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NO! The Scottish independence referendum campaign came sensationally to life in August, when an opinion poll suggested that a hitherto comfortable No lead had been abruptly wiped out. With a week to go and the outcome decreed too close to call, the panicking leaders of all three main parliamentary parties rushed over the border brandishing a 'solemn vow' that pledged extensive further powers of devolution. Ed Miliband – whose party had most to lose, in the form of 41 north-of-the-border Labour MPs – was jostled and heckled in Edinburgh, and David Cameron ventured boldly into the vernacular badlands with a plea not to vote Yes purely 'to give the effing Tories a kick'. In the end most commentators agreed that the decisive speech was Gordon Brown's, delivered with a fluency and passion that had deserted him as prime minister. 'Our future lies in cooperation and sharing, and not in separation and splitting apart,' he roared, finally giving the rather limp and unfocused Better Together campaign an inspiring sense of purpose. 'That unity is our strength!' With many undecided voters alienated by the intimidating belligerence of the hardcore 'Yestapo', the Nos eventually won the day by 55.3 per cent to 44.7. Scotland's First Minister and principal Yes man Alex Salmond stood down the following day, appearing to forget his dire campaign warnings that the referendum would settle the issue 'for a lifetime'. 'Scotland has decided not at this stage to become an independent country,' he said in a typically defiant resignation address, describing the road to separation as 'a journey'. Cameron wasted even less time in emphasising that devolution was a UK-wide issue: 'We have heard the voice of Scotland, and now the millions of voices of England must also be heard.' To no one's great surprise Salmond announced this month he would be standing for parliament – the auld enemy Westminster variant – come May. For many Britons the referendum's high-octane end-game offered a wistful reminder of the days when politics mattered to people, and galvanised heartfelt debate on the streets. The remarkable 85 per cent turnout stood in stark contrast to the electoral ennui laid bare in August, when David Jamieson was declared the West Midlands police and crime commissioner after a poll that drew only one in 10 locals to the ballot box.