

Historic Pact among Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | International relations

Why in news?

The elected representatives of three devolved UK legislatures – Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales – signed a historic pact declaring their intent to seek independence from the United Kingdom.

- **Cardiff Pact** – Leaders from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland signed a MoU in Cardiff.
- The pact represents the first time in modern history that all three devolved UK nations are led simultaneously by figures from pro-independence or pro-unification parties.
- **Core Demand** – They declared that “Westminster’s time is coming to an end”, urging the UK government to prepare and facilitate constitutional change.
- The agreement urged Westminster to respect self-determination while underscoring different routes to future votes.
- It pressed for greater fairness in funding and more powers over constitutional matters for Wales and Scotland.
- **Not binding** – The declaration is not legally binding, but it symbolises a renewed push for independence and constitutional change across the UK.
- They are declaring that their nations have the right to decide their own constitutional futures without Westminster blocking the process.
- The joint declaration did not mean all three nations were at the same stage in their push for constitutional change.

Background

- **Wales referendum powers** – The Wales government currently does not have the power to hold an independence referendum.
- The UK Supreme Court ruled in 2022 that the Scottish Parliament could not unilaterally organise another independence referendum because

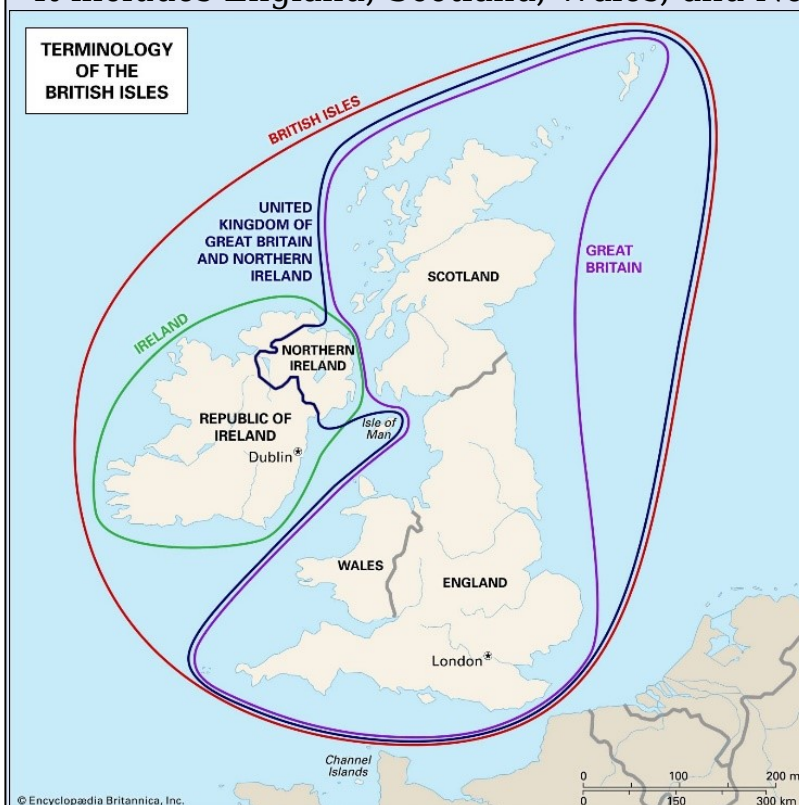
constitutional matters concerning the Union are reserved to Westminster.

- **Northern Ireland Leadership** – The First & Deputy First Minister have equal powers and responsibilities, and one cannot rule without the other.
- Established under the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement
- **Scottish Independence Vote** – In September 2014, Scotland voted 55% to remain in the UK and 45% to leave.
- **SC ruling** – In 2022, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the Scottish Parliament could not unilaterally organise another referendum, because constitutional matters are reserved to Westminster.

Quick Fact

United Kingdom (UK)

- The United Kingdom is a sovereign country, Great Britain is a geographic island, and England is a single country located within both.
- The United Kingdom (UK) is a sovereign state and political union.
- It includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.



Westminster System

- The Westminster system is a type of government that began in England during the Middle Ages, named after the palace where the British Parliament meets.

- It's one of the oldest, most widely used systems of government in the world.
- It emphasises parliament as the main governing body of an area, instead of an individual.

Important documents in this history include:

- *Magna Carta* (1215), which made the monarch responsible to the law and established basic legal rights for everyone
- The Petition of Right (1628), which applied new restrictions to the monarch's power and created even more rights for people, and
- The Bill of Rights (1689), which forced the monarch to sacrifice more power and vest it in Parliament, and further expanded people's civil rights.
- The Australian Capital Territory uses the Westminster system like all other places in Australia.

Reference

[India Today | Scottish, Welsh and Irish leaders signed independence pact](#)

