2. What are the key principles underlying the Union between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland? Are there principles that are unique to the UK’s Union?

I write from the perspective of writing the text books and learning material for the those students studying Welsh Government and Politics and AS/A2 and undergraduate level. Writing about the constitutional position of Wales is a complex process to undertake and even more complex for students to understand. I have only address question 2. I have set for questions with some discussion beneath each, all of which cause anomalies in national life and in comprehension of devolution:

What is a nation and what is a region?

Whether or not Wales is a nation is continually confusing. Is the UK the nation? Is Wales a region? Can you have a nation within a nation? Internationally Wales is recognised as a nation in sports such as Football, Rugby and in the Commonwealth Games but not in other areas such as Cricket or the Olympic Games. This makes England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland unique in this respect as no other nations within a wider nation or federation are so recognised internationally. Yet at the same time Wales does not have its own jurisdiction despite having a legislature unlike England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This is a difficult and complex situation to understand for Welsh students studying the UK constitution. How can Wales be at an equal level with other sovereign nations yet at the same time have no sovereignty itself? Students find this confusing.

Wales is a principality in name only

Wales is deemed to be a principality and has been so for several hundred years. Yet the Prince of Wales has no constitutional role in the nation, it is also the only nation in the UK without a royal palace and there is no formal role for the prince in Welsh politics. This needs to be rectified and about fifteen years ago I wrote a booklet entitled God Bless the Prince of Wales, which details how this may be done. The royal role in the devolved nations is also one that needs to be clarified, particularly as the First Minister and Cabinet Ministers are now appointed by the crown and Welsh laws receive royal ascent.

There is no constitutional protection for the nations being abolished

As there is no codified constitution for the UK, there is nothing to guarantee that unlike in other federations Wales could retain its distinctiveness and nationhood. Westminster Parliamentary sovereignty means that any Act seeking to do so could be over turned at any time. The existence of the Human Rights Act is a prime example of this, what is meant to be a supra-act, above all others and entrenched, the current government is going through the process of scrapping. The same could be done of any act which seeks to guarantee Welsh nationhood.
You cannot formally become a Welsh citizen

With respect to nationality we are all regarded as a British citizen and at the same time after we are born within the UK, Welsh, English, Scottish etc. There is no formal process of residency by which a person is born in one UK nation can then claim to be a citizen of another nation, with some exceptions in Northern Ireland. Thus David Lloyd George, the most famous Welshman of all time in British politics is regarded by some as English because he was born in Manchester. Yet at the same time the Welsh populous will generally accept as being ‘Welsh’, many in the Welsh rugby team who only have one Welsh grandparent and have spent their whole life living outside of Wales. The ability to be able to formally change citizenship inside the UK should be accepted and facilitated, if only technically. For example, after three years residency you can formally regard yourself as Welsh, English, Scottish etc.! This would help end this internal non British citizenship conundrum.

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