Why Scotland voted ‘No’

Presented at the IGS seminar on The Scottish Independence Referendum and the Future of the Multiethnic Nation State, UC Berkeley, September 2014

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The campaign in three stages

![Line graph showing the campaign in three stages with percentage on the y-axis and time from Sep '13 to Sep '14 on the x-axis. The graph has two lines: one for 'Yes' and one for 'No'. There are three stages labeled 1, 2, and 3.](image-url)
Data sources

- Two waves of an multi-wave panel survey
- Conducted over the internet via YouGov:
  - British Election Study Wave 2
    - June 2014
  - SRS pre-referendum wave
    - 25 August-16 September 2014
- Panel N = 2,800
- Marginals based on weighted data
Stage 1: why a big lead for ‘No’?

• Not a matter of identity
Scottish > British identity

% of respondents

Self-reported national identities

Not at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Very strongly
Stage 1: why a big lead for ‘No’?

- Not a matter of identity
- Not a preference for multi-level governance
Where powers should lie

- Energy
- Welfare benefits
- Pensions
- Tax levels
- Immigration
- Defence & foreign affairs

% opting for UK/Scottish Parliament

- UK
- Scottish
Stage 1: why a big lead for ‘No’?

- Not a matter of identity
- Not a preference for multi-level governance
- Not widespread optimism about the Union
## Consequences of remaining in Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Likely (%)</th>
<th>Unlikely (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK government would cut spending available for Scottish public services</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap between rich and poor would get wider</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster will transfer substantially more powers to the Scottish Parliament</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UK will vote in a referendum to leave the European Union</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trident submarines would remain based at Faslane on the Clyde</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare benefits will go down</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1: why a big lead for ‘No’?

- Not a matter of identity
- Not a preference for multi-level governance
- Not widespread optimism about the Union
- Not widespread pessimism about independence
## Consequences of independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Likely (%)</th>
<th>Unlikely (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The general economic situation in Scotland would be worse</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland would keep using the pound</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland would retain membership of the EU on similar terms</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland would have a weaker voice in the world</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There would be passport and border controls between Scotland and England</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland and the UK would arrange defence cooperation</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I personally would be better off</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1: why a big lead for ‘No’?

- Not a matter of identity
- Not a preference for multi-level governance
- Not widespread optimism about the Union
- Not widespread pessimism about independence
- So what, then?
- Fear, risk, uncertainty – independence as an existential threat
- And how much people have to lose…
‘Yes’ voting by risk-willingness

How willing to take risks?

Intending to vote ‘Yes’
'Yes' voting by openness to experience

% intending to vote 'Yes'

Least open

2

3

Most open

Graph showing the percentage of people intending to vote 'Yes' by openness to experience.
Q1: On a scale from 1 ("doesn’t bother me") to 10 ("utterly terrified"), what number best describes your reaction to that photo?

Q2: Should Scotland be an independent country?
Socio-economic drivers of vote choice

Effect on probability of Yes vote of 1 s.d. increase in predictor
Controlling for national identity

Effect on probability of Yes vote of 1 s.d. increase in predictor
Stage 2: why did the gap narrow?

More positive expectations of independence

- More positive expectations of independence
- Personally better off
- Economy suffer
- Keep the pound
- Reduce inequality
- Weaker voice in world
- Stay in EU
- Sure about independence
- Sure about Union

Change in mean perceived likelihood
Effect on probability of Yes/No of 1 s.d. increase in predictor

- Personal finances
- Pound
- Inequality
- Voice in world
- EU membership
- Sure Independence
- Sure Union

- Yes (vs. undecided)
- No (vs. undecided)
Stage 3: Why did the gap re-open?
Economic fears resurfacing

Scottish independence and money

Would Scotland be economically better or worse off if it became an independent country? %

- September 2-5: Better off 40, Worse off 42
- September 9-11: Better off 37, Worse off 48

Personally would you be better or worse off financially if Scotland became an independent country? %

- September 2-5: Better off 23, Worse off 37
- September 9-11: Better off 21, Worse off 45
Conclusions

• Identity provided core support for both camps
• But economic risk decided the outcome
• The median voter:
  – Feels more Scottish than British
  – Wants almost all powers at Scottish level
  – Questions legitimacy of Westminster government
  – Optimistic about independence but economic doubts
• ‘No’ campaign didn’t change what Scots want; just scared them out of going for it
• Little Scottish support for this multi-ethnic state…
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