

Scottish National Party leader Salmond pledges fealty to US imperialism

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In a weeklong visit to the United States earlier this month, Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Alex Salmond assured Washington of his full support in foreign policy should the September 18 referendum result in Scotland becoming independent of the United Kingdom.

The trip coincided with the annual Scotland Week celebrations in North America, and Salmond was accompanied by a substantial delegation of business leaders. The US is Scotland's largest inward investor, accounting for approximately 28 percent of all foreign investment. Salmond intends to expand this significantly by slashing corporation tax and reducing labour costs to offer up the working class as a cheap labour resource for the global financial corporations, much like Ireland in the 1990s and early 2000s.

During a keynote address at the opening of Glasgow Caledonian University's New York campus, Salmond left no doubt about the unwavering loyalty of his government to US imperialism. "You can aspire to be a great nation, without desiring to be a great power. The USA is both. But most nations can't be. And they reduce their chance to be a great nation, if they pretend to be a great power."

The message could not be clearer. For Salmond, the United States has the unchallengeable right to call itself a great power, and any country rejecting this is in the wrong. Such remarks are especially significant when Washington and its allies are waging an extraordinarily provocative campaign against Russia, utilising the Western-organised putsch in Ukraine to implement plans for a military build-up in Eastern Europe.

The first minister followed this up with an appearance on MSNBC television, in which he reassured the interviewers that Scotland would always be a friend of the United States.

Salmond's charm offensive was aimed at placating any fears in Washington over the dangers of Scottish

independence for US foreign policy. In the last weeks, as opinion polls have shown a narrowing between those in favour of independence and those against, military officials have taken to warning of the dangers to UK military power should Scotland separate.

Lord Robertson, the former secretary general of NATO, asserted at a Brookings Institution address in Washington that Scottish independence would be "cataclysmic" for UK foreign policy. Several days later, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, the first sea lord of the navy, wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* that Scotland's separation from Britain would "damage the very heart of the capabilities that are made up of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Fleet Air Arm."

The official "no" to independence camp, made up of the Conservative Party, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, make no secret of their support for British and US imperialism and their renewed drive to militarism and war.

Given the atrocities already caused by this in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, and now the huge dangers opened up by their reckless destabilisation of Ukraine, this rightly causes revulsion amongst many Scottish workers.

In contrast, Salmond has sought to portray the SNP as the opponents of militarism and British imperialism. He has been aided to no small extent in this deceit by the pseudo-left allies of Scottish nationalism, who have continually played up SNP threats to remove nuclear submarines from the Clyde, etc.

Salmond's volte-face in Washington has been prepared for some time. In 2012, the SNP voted to abandon its opposition to NATO. This was followed by the SNP's white paper on independence in December 2013, which offered a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, whereby nuclear-armed vessels from NATO countries would be able to use Scottish ports on a confidential basis.

Following Salmond's open declaration of support for

US imperialism in Washington, the pseudo-left are now coming forward to rationalise his pronouncement as proof that a new Scottish state can offer a progressive alternative in foreign policy!

A comment by Jonathan Shafi, a leading member of the International Socialist Group (ISG), a split from the Socialist Workers Party, hailed Salmond's Washington visit. His speech outlining Scotland's prospective foreign policy was the "anti-thesis of George Robertson's claims" showing that Scotland would be "an equal partner in a family of nations."

"Salmond shows an understanding of the wider, contextual elements involved in holistic international relations strategy: the environment, sustainable prosperity based on 'fairness' and being judged on usefulness, rather than being feared as a hegemon. And he wants rid of Trident. In this sense Salmond looks to escape the military and strategic entanglements bound up in empire building," Shafi enthused.

Such human rights propaganda aims to provide a democratic and progressive facade for a foreign policy orientation that will be no less committed to US imperialism and its Western allies than is currently the case. Moreover, it is precisely these arguments that have been used time and again internationally to justify brutal military interventions, led by Washington against a series of targets since the 1990s.

Shafi's statements make clear there is no line that the pseudo-left will not cross. The SNP's white paper on independence makes clear that the orientation to US imperialism will be combined with attempts to integrate defence policy with the European Union's (EU) foreign and security policy.

It states that the "independence advantage will be of greatest benefit in our relationship with the EU. This Government sees close engagement with the EU as an opportunity for Scotland, rather than the threat it seems to be for some in the UK." The document went on that one of the benefits in deepening cooperation with the EU was "[t]he opportunity to play a full role in the EU's common foreign and security policy, including cooperation to enhance Europe's defence capability."

The unconditional support for a foreign policy in alliance with the US and EU, both of which are acting with unprecedented aggression in asserting their imperialist interests globally, is not accidental. It flows logically from the SNP's class base in a section of the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie that view independence from the UK as an opportunity to project

their interests internationally and step up the assault on the working class at home.

Salmond was accompanied on his US trip by a large delegation of Scottish-based businesses to negotiate new trade deals. According to figures, Scotland exported goods totalling £5 billion to the US, equivalent to more than 15 percent of Edinburgh's current annual budget.

An *Observer* article published during Salmond's visit by Kevin McKenna gave an indication of the interests involved. McKenna railed against Robertson's warnings against Scottish independence, stating that it would give the world the impression that Scotland "must be run by a bunch of Marxist crazies who want to topple western democracy."

As McKenna reassured his readers, far from it. "I was accompanying a group of Scottish entrepreneurs from our creative industries who were participating in a Scottish trade mission to New York organised by Scottish Development International," he wrote. The "cream of creative talent in this country," enthused McKenna, "were in the city to speak to an assortment of tax specialists, lawyers, state department officials and businessmen."

Salmond made an appearance at the Bloomberg New Energy summit where he delivered a speech offering Scotland as a location for global investment from the energy firms, hedge funds and financial organisations who were present. Other speakers included former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, and US Energy Secretary Dr. Ernest Moniz.

Salmond used his speech to attack the British government for failing to cut taxes for the oil and gas sector, declaring, "Successive UK governments have imposed 16 tax changes on the sector in the last decade. No government with an understanding of the North Sea industry would do that. It's no way to encourage investment and maximise extraction rates."



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