

3. A brief history

Scotland's relations with its larger neighbour have often been difficult, none more so than in the "wars of independence" 700 years ago led by William Wallace and then Robert the Bruce. He defeated Edward II, then attempting to subjugate Scotland, at Bannockburn in 1314. After other cross border disputes, including Scotland's defeat at Flodden by the English in 1513, the Scottish and English crowns were unified in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland became overall monarch of the British isles.

In 1707, that union was cemented by Scotland and England's political union, forced on Scotland in part by a financial crisis following the abject failure of its colony in Panama, the so-called Darien adventure. All political power moved to London, but Scotland retained its own legal system, churches and universities. In 1745, the pretender to the British throne, Bonnie Prince Charlie, led the Jacobite revolt against Hanoverian rule by London. Despite reaching as far south as Derby, that ended in crushing defeat at Culloden in 1746.

In the 1800s, Scotland's economy strengthened, its cities boomed and its citizens took a leading role in the British empire. But proposals to give Scotland some form of "home rule" within the UK have been live since William Gladstone's era as Liberal leader in the 1880s. After several failed attempts at Westminster, notably in 1913 and 1979, a Scottish parliament was finally reestablished in 1999 in Edinburgh with wide-ranging policy making and legal powers but dependent on a direct grant from London.

In May 2011, Salmond and the SNP unexpectedly won an historic landslide victory giving the nationalists majority control of the Scottish parliament, enabling the first minister to demand that independence referendum.

5. The options – and key arguments

Option	Arguments for	Arguments against	Who supports
Status quo - the UK government in charge of most taxation, welfare and economy	The UK is the most successful economic and political union of modern times – change needs to be slow and careful. The UK brings security and shared risk, and common values.	It fails to recognise Scotland's unique needs, values and aspirations; Scotland's interests are always secondary to England's. The UK is run by parties which Scotland rejected.	Ruth Davidson, Scottish Tory leader; Lord Forsyth, former Scottish secretary; Sir Malcolm Rifkind, former foreign secretary.
Devo plus - ensures that Scotland has to raise the taxes it spends while keeping defence, pensions and foreign affairs at UK level	Scotland needs to take responsibility for the taxes it spends, and mould policies to its needs and raise the taxes to match its spending.	Giving Scotland control over taxation and welfare would heavily impact all parts of the UK, require reform of the UK parliament and undermine internal unity.	Reform Scotland think tank; Scottish Liberal Democrats; possibly Alistair Darling; devo plus campaign; senior figures in Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.
Independence - giving Scotland full control over all taxes, laws and North Sea oil while keeping sterling and the Queen	There is no reason why Scotland cannot control its own destiny, become equal to England, and take its full place in the world. Scotland and England would remain firm friends.	Scotland would face greater financial risks, lose the security of UK, and gain little that further devolution would give. It would rely on a foreign bank and be in damaging competition with its closest, larger neighbour.	Alex Salmond, Scottish National party, Scottish Green party, Sir Sean Connery, Sir Brian Souter, Stagecoach owner, the Scottish Socialist party and Solidarity.

12. The one sentence killer dinner party line on:

Independence: "Why can't Scotland, blessed with such great natural resources, talent and ingenuity, be allowed to stand on its own two feet and take its rightful place in the world?"

Status-quo: "We have the best of both worlds. Why throw away the security and rewards of staying in the UK? The union has lasted over 300 years for one reason: because it works."

Devo-plus: "Why should Scotland, with its thousand-year history, be treated like a teenager with a pocket money parliament? It should take responsibility for what it spends."