ANDREW MARR SHOW, 9TH APRIL, 2017

ALEX SALMOND, SNP INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN

AM: Now, one party that is united in its opposition to the American attack in Syria is the Scottish National Party. They've also been boosted this week by a formal announcement from Spain that that country will not block an independent Scotland from joining the EU. If only the Scottish economy was in a slightly stronger position, Alex Salmond, the party’s former leader, will be feeling chipper indeed. Mr Salmond, welcome from Aberdeen, it’s beautiful behind you. Can I start by asking about this weekend’s news however. If the regime is responsible for a chemical attack on its own people, innocent people in Syria, surely some kind of military response is proportionate by the west?

AS: What should happen, if somebody, the Syrian regime or whoever, is responsible for using chemical weapons against the civilian population, or barrel bombs or bombing hospitals, there should be a proper UN investigation and those responsible should be arraigned before the International Criminal Court. And that’s the way you impose the international rule of law. That’s what should happen. Now there’s a number of obstacles to that happening, not least of which the United States of America, unlike 130 other countries, doesn’t yet recognise the International Criminal Court. But that shouldn’t stop the initiative being made to have a proper examination on those who are responsible for an atrocity being held properly to account in terms of international law. And military action without that basis of law, without that framework, is no substitute for doing what’s right and proper to impose the rule of law to stop these things happening again.

AM: What do you make of the abrupt announcement the Foreign Secretary is no longer going to go to Moscow to talk directly with
the Russians after this, but is going to let the Americans go there first instead?

AS: Well, Boris Johnson just looks daft. I mean what is the argument for not going ahead with a visit? Well, you know, Rex Tillerson’s going on Wednesday so it can’t be that we’ve moved to a Cold War position of no talking what so ever. And the idea that the Foreign Secretary can’t be trusted because he might pursue his own line or have an independent thought or cross over what the Americans are going to say just makes him look like some sort of mini-me to the United States of America and that’s not a position that any Foreign Secretary would want to be in. You know if the *Mail on Sunday* repeats the Russian line that the British Foreign Secretary is a puppet, then you know you’re really in trouble and I’d have thought Boris Johnson looks in deep political trouble this morning.

AM: Let me turn to the independence question. Theresa May has said very clearly, this is not the time for a second independence referendum. Nicola Sturgeon has said that she’s prepared to be flexible about the date. Does flexibility, so far as the SNP’s concerned, mean that you could accept a second referendum after Brexit is completed, as David Mundell says?

AS: No, the right time for the second referendum is when the Brexit deal, the British Brexit deal is known, and therefore that can be compared against the prospect of an independent Scotland in Europe. Now you rightly at the top of your interview talked about Alfonso Dastis, Spanish Foreign Secretary and making it absolutely clear there was no Spanish veto against Scottish membership of the European Union. You could also have added Elmar Brok, Angela Merkel’s key ally in the European Parliament who said that that would be a very speedy process this week, or the queue of European MPs in the debate this week from across the continent who made clear their friendship towards Scotland. And then you
can see, Andrew, how the tectonic plates are changing in Europe and Scotland compared with three years ago.

**AM:** Well I was going to ask you, this is quite a change in tone from the Spanish government in particular. How important is that in the case for independence in Scotland? Is this a really crucial moment for you?

**AS:** Well it is a significant moment. I mean you’ll remember, and you should, a few years ago –

**AM:** Barroso, you’re going to say –

**AS:** President Barroso was sacked being interviewed by you comparing Barroso. Yes, comparing Scotland to Kosovo. I don’t think that Jean-Claude Juncker is going to be doing that any time soon, on the contrary, there’s been a sea change in attitudes towards Scotland. Now of course the British press always exaggerated the opposition to Scotland. That was part of the campaign, but there could be no mistaking now the friendship towards Scotland and the key thing of course, as Scotland has gained influence, then the UK government has lost influence. But if you’re a member of the club then you’ve always got cards to play in telling other people you don’t want to destabilise things. If you’re withdrawing as the UK is from the European Union you’ve got very little credit and very little credibility across the entire continent of Europe.

**AM:** So the timing of so called ‘Indy Ref 2’ is really important. What’s your view about holding an advisory referendum if Theresa May won’t give you a referendum before the end of the process, which could be several years away?

**AS:** Oh, yeah, I leave these matters to the person responsible and that’s the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon. But can I just say that you know the Theresa May line ‘this is not the time’ or ‘now is not the time’ is not going to stand. I mean you know back
in the day I remember David Cameron telling me there wasn’t going to be a Scottish referendum, but that didn’t last against the democratic wishes of the Scottish people and the Scottish parliament and neither will the Theresa May line. They won’t necessarily crumble today or tomorrow or next week -

AM: - Why do you say that?
AS: - but over the next few months that line will crumble.

AM: Why do you think that’s the case?

AS: Because no British Prime Minister can stand against the democratic wishes. Well, no British Prime Minister, even Margaret Thatcher, for goodness sake, was prepared to acknowledge the right of the Scottish people to exercise self-determination. And remember self-determination delayed, like justice, is self-determination denied and it just won’t stand politically. So my prediction is that the Theresa May position will crumble over time.

AM: But in this context, according to the polls, at least half of Scots don’t want a second independence referendum for the time being and therefore Theresa May can say, alongside Ruth Davidson, this is not the time and as it were, get away with it for quite a long time to come.

AS: Well the only poll which has asked about - after the Scottish parliament verdict, after the Scottish parliament supported it, it was Yougov which showed a majority said that the UK government should accede and that majority will grow, Andrew, because of the democratic imperative behind it, so take my word for it, there will be a referendum in Scotland. The timing of course will have to be negotiated but the timescale that it should be is when the people of Scotland can make a judgement because the Brexit Britain future and the future of an independent Scotland within a European context.
AM: Let me ask you about the Scottish economy because we had some slightly disheartening news last week. In the last quarter the Scottish economy actually shrunk by 0.2%, the UK economy grew overall, why do you think the Scottish economy and the British economy generally are so out of kilter at the moment?

AS: Well, we’ve lost a hundred thousand jobs in the onshore oil industry in Scotland over the last couple of years, not least of which in my constituency here in the north east of Scotland, Andrew. Now, if that was equivalent to the UK you’d be talking about a million jobs lost in your biggest industry. Obviously that has a severe economic effect. I mean I was fortunate as First Minister, when I was First Minister per capita GDP in Scotland exceeded the UK right through the years from 2007, and incidentally in the run up to the first independence referendum, but if you have a big blow in your major industry that has a significant economic effect. Incidentally, I wouldn’t get too complacent about the UK economy. If you look at the production figures this week and the balance of trade figures I think the post Brexit boom is running out of steam, Andrew.

AM: Right. Can I turn to one other area which is – again going back to the timing of a potential referendum because you could hold your own referendum in Scotland and I’m slightly surprised that you’re so reluctant to talk about it, because that is in the hands of the Scottish parliament and the SNP.

AS: Well it’s in the hands – the tactics on these matters are in the hands of the First Minister who’s properly charged with taking them forward and that’s a matter for Nicola Sturgeon, but she said she’ll outline to parliament, after the Easter recess, what her strategy is going to be to make sure that the will of the Scottish people and the parliament that the democratic will, the right of Scotland to self determination, Andrew is respected. Incidentally
when Theresa May was challenged about that by Angus Robertson in the House of Commons her answer was that her own constituency of Maidenhead had also voted to remain in Europe, as if somehow the ancient nation of Scotland is comparable with an English constituency. That’s exactly why incidentally her attitude will not stand. No self respecting Scot is going to stand for an attitude which a British Prime Minister evokes a comparison between a Scottish nation and a constituency of England however beautiful no doubt that Maidenhead undoubtedly is.

AN: Okay, well we could be talking about this for a lot longer Alex Salmond, but we’ve run out of time. We’ll talk again I’m sure soon, but for now thank you very much indeed.

AS: No Andrew, you haven’t mentioned Scotland winning the Grand National.

AM: I’m so sorry Alex.

AS: It’s important to congratulate Lucinda Russell and her team. Anything is possible when Scotland can win the Grand National.

AM: All right. Before you explode with enthusiasm thank you very much indeed Alex Salmond.

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