develop a Military Skills Discovery Tool helping employers and educational institutions to understand qualifications gained during service<sup>44</sup>
- developing an exit package that focuses on retraining and future employment for service members and their spouse/partner

## **Our veterans community**

This Scottish Government is also committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for our veterans community, creating the conditions for Scotland to be the destination of choice for its Service leavers and their families. This is set out in the Scottish Government's Veterans Strategy Action Plan first published in 2020<sup>45</sup> and refreshed in 2022,<sup>46</sup> informed by an extensive consultation with stakeholders across the community and tailored to the needs of our veterans and their families. Veterans and their families are valuable members of our society, offering a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experience. Recognising this and ensuring they do not suffer disadvantage because of their service and can integrate successfully into civilian society will be a cornerstone of support for veterans in an independent Scotland.

This Scottish Government has been steadfast in its commitment to our veterans, being the first Scottish Government to create a dedicated Minister in 2012 who made the landmark appointment in 2014 of the first independent Veterans Commissioner of any nation in the UK.<sup>47</sup>

The relationship between the Scottish people and those who have committed to protect them can be reforged, ensuring our military personnel and veterans are part of and play a full part in the communities in which they and their families live and where the present dislocation between serving and civilian life is minimised.

## **Scotland's defence industry**

The defence industry in an independent Scotland would play a key role in helping to build up our capability over time. In 2022, this sector added £3.2 billion to the Scottish economy and had over 33,000 direct employees, including 1,500 apprentices.<sup>48</sup>

Although the Defence and Security Review would inform our capability requirements, it is anticipated that due to Scotland's geography, a substantial maritime capability will form a key part of our defence forces. As shown earlier in this paper, comparator countries all operate a significant number of surface ships up to and including frigate-sized vessels.

Scotland is already home to renowned shipbuilders and has significant shipbuilding capabilities which can be seen by the work undertaken by both BAE<sup>49</sup> and Babcock<sup>50</sup> in delivering world-leading ships for the Royal Navy. This Scottish Government's intention would be to use the capability of Scottish yards to create the maritime capability for the navy of an independent Scotland.

Companies in an independent Scotland would also be expected to be in a strong position to compete for UK Defence work, following a recent change in UK naval procurement policy. The UK Government published a refreshed national shipbuilding strategy in March 2022,<sup>51</sup> confirming that the procurement approach for all UK naval ships is now to be decided on a case-by-case basis and can be open to single source procurement, UK competition, international competition, or a blended approach comprising UK and international competition.

This Scottish Government firmly believes that the world-leading capability of Scottish yards would continue to be attractive to the UK Government in the period beyond independence and we do not believe the expertise that exists there would be easy to replicate elsewhere in the UK.

## Scotland's space sector

Space is increasingly important in the delivery of national and international security.<sup>52</sup> Scotland already has a strong space sector, predominantly focused upon commercial space. According to Space Scotland, it is already punching above its weight in terms of performance in the UK space sector, with almost one fifth of all UK space sector jobs being based in Scotland in 2021.<sup>53</sup>

Scotland has world leading capabilities in small satellite manufacturing<sup>54</sup> and is applying downstream data applications including earth observation, which plays a vital role in monitoring global climate change.<sup>55</sup>

The delivery of launch capability will provide Scotland with the full end-to-end solution for small satellites. With a combination of domestic launch vehicle manufacturers and international partnerships Scotland could become the home of European launch. This government believes this capability will be attractive to a range of international defence partners.

## National security and intelligence

The safety and prosperity of an independent Scotland would be assured not only by its military capability and alliances but also by the establishment of a robust but proportionate security and intelligence apparatus.

Scotland's needs in this area would be met by the establishment of a single Scottish Security and Intelligence Agency. This new body would support Scotland's role as a good global citizen, contributing to national security whilst promoting and protecting human rights, the rule of law and democratic values. As in all other aspects of an independent Scotland, national security would be delivered in line with Scotland's values, with institutions that would be accountable to Ministers, and subject to scrutiny by Parliament, with an independent oversight mechanism to ensure transparent examination of the most delicate matters whilst respecting the need to protect sensitive information.

The specific capability of this agency would – as in other areas of defence and security – be informed by a comprehensive strategic threat assessment following a vote for independence, but the key functions it would deliver and how it would operate are already clear. A Scottish Security and Intelligence Agency would, at a minimum, undertake:

- risk and threat assessments
- investigation of threats
- liaison with Police Scotland and others (including the military), the UK and internationally
- intelligence gathering, receipt and handling
- production of open-source intelligence assessment and analysis
- protection of Scotland's critical infrastructure

- cyber security functions
- monitoring of, and response to threats to the democratic process
- protection of classified material
- security of 'Information Agreements' with the EU and other key allies

## **Scotland's security: cyber security and resilience**

The adoption and use of digital technologies have increased in recent years and this has benefitted the country hugely. However, alongside this digital transformation, there have been increases and changes in the types of threat we are now seeing. Threats to our democracy and way of life no longer come only from ground, sea or air. Conflict is both physical and virtual and there have been several instances of the use of cyber to undermine elections and the democratic process.<sup>56</sup> The years ahead are likely to be more challenging as we become even more reliant on the internet and digital technologies and the cyber threat becomes more sophisticated. It will be of the utmost importance to keep Scotland safe: enabling us to defend our democracy and counter high levels of malicious state and criminal activity. We will need the capabilities, the networks, the relationships and the approaches to keep Scotland safe, secure and resilient.

These objectives are eminently achievable. Following the restoration of its independence, Estonia, with a population only a quarter of that of Scotland,<sup>57</sup> has become an exemplar for secure digital public services and has one of the world's strongest cyber defence infrastructures, demonstrating that small states can outperform their bigger neighbours when it comes to security.<sup>58</sup>

Since the implementation of a national cyber resilience strategy for Scotland in 2015,<sup>59</sup> Scotland's cyber resilience has been improving, with evidence<sup>60</sup> that:

- awareness of cyber threats among the general population is increasing
- Scotland's national cyber incident response arrangements are in place and are tested regularly
- our public sector organisations are becoming better prepared against the cyber threat
- the cyber security skills pipeline is strengthening, with qualifications offered at secondary and tertiary education levels

An effective, collaborative partnership-approach to building cyber resilience is already in place in Scotland,<sup>61</sup> providing an effective base on which to build future capability. An independent Scotland would increase and deepen its cyber security capacity and capabilities in order to:

- lead on key national cyber security and defence issues
- understand and play its part in the global cyber security and defence ecosystem, developing strong partnerships with allies
- provide early warning, threat intelligence and assessment across priority sectors
- respond effectively to cyber security incidents and attacks, which may include more focused state sponsored attacks and more technologically advanced cyber attacks
- provide technical defence capabilities

In addition, the EU Directive on Network and Information Security (NIS) requires EU member states to have a Cert (computer emergency response team) capability in order to support the sharing of cyber threat and knowledge with other Certs across Europe.<sup>62</sup> Developing this capability would be an early priority for an independent Scotland.



# An independent Scotland as a good global citizen



## Key points

An independent Scotland would take its own decisions on international policy – reflecting our national interests and our consistent focus on being a good global citizen.

With independence, this Scottish Government would commit to meet the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income on official development assistance. An independent Scotland would also be able to enshrine the 0.7% commitment in law. This would enable an independent Scotland to play its full part in tackling global poverty.

In an independent Scotland, this Scottish Government would establish a dedicated ministerial portfolio to manage work in international development. This would be crucial for the work to have focus, budget and scale in government.

An independent Scotland could build on our work to date to be a world-leader in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, making a positive contribution to the planet and its people.

With independence, Scotland would have the opportunity to become a state party to treaties, conventions or agreements which the UK has not signed or ratified. These include the Revised European Social Charter, which provides a range of rights on pay, workers' rights and representation, and working hours, amongst others.

As set out in 'Building a New Scotland: Migration to Scotland after independence,' this Scottish Government would make the refugee and asylum system fairer, more streamlined and more dignified in an independent Scotland.

Scotland is already active and engaged internationally, playing as full a role as current powers allow.

For example, this Scottish Government has demonstrated leadership in multilateral forums, receiving global recognition for establishing the Edinburgh Process on Biodiversity<sup>63</sup> – promoting global advocacy at local and subnational levels of government. At COP26, Scotland became the first developed country to pledge Loss and Damage finance to support vulnerable communities to address the impacts of climate change, tackle structural inequalities and recover from climate-related loss and damage.<sup>64</sup>

Scotland already contributes to the development of international human rights, engaging with institutions such as the UN and the Council of Europe and publishing detailed reports on Scotland's compliance with international obligations.<sup>65</sup>

The Scottish Government has strong relationships with partners around the world. This is demonstrated through initiatives such as the Scotland-Ireland Bilateral Review,<sup>66</sup> and the Global Goals Partnership Agreement with Malawi,<sup>67</sup> on which we can build.

The Scottish Government's international development programmes help to tackle poverty, injustice and inequality. Our Humanitarian Emergency Fund responds to the impact of natural disasters, disease and conflict.<sup>68</sup> The Scottish Government also supports wider human rights and humanitarian initiatives, including collaboration with the University of Dundee, Amnesty International and Front Line Defenders to deliver the Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship.<sup>69</sup>

Scotland currently has an international network of nine government offices and more than 30 trade and investment offices. This network operates within the parameters of the devolution settlement and provides a strong basis from which to grow our international presence after independence.

In short, Scotland is already making a valuable contribution on the world stage. With the powers of independence, we could build on our existing strengths and take our place as a state among equals in the global community. Scotland will always aim to be a good global citizen. As covered further below, independence would give us the chance to do much more on issues like international development, climate and the environment, asylum seekers and refugees, promoting our values and taking a feminist approach to international relations.

### **A more ambitious approach to international development**

An independent Scotland would have an opportunity to develop a genuinely different and progressive offer on overseas aid and development. The Scottish people have a long history of supporting those in need and it is important that this help continues and grows where possible. Addressing poverty and contributing to humanitarian crises globally are beneficial in and of themselves and they can also contribute to creating a more stable global environment. This is good for every country, including Scotland.

Over the last decade the UK has lost much of its international leadership on aid, with commentators noting a reduction in the quality and quantity of its spend on development through, for example, a “rushed merger,” and cuts to aid spend,<sup>70</sup> with a balancing of aid towards the national interest of the UK and away from the poorest countries.<sup>71</sup>

UK spending on international development has fallen drastically in recent years with huge impacts on the poorest.<sup>72</sup> In 1970, the UN set a target for donor countries to spend 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) on official development assistance (ODA). While the UK Government set this target in UK law in 2015, it reduced its commitment to 0.5% in 2021.<sup>73</sup> In 2022 the UK spent more than three times on housing refugees in Britain than on helping to alleviate poverty in Africa.<sup>74</sup>

The UK Government has said it will return to spending 0.7% on ODA ‘when fiscal circumstances allow,’<sup>75</sup> however this was not included in the UK Government’s 2023 Autumn Statement, despite the Office of Budget Responsibility suggesting the fiscal tests would be met in 2027/28 and 2028/29.<sup>76</sup>

This Scottish Government would commit to meet the UN target of 0.7% of GNI on ODA. An independent Scotland would be able to enshrine this commitment in law and provide development assistance and humanitarian aid in ways that are anchored in the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and focused on poverty reduction.<sup>77</sup> At 2021 GNI figures, Scotland would be a mid-sized donor in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Donor Assistance Committee rankings (Table 3 below).

**Table 3:** A list of selected countries’ ODA in 2021 and how it equated as a percentage of GNI. Scotland’s 0.7% GNI is included for illustrative purposes.

<b>Country</b>	<b>ODA (\$US million, 2021)<sup>78</sup></b>	<b>% GNI<sup>79</sup></b>
United Kingdom	15,712	0.5
Sweden	5,932	0.91
Norway	4,673	0.9
Denmark	2,921	0.71
<b>Scotland<sup>80</sup></b>	<b>1,646</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Austria	1,467	0.31
Finland	1,441	0.47
Ireland	1,155	0.3
Luxembourg	539	0.99

Similar sized like-minded countries, such as Sweden, Norway, Finland or Ireland rank highly on indices of aid effectiveness and commitment to development.<sup>81</sup> Sweden, for example, was at the top of the Commitment to Development Index in 2023, which measures how countries' policies improve lives in the developing world.<sup>82</sup> An independent Scotland could join these global leaders by taking a principled approach to deliver aid.

This Scottish Government would base spending decisions on the many drivers of poverty and the needs of the partner country. We could share expertise in areas such as health, innovation, renewable energy, research and human rights. And, with an emphasis on equitable partnerships, we would learn from partner countries in return, as the Scottish Government has sought to do through our development partnership with Malawi.

Building on the progressive approach this Scottish Government has taken under devolution, with independence this Government would be informed by a feminist approach ensuring Scotland's ODA budget continued to have a strong focus on inclusion, which is crucial for global development. In 2018, the World Bank found that limited educational opportunities for girls and barriers to completing 12 years of education cost countries between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings.<sup>83</sup> It is wrong that women, girls, minorities, or the LGBTI+ community should be marginalised in any context and in an independent Scotland, this government's programmes would continue to seek to support and promote inclusion.

An independent Scotland would need to target its assistance carefully. The Paris Agenda for aid effectiveness emphasises the importance of countries taking a strategic and focused approach, rather than spreading development assistance thinly across multiple areas.<sup>84</sup> Taking a poverty-reduction lens, the majority of Scotland's financing could go to sub-Saharan Africa, recognising that sub-Saharan Africa has the highest share of people living under the extreme poverty line, and extreme poverty is projected to become increasingly concentrated in that region.<sup>85</sup> There are also issues upon which Scotland has a responsibility to engage, due to historic colonial or slave trade links. The most recent accounts show<sup>86</sup> the UK spent less than half of its finance on Africa in 2022, a proportion that has been reducing year on year.<sup>87</sup>

As a medium-sized donor, an independent Scotland would be a core and voluntary contributor to major multilateral organisations. These multilateral connections would be an important way for an independent Scotland to achieve impact, including through the UN, the World Bank and, of course, the EU. Working multilaterally would allow Scotland to pool resources with others and have an impact on poverty and redress inequalities at a global scale. Doing so could support those countries which bear the brunt of climate change caused by the development from which countries like Scotland have benefited. We would also be better placed to champion the perspectives of the Global South on climate justice and advocate for global vaccine equity or for debt relief.

Scotland could also use its seat at the table of multilateral organisations to advocate policies which will reduce poverty in developing countries. Indeed, Scotland is already doing this on 'Loss and Damage' in relation to climate change.<sup>88</sup> With independence, we could support positive terms of trade for developing countries, for example by identifying opportunities for trade to help meet development goals, such as through technology transfer.

In an independent Scotland, this government would establish a new ministerial portfolio dedicated to international development. This recognises that, whilst policy coherence remains of key importance, international development is a specific policy objective, reflecting Scotland's values-led approach, requiring specific specialist expertise and investment. This approach would support the most effective spend, as well as coherent pro-development policy making for the Scottish Government more broadly.

## Expanding Scotland's international work on climate and environment

Tackling climate change and biodiversity loss would be a key part of Scotland's international agenda as an independent nation – focusing on fair and just climate action towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions and a more resilient future.

Even with current powers, Scotland has developed a long-standing reputation for its commitment to the climate emergency<sup>89</sup> and its approach, always emphasising fairness and equality.<sup>90</sup> An independent Scotland would be able to do more and have greater influence, by working with partners within the EU and beyond.

Smaller countries already lead effectively on the international stage. Finland, for example, passed arguably the world's most ambitious climate target into law, aiming to be the first carbon-neutral and the first fossil-free welfare society by 2035.<sup>91</sup> Independence would allow Scotland to lead on issues where we can have a real impact, focusing international effort and resources appropriately.

For example, Scotland could demonstrate how a fair transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions is possible. We could show how we build resilience to the impacts of climate change. This will require investment in skills training and education that helps to secure good, high-value jobs in green industries like manufacturing, renewables, and technology, as well as creating job security for those in industries at the forefront of the transition. As set out in the First Minister's speech on industrial policy,<sup>92</sup> in an independent Scotland this Scottish Government would establish an Industrial Policy Council to promote innovation and maximise new economic opportunities.

Beyond our international climate finance and development spend, an independent Scotland could continue to support efforts to tackle climate change in ways that are inclusive and to champion a fair and just transition to net zero. We would support action at all levels of government and aim to be a bridge between national governments, as members of international and intergovernmental bodies, and those outside formal negotiating structures. We could use our voice and influence to secure recognition for governments at all levels in international climate change processes and to build coalitions that support and promote climate action by all actors.

This Scottish Government, across all its work, will also continue to support and amplify the voices and views of people on the front line of action. We will work to make sure women's views and perspectives have the same weight as men's and that everyone's voices, including those of children and young people and marginalised groups, are heard and acted on appropriately.

## Honouring our obligations in international treaties and agreements

In areas of devolved responsibility, Scotland already has an obligation to observe international agreements entered into by the UK.<sup>93</sup> But existing devolution arrangements mean that, all too often, Scotland has little or no input into positions taken by the UK Government in international negotiations, or decisions on whether to adopt an international treaty or agreement. For example, Scotland has no seat at the table to influence the Pandemic Accord negotiations,<sup>94</sup> or crucial climate change agreements – despite Scotland's internationally recognised leadership in action on climate change.<sup>95</sup> The UK Government has shown a willingness to withdraw from or breach international treaties, which has been seen to be damaging the UK's reputation and ability to influence internationally.<sup>96</sup>

Independence would give Scotland the opportunity to negotiate directly in our own interests. An independent Scotland could work with like-minded partners to advance an ambitious, progressive agenda and secure agreements in international forums aligned with our values and interests.

The Scottish Government believes that scrutiny and ratification of international treaties in an independent Scotland should be a transparent and democratic process and that the Scottish Parliament should be fully involved in this process, as happens in many other countries. Doing so would clearly signal Scotland's commitment to meeting our international obligations in full.

Action would be needed to ensure that an independent Scotland, from day one, continued to honour the international treaties, conventions and agreements it would 'inherit' from the UK. These cover topics ranging from human rights, climate change and the environment to trade, taxation and defence. At the point of independence, therefore:

- the Scottish Government would write formally to international organisations, such as the UN and the Council of Europe, to make clear Scotland's intention to honour the multilateral commitments inherited from the UK – for example, obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols
- new domestic legislation would be brought forward, where necessary, to give effect to treaties and obligations that require further provision to be made as a matter of Scots law
- as part of this same exercise, the Scottish Government would reaffirm Scotland's continuing intention to maintain alignment with EU regulations where possible and meaningful until it becomes a full member state

## Protecting and progressing human rights

As part of the UK, Scotland is already party to more than 20 major international human rights instruments. For example, everyone in Scotland is currently entitled to the rights set out in seven core UN treaties and a further seven Council of Europe treaties.<sup>97</sup> The rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) are already part of domestic law and cases can be heard in the Scottish courts, with an option for individuals also to apply to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for judicial remedy.

These rights would be at risk if the UK Government were to withdraw from the ECHR, a move that would place the UK alongside Russia and Belarus as the only countries in Europe not signed up to this fundamental treaty.<sup>98</sup>

Far from withdrawing from human rights commitments and institutions, Scotland wants to go further. In 2021, the Scottish Parliament voted unanimously to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law so that those rights too can be directly justiciable in Scottish courts.<sup>99</sup> The Scottish Government intends to extend this world-leading approach by bringing forward further legislation to incorporate a further four such treaties into Scots law, within the limits of devolved competence.<sup>100</sup>

With independence, Scotland would have the opportunity to become a state party to treaties, conventions or agreements which the UK has not signed or ratified. That includes being able to identify areas where we could do things differently or go further than the UK, for the benefit of Scotland and our partners around the world.

For example, this Scottish Government would seek to:

- join the majority of EU member states in becoming a full state party to the Revised European Social Charter. The UK signed the Revised Charter in 1997 but has never ratified it
- become a party to the UN Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which the UK has declined to sign. The Convention prohibits practices such as the state-sponsored abduction of individuals, including by means of 'extraordinary rendition' – state-sponsored 'forcible abduction in another jurisdiction and transfer to a third state.' The Scottish Government has repeatedly raised concerns about the use of Scottish airports by aircraft alleged to be involved in rendition flights. Becoming a party to the Convention would further underline that such practices will not be tolerated in Scotland



Similarly, an independent Scotland could decide whether to carry forward or remove any of the UK's declarations and reservations which qualify the extent to which the provisions of some treaties currently apply to it. This Scottish Government disagrees, for example, with the UK Government's reservation which exempts migrant women from the protections afforded by the Istanbul Convention.<sup>101</sup>

As we set out in 'Building a New Scotland: Creating a modern constitution for an independent Scotland,' independence "would help Scotland to secure rights and further embed equality by putting them at the heart of its constitution."<sup>102</sup> This Scottish Government proposes<sup>103</sup> that the interim constitution of an independent Scotland:

would embed human rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as well as the core international human rights treaties relating to economic, social and cultural rights and the rights of children, women, minority ethnic communities, disabled people and refugees, and the right to a healthy environment. The interim constitution would include a right to access a system of healthcare free at the point of need, and protect workers' rights, including the right to strike. It would also embed equality safeguards and include a duty to advance equality of opportunity for all.

## A feminist approach

Gender equality is at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision for a fairer world and Scotland has a proud record of engaging internationally within the current constitutional arrangement. That is why the Scottish Government committed to developing a feminist approach to international relations,<sup>104</sup> applying a feminist lens to all levers currently available to Scottish Government policy with an international dimension.

There are now over 16 nations, spread across each of the five UN regions, advocating for a feminist foreign policy.<sup>105</sup> An independent Scotland would leverage the full powers of an independent state to deliver a feminist approach to international relations to protect, promote and fulfil human rights around the world, collaborating within the multilateral system, regional and bilateral contexts to tackle the root causes of inequality that drive insecurity.

An independent Scotland could also build on our Women in Conflict 1325 Fellowship programme,<sup>106</sup> by sharing expertise and providing support and training in mediation, conflict resolution, reconciliation and constitution building to those from conflict-affected regions.

## A fairer and more streamlined approach to asylum seekers and refugees

Being a good global citizen also means respecting international commitments and welcoming people from all over the world. An independent Scotland would be an active participant in global cooperation to respond to migration and displacement issues.

Asylum is granted to people who have been forced to flee persecution in their country of origin and who need international protection. Independence would allow Scotland to reject the 'hostile environment' approach taken by a succession of UK governments, including the current government, and especially the approach to forced removal of asylum seekers to Rwanda. The UK approach has undermined international norms and attracted significant criticism.<sup>107</sup>

Despite this, Scotland has provided a warm welcome and a new home for refugees and people seeking asylum for many years and continues to do so. During this time, expertise has been built up in local government, the third sector and community-based organisations, particularly in Glasgow, supporting people to settle in Scotland and rebuild their lives.

This Scottish Government wants to make the refugee and asylum system fairer and more streamlined and to treat people with dignity and respect. This new system would only be available with independence. Key proposals that we set out in 'Building a New Scotland: migration to Scotland after independence'<sup>108</sup> include:

- responsibility for overseeing the asylum process in an independent Scotland would be given to a new Scottish Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Agency
- the new approach would be underpinned by an emphasis on fair, socially responsible and thorough decision-making, with clear adherence to human rights and equality principles and to the rule of law
- all asylum processing would take place in Scotland, with no offshoring to other countries
- if an asylum seeker is granted refugee status, that would come with the status of settlement in Scotland – what the UK Government calls 'indefinite leave to remain'. This would support longer term integration and reduce the need to go through additional administrative processes to stay in Scotland on a permanent basis
- once people are granted asylum, the transition process would be as straightforward as possible, using the principles of the 'New Scots' refugee integration strategy. As people would already have access to social security benefits, they would not face the risk of destitution which is a feature of the UK Government's asylum support system when financial support ends
- support for refugees and people seeking asylum could be streamlined, including housing and employment rights and support. Rather than operating multiple programmes with different rights and entitlements as the UK Government does, this Scottish Government would seek to deliver support on an equal basis. This would make our systems fairer and more straightforward for those who have to use them, as well as providing better value for money by not having to run parallel support systems.

Inevitably, some people would not meet the criteria for asylum status, but in an independent Scotland, anyone in that position would be treated with dignity, fairness and respect. Those affected would get help to consider their options and ensure that they would not face destitution or homelessness.

Detention by default, along with the Home Office's practice of dawn raids, would not form part of the current Scottish Government's approach to asylum. Where detention is necessary, it would be informed by risk assessment and be for a limited period prior to removal.<sup>109</sup>

The asylum system would be overseen by the courts, with an appeals process and essential safeguards to protect the human rights of people seeking asylum. The new powers Scotland will gain at independence around equality, including race equality, would be important in supporting Scotland's ambition to be a progressive, welcoming and inclusive state.

## **A new, fairer approach to refugee resettlement**

Scotland has played a significant role in the UK's refugee resettlement and relocation programmes, particularly those relating to Syria and Afghanistan. An independent Scotland would continue to support refugee resettlement. Following independence, the Scottish Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Agency would work with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to identify refugees with the most pressing needs and no durable solution in their current location who could come to Scotland. The refugee resettlement programme in an independent Scotland would be global and sufficiently flexible to enable a quick response to emerging crises and to avoid the need for separate programmes for each crisis.

As outlined in the sixth publication in the 'Building a New Scotland' series,<sup>110</sup> with independence, people arriving in Scotland under refugee resettlement programmes would be granted refugee status and indefinite leave to remain on arrival. This would enable them to get on with their lives, without the need to go through unnecessary and complex administrative processes later on. We recognise that many people who come to Scotland as refugees will wish to return to their home countries when conditions allow, but in the meantime the Scottish Government would work with local authorities, public services, the third sector and communities to welcome them and support their long-term integration.

The challenges presented by displacement and migration mean that it is vital that countries work together to support people who have had to flee from their home country. As a member of the European Union, an independent Scotland would fully participate in EU refugee resettlement and relocation initiatives, taking our place in the EU's decision-making process as a member in our own right, reflecting Scotland's values and goals.

Independence would provide an opportunity to take innovative and imaginative approaches to assisting displaced people using the migration system. To supplement our refugee resettlement programme, with independence we could build flexibility into the Scottish migration system, allowing us to provide opportunities for refugees and displaced people to come to Scotland under new safe and legal routes.



# A more successful Scotland with independence

## Key points

Through membership of the EU as an independent country, Scotland would regain the many economic, societal and cultural benefits and opportunities lost through Brexit.

Scotland would be part of the world's largest single market – almost 450 million consumers<sup>111</sup> compared to the UK's 67 million<sup>112</sup> – and would benefit from favourable trading terms and contribute to setting global standards.

An independent Scotland would be able to focus on the promotion of Scottish businesses, the sectors driving our economy, and to protect Scottish consumers internationally.

An independent Scotland could play a leading role in global economic development aiming to support sustainability and wellbeing, including through the Wellbeing Economies partnership and by supporting the reform of International Financial Institutions.

Scotland has a strong global brand, and the potential to lead in the industries of the future. With the powers of independence, Scotland could harness these strengths to build a flourishing economy.

## Scotland in the global economy

Scotland is already an open, trading nation and, as set out in previous 'Building a New Scotland' papers, the full powers of independence would enable Scotland – as a member of the EU – to flourish in the global economy.<sup>113</sup>

As discussed in 'Building a New Scotland: Independence in the modern world,'<sup>114</sup> many independent European nations comparable to Scotland have very open economies that compete successfully across a range of global markets. Openness to global trade is one important factor helping to explain the high productivity achieved by these nations.

'Building a New Scotland: A stronger economy with independence'<sup>115</sup> explained that, as an EU member state, Scotland would be part of a market that is much larger than the UK – seven times by population.<sup>116</sup> It would also directly benefit from the global weight of the EU's Common Commercial Policy. The EU continues to negotiate new trade agreements to open markets: it is the top trading partner for 75 countries.<sup>117</sup> And its size and scale mean that it is in a strong position to achieve both trade and non-trade objectives, in areas such as social, labour and environmental standards.

Scotland is already demonstrating leadership in global economic development. The Scottish Government plays a leading role on wellbeing economy agenda on the international stage, with Scotland a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments network (WeGo).<sup>118</sup> WEGo now includes Iceland, New Zealand, Finland and Wales, and other countries, including Canada, are engaging ever more closely with the network. Scotland is determined to build on this and strengthen the network further. The Scottish Government continues to work closely with the OECD, recognising that many countries are active in this agenda.

The vision currently set out in our National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)<sup>119</sup> is that, by 2032, Scotland:

will be recognised as a nation of entrepreneurs and innovators, who will have embraced the opportunities of new technologies. We will have boosted productivity considerably and focused resources on opportunities that will transform our economy and our society. We will be a nation confident of our place in the world, attracting international investment in research and innovation, in the industries of the future, and an exemplar of a just transition to net zero.

Through a range of measures included in NSET, the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that Scotland will be recognised at home and throughout the world as:

- an international benchmark for how an economy can transform itself, de-carbonise and rebuild natural capital whilst creating more, well-paid and secure jobs and developing new markets based on renewable sources of energy and low carbon technology
- a leader in its chosen areas of research and development, collaborating with other centres of excellence across the world and using these strengths to stimulate business opportunities
- a magnet for inward investment and global private capital
- an outward-looking nation, engaging internationally, exerting a meaningful influence on the policies, trends and events that shape our world

## Promoting Scotland globally

The needs of Scotland's economy are often not prioritised when the UK Government undertakes promotional activities overseas.<sup>120</sup> With independence, future Scottish Governments could have a tight focus on growing and supporting those sectors which matter most to Scotland, and which are well placed to compete globally.

With independence, our expanded international network would promote Scotland as a hub for innovation, trade and investment to a much wider audience. By exclusively promoting the innovative, high-quality and globally competitive products and services Scotland offers, we could help our businesses to deliver the trade and export growth that will transform the Scottish economy.

Trade and investment are vital to our economy. Trade supports our economic prosperity, improves our productivity and helps us to be globally competitive and entrepreneurial.<sup>121</sup> Scotland has a record of engaging constructively to protect and promote Scotland's interests. We are a trading nation with a long and proud exporting history, with world-class businesses trading successfully across the globe.

The economic benefits which this trade creates are fundamental to improving living standards, providing good jobs and prosperity for the people of Scotland and the nations we trade with.<sup>122</sup> There is global demand for Scottish goods and services. Our export, inward and capital investment plans<sup>123</sup> explain how a 'Team Scotland' approach<sup>124</sup> can support and showcase Scottish expertise, while our Brand Scotland activity harnesses our cultural and economic strengths to promote Scotland as a desirable country in which to live, work, study, visit, and do business.<sup>125</sup>

Scotland's Trade and Investment Envoys bring representational heft when promoting Scotland's business sector to governments and industry around the world.<sup>126</sup> They promote Scotland's international trade and investment interests and strengthen local market knowledge in the countries and sectors they represent. First established in 2017, the envoys are appointed by the Scottish Government and are volunteers who work in a non-political capacity.

But Scotland currently lacks meaningful involvement in the development of the agreements that determine how our businesses trade. The Scottish Government uses all the levers at our disposal to support our economy and its internationalisation, but these are limited. With the other levers reserved to the UK Government, and the unwillingness of successive UK Governments to engage meaningfully with the Scottish Government on trade policy,<sup>127</sup> we are unable to deploy the full range of policy levers to support Scotland's economic development.

Trading arrangements affect the interests and daily lives of Scotland's businesses and citizens – including impacts on food, jobs, health, our public services and the environment. This Scottish Government has sought to engage with the UK Government in ways that support Scotland's economy, its people and the planet.<sup>128</sup> But Westminster has failed to respond to Scotland's clear and distinct positions in its approach to the negotiation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).<sup>129</sup>

For example, throughout FTA negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, this Scottish Government urged the UK Government to protect Scottish producers from imports produced to lower environmental and animal welfare standards than those Scottish producers meet. However, in neither case was this protection included in the final agreement. Former UK Government Environment Secretary George Eustice now concedes that 'the Australia trade deal is not actually a very good trade deal for the UK'.<sup>130</sup> An independent Scotland will put Scotland's industries and people at the heart of our trading arrangements.

An independent Scotland's principled approach, in line with our strategic approach to trade,<sup>131</sup> could position trade within a wider economic, social and environmental context, assessing the impact and desirability of short-term market access gains against longer term economic, social and environmental goals. For example, addressing tensions between trade liberalisation and supporting public services by protecting the NHS from enforced competition or increases in drug costs as a result of trade liberalisation. This would be within, and would benefit from the weight of, the EU's trade policy.

Scotland opposed leaving the EU and we are now seeing the damaging impacts of Brexit on trade which the Scottish Government consistently warned about.<sup>132</sup> Scottish Government modelling shows that the value of Scotland's total trade in goods with the EU (imports plus exports) was 12% lower in 2021 than it otherwise would have been under continued EU membership.<sup>133</sup> The UK Government's own analysis recognised Brexit as having long-term harmful economic impacts.<sup>134</sup>

By re-joining the EU, the world's largest single market, an independent Scotland's businesses would gain access to almost 450 million consumers<sup>135</sup> with reduced barriers to trade. They would benefit from the huge opportunities that come from the EU's ability to secure advantageous trade arrangements with other countries. Combined with an expanded international network focused on Scotland's interests, access to all available foreign and trade policy levers, and a broad network of trade advisors at home and overseas, we could support our key sectors and businesses to tap into opportunities in overseas markets. This would increase our competitive advantages and help us realise our ambitions to transform Scotland's economy.

## Scotland's economic strengths

Scotland has distinct strengths and enviable resources in key areas of the economy, but very few of the powers necessary to fully harness these strengths. With the powers of independence, we could focus our domestic and international policy efforts on the sectors that will see Scotland thrive and compete in the global economy.

Major opportunities exist for Scotland in the production and export of the low carbon and renewable energy required to power the green economies of the future. Our abundant natural resources, including water and offshore wind, coupled with the necessary infrastructure and a skilled workforce in the energy sector means Scotland could be a major player in the developing global hydrogen market. Scotland has an ambition (as set out in the Hydrogen Action Plan<sup>136</sup> and draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan<sup>137</sup>) of 5 GW of renewable and low carbon hydrogen production by 2030 and 25 GW by 2045, providing a significant employment and export opportunity. Countries across Europe are increasingly seeking cleaner, more secure energy sources. A government with the full powers of independence, focused solely on Scotland's economy and priorities, could ensure that Scotland grasps this opportunity.

Carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) is another industry where Scotland has real competitive advantages and enormous potential<sup>138</sup> to be at the heart of this crucial industry in Europe. CCUS is central to our economic and net-zero ambitions, but the regulatory, fiscal and legislative levers to realise this potential are reserved to a UK Government which has failed to provide reliable timescales or funding for Scottish projects.<sup>139</sup> The government of an independent Scotland could focus investment on the Scottish cluster, helping secure a just transition to a net-zero economy.

Scotland's economic strengths lie not only in the energy sector. In 'Building a New Scotland: a stronger economy with independence',<sup>140</sup> we set out the areas of advantage in our "rich and diverse" economy, including a food and drink sector responsible for GVA of £5.8 billion in 2019,<sup>141</sup> a world-leading tourism industry, one of Europe's largest life sciences clusters, and a growing space sector producing more small satellites than anywhere else in Europe.<sup>142</sup>

## Global developments

There have been significant recent developments in areas of the international economy, including on industrial strategy. Recent US legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act 2023 provides strong tax credits, subsidies and loans totalling around \$400 billion<sup>143</sup> to support the development of domestic cleantech and a semiconductor supply chain. These incentives are making US industries more attractive for foreign investment. Canada has responded with around C\$80 billion in tax credits for clean technologies.<sup>144</sup>

The EU has also introduced a series of high-profile measures, designed to support competitiveness and reduce the bloc's dependency on the energy and technology of other nations. The EU Green Deal Plan will mobilise at least €1 trillion in sustainable investments over the next decade, aiming to enhance the competitiveness of a range of green sectors and thereby accelerating the transition to net zero.<sup>145</sup>

While the US and EU intervene to stimulate investment in the industries of the future, enhance economic resilience and shape a fairer economy, the UK Government's response has been seen to be lacking.<sup>146</sup> Scotland is tied to the UK with only limited progress able to be made in areas such as industrial policy while many economic policy levers remain reserved to the UK Government. With independence, Scotland could navigate a different path, for example with regards to trade negotiations and regulatory frameworks and standards which are critical in ensuring that Scottish companies can benefit from global market opportunities. Independence within the EU would widen the range of potential policy options and enable a more co-ordinated and cohesive approach to industrial policy.<sup>147</sup> Independence and EU membership would also offer Scotland the chance to be fully involved in policy development and decision making, including economic policy, as protected by the EU Treaties.

## Scotland's brand

Scotland has an enviable reputation, with a strong international profile and a large global diaspora. Tens of millions people worldwide claim Scottish ancestry, with some commentators suggesting at least 40 million.<sup>148</sup>

Amongst our global diaspora, the GlobalScots are an influential group of senior business leaders, who are motivated to give something back to Scotland, offering their time and expertise on a voluntary basis. They have provided insight and thought leadership with Scotland's enterprise agencies to successive Scottish Governments. They support companies by advising and mentoring, giving the benefit of years of experience. The GlobalScot Network currently has over 1,200 members across 64 countries globally.<sup>149</sup>

Both our Trade and Investment Envoys and GlobalScots programme, initiatives of the Scottish Government and its economic development agencies, support the internationalisation of the Scottish economy. With independence, we would work further with Scotland's diaspora to support Scotland's economic ambitions.

Scotland also has a distinctive international brand and identity. Scottish culture, food and drink, landscapes, music, tourist destinations, languages, universities, and sporting heritage, such as our golf courses, are major attractions to the rest of the world.

Our international brand is one of our most important assets. Scotland consistently ranks highly in terms of international brand recognition. According to the 2023 Nation Brand Index<sup>150</sup> of international comparisons of country reputations, Scotland ranks 16th from 60 nations – comparable with other similarly sized, high-income democracies and greater than many sovereign countries, despite not being an independent nation. Independence could help Scotland enhance its brand still further, increasing our attraction as a great place to live, work, study, visit, and do business.

With independence, these global linkages could be maximised for the benefit of Scotland's people, businesses and institutions, amplifying Scotland's distinctive perspective on global affairs. Speaking English, the international language of science, business and diplomacy, will facilitate the further development of the strong connections we enjoy with friends and partners around the world.

For centuries, Scots have helped to shape the world we know today. We have built on these historic connections to develop relationships of substance. As an independent country we would be able to fully capitalise on these relationships and expand our networks, opening new opportunities to work with likeminded countries and organisations on issues such as the climate emergency, to learn from others through policy exchange, and to share Scotland's experience and expertise.

# Independence and regional and international cooperation



## Key points

An independent Scotland would continue to have a close relationship with the UK and Ireland, working together as equals to cooperate on shared challenges.

An independent Scotland would join the UN to cement our place in the world.

Scotland would be active and vocal at the UN on the issues that matter most to us, guided by our interests and values, including those we share with the EU of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights.

An independent Scotland would also seek to remain part of the Commonwealth, the voluntary association of 56 countries, most with historical ties to the United Kingdom, working collectively to promote democracy, peace and prosperity.

An independent Scotland would establish a network of embassies and consulates in countries around the world, alongside Scottish permanent missions to key international organisations including the UN and its agencies, NATO and the EU.

## These islands – shared past, shared future

Independence would mark a new phase in the evolution of Scotland's relationships with the UK and Ireland. While the 'social union' of shared histories, sport, culture, languages, and family ties would continue as before, a renewed Scottish democracy would be a force for good across these islands. Scotland can thrive as a global nation while preserving these deep connections with our nearest neighbours and we will be able to update our partnership so that it meets the needs of the people of Scotland.

Earlier in this paper, we set out why an independent Scotland will have close, mutually beneficial relationships across these islands on defence and security matters. Scotland will also be able to coordinate with our closest neighbours on shared challenges and opportunities, such as developing our hydrogen sector alongside Ireland, and work in partnership with the UK and with Ireland in international forums such as the UN. Where Scotland's position is different, or more ambitious, we would not be bound by the decisions taken by the UK.

A refreshed British-Irish Council (BIC) could provide a formal forum for managing some of these relationships, complementing regular bilateral discussions. In its current form, the BIC comprises two sovereign states, three devolved territories, and three crown dependencies. After Scottish independence, there would be three sovereign states, two of them (Scotland and Ireland) EU member states.

We intend to say more about an independent Scotland's relationship with the rest of these islands later in the 'Building a New Scotland' series.

## Our near northern neighbourhood

As a northern European nation, Scotland shares a common region, historical connections and similar outlook with our nearest neighbours. Scotland and the Nordic countries share deep ties and a mutual affinity stretching far beyond geographical proximity. Together, we have long exchanged expertise and best practices to address similar challenges, such as promoting sustainable rural and islands development, maximising renewable energy resources, seizing blue and green economy opportunities, and improving social equality.<sup>151</sup>



Nordic states are mostly of a similar size – in population terms – to Scotland. They regularly come top of a range of international indices, from responsible development to happiness and sustainability. The Nordic model demonstrates what Scotland could achieve as an independent country.

Our shared values and the way the Scottish Government has built trust in this region have enabled us to build strong relationships, with the exchanges giving us an opportunity to deliver benefits for the people of Scotland. This is clearly demonstrated by policy links such as those informing our delivery of baby boxes<sup>152</sup> (Finland), Barnahus/ Bairns' Hoose<sup>153</sup> (Iceland), and our partnership on energy efficiency and heat network technologies<sup>154</sup> (Denmark), and many other policies contributing to the wellbeing of our communities and to Scotland's economic success.

To further this work and increase Scotland's visibility in the region, in August 2022 the Scottish Government opened a new office with a pan-Nordic remit in Copenhagen. The office is promoting policy exchange and unlocking new economic, cultural and trading opportunities.

We also have significant maritime frontiers with EU and non-EU nations, such as Norway, and with the Faroe Islands. This influences our outlook and approach, including on shared interests in offshore energy and carbon capture and storage between Scotland and Norway;<sup>155</sup> shared environmental ambitions, through for example membership of the OSPAR Convention,<sup>156</sup> significant Norwegian fishing activity in Scottish waters and vice versa; the management of a number of shared fish stocks;<sup>157</sup> and extensive bilateral engagement<sup>158</sup> on marine compliance with both Norway and the Faroe Islands.

The size and strength of our marine interests would make Scotland an influential maritime state, not just in a European context, where we are already a significant seafood and renewable energy producer with expertise to share, but also globally. For example, we would have opportunities to influence the overall approach of the EU in multilateral forums relating to the sea and the use of marine resources, and to be a leading player in UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), the key international instrument for protection of the sea, freedom of navigation and States' rights in their maritime zones.

Through the implementation of our Arctic policy framework, the Scottish Government is deepening Scotland's collaboration with Arctic partners around shared policy challenges, often stemming from rurality and low population density.<sup>159</sup> With the powers of independence and as the region becomes more accessible, Scotland could strengthen its role as a strategic sub-Arctic hub, including for potential new shipping routes.

An independent Scotland would contribute directly to a peaceful and stable future for the Arctic, offering a wealth of expertise to promote sustainable economic growth for the region and its communities. Eleven Scottish universities are already members of the University of the Arctic – the largest number for any non-Arctic nation apart from China.<sup>160</sup> And Scotland has the connections and knowledge to play a leading role in international initiatives aimed at promoting net zero solutions, increasing wellbeing and limiting the effects of climate change in the region.

With independence, we would deepen knowledge and policy exchange with our near northern neighbourhood, and strengthen academic, trade and cultural collaborations with the ability to strengthen bilateral and multilateral engagement with our Nordic and Arctic partners, including in intergovernmental organisations concerned with promoting sustainable cooperation in the region. As an independent country, Scotland will aim to have the closest possible relationship with the Nordic Council.

As noted in the section on Scotland's defence and security capability above, Scotland's geographic position in the North Atlantic will also mean we have a distinct role to play in the stability and defence of our neighbourhood.

## The European Union

Re-joining the EU at the earliest opportunity as an independent country represents the best future for Scotland. This position is shared by the majority of Members of the Scottish Parliament and the people in Scotland who voted decisively to remain in the EU in the 2016 Brexit referendum. The UK Government chose to negotiate only a limited Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, with, for example, no structured relationship on foreign policy, security and defence. In contrast, Scotland wants to continue to work as closely as possible with the EU, placing huge value on our relationships with our fellow Europeans. We are determined to build upon those links by re-joining the EU as an independent country.

Scotland is a nation with a strong European heritage, outlook, and values. For more than 47 years, individuals, businesses and communities across Scotland experienced the social, economic, and cultural benefits of membership of the EU. Scotland benefitted from access to the world's largest single market, with free movement of goods, services, capital, and people; and had greater opportunities through the EU to make Scotland's voice heard on issues that mattered to us – whether on global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, or influence over international human rights and equality policies.

Scotland still shares the values of the EU – promoting human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights – and Scotland's interests will be best served by actively helping to shape the EU's future direction as an independent member state. With independence we would be able to work more closely with our fellow Europeans, deepening our ties, improving our global networks, and unlocking new economic and business opportunities. An independent Scotland once in the EU would play its part in the European External Action Service (EEAS), contributing to and benefitting from the EEAS' network of over 140 delegations<sup>161</sup> around the world which amplifies the voices of all member states.

In addition, as an EU member state, an independent Scotland would have the weight of the EU behind it in navigating the global trading environment, for example, assisting in improving market access around the world in the interests of Scotland's businesses and contributing to and benefitting from the knowledge and expertise of EU trade negotiators.

The EU is evolving rapidly in its recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, its twin transitions on green and digital,<sup>162</sup> and in its response to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. Scotland shares with the EU a strategic agenda and a vision that embodies democratic values,<sup>163</sup> promotes the wellbeing of all of society, rises fully to the challenge of the global climate and biodiversity emergencies, and supports a smart and sustainable economic recovery from the global pandemic. This Scottish Government has already committed to remaining close to the EU and to building the strongest possible relationship between the EU and Scotland.<sup>164</sup> By maintaining alignment where possible and meaningful, and by protecting and continuing to advance the high standards that Scotland enjoyed when part of the EU, this Scottish Government will also ease the future process of Scotland's return.

## A globally connected Scotland

Scotland's enduring connections extend beyond Europe and include links in North America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and South America. For example, links between Scotland and the US and Canada are of such a scale that we have been significant partners for generations.<sup>165</sup> We have built on these historic connections and worked to develop relationships of substance, with the US as our single largest trade and investment partner outside the UK.<sup>166</sup>

Scotland has had a deeply integrated relationship with the United States and Canada for generations. In its modern form it encompasses trade, investment and academic links – and a wellspring of connections via diaspora, family and friends. Strategically for Scotland, North America is central to some of the issues already covered, not least our shared equities and interests in the Arctic and North Atlantic. As the United States and Canada focus on green manufacturing, Scotland is well placed to work with them on those opportunities to support delivery of sustainable jobs, energy independence and co-operation – all while bolstering the national security of our allies.

As an independent state, Scotland would be able to capitalise fully on these relationships, expand our networks and open new opportunities. We would be free to engage more substantially across the world, building stronger relationships while listening to those most affected by global challenges and learning from best practice.

Globally, this Scottish Government would aim to have the closest relationships and partnerships with countries that uphold similar values and have similar approaches to international engagement. Many of these have been listed above – our near northern neighbours, the EU, and the US and Canada – but they do not stop there. Scotland already enjoys good relations with several countries in Asia and has burgeoning relationships with nations from Chile to New Zealand. Independence will give Scotland the opportunity to grow these partnerships.

With independence, Scotland will also have to engage with the reality of our interconnected world, in an age of rising tensions. Many countries have different approaches and values which will at times be at odds with Scotland's. Some countries act in aggressive and hostile ways, breaching international norms and laws.

An independent Scotland would play its full part in the rules-based international system, and this will mean engaging with countries with which we fundamentally disagree. This Scottish Government would try to approach these relationships in a robust but constructive way, recognising that progress on shared challenges such as the climate crisis and issues of peace and security can only be achieved through cooperation with the largest possible number of partners. In some cases, like Russia or Iran, a concerted, collective effort by the international community to isolate and disinvest is the right course of action.

Maintaining this balanced, realistic approach would help Scotland to benefit fully from the opportunities of global connections, while being alive to risks and threats to our way of life from the activities of hostile state actors.

## Multilateral relationships

Scotland has a long history of engaging constructively with intergovernmental institutions and participating in international networks. But with membership largely restricted to sovereign states, it is only through independence that Scotland would be able to participate fully on the international stage, join these organisations in our own right, and influence the world around us on the issues that matter most to Scotland.

Working with partners through intergovernmental organisations is an essential tool for international cooperation, for finding shared solutions to shared challenges, and for demonstrating collective commitment to the international community.

Scotland already meets the essential requirements for joining the vast majority of these organisations, except that of being an independent state. However, we recognise that each organisation has its own procedure for membership: Scotland will respect these procedures with no expectation of fast-tracked routes.

Membership of the UN would cement an independent Scotland's place in the world and our commitment to the international rule of law overseen by the International Court of Justice. An independent Scotland would be active and vocal at the UN on the issues that matter most to us, guided by our interests and values, including those we share with the EU of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights.

As a UN member state, an independent Scotland will uphold the UN Charter<sup>167</sup> and work cooperatively with other countries to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>168</sup> With a vote and a voice in the United Nations General Assembly, Scotland would help to shape action on human rights, climate change, and global peace and security. For example, an independent Scotland could have joined with 153 countries<sup>169</sup> in voting for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

With independence, Scotland would also have a seat at the table at UN agencies – including UN Climate Change, the UN Development Programme, UNESCO and the World Health Organization – influencing international action in areas of particular interest.

An independent Scotland would seek to remain part of the Commonwealth.<sup>170</sup> The Commonwealth – a voluntary association of 56 countries, most with historical ties to the United Kingdom – works collectively to promote democracy, peace and prosperity, through a network of over 80 civil, cultural and intergovernmental organisations.

Scotland has deep and long-lasting connections and relationships with several Commonwealth countries, from Canada to Malawi, and growing connections with many others, including Rwanda and Pakistan. Following independence, Scotland would actively participate in the Commonwealth, a consensus-based multilateral forum that gives equal weight to countries' voices, no matter their size.

## Our future network

Independence would, for the first time, enable Scotland to have a dedicated network deploying the full range of diplomatic functions devoted to promoting and protecting Scottish interests. Building on our strengths, this offers the opportunity to design and expand our international footprint in a way that reflects Scotland's own priorities in the 21st century, rather than those of a bygone, imperial age; a network which amplifies our voice and ensures we capitalise on the new powers and responsibilities independence would bring domestically and internationally.

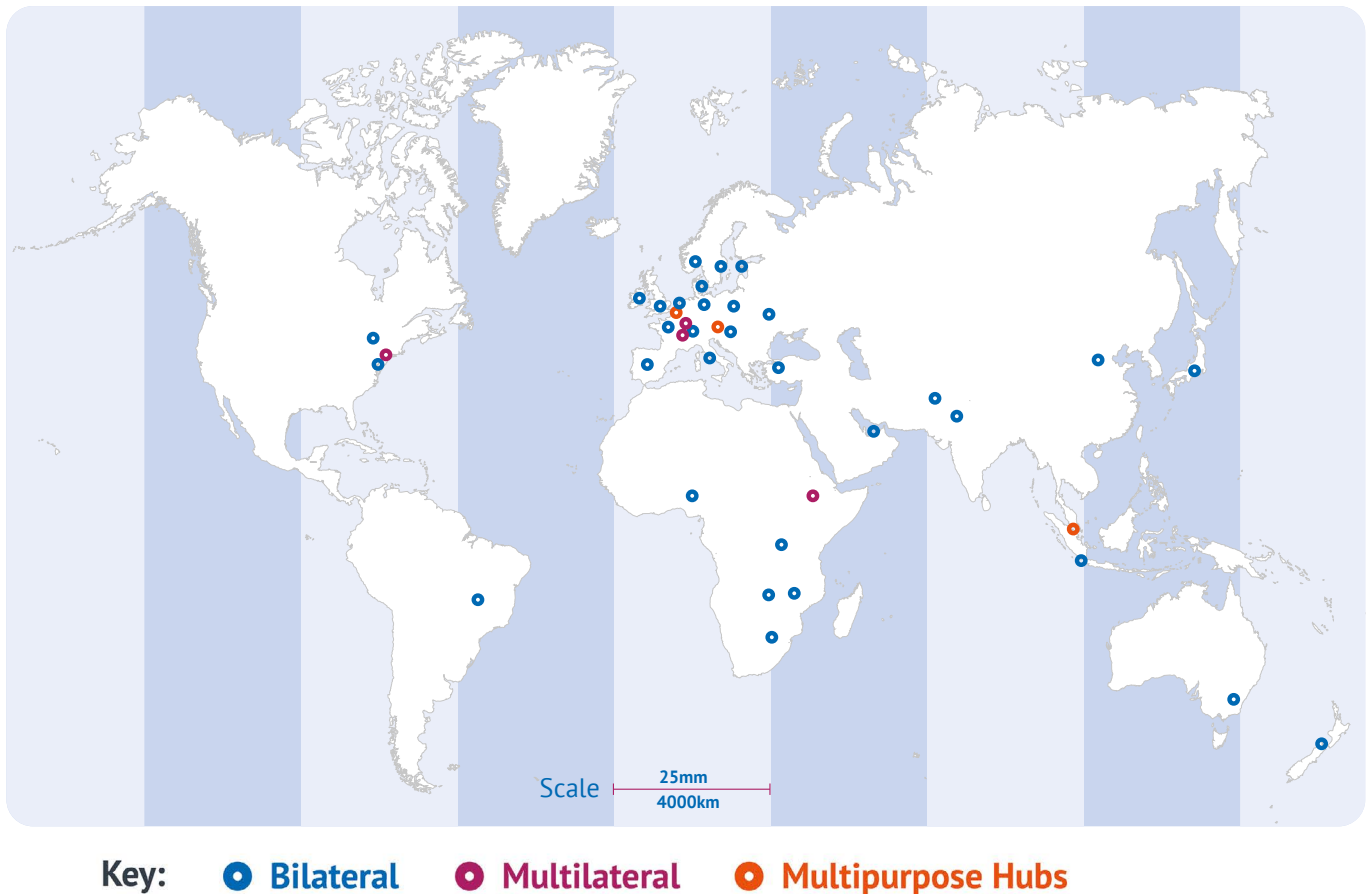
Following a vote for independence, the Scottish Government would begin building capacity for strategic planning, oversight and policy functions for defence and international security, multilateral policy, consular, protocol and ceremonial, as well as specialist international functions like legal, analytical, economic and security. We would rapidly expand our capacity to manage bilateral relationships and to engage with multilateral institutions. By independence day, Scotland will seek to develop a network of embassies and consulates covering all key territories, and this network will grow and adapt over time.

An independent Scotland would be able to take advantage of more innovative means of representation, such as roaming diplomats, shared premises, virtual embassies and digital diplomacy to most effectively represent Scottish interests in the right places and in the right ways.

This would allow Scotland to maximise the impact of its resources, respond quickly to shifting demands, and support key sectors of Scotland's economy. It would ensure we could reach a greater number of countries, beyond those where we have a physical presence. For example, an independent Scotland could appoint honorary consuls to provide support and representation in locations where no permanent staff were located, as many other countries currently do in Scotland. The diplomatic network of an independent Scotland would deliver five core functions:

- **policy:** to promote Scotland's strategic interests, share learning and make connections with international partners to ensure effective engagement with governments and other public institutions. In many countries, this would include our commitment to working with partners to support their development. All sovereign posts – Scottish Embassies in national capitals – would fulfil a political and government-to-government function
- **security:** to keep Scotland safe, promoting and safeguarding Scotland's defence and security interests overseas, including military, intelligence, justice and police liaison
- **trade and investment:** to promote Scotland as a hub for innovation, trade and investment – strengthening existing trade and investment links and seeking new opportunities – all underpinned by our values and principles. We would also increase the level of support to our existing GlobalScot<sup>171</sup> and Trade and Investment Envoy<sup>172</sup> networks, key parts of Scotland's international business community. These networks share advice, help open doors for Scottish businesses, and identify opportunities that support exports, capital investment and foreign direct investment
- **consular:** to provide appropriate consular support for our citizens through a range of routes, including agreements with key partner countries, reciprocal services as an EU member state and as part of the Commonwealth, roaming diplomats, and use of innovative digital services, giving future Scottish Governments the means to reach Scottish citizens requiring assistance abroad
- **people:** to promote Scotland's world-class universities and colleges to international students, create new opportunities for Scots to study abroad, and help our universities build research partnerships with institutions globally.<sup>173</sup> Cultural policy and agency personnel, integrated into an independent Scotland's own international network, will help promote people-to-people links and attract talent to live, work and study in Scotland.

The locations for a future network of diplomatic and consular offices would be informed by these functions and objectives. They would reflect the aims and interests of Scottish businesses, academic institutions and cultural bodies, drawing on their global expertise. Scotland would have a particularly strong presence in countries with significant Scottish diaspora, as well as in popular tourist destinations for Scottish travellers. In strategic locations, this Scottish Government would expand upon the Scotland House model already adopted in our offices in Brussels<sup>174</sup> and London,<sup>175</sup> which include teams covering diplomatic engagement, economic development and cultural promotion.



**Figure 1:** An illustration of independent Scotland's possible initial diplomatic coverage<sup>176</sup>

An independent Scotland's international network would grow and adapt over time. At the point of independence, this Scottish Government would establish embassies in: London, Dublin and Washington D.C., to foster relations with our closest neighbours and partners; key EU capitals; our partner countries in Africa; Canberra, Wellington, New Delhi, Islamabad and Ottawa, in recognition of our strong people to people links; and in our most important trading destinations, including in the Middle East and Asia – with Beijing, Tokyo, Singapore and Abu Dhabi initial priorities.



Table 4 below provides an overview of the size of the established diplomatic network of a range of countries with a population under 10 million. These countries maintain Embassies in 29-93 countries, alongside missions to the multilateral organisations of which they are members or observers.

**Table 4:** Established diplomatic network of selected countries with similar population to Scotland

Country	Number of bilateral missions <sup>177</sup>	Number of multilateral missions <sup>178</sup>
Austria <sup>179</sup>	87	9
Croatia <sup>180</sup>	57	7
Czech Republic <sup>181</sup>	93	7
Denmark <sup>182</sup>	67	6
Finland <sup>183</sup>	71	6
Ireland <sup>184</sup>	70	6
Lithuania <sup>185</sup>	43	8
New Zealand <sup>186</sup>	56	5
Singapore <sup>187</sup>	29	9

In addition to embassies and consulates, this Scottish Government would establish Scottish permanent missions to the key international organisations which an independent Scotland would plan to join, including the UN and its agencies, the EU, NATO, the Council of Europe, and OSCE. The appointment of professional diplomats to key multilateral institutions would enable regular engagement with a range of potential country partners without requiring the physical presence of an embassy. An independent Scotland's membership of groupings like the Commonwealth would also offer useful networks of like-minded international partners to cooperate and share efforts internationally.

An independent Scotland would work openly and constructively with our European neighbours. As an EU member state, an independent Scotland would benefit from and contribute to reciprocal consular services. As citizens of an EU member state, citizens of an independent Scotland in need of emergency assistance, including in countries where there is no Scottish Embassy or High Commission, would have access to the consular services of over 2,100 EU member state missions around the world.<sup>188</sup> European countries of varying sizes utilise access to this large EU network to ensure their citizens overseas have support when they need it. EU membership will also mean that Scotland is represented by their vast diplomatic network in over 170 countries around the world.<sup>189</sup>

Independence would see countries and international organisations from around the world establishing their own embassies to Scotland, with Edinburgh becoming a diplomatic hub. This would bring a wide range of benefits, not least high-quality job opportunities as locally engaged staff in the representations of our friends and partners.

# Conclusion



Independence would mean Scotland becoming a state in its own right, joining the global community of nations. We would be able to put the promotion and protection of the security, wellbeing and prosperity of our people at the heart of our international activity. And we could contribute to promoting human rights and equality worldwide, as well as acting on our responsibility to tackle the climate and nature emergencies facing our planet.

With independence, for the first time in the modern era, Scotland would represent itself on the international stage, with a seat at the table at the UN, the EU and other important global and regional forums. Our network of diplomats would promote Scotland's interests around the world.

Through cooperation with our international partners, an independent Scotland would advance our shared objectives, playing our full part in addressing global challenges. By joining NATO and committing to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, we would play our part in collective security. An independent Scotland would build on our strong relationships with our nearest neighbours in the United Kingdom and Ireland to ensure our mutual safety.

Independence would allow Scotland to do things differently and take decisions that are in the best interests of Scotland's people. For example, this Scottish Government believes that nuclear weapons should not be based in Scotland and should be removed in the safest and most expeditious manner possible following independence. This Scottish Government would also set as a cornerstone of defence policy that an independent Scotland would only participate in overseas military operations that are lawful, approved by Scottish Ministers, and authorised by the Scottish Parliament.

Our recently published international strategy<sup>190</sup> shows what Scotland can do with the limitation of devolved powers. Building on our strong reputation as a good global citizen, an independent Scotland could do more to contribute to global issues such as tackling poverty and inequality and addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. An independent Scotland would be a responsible partner, honouring our international obligations, and entering into international agreements that reflect our nation's values.

Independence would not be to the detriment of the existing relationships that Scotland already has in these islands or around the world. Instead, it would allow us to make these relationships stronger and forge new partnerships, working with other nations as equals on shared goals and challenges.

# Acronyms

<b>BIC</b>	British-Irish Council
<b>CCUS</b>	Carbon capture, utilisation and storage
<b>COVID</b>	Coronavirus disease <i>also</i> COVID-19, the current pandemic disease first identified in 2019.
<b>CSDP</b>	Common Security and Defence Policy
<b>ECHR</b>	European Convention on Human Rights
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FTA</b>	Free Trade Agreement
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>GVA</b>	Gross Value Added
<b>JEF</b>	Joint Expeditionary Force
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NIS</b>	Network and Information Security
<b>NORDEF</b>	Nordic Defence Co-operation
<b>NSET</b>	National Strategy for Economic Transformation
<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>SCQF</b>	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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- 167 See United Nations: [United Nations Charter](#)
- 168 See [The Global Goals](#)
- 169 United Nations (2023) – [UN General Assembly votes by large majority for immediate humanitarian ceasefire during emergency session](#)
- 170 See [The Commonwealth](#)
- 171 See [Scotland's International Business Network – GlobalScot](#)
- 172 Scottish Government [Trade and investment envoys](#) – International trade and investment (accessed February 2024)
- 173 Scottish Government (2024) [Scotland's international education strategy](#)
- 174 Scotland Europa [Scotland House Brussels](#)
- 175 Scottish Government [Scotland House London](#)
- 176 An illustration of an independent Scotland's possible initial diplomatic coverage (first phase): Bilateral Embassies/ High Commissions (Heads of Mission in many of these could be accredited as non-resident Ambassadors or High Commissioners to other countries in their region) in Ottawa; Washington DC; Brasilia; Dublin; London; Paris; Bern, The Hague; Berlin; Madrid; Rome; Warsaw; Copenhagen; Stockholm; Oslo; Tallinn, Budapest, Kyiv; Ankara; Abu Dhabi, Abuja, Kigali; Lilongwe; Lusaka; Pretoria; Islamabad; New Delhi; Beijing; Tokyo; Jakarta, Canberra; Wellington. Missions to multilateral organisations in New York, Strasbourg, Geneva, Addis Ababa. Multipurpose hubs (combining host country, multilateral missions and regional coverage) in Brussels, Vienna and Singapore



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An independent Scotland's place in the world

- 177 Figures include resident bilateral missions only and do not include non-resident missions, regional consulates, honorary consuls, trade offices or representation offices
- 178 Figures include both resident and non-resident missions
- 179 European and International Affairs Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria (2024) – [Directory of Austrian Foreign Representation](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 180 Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia – [Embassies of the Republic of Croatia in the world](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 181 Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Czech Republic [Czech Missions Abroad](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 182 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark [Danish embassies and consulates abroad](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 183 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland [Embassies, consulates general and honorary consulates by country](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 184 Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs [Irish Embassies and Consulates Abroad](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 185 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania [Lithuania Ministry of Foreign Affairs Find us abroad](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 186 New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade [Embassies](#) (accessed February 2024)
- 187 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore [Overseas Missions](#) (accessed February 2024)
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