

One state, four nations: a disunited kingdom ?

* Maps of the UK

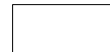
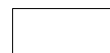
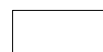
a) Physical map: main mountains and rivers



b) Main towns of the UK



Key:



The Union flag: a summary of the British union...

The Union Jack is a transnational flag full of historical significance. It represents the union of different countries and the growth of a family of nations whose influence extends far beyond the British Isles. This far-reaching influence is still seen today in the incorporation of the Union Jack in other national flags such as that of Australia. The British flag is called the "Union Jack", an expression that needs to be explained.

The Union Jack is a fine expression of unity as well as diversity. The British flag incorporates the national symbols of three distinct countries, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In fact its name "Union Jack" emphasises the very nature of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a union of nations. The flag is also known by another name, this too, emphasising the idea of union: the "Union flag", perhaps a less common term but a little more precise. The countries comprising the British Isles are not inward-looking or isolated states with an insular mentality; together they constitute a powerful union that has spanned centuries. Recent devolution that gave Scotland its own Parliament and Wales its own Assembly has also emphasised the importance of individual national identities within the union without affecting the essential unity of Great Britain. On the contrary, it has strengthened it. Recognition of, and respect for national identities are an essential ingredients for effective union. The Union Jack symbolises all this: respect for individuality within a closely knit community.

The "Union Jack" or "Union Flag" is a composite design made up of three different national symbols:



St. George's Cross,
the flag of England



St. Andrew's Cross,
the flag of Scotland



St. Patrick's Cross,
the flag of Ireland

The cross represented in each flag is named after the patron saint of each country: St. George, patron saint of England, St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland and St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland.

The image below renders the idea of the union of the three flags forming one unified, transnational Flag.

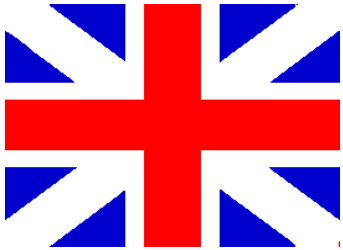


No mention has been made of the Welsh flag. The Welsh dragon was not incorporated into the Union Flag because Wales had already been united to England when the first version of the Union Flag was designed in 1606. It is, however, in common use:



... Or disunion ?

The first step taken in the creation of the flag of Great Britain was on 12th April 1606. When King James VI of Scotland became king of England (King James I) it was decided that the union of the two realms under one king should be represented symbolically by a new flag. Originally It consisted in the red cross of England superimposed on the white cross of Scotland on the blue background of the Scottish flag as in this illustration:



Thus we have the first flag of the union called, in fact, the "Union Flag".

What was meant to be a symbol of unity actually became a symbol of international controversy. The English resented the fact that the white background of their cross had disappeared and that the new flag had the blue Scottish background. On the other hand the Scottish resented the fact that the English red cross was superimposed on the Scottish white cross!! The old adage says you cannot please everyone but this first version of the Union Flag seemed to please no-one!

Apparently there was an unofficial "Scottish version" that attempted to rectify the sense of injustice that the Scottish felt at this innovatory flag. A distinct reference was made to this version when the King visited Dumfries in 1618. Here is what it looked like:



The controversy was destined to last; However, the flag was usually restricted to use at sea until the two kingdoms of Scotland and England were united in 1707. It was most probably from this use at sea that it got the name "Jack" ("Union *Jack*"). It was usually flown at the bow end of the ship, from the jack staff (= mat de pavillon)

The flag continued to be used in its original form until Jan. 1, 1801. At that time, with the union of Ireland and Great Britain, it became necessary to represent Ireland in the Union Flag and so the cross of St. Patrick was include thus creating the flag as we now have it. When the southern part of Ireland gained its independence in 1921 and became the Irish Free State no alteration was made to the Union Jack.

The name "Union Jack" became official when it was approved in Parliament in 1908. It was stated that "the Union Jack should be regarded as the National flag".

The overseas territories of the UK:

UK overseas territories



1 Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie & Oeno Islands

2 Cayman Islands

3 Bermuda

4 Turks and Caicos Islands

5 British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Montserrat

6 Falkland Islands

7 South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

8 Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha*

9 Gibraltar

10 Sovereign Base Areas (Akrotiri and Dhekelia)

11 British Indian Ocean Territory

12 British Antarctic Territory

* (including Gough Island Dependency)

Coming back to the UK: the cultural diversity through a map of the dominant languages



Explain to what extent this map shows the linguistic diversity of the UK and Eire. Don't forget to be critical and never forget to take into account the audience of this map.

Source: National geographic education website teaching resources for primary schools.

This map designed for geography lessons of primary schools. It is a very simplified map to be understandable for young pupils. For instance, almost all of Wales is shaded but only 19% of Welsh speak the language (according to the 2011 census) as well as English. A more accurate map would use statistical classes and different shades of grey !

It is also a simplification to define English as a language of German origin; English was also influenced by Latin and French.

The map does not include many other ethnic minorities who speak the languages of their countries of origin (community languages such as Bengali, Hindi... account for 5.5% of the population).

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The case of the Scottish desire of independence

1) The 2014 Referendum: "better together" ?

* The **Scottish independence referendum** was a referendum on **Scottish independence** that took place in Scotland on 18 September 2014. The independence referendum question, which voters answered with "Yes" or "No", was "**Should Scotland be an independent country?**". The "**No**" side won, with 2,001,926 (55.3%) voting against independence and 1,617,989 (44.7%) voting in favour. The turnout of 84.6% was the highest recorded for an election or referendum in the United Kingdom since the introduction of universal suffrage.

Behind this result, there are 2 centuries of difficult relationship between London and Edinburgh.

* The 1707 *Acts of Union* between Scotland and England saw Scotland's political power shift to London. It was a move designed to secure Scotland's future after a financial crisis caused by the unsuccessful colonisation of Panama by the country. By the 1800s Scotland was prosperous and booming, but in the 1900s calls for powers to be transferred back to Scotland were made. It was in 1999 that a Scottish parliament was re-established under Tony Blair's first term in a political **devolution**. It was on 15 October 2012 that Prime Minister David Cameron and First Minister of the Scottish Parliament Alex Salmond signed *the Edinburgh Agreement*, which allowed the Scottish parliament to legally stage a referendum. Salmond is clearly in favor of independence (he was the leader of the Scottish independent Party).

- **Yes campaigners** argue that Scotland's economy would flourish with independence and the Scottish Government would have full control over social policy. It could build the Scottish brand and become an equal to England.

- **No campaigners** *Better Together* say that independence would leave Scotland at greater financial risk without the security that comes with being a part of the UK. They are also proposing more devolved powers for Scotland should independence be rejected and this, they argue, will offer much the same without the risk.

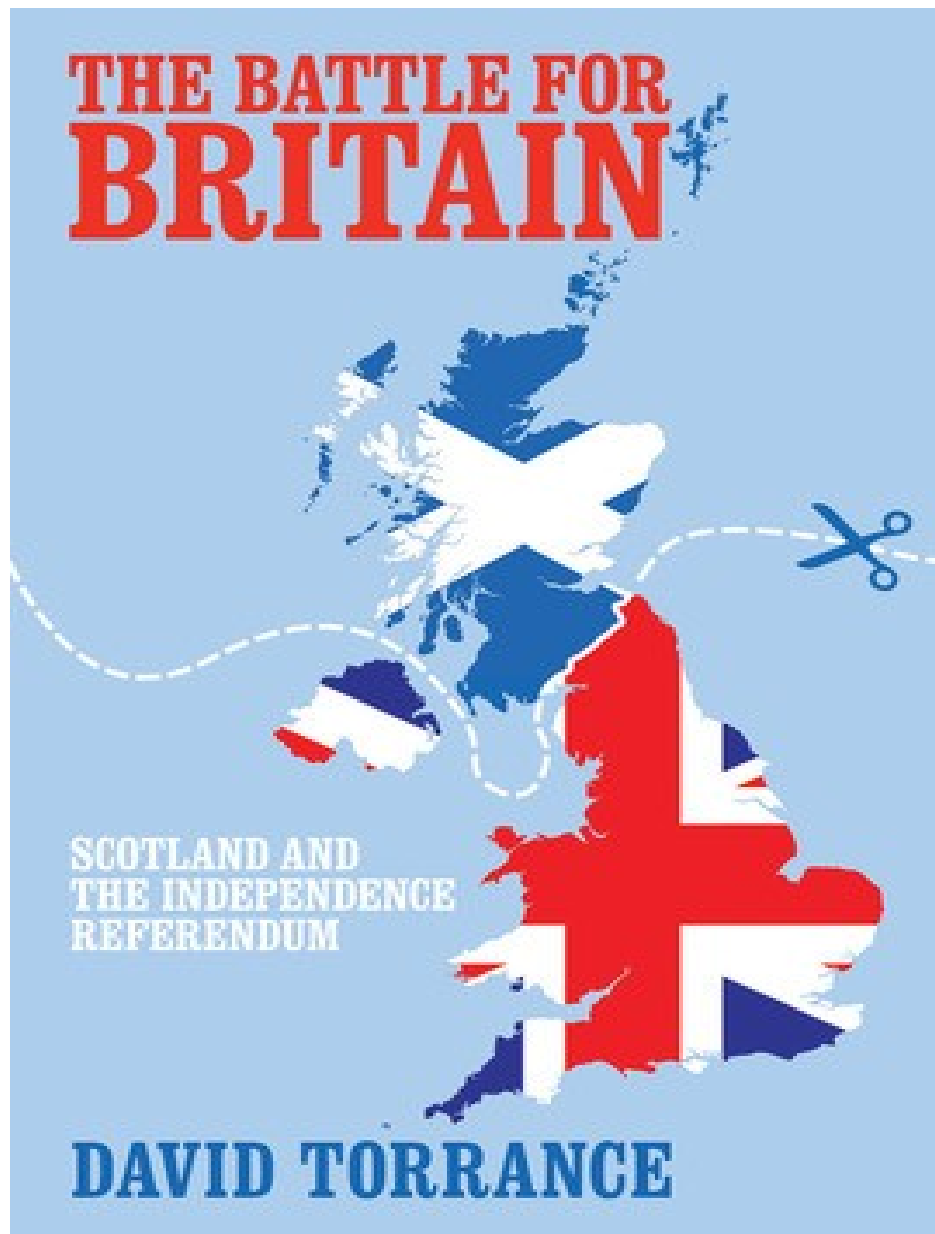


This political battle between Yes and No campaigners, which started since 2012, used in particular visual tools, such as maps.

... 2) Thanks to maps, used as political tools.



Map: "It'll cost you, the price of Scottish independence; Source: *The Economist*, April 14th-20th 2012.



Cover of David Torrance's book *The Battle for Britain* published in 2013 which explains the major stakes of a crucial political question for the UK.

I) A map so far away from geographical reality

1. The map represents a curiously insular Scotland. It is unfamiliar for us -- but very common in the UK -- to map each national entity separately, but it is uncommon to show Scotland surrounded by sea ! By this choice, the authors of the map wanted to cut off Scotland from its surrounding. They represented an isolated and fragmented country, drifting away from its neighbours.

2. The distortion of the names of places. This cover presents a mock map of an independent Scotland called 'Skintland'. The map is a satirical view of Scotland: each place name is changed and parodied. The background is a topographical map of Scotland.

All city and place names are renamed using puns suggesting a fall of Scotland (Skintland means the "land of the broke"; Aberdeen becomes "Aberdown", Forfar becomes "Fallfar"), predicting bankruptcy (Oban becomes "Obankrupt", Arbroath becomes "Arebroke") and misery to the population ("dire straits", "dearth" instead of "Perth"). Scotland would then be marginalized and simply disappear (Lewisn't = Lewis, Lockless = Lock Ness, Not Fyne = Loch Fyne, Null = Mull etc.)

II) ... which represents the economic ruling class of London's point of view

1. The point being made... The Economist's parody was aimed to warn the Scots about their wish to become independent. The journalists cast severe doubts about a separate Scotland's economy by directly addressing the Scots: "it will cost YOU". The aim was to draw their attention to the "price" of their national pride. The Scots might want independence for political or cultural reasons, but if they voted for independence, their country could end up like one of Europe's marginal economies, namely Greece (as they "twin" the capital of Scotland with Athens). One possible reason put forward in the main article could be that the North Sea oil could start to dry up in the next decade. An independent Scotland could also mean that its borrowing costs would be higher (as the name "Edinborrow" and "High interests lands" for Highlands suggest). The map is a satirical map but the warning is a very serious one, made by specialized journalists. The Economist is a famous financial magazine which is well respected even if its views are clearly right-wing and liberal. This magazine expresses the opinion of the economic ruling class of London.

2. The power of maps. The use of maps in the media is widespread, and has increased a lot lately. Maps are usually treated by the media as if they were neutral pieces of information, objective graphic images added to the articles in order to give context to the stories. The authors of this particular map are conscious of the potential political message of the image they create. Maps are powerful objects which affect decision makers "mental maps" and thereby influence the way they act. This **spoof map** (= satirical imitation, parody) was unashamedly provocative and condescending in the authors' mind. It clearly aimed at provoking an outcry in Scotland (and it did) but it also aimed at shifting the debate towards the economy instead of national pride. This cover was only used in the UK edition of The Economist and not the international edition – the authors have apparently shied away from attacking Scots overseas and showing a disunited United Kingdom to the world.