

By Nat Butcher, our Political Correspondent



UK politicians are fond of saying that they are making no preparations for Scotland's independence because they do not believe it is going to happen. They tell us that Scots are much too servile sensible to vote for separation because we are all Better Together

However, BBC Scotland has managed to gain sight of an early draft of a top secret document being prepared by the Cabinet Office, in which contingencies for a Yes vote are being considered, demonstrating that, behind the scenes, the prospect of Scottish separation is being taken very seriously indeed by the UK government.

The report, which was commissioned on the instructions of Prime Minister David Cameron, is entitled: "The implications of Scottish separation for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", and will discuss a number of relevant topics.

This channel has been given an exclusive preview of one of the first chapters to be produced, which deals with the constitutional implications of the split. The concluding paragraphs make the following points:

As has often been stated by the separatists, the UK will end if one partner secedes, and at least two new states will emerge.

One will be a separate Scottish nation which will have a status similar to that which it enjoyed before signing the Acts of union in 1707/8. Its position following separation is therefore quite clear.

The position of the rest of the UK (rUK) is somewhat more complex, being contingent upon the individual and collective statuses of each of the three component parts, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

When the Treaties of Union were signed, Wales and Ireland (Eire) had already been integrated into England, which signed on their behalf. Wales is no longer part of England, but the governance of both countries is so closely integrated that it seems inevitable that both will continue in a formal union following Scottish separation, at least in the short to medium term.

Northern Ireland is much less closely integrated with English governance, and consequently less likely to continue in any union. It has already been stated publically that England has no strategic interest in Northern Ireland, and discussions with Dublin are already well advanced in this area.

While recent events have made the province an embarrassment to Westminster, Dublin seems quite keen to have them back, so it is to be expected that a reunited Ireland is a much more likely outcome than a new union between the province and England/Wales.

The loss of Ulster Unionist MPS to the Conservative movement, while regrettable, will be more than compensated by the departure of the phalanxes of Labour and Separatist MPs from

Scotland, solving the West Lothian question once and for all.

The title of this new union has important implications for the geopolitical status of England and Wales and can be used as a lever to support continuity of treaty arrangements, all of which will theoretically cease on the division of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It is essential the the new union can make a credible claim to being the successor state of the old UK, even though this is not strictly the case in international law. This will help to safeguard *inter alia*

membership of the UN security council, and various EU opt-outs, which are currently enjoyed by the existing UK state.

The term United Kingdom will become meaningless as the new union will consist of one kingdom and a principality, however we recommend that the term is retained as it gives the greatest sense of continuity.

The precedent for this fiction was set when the regnal number II was applied to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, ignoring the consequences for Scotland, which had never benefitted from a previous Queen Elizabeth.

This begs the question, The United Kingdom of what?

The committee considered the continued use of the term Great Britain, but the loss of over one third of the territory of Great Britain following separation would seem to make this untenable.

We also considered the use of the term Greater England, which would be useful in many ways but could be seen as provocative in Wales, leading to further support for separatist movements in the principality, and this too is considered untenable.

The most appropriate term would seem to be Little Britain, which has historical resonance,

doesn't upset the Welsh and carries a connotation of continuity despite reduction. This is therefore our recommended option.

So there we have it. Scotlandshire sails off into a separatist Nirvana, Northern Ireland goes back to where it began, and England (and Wales) carry on as usual under the title of the United Kingdom of Little Britain, with its new heraldic motto: "*Plus ça changes, mais c'est la même chose*".

Simples!

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