



## On Scottish Independence, Obama Implies UK Should Remain “United”

Speaking at a joint press conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron at the G7 summit in Brussels on June 5, President Obama said the United States has “a deep interest in making sure that one of the closest allies that we will ever have remains strong, robust, *united*, and an effective partner.” (Emphasis added.)



Obama’s statement was a reply to a two-part question posed by a British reporter about “two major decisions” that Britain is facing: “Whether or not Scotland stays part of the United Kingdom, and whether the United Kingdom stays a part of the European Union.”

The reporter asked the president what those decisions mean to him and to the people of the United States. Obama was diplomatic enough to not step too heavily on Scottish toes:

With respect to the future of the United Kingdom, obviously ultimately this is up to the people of Great Britain. In the case of Scotland, there’s a referendum process in place and it’s up to the people of Scotland.

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I would say that the United Kingdom has been an extraordinary partner to us. From the outside, at least, it looks like things have worked pretty well. And we obviously have a deep interest in making sure that one of the closest allies that we will ever have remains strong, robust, *united*, and an effective partner. But ultimately these are decisions that are to be made by the folks there. [Emphasis added.]

Obama also answered the EU question carefully, while repeating the “unity” theme he used in answering the question about Scotland:

With respect to the EU, we share a strategic vision with Great Britain on a whole range of international issues, and so it’s always encouraging for us to know that Great Britain has a seat at the table in the larger European project. I think in light of the [Normandy invasion] events that we’re going to be commemorating tomorrow, it’s important to recall that it was the steadfastness of Great Britain that, in part, allows us to be here in Brussels, in the seat of a *unified*, and extraordinarily prosperous Europe. And it’s hard for me to imagine that project going well in the absence of Great Britain. And I think it’s also hard for me to imagine that it would be advantageous for Great Britain to be excluded from political decisions that have an enormous impact on its economic and political life. [Emphasis added.]

So this is why we have elections, and we’ll see the arguments made and I’m sure the people of



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Great Britain will make the right decision.

The world's media, particularly those in the UK, were quick to read between the lines and interpret Obama's comments as favoring British unity over Scottish sovereignty. *The Guardian* noted that while Obama stressed twice during the press conference that the decision on independence was "up to the people of Scotland," he nevertheless made it clear that he wanted to see Scottish voters reject independence in September's referendum.

Likewise, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party — which supports Scottish independence — reminded the U.S. president that Scotland was "deeply fortunate" that September's referendum was being conducted "in a deeply democratic way," unlike the U.S. war for independence nearly 250 years ago.

"An independent Scotland will mean that America has two great friends and allies here rather than one," Salmond continued.

Speaking to BBC Radio Scotland, Salmond said: "America had to fight for its independence. We are very fortunate in Scotland that we have a democratic, agreed, consented process by which we can vote for our independence. So, in summary, I suppose my message to President Obama is 'yes we can.'"

By borrowing the 2008 Obama campaign slogan, Salmond obviously intended to put a point on his message.

Douglas Alexander, a British Labour Party member who is the shadow foreign secretary and represents a Scottish district in the UK House of Commons, said Obama's "clear statement of support for the UK staying together will resonate with many of us here in Scotland."

"As a global statesman President Obama understands that *interdependence* is a defining feature of our modern world, and that building bridges, not putting up new barriers, is the challenge of our generation," said Alexander, who clearly opposes Scottish independence. (Emphasis added.)

The Scottish Labour Party, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, and Scottish Liberal Democrats all opposed a referendum deciding on independence.

The term "interdependence" has long been favored by internationalists who seek to eliminate national sovereignty and place the world's independent nations under the control of international and regional governmental organizations such as the UN, the EU, and NATO. As just one outstanding example, on United Nations Day, October 24, 1975, the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, anticipating the bicentennial of the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, unveiled a mockery of the great American document: "A Declaration of INTERdependence."

The Obama statement was not universally praised in Britain, however. The BBC quoted a surprising statement from former UK diplomat Lord Malloch-Brown, who has substantial internationalist credentials, having served as development specialist at the World Bank and UN (1994-2005) and as UN deputy secretary-general in 2006: "I'm surprised that he has stepped into this. I don't think it will be very helpful for anybody."

Perhaps Malloch-Brown fears that Obama's opposition to Scottish independence will be viewed by Scots as interference and will prompt a backlash.

While Obama's statement regarding Scottish independence received the lion's share of the attention, his remark's on Britain's continued participation in the EU are more significant. The European Union has grown from a trade compact known as the "Coal and Steel Community" formed among six European



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nations after World War II, to a virtual continent-wide government that has supranational authority over 28 formerly-independent European nations today. From the very beginning, the United States supported and nurtured regional government in Europe.

The post-War Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program), for example, played a major role in forcing what was to become the EU on the peoples of Europe. In a 1947 speech, then-U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall (a member of the internationalist-minded Council on Foreign Relations [CFR]) let it be known that European economic cooperation was a precondition for desperately needed American aid after World War II. The Marshall Plan, under which the United States sent \$13 billion in economic support to Europe, was sold as a means of helping rebuild Europe as a way to prevent the advance of Soviet communism over all of Europe. But the real purpose of the Marshall Plan was to push for European “unification” (eventually, the EU). Congress inserted a clause in the 1951 Mutual Security Act stating: “... to further encourage the economic unification and the political federation of Europe.”

Just as Obama expressed concern that the withdrawal of Britain from the EU might hurt the regional government (“It’s hard for me to imagine [the EU] going well in the absence of Great Britain”), the U.S. establishment is concerned about what effect the withdrawal of Scotland from the UK will have on another international authority with joint U.S.-European origins: NATO.

Though NATO — like the Marshall Plan — was originally promoted as a way of thwarting Soviet designs on Western Europe, it has (like the EU) grown from a few nations (12) to 29 and has outgrown its originally stated purpose. But few people knew at its inception (or know now) that NATO was created as a “Regional Arrangement” authorized by Articles 51-54 of the UN Charter and is therefore a branch of the grandfather of all international organizations — the United Nations.

How would a withdrawal of Scotland from the UK impact NATO?

First Minister Salmond has indicated that, after Scottish independence, he plans to evict Britain’s Trident nuclear submarines from the River Clyde. *The Telegraph* (UK) reported that “there is widespread concern there is nowhere else suitable for [the submarines], meaning Britain would be forced to abandon its nuclear deterrent and NATO part of the ‘supreme guarantee’ of its members’ security.”

Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty establishing NATO states: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”

Though Obama chose his words carefully, and risked appearing to be interfering in Britain’s internal affairs, his message still came through: *The United States regards Britain’s support of the EU and NATO as critical, and we are opposed to any action taken by Britain or Scotland that will undermine these supranational organizations.*

*Photo of President Obama in Brussels: AP Images*

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