

ANGLAIS

Dossier de Civilisation n°1

Les institutions politiques du Royaume-Uni et des Etats-Unis

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The United Kingdom

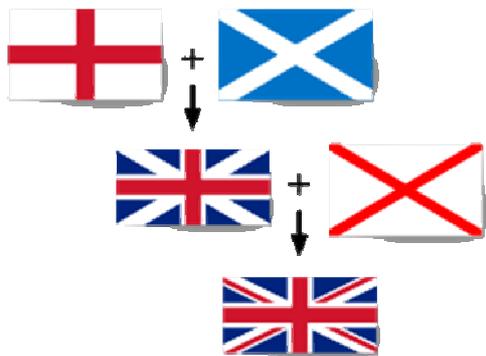
The Make-Up of the UK

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a constitutional monarchy and unitary state. It is made up of four individual countries, which are England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is governed by a parliamentary system and its seat of government is in London. There are also three devolved powers outside of the capital, located in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh (the three capital cities of Ireland, Wales and Scotland respectively). There are also a number of islands that are constitutionally tied to the United Kingdom constitution, but that are not part of the UK. They are the bailiwicks (headed by a bailiff, appointed by the crown to administer) of Jersey and Guernsey (to the south of the UK) and also the Isle of Man, which is off the north-east coast of the British mainland.



However, it is true to say that the majority of British might even get confused as to the difference between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the British Isles. In fact, it should be remembered that there is a difference between nationality and citizenship. A Scots and Welsh should correctly give the answer that they are of British citizenship. But, they should reply that they are either Scottish or Welsh regarding their nationality. The English all tend to give the same answer to the question (that they are British citizens and they have British nationality). However, clearly, they outnumber the others by nine to one. National identity exists very strongly for the Scots and the Welsh. But, how did the union of the various countries that make up the UK come about?

The Act of Union of 1536 (under Henry VIII) joined England and Wales first of all. It was not until 1st May 1707 that Scotland and England joined together, and along with Wales formed what is now known as Great Britain. This was under the Treaty of Union that was to be signed on 22 July 1706. It was ratified by both the Parliaments of England and Scotland in 1707.



Just under a century later, on January 1st 1801, the Irish Parliament voted to join the Union, and the Kingdom of Great Britain became the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*. It was in 1922 that the name was changed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and *Northern* Ireland, when the majority of the southern counties in Ireland chose to become independent, forming the Republic of Ireland, or Eire. There had been centuries-old disputes over the rule of Ireland, but the Irish Home Rule brought about the partition of Northern and Southern Ireland in