

SPEECH TO THE ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP
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I believe that the biggest threat to our security today is complacency.

A combination of perceived lack of a threat and the savage impact of austerity on defence and security budgets has left us vulnerable.

In our democracies, the lack of a narrative and of leadership on the existing, new and unexpected threats to our safety, and indeed our peaceful way of life, should make us all very worried indeed.

Just look at today's world. The sudden unexpected annexation of Crimea, the destabilisation of Ukraine, the rise and momentum of ISIS (actually attacked as too extreme by Al-Qaeda), the extending reach of Islamic Jihadism into previously stable parts of the world, the miserable chaos in Syria and now in Iraq and the spill over from them into the most volatile region of the world, the turmoil in the Maghreb, the looming confrontations in the South and East China Seas. We have the USA leading from behind (or rather eschewing a leadership role) and Germany standing back and focussing with successful single minded attention on its economy. Others cutting budgets and capabilities.

Not a pretty picture and quite a cocktail of trouble – more than enough to concentrate minds at the NATO Summit in Wales in only a few weeks' time.

But on top of all that there will be surprises like those in the last 35 years which have come at us out of the blue.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the USSR, the invasion of Kuwait, the war in Bosnia, the attempted ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, and the Arab Spring – all caught us off guard – so what's round the next corner, and are we ready for it?

I pose the question: why are we constantly surprised by the foreseeable? And having asked that question, what surprise do we face in 78 days' time here in this country? On 18th September the 4 million UK citizens (including 98,000 aged 16 to 17) who live in Scotland will vote on the secession of Scotland from this 307 year old hitherto United Kingdom.

In April at the Brookings Institution in Washington, in a carefully considered speech, I said that the geostrategic significance of Scottish secession would be cataclysmic for the West. I still hold that view because it would, and a growing number of people now recognise that fact.

Indeed just yesterday, the Education Secretary Michael Gove, himself a Scot, said that the enemies of the West would cheer a Yes vote [I note that in the comments under the Telegraph article he is described as a 'nasty, vile excuse for a human being' and a 'Thunderbirds-faced idiot'.]

After my speech in Brookings I was denounced predictably by my nationalist opponents but even by some 'friends' and the Daily Mail and The Economist for my use of the word 'cataclysmic' and my forecast that the breakup of Britain would comfort our adversaries and dismay our allies.

In social media I was called 'vermin' and 'scum', that I 'should be put in a sack and drowned' and was a 'pestilential parasite'.

Even in the highly respectable Glasgow Herald, their columnist – last year's 'Columnist of the Year' Ian Bell said my speech was 'the most lurid and depraved peroration a Unionist has managed thus far'.

So much for my fan club.

So, look at the secession scenario from three angles. The internal, the external and the knock-on effects.

In Scotland for some people, this is simply a question of self-determination. A small, historic nation merely seeking the same statehood as other small independent states. They see no ramifications externally- even in the rest of the UK where 600,000 vote-deprived Scots live and work.

To these advocates, the transition will be seamless and painless. Start-up cost for the new state will be £200 million – a fraction of the cost of Edinburgh's single route tram system.

They, and they include the present Scottish Government, postulate that membership of a new Currency Union and the use of the pound and (bizarrely) the Bank of England as lender of last resort. They plan on automatic and continuing membership of the EU with all of the UK's opt outs and rebate, continuing membership of NATO (whilst simultaneously expelling the UK nuclear deterrent from the Clyde and putting that expulsion in the written constitution). They also want to continue to share the DVLA, the Royal Mint, the National Lottery, the Research Councils and the UK Benefits system, among other UK agencies.

Some would hold that this view is heroic. Others would see it as wishful thinking at best and fraudulent at most.

But remember however, that present public opinion polls suggest that between 30 and 40% of the electorate are still attracted to it.

Now look from the other end of the telescope. How the outside world would take the break-up of Britain.

The continuing UK would lose a third of its land mass, ten percent of its GDP, five million of its population and virtually all of its oil-fields. It would lose £2.5 bn from its defence budget (and 12 Typhoon fast jets, several frigates and all Army regiments with 'Scottish' in their names). They would lose several Embassies and residencies.

In a predictably messy divorce involving several years of wrangling, everyone would be preoccupied with unpicking 307 years of successful integration – economic, industrial, financial, political and personal. Turmoil and dissent is guaranteed. It would all leave a much diminished country and then what price our unique membership of the UN Security Council, the EU, NATO, the G7, G8 and G20?

There are, I know, some crazy souls on the English Right who rejoice at the prospect without the Scots, of permanent Tory majorities but they are as deluded and short-sighted as the Scottish separatists whose favourite slogan in the West of Scotland housing estates is 'No Tory Governments, Ever'.

But in the world outside of the UK, the dismantling of the UK would have a dramatic effect.

The disintegration of the second military and diplomatic power in the West would be devastating to solidarity. At a time when extreme Nationalists, Jihadi missionaries, organised criminals, proliferators and cyber warriors are on the march, we need, as almost never before, a solid united, resolute, value-based western world to confront and defeat them.

This country, our country, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has a properly proud history of standing alone, or in leadership of others, at times of war and of peace.

D-day ceremonies in the last few weeks were witness to the power and effect of our united nation at times of globally existential danger. To have all that torn up in the autumn of 2014 would be a wretched way of marking what happened so bravely and brilliantly at Normandy 70 years ago.

As Michael Ignatieff very perceptively said in the FT last week 'Separatist politicians force their fellow citizens to make choices they should not have to make between identities' and he predicted that 'if Scotland does secede, there will be many torn souls the day after'.

Looking finally at the knock on effects. The separatist germ will not stop with Scotland. In other parts of our continent – and beyond it – those who would break up existing states on national, linguistic, ethnic, racial or religious lines, look on the Scottish outcome with eager anticipation.

In Spain and Belgium, in Italy and elsewhere, they see the Cameron/Salmond Edinburgh Agreement as their case study, even the template, for the next move. I have personal confirmation of that.

We should therefore be alarmed.

But prominent voices have now spoken out. President Obama, Mrs. Clinton, the Pope, the Chinese PM all share the view that the UK should stay as one. Many more, a lot of them in Scotland, but intimidated into silence, agree but need to speak loudly.

So long as the campaign for the UK is seen in exclusively Scottish terms, then the risk of an accident remains. 60/40, 55/45 is just too close to call.

This presentation has been, by its nature of a warning, perhaps negative. The case, however, for our United Kingdom is strong, moving and powerful – but it needs to be made – and made over and over again.

If not, there may be no country left to be proud of and the world would be a much more dangerous place.