

Connecting Scotland to the World

Proposals to the First Minister
on Scotland's European and
International Relations



ANTHONY SALAMONE

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— EDINBURGH —

the most common, and the most serious, of the diseases that afflict the human population.

It is the purpose of this paper to review the epidemiology and clinical features of this disease, and to discuss the current status of the search for a vaccine.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cholera is a disease of the gastrointestinal tract, which is caused by infection with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is a disease of the poor, and is most common in the developing countries of the tropics and subtropics.

The disease is characterized by a sudden onset of watery diarrhoea, which is often accompanied by vomiting. The illness is usually self-limiting, and the patient recovers within a few days. However, in some cases, the disease can be fatal, particularly if the patient is dehydrated.

The disease is caused by infection with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. There are two main types of the bacterium, *V. cholerae* O1 and *V. cholerae* O139. Both types are capable of causing cholera.

The bacterium is spread from person to person, and from animals to humans. It is also spread through contaminated water and food.

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Purveyors of Political Insight

European Merchants is the Scottish political analysis firm based in Edinburgh and led by Anthony Salamone

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About Anthony Salamone

Anthony Salamone FRSA is Founder and Managing Director of European Merchants, the Scottish political analysis firm in Edinburgh. Anthony is a leading Scottish political scientist, analyst and thinker, equipped with more than a decade of relevant experience. He is an expert on Scottish politics, the politics and institutions of the European Union, British politics and international relations. In particular, Anthony is an authority on the politics of Scottish independence, Scotland's European and international relations, and the prospects of Scottish EU membership and foreign policy under independence. He has written and contributed extensively on these themes, as an influential voice in public debate. Anthony has degrees from and worked at the University of Edinburgh and the London School of Economics and Political Science. Among his past positions, he was Founding Managing Editor of *European Futures*, the University of Edinburgh's academic blog on European affairs; Steering Group Member of the Edinburgh Europa Institute; Co-Convenor of the Edinburgh Europa Research Group; Founding President of the Edinburgh University European Union Society; Creator and Lead Educator of *Towards Brexit? The UK's EU Referendum*, the University of Edinburgh-FutureLearn Massive Open Online Course; and Assistant Editor of the *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUOPP)* academic blog. Anthony is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Member of the Edinburgh Europa Institute and President Emeritus of the Edinburgh University European Union Society. He contributes often to media, publications and platforms across Scotland, Europe and the world. Throughout his career, Anthony has worked to support substantive debate in Scotland and beyond, especially on European and global affairs.

About European Merchants

European Merchants is the Scottish political analysis firm based in Edinburgh and led by Anthony Salamone. Our mission is to bring clarity and insight to Scottish, European and global politics. As *Purveyors of Political Insight*, we are dedicated to providing innovative analysis and bold ideas on the major questions facing Scotland and Europe. From our unique Scottish perspective, we decipher turbulent political currents to interpret the trends which shape our world. Thoroughly informed and connected, we are a foundry for political intelligence on Scottish, European and global affairs. We have particular expertise in Scottish debates on the constitution, devolution and independence, Scotland's European and external relations, and European Union politics and institutions. European Merchants is committed to furthering public debate and we offer our perspective through our own publications and external comment and analysis. We intend to make our contribution to understanding our times.

Contents

Introduction	5
1 Ministers	6
2 Department	7
3 Strategy	8
4 Ethos	9
5 Firewall	10
6 Consensus	11
7 Concordat	12
8 Alignment	13
9 Diaspora	14
10 Celebrations	15
11 Offices	16
12 Audits	17
13 Digital	18
14 Council	19
15 Conference	20
Proposals	21
References	22

Introduction

At this time of change, it is important to reflect on Scotland's future direction in every respect. Our relationships with the rest of Europe and the wider world are essential to our social wealth and economic prosperity. Nevertheless, the deep and regrettable polarisation of Scottish politics over recent years has produced divisions, even where consensus is possible.¹ More often than not these days, the Scottish Government's European and international relations are filtered through the prism of the independence debate, by all sides. That should not be the case.²

In reality, it should be entirely feasible and reasonable for the Government, the Parliament and wider Scottish actors to engage with European and international counterparts on matters within their competence. Indeed, in this interconnected continent and world, Scotland's political institutions can only exercise their roles in the domestic context effectively by interacting and cooperating with external partners. At the same time, the Government's external relations should be framed by Scotland's current constitutional position, not its internal debates on its future. In that respect, we should question whether European and international partners would want to associate themselves with a country that always spoke about itself.

Mainstream Scottish politics should have the skill and worldliness to find a lasting consensus that Scottish institutions should engage with the outside world, in line with whatever Scotland's constitution may be. Through that consensus, political parties both supporting and opposing independence would agree that external affairs should not be conflated with the independence debate. By the same turn, they would equally accept that the adage that foreign affairs is reserved is overly simplistic. In Scotland's current constitutional settlement, the foreign policy of the United Kingdom is reserved. That reservation does not prevent the Scottish Government or Parliament from interacting with the world, and indeed neither has ever pretended to exercise the foreign policy of the United Kingdom directly.

To support such a consensus, this report sets out 15 recommendations to the First Minister on Scotland's European and international relations. They cover strategic, operational and cultural elements designed to facilitate the effective promotion of Scotland's values and interests in the rest of Europe and the world, in accord with its constitution, through the establishment and delivery of realistic and defined principles and objectives. Taken together, these recommendations can serve as a foundation to build a credible and successful approach to connecting Scotland to our continent and our world with purpose. It is time for a renewed perspective.

At this stage, Scotland needs a strong political consensus on its current relations, in the present, with the rest of Europe and the wider world. Over three years after the UK formally left the EU, Brexit has been realised. While EU-UK relations will evolve, the concept of Brexit is, regrettably, done.³ Coasting on pro-EU sentiment in Scottish society will not achieve results for Scotland in any respect. Disinterest from the affairs of the EU and the world would equally serve Scotland poorly. In their place, we must now forge a common outlook on Scotland's role in the world.

Anthony Salamone FRSA

6 April 2023

1 Ministers

To create streamlined ministerial portfolios for European and international relations

CONTEXT

Scotland's relationships with the rest of Europe and wider world merit sustained political attention and investment at the highest level, whatever its constitutional future. In the outgoing administration, the Scottish Government incorporated a Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, supported by a Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development. For a country of Scotland's size, and given that it is not a state, it is sensible to have one senior and one junior minister charged with European and international relations. However, to be most effective, those ministers should have streamlined portfolios focused on European and global affairs, potentially including related subjects such as trade. Those portfolios should not include the constitution or independence.

PROPOSAL

The First Minister should create two ministerial posts for this field: a Cabinet Secretary for European and International Relations and a Minister for European Affairs. The Cabinet Secretary would have responsibility for all aspects of the Government's European and global work, including international development, and potentially including related subjects such as trade or tourism. Matter such as culture or migration should be allocated separately. To promote separation of the Government's European and international engagement from the independence debate, the post should not include the constitution, which could instead reside with the First Minister. The Minister for European Affairs would support the Cabinet Secretary specifically and directly on relations with the European Union and other European partners, in place of majoring in sub-fields in their own right.

IMPACT

This streamlined approach to ministerial portfolios would enable the political team to focus their efforts on the substantive work of the Government's policies, relationships and engagements connected to European and global affairs, along with related subjects. It would give emphasis to the Government's relations with the EU and wider Europe, which are certainly the most consequential dimension of Scotland's connections to the world. In that light, the Minister for European Affairs would be dedicated to sustaining and developing Scotland's connectivity with the EU, in coordination with the Cabinet Secretary. Beyond requiring regular travel, these ministerial posts would benefit from continuity of officeholder, so that external partners have the opportunity to develop productive relationships and lines of communications with the Government, to the benefit of Scotland.

2 Department

To establish a single government department for European and international relations

CONTEXT

The governments of most European states that are comparable in size to Scotland have around 15 to 18 ministries or departments.⁴ By contrast, at the end of the outgoing administration, the Scottish Government had 52 directorates of various sizes and remits.⁵ Of them, the EU Directorate and External Affairs Directorate directly cover European and global affairs. Others, such as the International Trade and Investment Directorate, involve related subjects. Whatever Scotland's constitutional future, it would be logical to replace the multitudinous mosaic of government directorates with a refined series of government departments. As part of such a reorganisation, the Government's work and policies on European and international relations could be gathered together in a purposeful way.

PROPOSAL

The Government should establish a single and unified department for European and international relations. This process would consolidate the EU and External Affairs Directorates, and possibly other directorates concerning related subjects. The principal leadership of the new department would be based in Edinburgh, to ensure that its work on European and global affairs was appropriately connected to the political level of Government and to the wider work of the Government. Its size, in terms of both personnel and budget, would be based on the reasonable requirements to represent Scotland and the Government effectively in the rest of Europe and the world, taking into account that Scotland is a European sub-state. The department would manage all of the Government's representative offices, in addition to policies related to international development and potentially trade.

IMPACT

Consolidating the Government's European and international engagement into a single government department would promote a more coordinated approach to this field. Such consolidation would provide greater clarity both to those within the Government and to external stakeholders on the locus for policies, activities and engagement related to European and global affairs. The department would have several divisions, such as EU relations, global or sectoral relations, trade, and international development, to structure its work according to thematic and geographic priorities. The Government's representative offices could be managed through a dedicated division or by allocation to geographic divisions. Given the logic of strategically focusing engagement on Europe, the EU relations division would likely be the largest component of the unified government department.

3

Strategy

To institute credible and effective government strategy for European and international relations

CONTEXT

The Scottish Government must confront significant challenges in order to be successful in the European and global arenas.⁶ Scotland is non-EU European sub-state. Brexit, while its legacy will endure, has been completed. Divergence, in political, economic and wider terms, from the EU is inevitable and under way. In the absence of sustained and proactive efforts, the relevance of Scotland to the EU will naturally diminish over time. This difficult environment, combined with the need for a robust policy culture in this field, reinforces the imperative for cogent Government strategy for European and international relations within Scotland's present constitutional arrangements. The outgoing administration had no such strategy.⁷ Inherently, challenges cannot be overcome when they are ignored.⁸

PROPOSAL

The Government should institute credible and effective strategy for European and international relations in the post-Brexit context and based on Scotland's current position within the UK. Such strategy should define the primary principles and objectives, in concrete and measurable terms, to structure the entirety of the Government's European and global engagement. They should be values-based, as well as ensure alignment between domestic policy and external action. Strategy should be expressed through multiannual concepts, supplemented by annual plans where relevant, and subject to periodic review and amendment as required. It should facilitate the prioritisation of the Government's efforts in this field and guide the Government in deploying its limited resources to achieve its objectives. It should be forthright about Scotland's challenges and address them adroitly.

IMPACT

Adopting a strategic approach to European and international relations would provide the Government with the means to confront the substantial challenges for a non-EU and non-EEA European sub-state to engage successfully with the rest of Europe and the wider world. Credible and effective strategy would be the basis for advocating Scotland's values and interests in the world as part of the UK. Most consequentially, it would enable the Government, the Parliament and the public to understand the actionable objectives for European and global affairs and to measure the extent to which they were achieved. While the European and global arenas are often fast-paced, reactive and thankless, it is still possible and essential to assess the Government's objectives and performance in those arenas. Such assessment would be the foundation of a genuine policy culture in this field.

4

Ethos

To support a robust policy culture on European and global affairs based on greater Europeanisation

CONTEXT

Most, if not all, of the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament and Government intersect with the European and global arenas to some extent. Standards and best practice are often established at European and international levels, and such developments will always have an impact on Scotland and the UK, regardless of the fact that the UK left the EU years ago. In turn, it must be normal for Scottish institutions to engage with European and international counterparts on matters within their competence. A central element for productive engagement in this domain is sufficient internalisation within Scottish politics and governance of the institutions, policies, politics and news of states, sub-states, organisations and bodies in those arenas. In short, Scotland needs an ethos of informed connection.

PROPOSAL

The Government should support a robust policy culture on European and global affairs within Scottish politics and governance. In that respect, the aim should be an informed and substantive political environment in Scotland in which debates, decisions and policies on European and international relations are sufficiently connected to the realities, challenges and opportunities of those arenas. While such a culture is not a matter for Government alone, it can exercise a crucial role in developing it. Given Scotland's status as a European sub-state, the emphasis should be on achieving significantly greater Europeanisation of Scottish politics and governance, including knowledge of and experience in the functioning of the EU, the politics and histories of the Member States, other European languages, the policy agenda in Brussels and the strategic debates on the future of Europe.

IMPACT

An ethos of informed connection on European and international relations in Scottish politics and governance, underpinned by substantial Europeanisation, would bring essential understanding, perspective and nuance on the European and global arenas. It would facilitate a richer political dialogue on Scotland's relationships with the rest of Europe and the world, as well as on the decisions and policies of the Government in this field. It would remediate the significant and widening disconnect from the EU, including its debates and workings, in particular.⁹ Such an ethos would be the foundation for a robust policy culture on European and global affairs, through which matters concerning the European and external relations of Scotland's political institutions were debated, structured, undertaken and evaluated based on refined knowledge and astute awareness.

5

Firewall

To firewall government's European and international engagement from the independence debate

CONTEXT

European and external relations constitute a distinct and consequential policy field in their own right, in similar fashion to health, education and justice. Given the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament and Government, external affairs are not a centrepiece of their business, in the same manner as those other fields. Nevertheless, the Government's decisions, policies and engagement related to European and international relations carry substantial impact and merit close investment, attention and review. By its nature of interaction with the outside world, this work is most susceptible to being conflated with the preferences for or against independence of the incumbent Government at the time. In consequence, the Government should be proactive in minimising and avoiding such conflation.

PROPOSAL

The Government should firewall its European and international engagement from the independence debate to protect the opportunities and benefits which do or could result from that engagement. It should ensure that its documentation, statements and strategy related to European and global affairs are predicated on Scotland's current constitutional arrangements. It should enjoin that the political level of the Government refrain from introducing the independence debate into the Government's European and international relations, including in respect of dialogue with senior decision-makers from the EU or elsewhere. It should provide instead that Government engagement with the rest of Europe and the world is focused squarely on substantive matters of mutual interest, and based on related cooperation, in conjunction with the strategic global debates of our times.

IMPACT

A suitable firewall between the Government's European and international affairs work and the independence debate (and, most notably, its preferences in that debate) would support positive and constructive relationships with European and global partners. Such a firewall would mitigate the corrosive effects of conflation between the Government's external affairs work and its views on independence, which would otherwise damage domestic consensus on that work and reduce the space for genuine cooperation with external actors. Moreover, partners of worth have no desire to become involved in the internal political matter of Scotland's constitutional future. Arguments of independence provide no foundation for sustained and mutually-beneficial connections between Scotland and partners in the rest of Europe and the world, so they should not be part of such engagement.

6 Consensus

To foster cross-party consensus on government's European and international engagement

CONTEXT

A successful role for Scotland in the rest of Europe and the world, whatever its constitutional future, depends on strong domestic political consensus. It would be damaging to the Scottish Government's European and international engagement if only governing parties supported the fact or manner of that engagement, or if that work were perceived as an extension of the independence debate. It should be entirely feasible for mainstream Scottish political parties to reach agreement on the general shape and direction of Scotland's principles and objectives for its European and global relationships within its current constitutional position. Such a collaborative approach, while perhaps novel to the polarised politics of recent years, would be in keeping with the original promise of the Scottish Parliament.

PROPOSAL

The Government should foster genuine cross-party consensus on its European and international engagement. While every mainstream political party has a role in building and sustaining such a consensus, governing parties hold the greatest influence in shaping a political and policy environment conducive to consensus. In turn, the Government should take the initiative by developing mechanisms for meaningful cross-party engagement on its European and global affairs work. For instance, mainstream parliamentary parties could be involved in the setting of the Government's multiannual European and international relations strategy. The Government could invite multi-party delegations to participate in its signature travel missions abroad. It could proactively seek common ground, whatever the balance of parties, on matters such as trade and international development.

IMPACT

An environment of cross-party consensus on the Government's European and international affairs work where possible would have the potential to enhance the quality of policies and decisions in this field. By design, such an approach would require compromise, especially from the Government. Even where consensus was not procedurally necessary, such as where the Government had a majority in the Parliament, it should be the default nonetheless. The choice of consensus on Scotland's European and international relations can often deliver a more unified and consistent message to external actors, supporting cogent policy in an often unpredictable and reactionary arena. Cross-party consensus on European and global affairs strategy would ensure that, in the event of a change of government, general principles and objectives could continue in the new administration.

7

Concordat

To propose a modern concordat on international relations with the UK Government

CONTEXT

Given that the Scottish and UK Governments both represent Scotland in different respects, the successful representation of Scotland in the rest of Europe and the world depends on good cooperation between the two. It would be unfavourable if each government sought to compete with the other to represent Scotland abroad, as such competition would confuse external actors and waste limited resources.¹⁰ While the two will have different perspectives, not least in recent years on the relationship between the UK and the EU, it is essential that they work together to advocate Scotland's general interests. Intergovernmental cooperation in this field is ostensibly structured through the international relations concordat, which was concluded in 2013 (and the EU relations concordat was made obsolete by Brexit).

PROPOSAL

The Government should propose a modern concordat on international relations with the UK Government. A new agreement could better reflect the evolution of the Scottish Government's European and international engagement over the past decade. Such an agreement might include the Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, but could easily be concluded directly between the Scottish and UK Governments. It should broaden the terms of sanctioned engagement to include political dialogue with external actors on matters within the competence of the Scottish Parliament and Government. It should codify cooperation between Scottish representative offices and UK diplomatic missions. Where applicable, it should incorporate engagement with the European Union at all levels, given that EU affairs were previously covered by the former EU relations concordat.

IMPACT

A new and modern concordat could enable the Scottish and UK Governments to work more effectively together to represent Scotland in the European and global arenas, in recognition of each other's areas of responsibility. New arrangements can be realistic about the prospect for political divergences yet cognizant of the imperative of good cooperation in this domain. A new agreement could provide greater clarity to European and global actors on the representation remits of the two governments in respect of Scotland. That approach would enable the Scottish Government to be more successful in this field, as external actors would be able to understand and to take reassurance from the division of responsibilities made by the concordat, with the endorsement of the UK Government. More broadly, a new deal would give both governments a chance to reset relations in this space.

8 Alignment

To develop a realistic and effective approach to alignment with the EU's laws and policies

CONTEXT

As part of its response to Brexit, the Scottish Parliament passed the EU Continuity Act, which enables the Scottish Government to align with EU laws and policies in some respects within areas of competence for Scottish political institutions. The premise behind this legislation is exceptional: that a non-EU European sub-state will attempt, in some measure, to align with the EU acquis of its own accord, even where its state does not. It is a challenging commitment to fulfil, given the scope and pace of change of the EU's laws and policies. Moreover, such a commitment can only ever be partial, as it will often not be possible, practical or prudent for Scotland to align with the EU where the UK as a whole does not. Indeed, by its own admission, the outgoing administration did almost no proactive alignment.¹¹

PROPOSAL

The Government should develop a realistic and effective approach to alignment with the EU's laws and policies. It should be founded on sufficient appreciation of the challenges of undertaking and maintaining alignment with parts of the EU acquis from Scotland's current constitutional position. It should be focused on establishing the areas of priority for Scottish alignment, the governing criteria for alignment decisions and the mechanisms of delivery for achieving alignment on current and future developments within the acquis. Genuine efforts to secure partial Scottish alignment with the EU acquis would require major investment by the Government and the Parliament in monitoring, analysing and reviewing the numerous changes to the acquis, to determine the optimal course for Scotland, taking into account the approach of the UK Parliament and Government.

IMPACT

A realistic and effective approach to Scottish alignment with EU laws and policies would support both a better political debate and better substantive outcomes on alignment. If a consensus exists in Scottish politics that proportionate alignment with the EU acquis for Scotland is a worthy goal, then the emphasis must be on the practical implementation and delivery of that objective. Stating an ambition of alignment while achieving little of substance would not be productive. While, for some, the question of alignment is linked with a desire for EU membership for Scotland, the remarkably little proactive and substantive alignment undertaken by the Government in the three years since formal Brexit suggests that making such a link is misplaced. Instead, a more productive focus would be to develop a workable approach to alignment to facilitate better EU relations in the present.

9

Diaspora

To institute a holistic approach to government engagement with the Scottish global diaspora

CONTEXT

The Scottish global diaspora should be an integral dimension of the Scottish Government's European and international relations. The diaspora is a worldwide community of people with different kinds of connections to Scotland. It is both more welcoming and more productive to define the Scottish diaspora broadly, to include anyone with interest in or affinity for Scotland. In turn, it encompasses people who previously studied in Scotland, many of whom now occupy positions of note across Europe and around the world. Particular locales for the Scottish diaspora, such as in parts of the EU, the United States and Canada, can be worthy of attention. At the same time, the Scottish diaspora exists in some form in every part of the world. Modern technologies can connect Scotland and its full diaspora.

PROPOSAL

The Government should institute a holistic approach to its engagement with the Scottish global diaspora. Such an approach should integrate diaspora relations into the Government's wider European and international relations strategy. It should promote meaningful connections within and between the diaspora and Scotland. In that regard, engagement with the diaspora should not be viewed as extractive. Trade and investment should certainly form part of diaspora relations, but as one element of sustaining the Scottish global community. Wider elements of diaspora relations should include culture, education, migration and friendship. On this subject, Scotland should be particularly attentive to the experiences and insight of Ireland as a European champion of diaspora engagement. In that light, the Government should look to support the diaspora, as well as benefit from it.

IMPACT

A holistic approach to engagement with the Scottish global diaspora would result in coordinated efforts to build and sustain a community between Scotland and people worldwide. It would span political, economic and social relations and interlink with numerous aspects of the Government's European and global affairs work beyond the formal bounds of diaspora policy or foreign direct investment. Its representative offices should be deeply engaged in diaspora work. Diaspora diplomacy, like wider public diplomacy, is based on the connections which individuals, organisations and businesses have with Scotland as a whole. While the Government has an organising role in some respects, diaspora relations will in large part take place organically. In those cases, it is for the Government to be aware of and to understand such relations without needing to manage them.

10 Celebrations

To leverage annual celebrations as catalysts to promote values, interests and policies

CONTEXT

Annual Scottish, European and global celebrations are opportunities not only to promote Scotland's values and interests, but to connect those occasions with the principles and aims of the Scottish Government's European and international relations strategy. In that regard, it is not simply a question of facilitating tourism or encouraging general sentiment in favour of Scotland. Instead, the potential is for more comprehensive advocacy of Scotland's core objectives for its relations with the rest of Europe and the wider world. Those objectives would derive from its cogent strategy and would ideally have cross-party support. Such moments would enable the Government and Scotland as a whole to establish and sustain meaningful and mutually-beneficial connections with partners around the world.

PROPOSAL

The Government should leverage annual celebrations as catalysts to promote values, interests and policies. In addition to other potential select dates, the focus should be on St Andrew's Day and Europe Day. Extensive efforts should be made to leverage St Andrew's Day to promote Scotland's values, interests and priorities, beyond headline notions of favourable Scottish sentiment. Senior representatives of Scotland, including from the Government, should be deployed strategically in locations around Europe and the world to host purposeful celebratory occasions. Europe Day should be taken as an opportunity to promote Scotland's multifaceted connections with the rest of Europe (not linked to the independence debate) in the spirit of the ideals and values of European unity. The representative offices of the Government could host strategically-relevant events related to Europe Day.

IMPACT

The catalysing potential of annual celebrations for Scotland could be substantial. At their best, such moments combine the effective promotion of values, interests and priorities together. Particular themes can prove useful where substantive and meaningful, not bland and generic. The Government should work in partnership with other actors in Scotland to maximise the prospects for annual celebrations. It should equally recognise that it does not need to coordinate all activity directly. The Government, the Parliament and wider society should invest significantly more in the representational and promotional dimensions of annual celebrations, particularly St Andrew's Day. Inherent to such work would be the question of for what Scotland wishes to be known in the world. Cogent strategy for European and international relations would easily deliver the answer to that question.

11

Offices

To reimagine government's representative offices as integrated representations and delegations

CONTEXT

The Scottish Government currently maintains nine representative offices, one of which is located in London. The majority of its external offices are situated in the EU. These offices are multipurpose venues: they support trade and investment; they facilitate cultural and educational exchange; they gather information related to policy developments; and they advocate Scotland's values and interests, among other roles. Officially, most offices have been styled "Innovation and Investment Hubs". The outgoing administration expanded the number of its representative offices. Since Scotland is a sub-state and all such offices are optional, a detailed public rationale should be provided for future potential offices. With nine offices in place, the principal task for Government is to form them into a united network.

PROPOSAL

The Government should reimagine its representative offices as integrated representations and delegations in the service of its European and international relations strategy.¹² It should dispense with a need for camouflage and rename its bilateral missions as Scottish Government Representations and its Brussels office as the Scottish Government Delegation to the European Union. It should appoint a Representative or a Delegate, as applicable, to lead each mission. Those leaders should have the requisite standing to speak on behalf of the Government, in line with its areas of responsibility. The Representatives need not be sourced from the ranks of civil servants where other candidates demonstrate the necessary and relevant skills, experience and expertise. The Government should work to ensure that its representations form part of its strategy and contribute to its delivery.

IMPACT

The reimagination of the Government's offices as representations and delegations functioning as a unified network is a logical evolution. Now that the Government has such a network, it must determine how to generate the greatest synergies out of its collective work. In that regard, its representations should have sufficient flexibility in their structure and operation to account for local circumstances and their individual missions. At the same time, they should be well connected to headquarters and integrated into the full network. Central government must evaluate how it will adapt itself to accommodate its modest global network of missions. Intelligence can be gathered by missions but not used by headquarters where disorganised. Incidentally, these offices are not the basis of a diplomatic network for an independent Scotland and should not be considered as such.

12

Audits

To conduct strategic bilateral audits of relationships with priority state and sub-state partners

CONTEXT

Bilateral relations are the traditional mainstay of international affairs, and they retain their importance today. In keeping with Scotland's current position, the majority of its most important bilateral partners are located in the rest of Europe. Some of those partners are states and others are sub-states. Given that Scotland is a sub-state, its relationships with states carry an inherent asymmetry. However, it is entirely feasible for the Scottish Government to have productive relations with bilateral state partners on matters of mutual interest within its competence where those are relations are sufficiently firewalled from independence debate. For a country of Scotland's size, whatever its constitutional future, prioritisation will always be an essential requirement for a successful bilateral relations strategy.

PROPOSAL

The Government should conduct strategic bilateral audits of relationships with priority state and sub-state partners.¹³ Such audits would deliver a comprehensive review of Scotland's existing connections with and presence in the bilateral partner, including political, economic, research, cultural and social relations. They would provide granular data at regional and city level where relevant. Audits would determine the current strengths in the bilateral relationship and identify promising areas for future investment. In turn, they would support the setting and delivery of targeted objectives connected to the Government's wider European and international relations strategy. In keeping with a European focus to that strategy, most strategic bilateral audits should cover EU partners. The balance between state and sub-state partners should match Scotland's priorities.

IMPACT

A programme of strategic bilateral audits would provide a strong complement to the general European and international relations strategy of the Government. It would map current and potential avenues for cooperation with priority partners for Scotland. In that regard, the selection of candidates for audits should reflect the Government's established strategic orientation and support the delivery of its principal strategic objectives for European and global relations. Where possible, it would be ideal for such audits to be conducted in cooperation with the bilateral partner at governmental and wider levels. A joint approach could itself facilitate future bilateral cooperation on areas of mutual interest and benefit. Moreover, the Government should network with Scottish actors who do or could engage with the bilateral partner to conceptualise the relationship and to support its growth.

13

Digital

To enhance the digital profile of government's work and policies on European and global affairs

CONTEXT

The digital dimension is essential to external relations today. In the modern era of technology, the Scottish Government can speak to a global audience instantly. In keeping with the meaning of public diplomacy, that audience can include the general public, businesses and organisations. However, that audience can equally include decision-makers and shapers in the political and diplomatic arenas. In a field often defined by unpredictability and reaction, the Government's digital presence can provide both a means to communicate Scotland's existing priorities and to respond to emerging European and global developments. Its collective digital footprint, including websites and social media, should be informative and accessible, delivering purposeful messages and evolving as technology changes.

PROPOSAL

The Government should enhance the digital profile of its work and policies on European and global affairs. It should establish a dynamic and detailed platform for its department for European and international relations, integrated into the central government website. Beyond providing current and substantive news on the work of the department, that platform should incorporate dedicated space for each of the Government's representations and delegations. Collectively, such a platform would give a thorough portrait of the Government's ongoing activity on European and global affairs, including its strategies, policies, initiatives, events, communications and wider news. It would be supplemented by social media channels and other digital media. This approach would align with common practice adopted by states and sub-states across Europe and around the world.

IMPACT

An enhanced digital profile would enable the Government to showcase its work and policies on European and global affairs to a worldwide audience. Given that external affairs is predicated on communication and interaction with the outside world, it is logical that the Government should offer dynamic and substantive content on its external affairs work through digital platforms and media. Such efforts would reach both the general public and policy actors. In turn, they would support increased engagement with the Government and greater understanding of its positions and activities on European and global affairs. Investment in a modern and effective digital profile for the Government could easily prove its worth by facilitating successful public diplomacy and by allowing the Parliament, the Scottish audience and the global audience to see the Government in action.

14

Council

To establish an advisory council of experts on European and international relations

CONTEXT

In formulating, conducting and evaluating its European and international relations strategy, the Scottish Government should seek to benefit from external expertise within Scotland on this domain. In 2016, the Government at the time established the First Minister's Standing Council on Europe to provide advice on matters of Brexit.¹⁴ The Council is now defunct and its last recorded meeting took place in September 2020, though it was apparently not formally dissolved by the outgoing administration. In any event, the former Standing Council did not cover Scotland's overall relationships with the rest of Europe or the world. Moreover, in focusing on the UK's departure from the EU from a relative distance, its mission was reactionary and separate from the Government's own strategic approach.

PROPOSAL

The Government should establish an advisory council of experts on European and international relations. Such a council should engage experts from a wide range of applicable fields and backgrounds, including practitioners. It should involve the regular participation of ministers and senior officials from the Government. The advisory council should cover the Government's strategy, objectives, policies and engagement with both the rest of Europe and the wider world. Its purpose would be to provide substantive and interrogative analysis on the Government's strategic direction and policy application, drawing on the expertise of its varied membership. Expert perspectives would aid the Government in ensuring that its approach to European and global affairs was sufficiently connected to the major debates, developments, challenges and opportunities existing in those arenas.

IMPACT

An advisory council on European and international relations would afford the Government with a valuable forum to evaluate its own strategies and policies in this domain. It would equally serve as a platform to discuss notable developments in the rest of Europe and the world, alongside their implications for Scotland. The council would marshal expertise on European and global affairs within Scotland to support credible and effective strategy in this space. For such a body to work most effectively, the Government would have to invest itself in listening to and reflecting on the views and perspectives offered in the council, especially where it did not inherently agree with them. Dialogue and challenge could result in better strategic objectives and policy design, supporting more successful outcomes from the Government's European and international engagement and related work.

15 Conference

To underwrite a major annual conference on European and global affairs hosted in Scotland

CONTEXT

Given that Scotland, along with the wider UK, is not part of the EU, one of its most significant challenges for European engagement is its natural loss of relevance to EU actors over time. If the Scottish Government wishes to counteract the process of Scotland's diminishing profile in the EU, alongside concurrent implications for its global profile, it requires both cogent strategy and a proactive approach. One avenue to sustain Scotland's relevance in this domain is to establish a signature annual conference hosted at a regular location.¹⁵ Its purpose would be to gather decision-makers and decision-shapers from across Europe and around the world to debate and discuss defining questions of our times. The ambition would be to add this conference to the calendar of high-profile annual gatherings of this kind.

PROPOSAL

The Government should underwrite a major annual conference on European and global affairs hosted in Scotland. Such a conference should attract participation from the political, diplomatic, business, civil society and other spheres. It should have a significant public profile, while giving space for both recorded debates and off-the-record dialogue. It would be a policy conference, not an academic one. Its purpose would be to bring together actors from a wide range of sectors, with an emphasis on practitioners, to debate major European and global developments. The conference need not be organised by government directly, and instead could be supported by government in terms of funding and logistics. In the interests of transparency, such support from the Government should be openly declared. The conference could acquire a specific theme or focus to give it a distinctive profile.

IMPACT

A major annual Scottish conference on European and global affairs would provide Scotland with a platform to attract interest from and maintain relevance in those arenas. Where it found a signature theme and good attendance, the conference could deliver a higher public profile for Scotland on European and international issues. It would feature various speakers from different perspectives. It would provide networking opportunities for participants from Scotland and the wider world. Over time, it could enhance Scotland's reputation as a centre for dialogue on major European and international developments, evidenced in this successful annual gathering. In turn, the conference could be one dimension of a proactive approach to ensure that Scotland, as a non-EU European sub-state, does not fade into the geopolitical background and instead elects to be in its foreground.

Proposals

THE 15 PROPOSALS ON CONNECTING SCOTLAND TO THE WORLD

- 1 **MINISTERS** | To create streamlined ministerial portfolios for European and international relations
- 2 **DEPARTMENT** | To establish a single government department for European and international relations
- 3 **STRATEGY** | To institute credible and effective government strategy for European and international relations
- 4 **ETHOS** | To support a robust policy culture on European and global affairs based on greater Europeanisation
- 5 **FIREWALL** | To firewall government's European and international engagement from the independence debate
- 6 **CONSENSUS** | To foster cross-party consensus on government's European and international engagement
- 7 **CONCORDAT** | To propose a modern concordat on international relations with the UK Government
- 8 **ALIGNMENT** | To develop a realistic and effective approach to alignment with the EU's laws and policies
- 9 **DIASPORA** | To institute a holistic approach to government engagement with the Scottish global diaspora
- 10 **CELEBRATIONS** | To leverage annual celebrations as catalysts to promote values, interests and policies
- 11 **OFFICES** | To reimagine government's representative offices as integrated representations and delegations
- 12 **AUDITS** | To conduct strategic bilateral audits of relationships with priority state and sub-state partners
- 13 **DIGITAL** | To enhance the digital profile of government's work and policies on European and global affairs
- 14 **COUNCIL** | To establish an advisory council of experts on European and international relations
- 15 **CONFERENCE** | To underwrite a major annual conference on European and global affairs hosted in Scotland



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