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# Evolution and Devolution: Citizenship, Institutions, and Public Policy

[James Mitchell](#)

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## Abstract

The United Kingdom is a *state of unions*. It evolved through a series of diverse unions, each leaving an institutional legacy. Though the United Kingdom was

highly centralized it was not uniform. Devolution is rooted in this legacy. Past institutional arrangements, notably central government departments responsible for Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Ireland affairs (collectively known as “administrative devolution”) remain central to how UK politics and policy should be understood today. Devolution involved adding elected representative institutions to each of the components of the state of unions apart from England. The powers, responsibilities, and funding arrangements of devolution reflect the evolution of administrative devolution. Nonetheless, devolution marks a critical juncture that will accentuate differences in citizenship rights within the United Kingdom.

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