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THE SCOTTISH BOMB

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On September 18 the Scottish people are called on to answer the question : « Should Scotland be an independent country ? » This referendum results from the success of the Scottish National Party in the May 2011 elections and the Edinburgh Agreement signed on 15 October 2012 by David Cameron, Prime Minister of the UK and Alex Salmond, First Minister of Scotland.

On the evening of 18 September - or on the 19th depending on time-zones and if the vote-counting takes longer in what is expected to be a close call - France, Europe and the world will perhaps learn that a 300-year-old Kingdom - an Empire even - is being erased from the map.

We will then discover that the United Kingdom, which has united in particular England and Scotland since 1707, has self-destructed in a single day of democratic consultation - even if that result would not lead to the official proclamation of an independent Scotland until March 2016.

If this happens, the « United Kingdom » will lose less than 10% of its population, but a third of its land area, and 90% of its offshore oil reserves.

The event would have the effect of a bomb. Particularly in France where the « opinion-makers » have for forty months taken great care to keep the French people in almost complete ignorance of the threat hanging over the very existence of their most cordial ally and adversary : the UK, Great Britain, or what the French imprecisely call « les Anglais ».

Nevertheless the notion that the Scots could « boot the English out » of Scotland should not displease the French. That's the point. The notion that an ancient civilised people might want to take its destiny into its own hands and could, *by a mere referendum*, conquer its independence could indeed be an inspiration to the French... Although in history the French did boot out the English and later the Germans, they have for decades abdicated their destiny to a nuclear monarch who has set himself up as a dictator, who wields power permanently with the silent complicity of his courtiers. This nuclear dictatorship is all the more effective for being masked. The French Court is not likely to give the French people the idea of breaking free, *by a mere referendum*, oh no !

We note also that Scottish independentism, which existed already in 1850, owes some of his recent advance and possible success tomorrow to a moral revolt against nuclear weapons. Here is a fact : if independence comes (and some polls are causing the Noes to fear the Yeses) it will not just have the effect of a bomb on the south side of the Channel, it will be a bombshell on the north side : the « Scottish Bomb ». This will be a metaphorical and purely peaceful bomb, admittedly, yet will affect some very literal bombs : the bombs that the UK (GB, « les Anglais ») has been imposing on Scotland for decades, with the submarines and their Trident missiles based near Glasgow. Independence is finally the only means left to the Scots to get rid of this nonsense.

What will become of these nuclear weapons if the UK fails to find a new place to deploy them (and failure is probable, as admitted by some civil and military leaders in London and by an eminent journalist) ? Will Great Britain shed them and cease to be a nuclear power ? Will she drag France down in her fall ? It is likely that the Teutates Treaty which links their nuclear weapons and guarantees their survival until at least 2050 will become null and void, is it not?

Oh horrible thought: will it be the start of the end of the nuclear order ?

But how did we get to this point ?

No need to go back to the ancient origins of Scotland. The stubborn crafty actions of the SNP (Scottish National Party) which was born in the 1920s certainly counts for something. But it is not enough for a full explanation.

In 1997 the Labour Party in power in Westminster granted « devolution » (an idea mentioned already in 1945), meaning the transfer of some responsibilities from Westminster to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (chiefly in the fields of education, health, agriculture, tourism and the environment). A Scottish Parliament and Government were then created in Edinburgh and began to operate in 1999, with 129 MPs elected for a four-year term. The first two elections formed governments without the SNP. They did not have jurisdiction over the fiscal and monetary system, social security, energy, and above all defense and foreign policy. That was a restriction which many Scots did not appreciate and which forced them to submit to a nuclear defense policy that they never wanted.

In March 2007, the New Labour PM, Tony Blair exerted pressure and pushed through a decision on principle to renew the Trident missiles and submarines - despite huge mobilisations in the UK and despite a revolt by some of his own MPs.

In May 2007 the Scots, called on to elect MPs for their 3rd parliament and disappointed by the Labour policies in Westminster, made the SNP the leading party in Edinburgh with 49 seats out of 129. The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, then became First Minister of Scotland, heading a minority government. Salmond has long been a resolute opponent of nuclear weapons.

In June in London, Gordon Brown took over from Tony Blair. Brown is a Scot and is sensitive to the question of nuclear disarmament. In the short term he didn't question his predecessor's policy. But on 21 January 2008 during a trip to India, he gave at the Delhi Chamber of Commerce a memorable speech that made him the first western head of government to propose that his country should lead a process of full nuclear disarmament and should place its nuclear know how in service of a verification system. Alas, that speech passed unnoticed in our countries, and had no visible sequel. The [open letter](#) I sent him from ACDN on 1 February 2008 has still had no reply.

On 22 October (a Monday) Scotland's deputy first minister Nicola Sturgeon opened in Glasgow a « high-level » colloquium or « summit » about the Trident programme. It was closed by Scotland's Minister for Parliamentary Questions, Bruce Crawford, who declared to the Sunday Herald : "There are few questions that are more important in the world than the proliferation of nuclear weapons. » He added : "As a country we have a perfect right to raise our voices to express our opposition to nuclear weapons on Scottish soil." The Scottish Green MP Patrick Harvie, also a speaker in the colloquium, declared : "We have an obligation to do what we can to prevent the Westminster government from forcibly placing a new generation of nuclear weapons in Scotland. »

One week earlier, Alex Salmond wrote to the 122 states in the Non-Proliferation Treaty that did oppose nuclear weapons. He explained that Scotland doesn't want nuclear weapons in Scotland or anywhere.

That letter dated 15/10/07 was published by the Sunday Herald and immediately copied onto the ACDN site as : « First Minister Alex Salmond wants Scotland, UK and the World rid of nuclear weapons ». It deserves to be quoted in extenso (see below) : it gives the key to the evolution which would lead seven years later to the referendum on independence.

After the May 2010 elections for the Westminster Parliament, Labour had to hand over to the Conservatives. Britain's new PM, David Cameron, could not be persuaded to abandon the Trident programme.

In the next elections in Scotland, in May, the voters gave the SNP an absolute majority in the 129-seat Parliament. This time the SNP had on its programme a referendum on independence, scheduled for the second half of its term. Since the polls spoke of only 30% voting Yes, and losing, London authorised the referendum and David Cameron even pushed the independentists to organise it quickly and settle the matter once and for all. They didn't fall into the trap : they kept to their own timeline. So it was that on 11 September 2014 (irony of history) David Cameron went « tearfully » to Edinburgh to try to save the United Kingdom from disintegrating via the referendum whose wording he himself had defined and imposed.

On 18 September the answer will be given by the Scots, or more precisely the residents of Scotland (whatever their nationality of ethnic origin, even if they are not British subjects, for example students from continental Europe studying in Edinburgh or Glasgow) - together they will decide.

Obviously if the Yes vote wins there will follow many negotiations between Edinburgh and London, Edinburgh and Brussels, Edinburgh and the other EU capitals, Edinburgh and Washington... The independentists have planned for that, and allow 18 months before the official proclamation of independence. They are determined to act with intelligence and pragmatism.

So the die is not yet cast. The partisans of Yes, a weak minority in the polls of 2011 and 2012, have now for the first time, on 5 September, overtaken the Noes. But something may still turn the tide against them. For example, the horrible murder of a British hostage by a masked terrorist (suspected by his accent to be a Briton) acting in the name of the so-called « Islamic State » might give an advantage to the Union Jack by strengthening the troops faithful to the Queen (she refuses to support unionists or separatists, and thus would remain Queen of Scotland, as the SNP accepts).

But if the YES wins and brings Scotland out of the Union, then among all the arguments for and against there is one that will have proved decisive : the refusal of nuclear weapons.

So the nuke-lovers of all nations should be trembling on their pedestals.

One extra reason is, in the words of Bill Kidd et Erika Simpson :

« In the face of such opposition from Scotland even in the possible wake of a decided No vote it will remain difficult for the UK government to continue its absurd and costly pursuit of renewing the Trident nuclear weapons system against the backdrop of international negotiations to ban nuclear weapons. Scotland's vote this Thursday could go either way, but it is already sure to push Mother England to overcome her Cold War thinking about security by undermining traditional arguments in favour of maintaining these weapons of mass destruction. »

Tell yourself this: democracy still has resources to get the better of militarist and nuclear stupidity. Provided the peoples of the world want it, and demand that their opinions be heard.

Saintes, le 16 septembre 2014
Jean-Marie Matagne

See also:

- ▶ [Britain's wee nuclear problem](#)
by Bill Kidd and Erika Simpson

- ▶ [From a Nuclear Free Scotland to a Nuclear Weapon Free World](#)

- ▶ [Time to let Trident rust in peace?](#)
by Iain Macwhirter

- ▶ [First Minister Alex Salmond wants Scotland, UK and the World rid of nuclear weapons](#)

- ▶ [Gordon Brown: Speech at the Chamber of Commerce in Delhi 21 January 2008](#)

- ▶ [Gordon Brown: London is ready to work for total nuclear disarmament.](#)

- ▶ [Open Letter to Prime Minister Gordon Brown](#)

- ▶ [British Foreign Minister calls for work to begin on a nuclear-weapon-free world](#)

PS:

Below is the full text of the letter from First Minister Alex Salmond sent to 122 parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on 15 October 2007:

"I am writing to you, as representative of a State Party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to inform you of the Scottish Government's views and determination to play as constructive a part as possible in pursuing our country's nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT. We also intend to explore the possibility of taking up observer status at future NPT meetings, so that we can more directly and effectively represent the aspirations and interests of Scotland's people. In the event that we do seek that status, I would hope we would be able to count on your government's support. "As you may know, the United Kingdom currently deploys a 4-submarine Trident nuclear weapon system from the Faslane Naval Base in Scotland. The UK also stores up to 200 nuclear warheads a few miles further along the coast, in Coulport. Last March the UK government pushed through the Westminster Parliament a preliminary decision to renew the Trident system, thereby signalling its intention to continue to make and deploy nuclear weapons beyond 2050. The majority of Scottish people and their elected representatives oppose these deployments.

"In May, for the first time since the nuclear age began in 1945, the people of Scotland elected a government that is opposed to nuclear weapons. On 14 June, the Scottish Parliament debated the following motion in relation to the UK Government's policy on nuclear weapons:

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

"The Scottish Parliament showed clear and overwhelming opposition to the UK Government's plan to replace its Trident nuclear weapons system (by 71 votes to 16, with 39 abstentions), and widespread support for this Government's vision of a Scotland without nuclear weapons.

"During the debate, the Scottish Government signalled its intention to reflect on the views of the majority of Scots and carefully consider which aspects of the UK Government's plans to replace Trident impact on our responsibilities in Scotland under devolution. We made it clear that we will do all that we can, in light of those responsibilities, to persuade the UK Government to change its stance both on the replacement programme and on the general principle of maintaining and deploying nuclear weapons.

"Recognising that there are a range of views on the constitutional future of Scotland, we have embarked on a National Conversation with the Scottish public on the options for constitutional change leading to further development of the way we govern ourselves. As part of this debate on Scotland's constitutional future, we will be holding a high level meeting of key stakeholders from across Scottish life to discuss the implications of

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the replacement of Trident and what a Scotland without nuclear weapons might look like.

"I would like to assure you of Scotland's deep commitment to international peace and security, and our desire to participate in making the case for implementation of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation provisions of the NPT and other relevant international agreements and treaties. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or your government wish to discuss these issues further."