

INTERPARLIAMENTARY  
RELATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF  
DEVOLUTION IN THE UK  
1998–2018

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Unravelling Threads?

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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# PREFACE

What do the first 20 years of the devolved legislatures in the United Kingdom tell us about the practice of territorial governance and politics in the United Kingdom? The period has been one of changing relationships between nations and regions in the domestic UK Union. Although a changing dynamic is not a new phenomenon in constitutional and territorial governance, the pace of change has been higher and arguably more evidently enduring in public awareness in the United Kingdom over these 20 years.

Academic debates, and public debates to some extent, on the future governance of the devolved UK and the direction of possible reforms to territorial politics and governance touch on broader theoretical concerns about political and constitutional autonomy of the constituent parts of the multinational domestic union and the practical working of devolution in the apparatus of the UK state. This book does not undertake a comprehensive review of the working and the culture of the legislatures in the devolved UK. It sets out to explore the relationships between legislatures in the first 20 years of the constitutional reforms on devolution. The working of devolution within the domestic UK union is a wide academic and policy debate. This book explores relations between domestic UK legislatures between 1998 and 2018.

The premises that shape constitutional discussions about the future governance of the United Kingdom affect the political debates and narratives about the structure and rationale of the working of devolution. Both the history of civil society and the historical framing of the Union state institutions retain significance in considering the modern territorial governance of the United Kingdom. The shaping of the British state and the United Kingdom following the establishment of Northern Ireland in 1920 are intertwined with ‘nationhood’ and differing forms of nationalism. Each nation of the United Kingdom entered the partnership of the union state on different terms.

The reforms of 1998 were a watershed in the territorial governance of the United Kingdom. The establishment of devolved legislatures marked a clear change in territorial governance, but there also was continuity. The evidence of a less rapid pace of reform in the departmental machinery of government and, perhaps most clearly, in the culture of Westminster has been noted in academic

literature. This book considers how the United Kingdom works as an increasingly heterogenous entity where tensions between the policy directions of the UK state and the devolved nations in the United Kingdom have become more evident in recent years. Policy divergence and the policy capacity of devolved institutions in the devolved administrations and legislatures have underpinned rationales for further constitutional reforms to devolution.

The United Kingdom leaving EU membership in 2020 and the governance of the Covid-19 pandemic post 2020 both brought greater salience to pre-existing potential areas of legislative conflict between the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures. The devolution ‘settlements’ in the three nations remain far from settled.

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