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**Nationalism and the Labour Party : differential voting in Scotland and Wales since 1997**

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**NATIONALISM AND THE LABOUR PARTY:  
DIFFERENTIAL VOTING IN SCOTLAND  
AND WALES SINCE 1997**

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## 1. Introduction

The establishment in the late 1990s of a Scottish Parliament and a National Assembly in Wales has had a profound, and largely unexpected, impact on electoral politics in Britain. While Scotland and Wales are longstanding bastions of support for the Labour Party at Westminster, the results of elections in 1999 and 2003 for the new Parliament and National Assembly have undermined the party's regional political supremacy. In Scotland, Labour has been forced to govern continuously in coalition, while in Wales, it only regained an ability to govern alone, in 2003, by the narrowest of margins, winning exactly half of the Assembly's seats. Thus Scottish and Welsh voters, in these new, devolved, elections, have behaved differently than in those for Westminster. Labour, as the governing party at the national level, has suffered, at the devolved level, at the hands of smaller parties, above all the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) (PC). The latter, conversely, have performed much better at the devolved level than in elections for Westminster. As such, Britain has joined that group of democracies where the phenomenon of differential voting between national and regional levels appears to have become entrenched.

In this paper, we seek to explain the causes of differential voting in Britain, focusing in particular on why so many voters in Scotland and Wales who normally support Labour in General Elections (GEs) switch their votes to the SNP and PC at the devolved level. The paper is structured as follows. In Part 2, we critique the two principal existing explanations for differential voting – those that view it as a result of changes in the electoral system, and those that view it as a characteristic of “second order elections” (SOEs) – before developing an alternative explanation based on a model of two-dimensional voting in which the respective relevance of nationalism and ideology in voting decisions fluctuates systematically with the type of election (national or regional) taking place. In Part Three, after describing the methodology adopted and the data bases used, we present our findings with respect to first, the sources of vote transfers between Labour and the nationalist parties across general and regional elections, and second, the role of nationalism and ideology in underpinning differential voting in the two regions. In Part Four, we summarise our principal finding – that our general argument holds for Scotland, but not for Wales – and present some tentative conclusions regarding the peculiarities of the Welsh case.

In the remainder of the Introduction, however, we describe the extent to which the Labour Party has traditionally dominated both Welsh and Scottish politics as a means of putting the relatively new phenomenon of differential voting in context.

### *Labour Party Domination in Wales*

Nowhere in Britain in the postwar period has the Labour Party dominated politics as much as in Wales. In its landslide victory in the 1945 GE, Labour's vote in Wales (58.5%) exceeded that for Britain as a whole (48%) by more than ten percentage points (Jones and Scully 2004:2). In every subsequent GE, Labour has consistently maintained a majority of parliamentary seats in Wales, and a comfortable plurality of the vote.<sup>1</sup> Three successive Labour Party leaders, James Callaghan (1976-80), Michael Foot (1980-83) and Neil Kinnock (1983-92), all represented Welsh constituencies. In Labour's landslide election victory of 1997, the party's vote share in Wales (54.72%) again exceeded that for Britain as a whole (44.33%) by more than ten percentage points.

Only two years later, however, in the first elections to the National Assembly of Wales (NAW), Labour's failure to gain a majority of seats (28 of 60), with only 36.5% of the vote, coupled with the stunning performance of PC (17 seats, and 29.5% of the vote), was a major political shock. Most notably, Labour ceded seats to PC in its traditional heartland in the industrial South-East. Though it enjoyed something of a revival in the second elections to the NAW in 2003, winning half the seats (30 of 60) and 38.3% of the vote (with PC dropping back, though retaining second place, with 12 seats and 20.5% of the vote), Labour's stuttering performance in the two NAW elections held to date contrasts sharply with its postwar

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<sup>1</sup> Even in Labour's catastrophic defeat in the 1983 GE, its vote share in Wales (37.53%) exceeded that for Britain as a whole (28.28%) by nine percentage points, and it retained a majority (20 of 38) of Welsh parliamentary seats. It must be noted, though, that the inbuilt disproportionality of the British electoral system, in greatly favouring the largest party, is at its most acute in Wales. This was especially so in the 1997 and 2001 GEs (Jones and Scully 2004:3).

dominance in Wales of elections to Westminster.<sup>2</sup> This, coupled with PC's very strong showings in the Assembly elections, compared to its traditionally much weaker showing in elections to Westminster,<sup>3</sup> constitute strong evidence for a new pattern of differential voting in Wales for national and regional elections.

**Table 1: Percentage Share of the Vote in Wales 1997-2003**

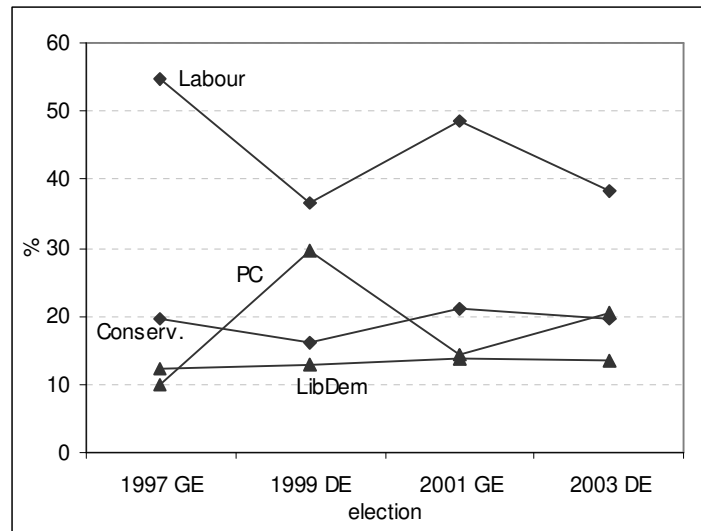
	1997 GE	1999 DE	2001 GE	2003 DE
<b>Labour</b>	54,7	36,5	48,6	38,3
<b>Conservative</b>	19,6	16,2	21	19,5
<b>Lib Dem</b>	12,4	13,0	13,8	13,4
<b>PC</b>	10	29,5	14,3	20,5

*Source: Young (2003)*

GE: General Elections

DE: Devolved Elections

**Graph 1: Percentage Share of the Vote in Wales 1997-2003**



<sup>2</sup> Labour's improved performance in the 2003 NAW elections still fell significantly short of the results it had obtained two years earlier in the 2001 GE, in which it had gained 48.59% of the vote and retained 34 of Wales's 40 parliamentary seats (again comfortably outstripping the party's performance in Britain as a whole [41.96% of the vote]).

<sup>3</sup> Though it is worth noting that PC's showing in elections for Westminster, while still lagging considerably behind its performance in the 1999 and 2003 NAW elections, has steadily improved since 1983, as follows: 1983: 7.79% of the vote, 2 parliamentary seats; 1987: 7.28%, 3 seats; 1992: 8.48%, 4 seats; 1997: 9.95%, 4 seats; 2001: 14.27%, 4 seats. (With the exception of the 2001 GE, the same can be said for the SNP, though with a consistently and significantly higher share of the vote than that of PC: 1983: 11.75%, 2 seats; 1987: 14.04%, 3 seats; 1992: 21.27%, 3 seats; 1997: 22.09%, 6 seats; 2001: 20.07%, 5 seats).

### *Labour Party Domination in Scotland*

The Labour Party has also dominated postwar politics in Scotland. In 14 of the 16 GEs held since 1945, the party gained a majority of parliamentary seats, and in the remaining two (those of 1951 and 1955), a plurality. The extent of its domination has not, however, matched that of Labour in Wales. While Labour's share of the vote in Scotland has exceeded that for Britain as a whole, the margins have been smaller than in Wales. (For example, in the GEs of 1992, 1997 and 2001, these margins were 3.77%, 1.22% and 1.31% respectively). In this sense, Scotland has always constituted more contested terrain for Labour. In the mid-1950s, the Conservatives held as many as 30 of Scotland's 71 parliamentary constituencies and as late as 1983 retained 21 seats. Since the late 1970s, Labour's supremacy has been challenged by the SNP, which saw its share of the vote increase from 11.75% in 1983 to 20.07% in 2001 (peaking, at least to date, at 22.09% in 1997).

Nonetheless, the failure of the SNP to translate its increased share of the vote into significant parliamentary gains, coupled with the Conservatives' steady and spectacular collapse in Scotland since 1983, which has seen its share of the vote almost halved, and its number of parliamentary seats reduced from 21 (in 1983) to only 1 (in 2001), has meant that Labour's grip on Scotland has been reinforced considerably since the mid-1980s. In the 1987 GE, with 42.38% of the vote, Labour won 50 of Scotland's 72 parliamentary seats, while in the GE landslide of 1997, in its best ever postwar showing, it won 56 seats with 45.55% of the vote. As such, Labour entered the 1999 elections for the Scottish Parliament as the dominant regional political force.

Yet as in Wales, the results came as a disappointment for Labour. Its vote share in both the constituencies (38.8%) and regional lists (33.8%), giving it an overall vote share of 36.2%, lagged well behind its performance in the 1997 GE, while its tally of 56 seats left it 9 short of a majority in the new 129-seat Parliament. Conversely, the SNP's vote share of 28.7% in the constituencies and 27.5% in the regional lists, giving it an overall vote share of 28.0%, comfortably exceeded that for the 1997 GE (22.09%), and won it 35 seats in the new Parliament. In terms of their share of the constituency vote compared to the 1997 GE, Labour had declined by 6.75%, while the SNP had increased by 6.61%.

This initial pattern of differential voting was maintained in the 2003 elections for the Scottish Parliament, even though both Labour and the SNP suffered losses compared to 1999. Labour's vote share in both the constituencies (34.5%) and the regional lists (29.4%), giving it an overall vote share of 32%, was more than eleven percentage points below that for the preceding 2001 GE (43.27%), while the SNP's overall vote share of 22% exceeded, albeit marginally, that for the 2001 GE (20.07%).

**Table 2: Percentage Share of the Vote in Scotland 1997-2003**

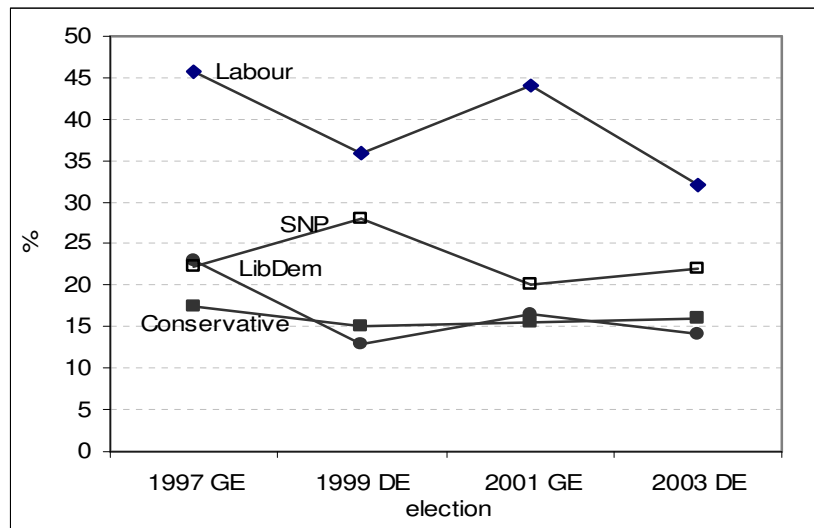
	1997 GE	1999 DE	2001 GE	2003 DE
<b>Labour</b>	45,6	36	43,9	32
<b>Conservative</b>	17,5	15	15,6	16
<b>Lib Dem</b>	23	13	16,4	14
<b>SNP</b>	22,2	28	20,1	22

*Source: Leake and Cracknell (2003)*

GE: General Elections

DE: Devolved Elections

**Graph 2: Percentage Share of the Vote in Scotland 1997-2003**



In sum, on the basis of two sets of GEs (1997 and 2001), and two sets of regional elections (1999 and 2003), differential voting seems to be an entrenched feature of electoral behaviour in Scotland and Wales.

## **2.1. Implications of Changes in the Electoral System**

Several authors have argued that a change in electoral behaviour between general and regional elections may be a function of the different electoral systems operating in each context (Paterson et al 2001, Denver and MacAllister 1999, Bennie and Clark 2003, Miller 1999). The rules governing electoral competition will have important effects on the behaviour of voters and on the incentives of parties to present candidates. According to Cox (1999:154), the presence in a single district of more than two competing parties will generate strategic voting. The strategic voter will select that party closer to his preferences, but with the possibilities of winning a seat. For strategic voting to occur, the voter must not only value the expression of his preferences, but also be concerned with the result of the election.

In British GEs, with their single-member districts, strategic voters tend to opt for the two principal parties in their district, thereby penalizing smaller parties. The new electoral systems introduced in Scotland and Wales in 1999 modified the Westminster system by introducing a second vote, via regional lists, under the d'Hondt formula designed to increase proportionality<sup>4</sup>. In principle, the existence of a second vote in multi-member districts, with a more proportional system, should enable the voter to behave sincerely rather than strategically. Consequently, the smaller parties, as the traditional victims of the British first-past-the-post system, have a greater chance of success. To date, the empirical evidence in Scotland has demonstrated that around 20% of major party voters (with the exception of Conservatives, at 10%) changed their vote in the list vote largely in favour of the smallest

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<sup>4</sup> Scotland and Wales have two types of elected members in their assemblies: 73 and 40 members respectively represent single member constituencies and are elected by simple majority vote, using the traditional first-past-the-post system; and 56 and 20 members respectively represent electoral regions and are elected by a party list proportional system, using the additional member system.



parties such as the Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens (Paterson et al 2001). Nonetheless, some authors have argued that the growing vote share of small parties is due to an *increase*, rather than a decrease, in strategic voting. That is, the list vote has become, in practice, a means by which the voter can select the second preferred party (Denver 2003) or express a preference for a coalition government (Paterson et al 2001). This would explain why, despite a proportional system which benefits the SNP, the latter's vote share in the list vote is actually *lower* than that for the constituencies. The SNP's electorate, in contrast to that of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, is not geographically concentrated, which should result in a poor showing in the constituency vote (Denver and McAllister 1999). Given this, we would expect nationalist voters to vote for the SNP in the list vote, where it has greater possibilities of success. Yet in fact, SNP voters behave like those of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, with many of them switching to another party on the second vote, using the latter, as Denver (2003) suggests, to express their second preference.

In any case, the move towards an overall more proportional system cannot be used as an explanation for changes (compared to GEs) in voter behaviour in the constituency vote where, obviously, the electoral system has remained constant. Change in the system per se, therefore, is not useful for explaining the evolution of either the Labour or the SNP vote: the narrowing of Labour's lead over the SNP (when compared to GEs) not only occurs in the list vote (which could be explained in terms of the advantages this supposedly holds for the SNP) but also, and to almost the same degree, in the constituency vote, which continues to conform to the Westminster design.

In the Welsh context, Cole (2001) also notes that it is often argued that a change from a single-vote plurality system to a two-vote proportional system is likely to encourage some voters to vote for two parties. Nonetheless, the Additional Member System (AMS) adopted for NAW elections, though likely to make it difficult for Labour to win list seats, was nonetheless still expected to return the party to power with a majority of seats. (Cole, examining the hypothetical impact of AMS on all elections in Wales since 1964, concludes that Labour would have won a majority of seats in the NAW in all contests except for the

mid-1980s, and that this outcome could have been achieved on a minority vote).<sup>5</sup> In the event, the actual result in 1999 was unexpected, in two ways: first, Labour failed to win a majority of seats in the NAW; second, the result was less proportional than expected, actually *favouring* Labour despite its allegedly “disastrous” performance (it won 46.7% of the seats with only 36.5% of the total vote). This was a function largely of the concentrated nature of Labour’s constituency support (it won all but one of its seats via a constituency vote share of 37.6%), and the meagre gains it achieved via the list vote<sup>6</sup> (Cole 2001:147-8,155, 157-9). In contrast, PC did benefit greatly from the list votes where its tally of 30.5% exceeded that for its constituency vote (28.4%) and won it 8 of its total 17 seats in the Assembly. In 2003, however, the structure of its vote share conformed more to that of the SNP, in that its list vote (19.7%) lagged behind its constituency vote (21.2%) (even though 7 of its total of 12 seats were gained through the list vote).

Focusing exclusively on the constituency vote, however, reveals the same pattern as in Scotland, though in a much more accentuated way. In the 1999 NAW elections, the gap in the constituency vote between Labour and PC of only 9.2 percentage points was much narrower than that for the preceding 1997 GE (44.77%); in the 2003 NAW elections, the gap (18.8%) was again much narrower than that for the preceding 2001 GE (34.32%).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cole (2001:157-8) writes that it was the probable strength of Labour in a NAW elected with AMS that might explain the Welsh Labour Party’s acceptance of PR. At the same time, the latter would form a credible foundation for the “inclusive agenda” that Labour promoted as a means of convincing first, an essentially sceptical electorate of the benefits of devolution and, second, its political opponents that the electoral system would not guarantee Labour a large permanent majority.

<sup>6</sup> Cole (2001:159) is actually wrong to refer to “the low level of the party’s list vote”. It is more a question of the efficacy, in seat terms, of its share of the list vote. Labour won a plurality of the list vote (35.4%) but gained only 1 seat, while PC’s share (30.5%) won it 8 seats.

<sup>7</sup> It may be the case that changes in the electoral system can have a negative impact on turnout. Nonetheless, in their analysis of the 1999 elections in Scotland and Wales, Curtice et al (2000:26) conclude that it is difficult to argue that much of the drop in turnout (compared to the preceding 1997 GE) can be accounted for by the perceived difficulty of the new electoral system.

## **2.2. Devolved Elections as Second Order Elections**

A second major argument advanced for explaining differential voting between national and regional elections is that the latter constitute “second order elections” (SOEs). Reif and Schmitt (1980) coined this phrase in their study of voting behaviour in elections for the European Parliament as a means of describing voting patterns in elections considered by the voters themselves as less relevant, and the results of which are influenced heavily by issues beyond the arena in which the elections are taking place. That is, in European elections, voters are more preoccupied with political issues in their respective countries than those at the European level in making their decision. Norris (1997:112) identifies four consequences of SOEs. First, because they generate less interest amongst voters, they are characterised by lower turnout levels. Second, the results in SOEs reflect the popularity of the parties located at the first order level, and not the issues, candidates or political events related to the second order. Third, governing parties at the national level usually suffer a loss of votes in SOEs, especially if the latter take place midway during the legislature, given that voters will use SOEs to protest against national governments. Fourth, small parties usually benefit the most from the protest voting that occurs in SOEs.

In Scotland, Ingram (2003) has pointed to lower levels of turnout in the 1999 elections for the Scottish Parliament (compared to turnout for the 1997 GE) as evidence of second order voting, especially given that those who valued less the relevance of the Scottish Parliament, and those who identified with the governing party in London, were more likely to abstain. Yet the SOE model is not without its problems. Paterson et al (2001) have shown that those Labour identifiers who did not actually vote Labour in the 1999 Scottish elections did not do so on the basis of discontent with the Blair government in London which, by a large majority, was evaluated positively in Scotland.

In Wales, too, the adequacy of the SOE model has also been questioned. McAllister (2004: 78) argues that voting in the 1999 NAW elections conforms to the model. Turnout, at 46%, was low, especially compared to the turnout in Wales for the 1997 GE of 73.57%. As the governing party at the national level, Labour’s vote share in the NAW elections (36.5%) was more than 18 percentage points below that for the 1997 GE (54.72%). Conversely, the

vote share of the regional party – in this case, PC – was almost 20 percentage points higher, at 29.5%, than that for the 1997 GE (9.95%). However, whether voting in the 2003 NAW elections conforms to the SOE model is more ambiguous. On the one hand, when compared to the 1999 NAW results, Labour's much heralded recovery in 2003, in which it took back its traditional heartland constituencies from PC, and the latter's loss of 5 seats and nine percentage points on its 1999 vote share (from 29.5% to 20.5%), indicated a return to a typical "first order", or Westminster, pattern of voting in Wales. The 1999 NAW results were therefore no more than a "blip" (McAllister 2004:81). On the other hand, when compared to the 2001 GE results, voting in the 2003 NAW elections demonstrated clearly the continued entrenchment of differential voting between Westminster and regional elections. Turnout in 2003, at only 38%, lagged far behind that for the 2001 GE, at 61.38%. Labour's share of the vote, at 38.3%, was more than 10 percentage points below that for the 2001 GE (48.59%), while PC's vote share, at 20.5%, though disappointing when compared to its performance in 1999, nonetheless exceeded its vote share in the 2001 GE (14.27%) by more than 6 percentage points. Moreover, McAllister (2004:77,78) argues that by the time of the 2003 NAW elections, there was still a widespread lack of understanding of what the NAW actually does, and it was highly doubtful whether the public truly identified the NAW as a powerful agent for political and economic change. Furthermore, in the campaign itself, external factors – most notably, the war in Iraq – deflected attention away from the Welsh context. On this basis, McAllister (2004:79) concludes that "the second-order thesis has continued relevance to the devolved tier".

Other studies, however, argue that the SOE thesis is inadequate as an explanation for systematic differential voting between Westminster and NAW elections. Certainly, there was *some* element of protest behaviour in the 1999 NAW elections. Cole (2001:160) notes that the election result could have been a function of several short- and medium-term factors disadvantageous to Labour, including the disproportionate concentration in Wales of core Labour supporters critical of the New Labour policy agenda, and the abstention of Labour supporters either hostile or apathetic towards the NAW, compared to the enthusiasm of PC supporters. This latter claim was supported by an HTV/NOP poll conducted at the end of the NAW election campaign in May 1999, which found that 79% of PC voters were very likely or certain to vote, compared to only 68% of Labour voters (Jones 1999:329; Cole 2001:161).

However, in their analysis of the 1999 NAW election result, Scully, Jones and Trystan (2004:532) concluded that Labour identifiers had been neither more nor less likely than other voters to participate. More importantly, in early 1999 the Labour government in Westminster was popular in both Wales and Britain as a whole (Tristan, Scully and Jones 2003:638,641; Jones and Scully 2003a:126). Labour was damaged by the acrimonious battle that it waged for the leadership of the party in Wales, but as Jones and Scully (2004:5) argue, 1999 did not represent a *general* rejection of Labour. In a hypothetical GE held in 1999, these authors found that a majority of Labour supporters remained loyal to the party, while gains for PC were much smaller than those it had achieved in the actual NAW elections. Moreover, in 1999, those voters switching (largely from Labour) to PC did not have a particularly hostile view of the British Labour government, and were unlikely to have been concerned with UK-level considerations in voting. As such, “the expectations generated by SOE theories are signally confounded by our 1999 data: the dramatic rise in support experienced by Plaid Cymru was not a protest vote against the UK Labour government, or even motivated in some other way by UK-level matters”. Moreover, this also held true for the 2003 NAW elections (Jones and Scully 2004:8).

Yet if both changes in the electoral system and the SOE model are inadequate as means of explaining differential voting between national and regional elections, how can we explain the tendency of both the SNP and PC to gain votes in regional elections at the expense of Labour?

### **2.3. Two-dimensional voting: an alternative explanation**

The class cleavage has long been assigned primary importance in explaining electoral behaviour in Britain;<sup>8</sup> in spatial terms, Adams (2001) considers that British politics can be adequately understood in terms of the Left-Right ideological dimension. Yet in both Scotland and Wales, such a one-dimensional view of politics has been contested strongly.

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<sup>8</sup> Perhaps never better expressed than by Pulzer (1972:102): “class is the basis of British politics; all else is embellishment and detail”.

### *Class and Nationalism in Scottish politics*

Since Budge and Urwin's (1966) analysis of voting behaviour in Scotland challenged the supposed homogeneity of the British electorate, increasing attention has been paid to the existence in Scotland of a second, nationalist, cleavage in addition to that of ideology or class. The rise of the SNP in the 1970s (which saw it gain 11 parliamentary seats in the October 1974 GE) indicated that national identity had important consequences for both voting behaviour and the party system in Scotland. While initially, electoral support for the SNP was considered by some authors as a protest vote against the traditional parties (Lutz 1986), it is now generally held to be a function of voting based on national identity (Mishler 1983, Brand et al 1994, Brown et al 1999).

To date, there have been few studies of the relationship between these two dimensions of voting and the Scottish parliamentary elections of 1999 and 2003. Paterson et al (2001) analyse how the influence of these two dimensions on the SNP vote and the Labour vote has evolved in the course of the 1997 GE and the 1999 elections for the Scottish Parliament. Their results demonstrate that while the effect of identity increases in regional elections, that of the ideological dimension ceases to be significant. Few robust conclusions can be drawn on the basis of two elections, though there are various possible explanations for this tendency. It could represent a permanent change in the relative weight of the two dimensions as a result, for example, of the process of regionalization itself. Alternatively, it could simply be a temporary change. Or it could be, as we argue below, that the weight of the dimensions may fluctuate systematically with the nature (national or regional) of the election taking place.

### *Class and Nationalism in Welsh politics*

As in Scotland, two competing perspectives have dominated the study of voting behaviour in Wales: the "British", in which voting in Wales is assessed primarily in terms of characteristics common to the whole of Britain, and in which the role of class in voting behaviour is again assigned particular prominence; and the "Welsh", which has emphasised

the importance of cultural factors in Welsh politics, such as a strong sense of national or ethnic identity; the use of, or allegiance to, the Welsh language; and the presence of a radical political tradition (Cole 2001:151-2).

In fact, the “British” perspective is wholly inadequate as a means of explaining the Labour Party’s domination of Welsh politics in the postwar period. While class has certainly been a powerful base for the party, so too has a strong Welsh identity. A purely class explanation of Labour voting in Wales has never been able to account for differences in the size of the Labour vote between Wales and Britain as a whole – that is, while the Welsh working class is more strongly pro-Labour than the British working class as a whole, so too is the Welsh middle-class. Furthermore, the “Welsh ethnic dimension in Labour voting in Wales suggests that a substantial number of voters are seeking a political expression of Welsh values” (Balsom et al 1983:312). Thus while, predictably, 60% of Conservative supporters claim British over Welsh identity, and 96% of PC supporters claim Welsh over British identity, a remarkable 70% of Labour supporters also claim Welsh over British identity (Balsom et al 1983:301-2,309,311-12,322).

In comparison, the support base for PC has been, historically, much narrower, largely because of the highly equivocal nature, in political terms, of the Welsh language.<sup>9</sup> While the latter has been, and remains, at the heart of Wales’s claim to nationhood, the fears invoked by the linguistic issue amongst the non-Welsh speaking population in Wales have been a significant barrier to the advancement of Welsh nationalism. The mining areas of South-East Wales – Labour’s traditional heartland – have long been characterised by both strong Welsh sentiment and the virtual absence of the Welsh language. National sentiment and nationalist voting have therefore never been highly correlated in Wales. Instead, there is “substantial evidence that the linguistic/cultural factor is a formidable barrier to the flow of diffuse national sentiment towards support for Plaid Cymru .. the Welsh language issue appears to inhibit the conversion process” (Balsom et al 1983: 313,315). As such, PC, in electoral terms,

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<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that the issue of the Welsh language is not politicised, but simply that it lends itself to a different set of political objectives and demands. Traditionally, the objectives of PC have centred on the defence of Welsh language and culture, whereas in Scotland, where the native language is spoken by a minute proportion of the population, nationalism has been much more concerned with the constitutional objectives of autonomy and independence.

has traditionally drawn on the support of a relatively narrow band of highly Welsh people (though it has by no means monopolised this group). And just as the Welsh-speaking population is geographically concentrated, so too, in parliamentary terms, has electoral support been for PC (Balsom et al 1983: 313, 316, 323). At Westminster, PC MPs have always represented constituencies in rural, heavily Welsh-speaking South-West and North-West Wales, such as Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Merioneth, Caernarfon, and Ynys Môn.

Given Labour's longstanding ability to both retain working class support and incorporate a large segment of the vote based on Welsh national sentiment, and PC's traditionally much narrower basis of support, Balsom et al (1983:323) concluded thus: "the Labour party is not simply the party of the working class in Wales, but is also strongly Welsh in its support .. the chosen vehicle of Welsh sentiment has been, for fifty years now, the Labour party". Yet since Balsom et al undertook their analysis, this situation has undoubtedly changed. PC has succeeded in expanding, and changing the nature of, its electoral base, as evidenced by its steady progress at the polls since the 1983 GE (see footnote 3). It has not done so by radicalising its constitutional objectives. Support for independence amongst the Welsh electorate has always been, and remains, relatively low. Indeed, by the time of the 1999 NAW elections, PC had dropped its demand for independence, opting instead for full national status within Europe (Jones 1999:325).<sup>10</sup> Instead, it has surmounted its traditionally "'culturalist' bent" (Jones and Scully 2003b:3) by adopting a more explicitly socialist economic agenda for Wales, precisely as a means of weakening Labour's traditional grip on both class and nationalist sentiments in Wales. This strategy apparently bore fruit in the 1999 NAW elections when, as noted above, PC won several assembly seats in Labour's hitherto impregnable heartland constituencies in South-East Wales. In this way, Labour's longstanding status as the "chosen vehicle of Welsh sentiment" has been undermined, nowhere more so than in the NAW elections of 1999 and 2003.

The effects of ideology and nationalism on voting behaviour have been studied considerably in the Spanish context, where there has been greater experience with regional elections fought along these two dimensions. The Catalan case, in fact, shares certain

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<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Labour's claims to the contrary during the NAW election campaign in 1999, whereby it sought to portray PC as radically pro-independence, evidently lacked credibility and subsequently backfired.



characteristics with that of Scotland. As Brown (2001) has shown, both regions display similar patterns of electoral behaviour with respect to the two principal parties, socialist and nationalist, whose fortunes change according to the type of election taking place. In the Catalan case, this is a result of both dual voting (as differential voting is referred to in Spain) and differential rates of abstention (Riba 2000; Montero and Font 1991). The former refers to the tendency of a significant proportion of the electorate to opt, systematically, for a national-level party - principally the Socialist Party – in general elections, and, conversely, to vote for the Catalan nationalists (CiU) in regional elections. The latter refers to the higher rates of abstention in regional elections which penalise, primarily, the Socialist Party.

Various arguments have been advanced in the literature to explain dual voting amongst the Catalan electorate. One links variation in the weight of nationalist and ideological dimensions to the type of election being held (Padró and Colomer 1992). Here, although voters' preferences remain constant, election outcomes vary as a result of changes in the relative weight of each dimension. This is due to the different competences and characteristics of each institution and the different themes that emerge in campaigns at each electoral level (1992:146). Padró and Colomer argue that while the nationalist dimension increases in importance in regional elections, thereby benefiting CiU, the ideological dimension predominates in general elections, thereby favouring the Socialist Party.<sup>11</sup>

Following the argument of Padró and Colomer, we advance the following hypothesis: that regional elections increase the importance of the nationalist dimension in voting, and reduce the effects of ideology. For this reason, both the SNP and PC have been able to narrow the gap between themselves and the traditionally dominant Labour Party in the devolved elections of 1999 and 2003. While it is true that the Scottish Parliament has acquired some relatively minor fiscal competences, the principal redistributive instruments in

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<sup>11</sup> This interpretation has been criticised strongly by Pérez-Nievas and Fraile (2000) who argue that dual voters are closer to the CiU ideologically and to the PSOE along the nationalist dimension. As such, an increase in the importance of the latter benefits the socialists rather than the Catalan nationalists. In this paper, the lack of data does not enable us to undertake a spatial analysis and it is therefore not possible to verify the validity of Pérez-Nievas and Fraile's critique in the Welsh and Scottish contexts.

the hands of government remain at Westminster.<sup>12</sup> As such, it is plausible to argue that in regional elections the importance of issues located on a left-right continuum declines. Conversely, given that the competences and preoccupations of regional institutions are based in the region in question, those issues related to the nationalist cleavage become increasingly relevant for voters. In addition, the nature of these institutions ensures that voters take into account their preferences regarding devolution more so in regional elections than in GEs. In sum, the nationalist and ideological dimensions to voting exert a different influence in regional elections.

A similar argument to that of Padró and Colomer has been developed to explain the differential voting that has benefited PC so spectacularly in elections to the NAW. Voting volatility between Westminster and NAW elections is linked to “differential perceptions of what is at stake” in the “precise electoral arena of the moment” (Broughton 2001:250,255). Large numbers of Welsh voters “see the two arenas as distinct and largely separate” (Trystan, Scully and Jones 2003:648-9). And in contrast to elections for Westminster, vote choices in elections to the NAW have been “shaped to a substantial degree by Welsh-specific factors, and a new electoral context in Wales taking shape around a new political institution” (Trystan, Scully and Jones 2003: 644). In this new political context, the nationalist dimension (or, at least, what these and other authors term “Welsh issues”<sup>13</sup>) is accentuated which benefits, in turn, PC (Cole 2001:161). In the 1999 NAW elections, “voters shifting their support to Plaid [PC] for the devolved election tended to be those who placed greatest emphasis on ‘Welsh’ issues” (Jones and Scully 2004:8). A plurality (42%) of those voting indicated that they did so “mostly according to what was going on in Wales”, while only 33% did so “mostly according to what was going on in Britain as a whole”, and 20% expressed equal concern with both levels (Trystan, Scully and Jones 2003:642).<sup>14</sup> It seems that that

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<sup>12</sup> The Scotland Act of 1998 concedes to the Scottish Parliament the power to change the basic rate of income tax in Scotland. However, the Act makes equally clear that in general, fiscal, economic and monetary policies remain in the hands of central government.

<sup>13</sup> See below.

<sup>14</sup> On this basis, these authors (2003:642) conclude that the “NAW election cannot, therefore, be simply and readily labelled a ‘second order’ contest”. Predictably, 65% of PC voters were concerned with Welsh issues alone, compared to 35% of Labour voters and 22% of Conservative voters. Conversely, only 13% of PC voters were concerned with British issues alone, compared to 41% of Labour voters and 49% of Conservative voters.

critical segment of voters who switched their allegiance to PC in 1999 were motivated to do so by Welsh factors (Jones 1999:330; Trystan, Scully and Jones 2003:646). Distinguishing between PC “loyalists” and PC “switchers”<sup>15</sup>, Trystan, Scully and Jones (2003:647-8) found that amongst the latter, anti-Westminster government attitudes were not a significant motivating force for changing their allegiance. Instead, as Cole (2001:161) argues, PC’s success may have been a consequence of devolution; that is, “the creation of an Assembly might have encouraged some voters to support the most nationalist party .. Devolution .. may have focused attention on a distinctively Welsh agenda to the disadvantage of the British New Labour Party”. Jones and Scully (2004:9) conclude similarly that “it is the ability of Plaid to appeal as a party of greater relevance to ‘Welsh’ in a Welsh electoral context that is more pertinent to explaining its greater success in devolved elections”.

Whether this is indeed the mechanism for PC’s increased share of the vote in devolved elections, it is certainly the case that in the light of the 1999 NAW election results, the Labour Party in Wales moved quickly to re-establish its “Welsh” credentials. Following the removal of First Minister Alun Michael (closely identified with, if not imposed by, the Blair government), his successor, Rhodri Morgan (identified more closely with old Labour) was given free reign to bolster the party’s position in Wales. 2000 saw the re-launching of the party as “Welsh Labour” and the “true party of Wales” (Jones and Scully 2003a:126), and continuous efforts by Labour to develop and emphasise policies that were “made in Wales” (Broughton 2001:254). Most notably, Morgan’s speech in December 2002, in which he sought to put “clear red water” between Welsh Labour and New Labour<sup>16</sup>, was in direct response to PC’s claims in the 1999 NAW election campaign that it was both more Welsh and left-wing than New Labour. Labour’s subsequent recovery, at least in relative terms, in the 2003 NAW elections, enabled Morgan to claim that Wales had “come home to Labour” (McAllister 2004:80-1; Jones and Scully 2003a:128-9). In sum, the dynamics of both voting behaviour and partisan politics in the 1999 and 2003 NAW elections were grounded very much in the relevance, rather than the irrelevance, of the regional context.

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<sup>15</sup> “Loyalists” refer to those voters supporting PC in both Westminster and NAW elections; “switchers” refer to those voting for Labour in Westminster elections, but defecting to PC in NAW elections.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Welsh Labour shifted towards PC’s explicitly socialist agenda by rejecting New Labour’s plans for foundation hospitals and for a shift away from comprehensive schools. Curiously, PC failed to respond to the threat (McAllister 2004:80-1).

The growing relevance of the regional context in Welsh politics is borne out, in fact, by trends in attitudes towards the process of devolution in general and the establishment and impact of the NAW in particular. It is true, of course, that unlike Scotland, the establishment of the NAW did not reflect a clear “settled will” on the part of the Welsh electorate, but instead substantial and roughly equal proportions of agreement, disagreement and apathy. The latter was demonstrated in the 1997 referendum in which, on a low turnout, only 50.3% of the voters supported the creation of the NAW (Scully, Jones and Trystan 2004:520; Trystan, Scully and Jones 2003:638). Though this did represent a significant shift in public attitudes towards devolution since the 1979 referendum, in which the then Labour government’s legislation for an Assembly had been rejected overwhelmingly, it is also the case that there was little subsequent development in constitutional thinking in Wales between 1979 and 1997. As such, Jones and Scully (2003b:4-5) are probably right to conclude that the 1997 referendum delivered a verdict on the general principle of devolution, rather than the specific governmental form it should assume.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that since the 1997 referendum, there has been a substantial decline in opposition to devolution in Wales (Jones and Scully 2003b:2; Jones and Scully 2003a:128). By the time of the 1999 NAW elections themselves, a BBC/IBM Election Night poll found that 58% of voters considered the establishment of the NAW a good thing (with 31% against), while 46% thought the NAW would lead to better government for Wales, 11% thought it would lead to worse government, and 36% considered it would make no difference (Jones 1999: 327). Subsequently, in an analysis of longer-term changes in constitutional preferences in Wales between 1997 and 2001, Jones and Scully (2003b:6-7,17) found not only increasing support for devolution in general, but also for assigning the NAW greater powers. From 1997 to 2001, support for outright independence fell from 14.1% to 12.3%; for no elected body whatsoever from 39.5% to 24.0%; for the Assembly as currently constituted from 26.8% to 25.5%; while support for a Parliament increased from 19.6% to 38.8%. In other words, the current status quo, of an elected Assembly with limited powers, has never enjoyed majority support amongst the electorate, while a clear plurality, by 2001, supported the Assembly becoming a more powerful institution, that of a parliament with tax-varying and legislative powers.

### 3. Methodology and Data

The empirical test uses different surveys for each election year. For Scotland we use the Scottish Election Survey (1997), the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (1999) and Devolution and Constitutional Change (2001). We use the latter survey for both the 2001 GE and hypothetical regional elections held the same year. Data used in Wales are the Welsh Assembly Election Study (1999), Devolution and Constitutional Change (2001), and the Wales Life and Times Study (Welsh Assembly Election Study) (2003). In the two regions, we use the same data for two different elections due to the absence of appropriate surveys for Wales in 1997 and for Scotland in 2003, and to ensure that the differential effects of the nationalist and ideological dimensions according to the electoral arena are not due to changes in voters' preferences, which in these cases remain fixed.

First, we use cross tabulations to study the vote transfers between general and regional elections, demonstrating with individual data that differential voting exists in both regions. Second, we present multinomial logistic regressions for each election year in order to study the evolution of the coefficients of the nationalist and ideological dimensions and to what extent this explains differential voting. The dependent variable is the voting decision (including the four main parties and abstention) reported by the respondent, except in the 2003 Scottish parliamentary elections, in which the variable is voting intention. In order to control for the effect of the electoral system and to simplify the analysis, we only use the district vote (excluding the list vote) in the regional elections. The main independent variables are the nationalist and left/right scales; we include as control variables the evaluation of government performance, age, sex and education<sup>17</sup>. Government evaluation consists of evaluation of education and health policies and of living standards in general. These are competences shared by both national and regional administrations and, as such, do not reflect clearly the performance of the government at Westminster. In any case, a necessary condition for confirming the validity of the SOE model is that the government performance variable has the capacity to explain an increase in the probability of voting for nationalist parties against that of voting Labour. However, it is not a sufficient condition,

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<sup>17</sup> The appendix shows in detail how these variables were constructed.

since if this variable explains differential voting, we will be unable to clarify which of the two governments, central or regional, is being evaluated by the voter. The SOE model will be correct in explaining differential voting only if such evaluation refers exclusively to the Westminster government, but we cannot know this with the data that we have.

### **3.1. Vote Transfers**

#### *Scotland*

In the elections to the Scottish Parliament, the SNP obtains better results and gains significant ground on its main rival, the Labour Party. Where do these new voters come from? The first element explaining the SNP's success is the loyalty of its own electorate, which decides to vote nationalist in both types of elections (see Tables 3 and 4). This is especially true of vote transfers between the 2001 GE and a hypothetical set of regional elections held simultaneously, where in the latter, more than 90 percent of SNP voters remain loyal to the party. However, voter loyalty is not a sufficient explanation for the SNP's success. The latter is achieved mainly as a result of gaining new voters from other parties, and of abstention.

The most relevant group of new voters for the SNP are Labour voters. The two tables show that about ten percent of the Labour electorate decide to vote for the nationalists in regional elections. These new voters represent an important proportion of nationalist support, especially in the 1999 regional election, when transfers from Labour accounted for about one quarter of the SNP vote. Transfers in the opposite direction, from the SNP to Labour, are much less relevant and represent a marginal percentage of Labour's total vote. The data confirm, therefore, that differential voting occurs in the Scottish context.

**Table 3: Vote transfers in Scotland 1997-1999**

<i>Constituency party vote, Scottish Elections 1999</i>						
	Absten.	Conserv	Labour	Liberal	SNP	Total n°
Absten.	64,6	3,6	11,8	6,1	13,8	246
	38,7	6,1	6,7	10,9	11,9	
Conserv.	17,9	61,8	7,2	6,7	6,3	207
	9,0	87,7	3,5	10,1	4,5	
Labour	24,8	0,9	57,1	4,8	12,3	646
	38,9	4,1	85,6	22,4	28,1	
Liberal	21,0	2,6	7,9	61,4	2,81	114
	5,8	2,0	2,1	50,7	7,0	
SNP	15,6	0	4,5	4,0	75,7	198
	7,5	0	2,1	5,8	52,6	
Total n°	411	146	431	138	285	1411

*First numbers in cells are row percentages; second numbers are column percentages*

Labour and the SNP share a group of voters, but who is borrowing and who is lending votes? The data are not conclusive: in the 1999 regional elections, the group of differential voters contained about the same proportion of Labour and nationalist identifiers. But in 2001, most differential voters (76 percent) were Labour supporters.

**Table 4: Vote transfers in Scotland 2001**

<i>Constituency party vote, Scottish Elections 2001*</i>						
	Absten.	Conserv	Labour	Liberal	SNP	Total n°
Absten.	55.4	3.9	18.5	4.8	17.3	480
	81.8	18.4	16.8	15.8	27.8	
Conserv.	10.6	75.0	2.9	5.7	5.8	104
	3.4	75.7	0.6	4.1	2.0	
Labour	6.2	0.6	81.9	2.1	9.1	515
	9.8	2.9	79.6	7.6	15.8	
Liberal	8.9	1.5	8.9	74.1	6.7	135
	3.7	1.9	2.6	68.9	3.0	
SNP	2.4	0.6	2.4	2.9	91.6	167
	1.2	0.9	0.7	3.4	51.3	
Total n°	325	103	530	145	298	1401

*\*Constituency party vote if there were Scottish Elections in 2001*

*First numbers in cells are row percentages; second numbers are column percentages.*

Abstention could be the second factor explaining SNP success in regional elections. In the 1999 elections, the SNP is the party that received more votes from those who abstained in the 1997 GE; this represented around 12 percent of its vote. However, a similar percentage of those who voted nationalist in 1997 decided not to vote in 1999. Therefore, in these elections, gains from abstention did not contribute much to the SNP's success. It is in the hypothetical 2001 regional elections that the gains from abstention for the SNP exceed the losses<sup>18</sup>. Contrary to the Catalan case, these data do not confirm a persistent differential rate of abstention that favours the nationalist party. This only occurs in 2001, when 30 percent of SNP identifiers affirm that they did not vote in the GE of that year, compared to only 8.5% who indicate that they would abstain in a regional election. We need more time, therefore, to ascertain the exact role of abstention in the Scottish elections.

The reasons for the SNP's success in regional elections also explain Labour's collapse. One of the main sources of Labour losses are those voters who decide either not to vote or who vote for the SNP. Labour does not compensate for these losses by gaining votes from other parties or from abstention; consequently, its vote share in regional election falls.

### *Wales*

As in Scotland, PC succeeded in closing the gap on its main rival, the Labour Party, in elections for the NAW. Explanations are similar to those for the Scottish case. PC is the party with the most loyal electorate, which votes for it in both types of elections. In the first NAW elections, PC received a significant proportion of votes from all parties, even from the Conservative party, but as in Scotland, its major gains came from Labour supporters. Transfers from the latter represented 47% of the nationalist vote in the 1999 NAW elections and 35% in those of 2003. In the latter, those PC votes taken from the Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties were marginal. We may conclude that, as in Scotland, PC and Labour share an important group of voters that choose the former in regional elections and the latter in GEs.

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<sup>18</sup> Note, however, that this is the voting intention reported by the respondent. Actual participation in the 2003 elections to the Scottish Parliament was much lower.



**Table 5: Vote transfers in Wales 1997-1999**

<i>Constituency party vote, Welsh Elections 1999</i>						
	Absten.	Conserv	Labour	Liberal	PC	Total n°
<i>Party vote , General Elections 1997</i>		81.3	2.4	9.8	0	6.5
	Absten.	29.0	6.2	8.5	0	7.1
		42.1	38.9	2.4	4.8	11.9
	Conserv.	15.4	75.4	1.9	12.2	13.3
		42.2	2.1	37.0	4.9	13.7
	Labour	47.2	12.3	89.4	38.8	46.9
		28.8	5.8	3.8	44.2	17.3
	Liberal	4.3	4.6	1.2	46.9	8.0
		31.1	4.4	0	2.2	62.2
	PC	4.1	3.1	0	2.0	25.8
	Total n°	345	65	160	49	113
						732

*First numbers in cells are row percentages; second numbers are column percentages.*

Again, differential voters do not clearly belong to any party: in 1999, the majority were Labour identifiers (54 percent), but this is reversed in 2003 when most differential voters (51 percent) identified themselves as PC supporters.

Losses from PC to other parties are indeed marginal, but like the other Welsh parties, there are substantial numbers of PC voters who decide to abstain in the regional elections (between 25% and 30%). Despite this, PC is the party least affected by higher abstention rates in regional elections; as such, lower levels of participation benefit the nationalist party. In contrast, abstention is especially damaging for Labour, which loses almost half its voters in the NAW elections. These losses are not offset by new votes gained from other parties. It is especially relevant that in both regional elections to date, Labour does not receive any support from nationalist voters.

**Table 6:** *Vote transfers in Wales 2001-2003*

		Constituency party vote, Welsh Elections 2003					
		Absten.	Conserv	Labour	Liberal	PC	Total n°
Party vote , General Elections 2001	Absten.	91,0	2,5	5,0	0,5	1,0	201
		38,2	6,1	4,9	1,9	1,9	
	Conserv.	37,3	50,0	5,1	2,5	5,1	118
		9,2	72,8	2,9	5,8	5,7	
	Labour	44,6	2,7	40,3	4,2	8,2	451
		42,0	14,8	89,7	36,5	35,2	
	Liberal	42,5	6,8	6,8	37,0	6,85	73
		6,5	6,2	2,5	51,9	4,7	
	PC	25,0	0	0	2,6	72,4	76
		4,0	0	0	3,8	52,4	
	Total n°	478	81	203	52	105	919

*First numbers in cells are row percentages; second numbers are column percentages.*

The main difference between Scotland and Wales is the role of abstention - which is more relevant in the Welsh case - but in both cases the differential voting phenomenon contributes to the success of the nationalist parties. The proportion of those who voted Labour in the GE and nationalist in the regional elections is worthy of consideration, especially in Wales. They represented between 14% and 8.4% of the turnout in Wales and between 8% and 4.4% in Scotland. However, in both regions the relevance of differential voting dropped substantially in the second set of regional elections in 2003. It is too soon to know whether this decreasing trend will continue or stabilise.

### **3.2. Nationalist and Ideological dimensions in Scotland and Wales**

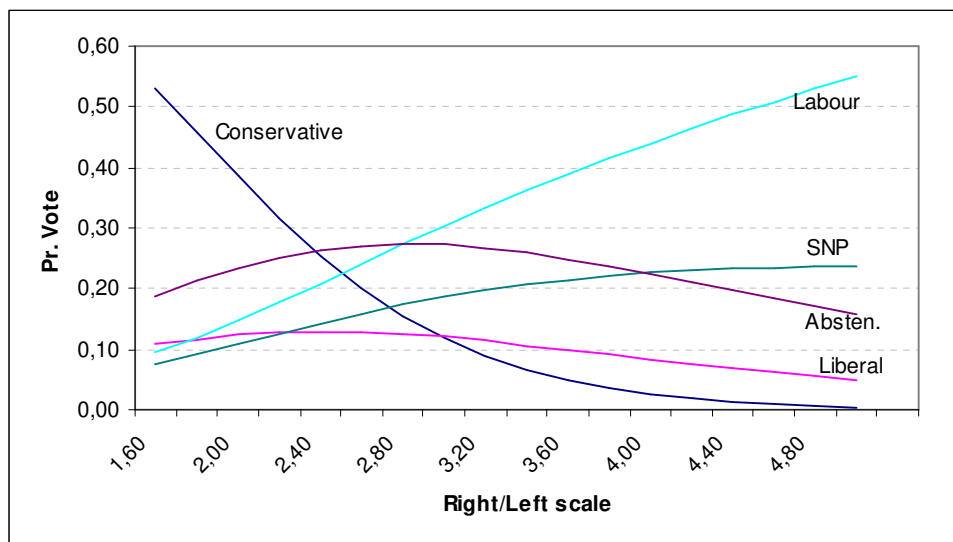
Our hypothesis is that the different importance that voters assign to the nationalist and left/right political dimensions in these regions, depending on the electoral arena, explains differential voting. According to our argument, while nationalist issues turn out to be more relevant in the voter's decision in regional elections, the importance of ideological issues declines. We expect that this may explain the fact that the same voter opts for Labour in GEs and chooses the nationalists in regional elections. This, of course, only holds true if the voter

considers Labour more attractive on the left/right scale and the SNP or PC on the nationalist scale. We interpret the following results taking this into account.

### *Scotland*

Table 7 shows the different multinomial logistic regressions for each election year using the Labour party as the reference group. In general, both dimensions are important in the voting decision. In all elections, the probability of voting Conservative (compared to Labour) is higher for right-wing and unionist voters. The nationalist dimension is not important in voting for either the Liberal Democrats or Labour and the influence of ideology seems to decrease over time; apparently, voters increasingly see both parties as politically equal along these two important dimensions.

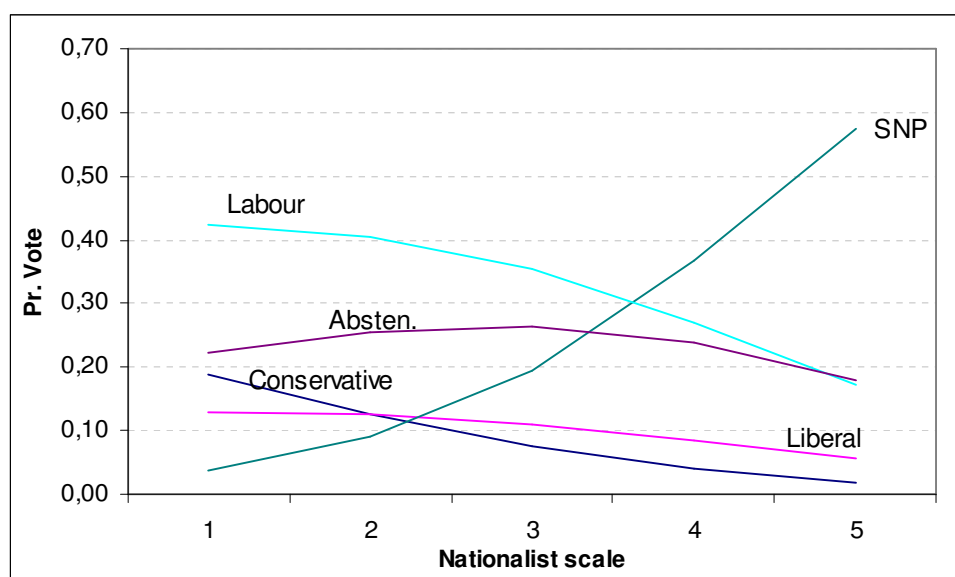
**Graph 3:** *Ideology and the vote in Scotland in 1999*



The role of government performance does not show a general pattern across elections. In the 1997 GE, government performance has no effect on the decision to vote either Labour or SNP, given that until 1997 the Conservatives had governed at Westminster. Apart from

this election, the effect of government performance is no greater in the regional elections and, as such, cannot explain the increased vote for the SNP.

**Graph 4:** *Nationalism and the vote in Scotland in 1999*



Graphs 3 and 4 show the predicted probabilities of voting for the different parties according to the degree of nationalism and ideology.<sup>19</sup> The data reveal a strong relationship between nationalism and the probability of voting for the SNP, and between ideology and the probability of voting Labour. In the case of the nationalist dimension, the SNP is the only party whose probability of being voted for increases substantially amongst the most nationalist positions. The probability increases from 0.04 amongst unionists to 0.58 amongst the most nationalist. The general tendency for the other parties is the reverse, though much more moderately. The relationship between being Left and the probability of voting is clearly positive in the case of Labour, while the SNP, though slightly improving its probability amongst Left voters, falls significantly further behind Labour. In addition, the negative

<sup>19</sup> In both the Scottish and Welsh cases, we only show the predicted probabilities for the first set of regional elections in 1999, given that in the other elections, these tendencies do not vary significantly, except with respect to the abstention rate. In both regions, the greater probability of non-nationalists abstaining in regional elections disappears in GEs.

tendency for the Conservative Party is very clear, whereby the probability is almost zero amongst the most Left voters. The graphs show clearly that while the Labour Party is especially sensitive along the ideological scale, the relevant changes in the probabilities of voting for the SNP are along the nationalist scale.

**Table 7:** *Evolution of nationalist and ideological dimensions 1997-2001*

	1997 General Election	1999 Scottish Election Const.	2001 General Election	2001 Scottish Election Const. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Did not vote</b>				
Left/Right scale	0.709** (0.225)	0.565** (0.187)	0.692** (0.165)	0.467* (0.187)
Nationalist scale	-0.056 (0.116)	-0.171 (0.106)	-0.187* (0.094)	0.270** (0.108)
Gov. Perform.	-0.221 (0.178)	0.438** (0.155)	0.945** (0.138)	1.092** (0.160)
Education	0.072 (0.077)	-0.132** (0.059)	-0.092 (0.052)	-0.118* (0.059)
Age	-0.020* (0.008)	-0.042** (0.006)	-0.048** (0.006)	-0.045** (0.006)
Sex	0.064 (0.240)	0.131 (0.198)	-0.152 (0.176)	-0.108 (0.203)
<i>_Intercept</i>	3.013** (1.031)	2.166** (0.943)	1.254 (0.819)	1.008 (0.935)
<b>Conservative</b>				
Left/Right scale	1.945** (0.359)	1.903** (0.264)	1.638** (0.280)	1.669** (0.304)
Nationalist scale	0.630** (0.182)	0.373** (0.140)	0.634** (0.144)	0.625** (0.160)
Gov. Perform.	-1.528** (0.276)	0.663** (0.205)	1.383** (0.238)	1.648** (0.256)
Education	0.347** (0.118)	0.151* (0.074)	0.257** (0.085)	0.216* (0.090)
Age	0.029* (0.011)	0.025** (0.008)	0.021** (0.009)	0.020* (0.010)
Sex	0.654 (0.402)	0.210 (0.269)	0.352 (0.319)	0.343 (0.351)
<i>_Intercept</i>	8.824** (1.510)	2.062 (1.251)	-1.105 (1.397)	-1.884 (1.097)

<sup>1</sup>hypothetical regional election in 2001

numbers in brackets are standard errors

\* significant at 0,05 \*\* significant at 0,01

(continued...)

**Table 7: Evolution of nationalist and ideological dimensions 1997-2001**

	1997 General Election	1999 Scottish Election Const.	2001 General Election	2001 Scottish Election Const. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Liberal Democrats</b>				
Left/Right scale	1.058** (0.274)	0.744** (0.244)	0.393 (0.214)	0.470** (0.212)
Nationalist scale	0.123 (0.146)	-0.016 (0.139)	0.070 (0.123)	0.094 (0.126)
Gov. Perform.	-0.255 (0.229)	0.466* (0.201)	1.045** (0.186)	0.911** (0.189)
Education	0.580** (0.095)	0.304** (0.074)	0.351** (0.068)	0.245** (0.066)
Age	0.030** (0.009)	-0.000 (0.008)	0.009 (0.007)	0.003 (0.007)
Sex	0.947** (0.315)	0.191 (0.260)	0.469 (0.252)	0.077 (0.240)
<i>_Intercept</i>	-0.199 (1.242)	-1.244 (1.212)	-4.889 (1.120)	-3.065** (1.097)
<b>Scottish National Party</b>				
Left/Right scale	0.734** (0.231)	0.179 (0.191)	0.426** (0.200)	0.260 (0.174)
Nationalist scale	-0.750** (0.134)	-0.901** (0.119)	-0.619** (0.122)	-0.716** (0.109)
Gov. Perform.	-0.001 (0.190)	0.866** (0.163)	0.968** (0.170)	0.943** (0.151)
Education	0.074 (0.081)	-0.008 (0.061)	0.051 (0.064)	0.007 (0.055)
Age	0.012 (0.008)	-0.010 (0.006)	-0.009 (0.007)	-0.015** (0.006)
Sex	0.082 (0.251)	-0.374 (0.211)	-0.345 (0.220)	-0.325 (0.191)
<i>_Intercept</i>	-1.625 (1.165)	-4.644** (1.022)	-4.128** (1.046)	-3.969** (0.915)
<i>R-squared</i>	0.183	0.136	0.145	0.139
<i>Observations</i>	601	823	937	885

<sup>1</sup>hypothetical regional election in 2001

numbers in brackets are standard errors

\* significant at 0,05 \*\* significant at 0,01

To confirm our hypothesis, it is necessary to focus on the decision of the differential voter to vote for either Labour or the SNP. In this case, both dimensions are important in the decision: being nationalist increases the probability of voting for the SNP and, in some elections, being leftist benefits Labour. Here, we clearly see that the coefficients fluctuate in the expected direction. In regional elections, the influence of the nationalist dimension

increases, while that of ideology becomes insignificant. Indeed, in regional elections, Scottish voters stop assigning importance to ideology in their decision to vote either SNP or Labour. However, in GEs, ideology again becomes important for the electorate.

This pattern does not directly lead to an increased SNP vote in regional elections. If voters (and especially differential voters) were mainly unionist and rightist, the model would predict a decrease in the SNP vote, to the benefit of the Labour party. But it turns out not to be the case: differential voters tend to be strongly nationalist and leftist. For instance, differential voters in 2001 scored 4 on the nationalist scale (favouring independence within the EU) and 3.5 (out of 5) on the right/left scale. Therefore, the evolution of the coefficients in our regressions clearly benefits the SNP.

Table 8 tries to clarify whether the model can predict correctly the behaviour of differential voters. This table shows the probabilities of voting for the different parties for two ideal types: the average voter and the differential voter<sup>20</sup>. It is notable that the probability of voting for the SNP and Labour Party is substantially reduced in regional elections. This occurs amongst both average and differential voters, but the reduction is much higher for the latter group. This is especially clear in 1999, when the difference changes from 0,26 to 0,04. Despite this important reduction, the model cannot clearly predict the real behaviour of the differential voter who supports Labour in GEs and the nationalists in regional elections.

**Table 8:** *Probabilities of differential and average voters 1997-2001*

	<b>Differential Voter</b>		<b>Average Voter</b>	
	1997 GE	1999 SE	1997 GE	1999 SE
Abstn.	0,20	0.24	0.21	0.26
Conserv.	0,04	0.04	0.02	0.07
Liberal	0,09	0.08	0.10	0.11
SNP	0.20	0.30	0.16	0.20
Labour	0.46	0.34	0.49	0.35

*GE: General Election; SE: Scottish Elections*

<sup>20</sup> See appendix to see how ideal types of Scotland and Wales were created.

	<b>Differential Voter</b>		<b>Average Voter</b>	
	2001 GE	2001 SE*	2001 GE	2001 SE*
Abstn.	0,27	0.11	0.29	0.19
Conserv.	0,01	0.01	0.03	0.03
Liberal	0,07	0.09	0.10	0.12
SNP	0.19	0.35	0.13	0.22
Labour	0.44	0.43	0.43	0.43

*GE: General Election; SE\*: hypothetical Scottish Elections*

The rise of the SNP in the hypothetical regional elections of 2001 is also influenced by an important proportion of voters who decided not to vote in the 2001 GE, but who would have voted for the nationalists in a regional election. This is also reflected in the model, where the relationship between nationalism and abstention in both types of elections is opposed. In GEs, the more nationalist a voter is, the greater the probability of abstaining (all other variables at their means). However, the opposite occurs in regional elections, where predicted abstention is higher amongst unionists. The predicted abstention rate in values 1 and 2 (where the probability of voting SNP is higher) is extremely low in regional elections (8%) especially compared to the predicted abstention rate of the average voter (approximately 30%).

**Table 9:** *Nationalism and the Probabilities of abstaining, 2001*

<b>Nationalism</b>	2001 GE	2001 SE*
<b>1</b>	0.30	0.08
<b>2</b>	0.30	0.14
<b>3</b>	0.29	0.20
<b>4</b>	0.25	0.27
<b>5</b>	0.21	0.32

*SE\*: hypothetical Scottish Elections*

*GE: General Election*

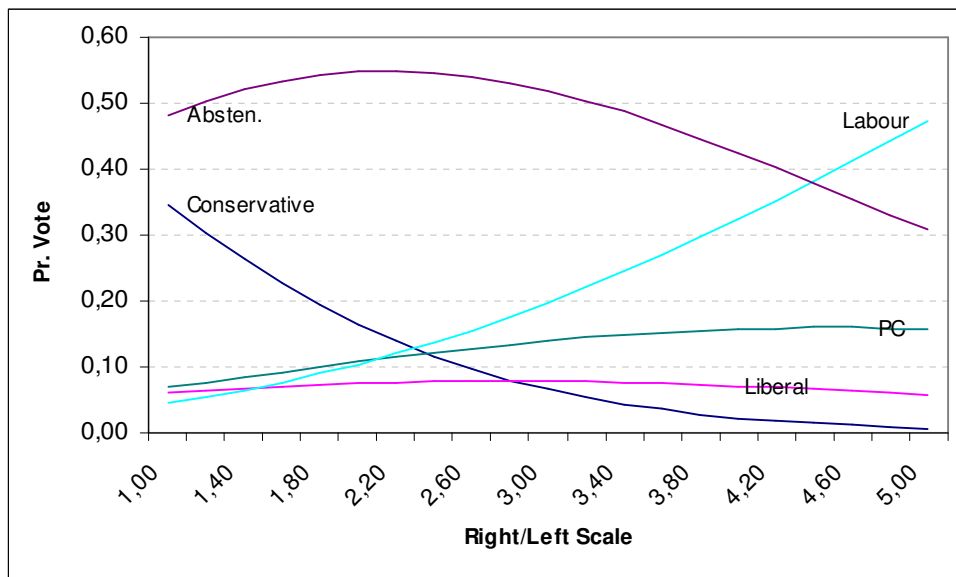
## *Wales*

Graphs 5 and 6 show the predicted probabilities for the NAW elections in 1999. The trends are very similar to those for Scotland. The probability of voting Labour increases amongst Left positions, while declining for the Conservative Party. In similar fashion to the SNP, the PC vote is not especially sensitive along the ideological scale, but the probability of



voting PC increases along the nationalist scale. The probability of voting Labour remains constant along this scale, with a slight increase in the intermediate positions.<sup>21</sup> In sum, the ideological and nationalist dimensions have a very similar effect on the probability of voting for the major political parties in both regions.

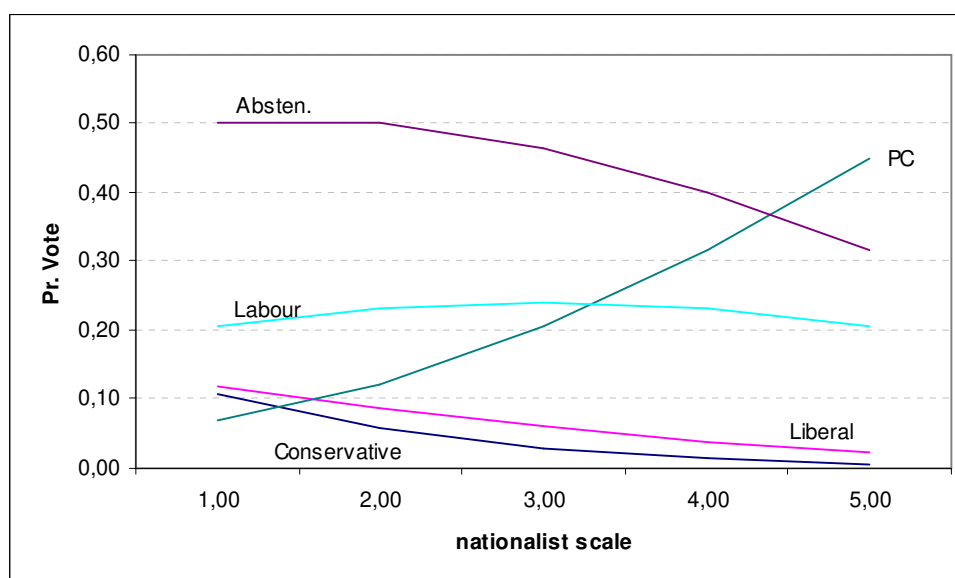
**Graph 5: Ideology and the vote in Wales 1999**



We have noted that Wales shares other important similarities with the Scottish case. In both regions, we found a pattern of differential voting between the Labour Party and the nationalist party. Nonetheless, with the following logistic regressions we determine whether differential voting in Wales is explained by the same arguments.

<sup>21</sup> These tendencies hold for all the remaining elections analysed here, with the exception of the 2003 regional elections, in which the probability of voting Labour remains constant across the ideological dimension but declines across the nationalist dimension.

**Graph 6:** *Nationalism and the vote in Wales 1999*



The regression results do not show a clear pattern as in Scotland. The left/right scale is not significant in the voter's decision to choose between Labour and PC in any type of election. Nor does the nationalist dimension follow the trend that we hypothesise: *in fact, its influence is slightly smaller in NAW elections than in GEs*. As such, our argument does not hold for the Welsh case. This conclusion is confirmed if we list the predicted probabilities of the average and differential voter ideal types (Table 11). In this case, it is evident that the model does not capture what has happened in Wales. In the 1999 NAW elections, the probability of voting PC is reduced amongst both differential and average voters, while increasing considerably with respect to voting Labour. The model improves its predictions for the 2003 NAW elections, where the distance between Labour and PC is reduced. However, this is only due to a reduction in the probability of voting Labour; the probability of voting PC remains stable. Furthermore, according to the model, the behaviour of the differential voter in both elections is very similar to that of the average voter.

Therefore, our analysis does not throw light on what is happening in the NAW elections held to date. The argument (elaborated by the authors we have cited here) that "Welsh issues" become *more* relevant in regional elections contrasts with our finding that the nationalist dimension, in fact, *decreases* in relevance in regional elections. It is possible, of

**Table 10:** *Evolution of nationalist and ideological dimensions 1997-2003*

	1997 General Election	1999 Welsh Election Const.	2001 General Election	2001 Welsh Election Const.
<b>Did not vote</b>				
Left/Right scale	-0.498* (0.212)	-0.695** (0.188)	-0.543** (0.174)	0.088 (0.200)
Nationalist scale	-0.025 (0.128)	-0.112 (0.118)	-0.171 (0.096)	0.169 (0.112)
Gov. Perform.	-0.068 (0.200)	0.407* (0.180)	0.482** (0.133)	0.467** (0.145)
Education	0.185** (0.078)	-0.054 (0.065)	-0.115 (0.064)	0.222 (0.071)
Age	-0.051** (0.009)	-0.037** (0.007)	-0.039** (0.006)	-0.044** (0.007)
Sex	0.109 (0.261)	0.084 (0.233)	-0.120 (0.198)	-0.075 (0.236)
<i>_Intercept</i>	3.565** (1.162)	3.314** (1.047)	2.881** (0.903)	0.715 (0.978)
<b>Conservative</b>				
Left/Right scale	-1.306** (0.215)	-1.561** (0.298)	-0.955** (0.230)	-0.461 (0.304)
Nationalist scale	0.478** (0.149)	0.705** (0.235)	0.391** (0.151)	0.791** (0.209)
Gov. Perform.	0.777** (0.208)	1.031** (0.299)	1.112** (0.189)	0.667** (0.229)
Education	0.093 (0.070)	0.178 (0.102)	0.233** (0.083)	0.338** (0.112)
Age	0.008 (0.008)	0.002 (0.012)	0.008 (0.009)	0.013 (0.012)
Sex	-0.009 (0.272)	0.511 (0.407)	0.217 (0.293)	-0.217 (0.385)
<i>_Intercept</i>	-1.996 (1.219)	-3.105 (1.808)	-4.414** (1.349)	-6.264** (1.762)

numbers in brackets are standard errors

\* significant at 0,05 \*\* significant at 0,01

(continued...)

course, that these “Welsh issues” are *not* related to the nationalist dimension. Graph 7 tries to determine the relationship between the nationalist scale and the vote decided by “Welsh issues” in both the 1999 and 2003 NAW elections. There appears to be a clear relationship between both variables: the importance of “Welsh issues” increases amongst the nationalist positions. Another possible explanation for the divergence between our finding and the existing literature is that the latter has only examined the effect of “Welsh issues” in regional elections, without taking into account the effect that they may have in elections for Westminster. It could well be that the effect was similar in both elections and, as such, was

not a distinctive feature of the NAW elections. At any rate, in the light of our results, we consider it important to clarify the meaning and possible effects of “Welsh issues”, which remains a vague concept.

**Table 10:** *Evolution of nationalist and ideological dimensions 1997-2003*

	1997 General Election	1999 Welsh Election Const.	2001 General Election	2003 Welsh Election Const.
<b>Liberal Democrats</b>				
Left/Right scale	-0.125 (0.258)	-0.598* (0.280)	-0.512* (0.218)	0.047 (0.378)
Nationalist scale	0.111 (0.167)	0.411* (0.202)	-0.054 (0.134)	0.027 (0.223)
Gov. Perform.	0.251 (0.252)	0.489 (0.286)	0.482** (0.173)	0.732** (0.291)
Education	0.133 (0.085)	0.191* (0.094)	0.391** (0.075)	0.489** (0.137)
Age	0.002 (0.009)	0.008 (0.011)	0.005 (0.008)	-0.009 (0.014)
Sex	0.057 (0.329)	-0.029 (0.369)	-0.030 (0.264)	0.677 (0.517)
_Intercept	-3.185* (1.486)	-3.127 (1.684)	-2.233 (1.184)	-5.697** (2.095)
<b>Plaid Cymru</b>				
Left/Right scale	-0.492 (0.312)	-0.378 (0.237)	-0.182 (0.229)	-0.113 (0.263)
Nationalist scale	-0.558** (0.180)	-0.474** (0.146)	-0.507** (0.103)	-0.401** (0.150)
Gov. Perform.	0.894** (0.190)	0.622** (0.225)	0.931** (0.172)	0.610** (0.193)
Education	0.048 (0.102)	0.142 (0.078)	0.249** (0.076)	0.312** (0.093)
Age	0.001 (0.012)	0.001 (0.009)	0.014 (0.008)	0.011 (0.009)
Sex	-0.098 (0.391)	0.049 (0.298)	-0.254 (0.267)	-0.189 (0.319)
_Intercept	-1.683 (1.685)	0.066 (1.304)	-3.111** (1.202)	-2.168 (1.363)
R-squared	0.119	0.109	0.109	0.115
Observations	550	536	713	531

Numbers in brackets are standard errors  
 \* significant at 0,05 \*\* significant at 0,01

**Table 11:** *Probabilities of differential and average voters 1997-2003*

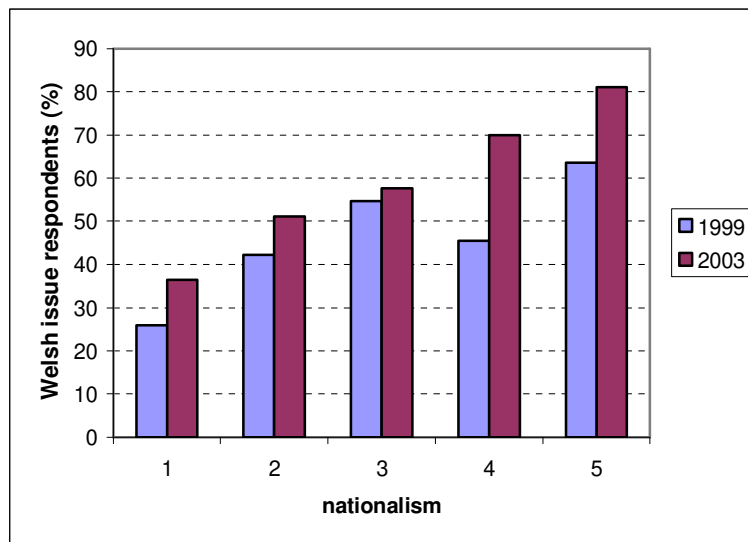
	<b>Differential Voter</b>		<b>Average Voter</b>	
	1997 GE	1999 WE	1997 GE	1999 WE
Abstn.	0,42	0.11	0.49	0.13
Conserv.	0,03	0.08	0.04	0.13
Liberal	0,07	0.09	0.07	0.09
PC	0.19	0.06	0.14	0.05
Labour	0.29	0.65	0.23	0.59

*GE: General Election; WE: Welsh Elections*

	<b>Differential Voter</b>		<b>Average Voter</b>	
	2001 GE	2003 WE	2001 GE	2003 WE
Abstn.	0,21	0.46	0.28	0.56
Conserv.	0,07	0.05	0.08	0.05
Liberal	0,13	0.04	0.11	0.04
PC	0.13	0.15	0.10	0.11
Labour	0.45	0.28	0.42	0.23

*GE: General Election; WE: Welsh Elections*

**Graph 7:** *Relation between “Welsh issues” and nationalism.*



Our argument that the changing weight of the two dimensions lies behind differential voting does not explain the Welsh case at all. However, neither does the SOE model. If we focus on the decision to vote for either PC or Labour, the coefficients of government performance are always smaller in the NAW elections. Hence, PC's success is not the result of protest voting; people dissatisfied with government policies tend to punish the incumbent more in GEs.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In this paper, we have sought to explain differential voting in Britain in two regional contexts. The phenomenon itself appears to be entrenched, though it is notable that over time (albeit a relatively brief period) it has become less accentuated – the contrast, in terms of support for Labour and the nationalist parties, between the 2003 regional elections and the 2001 GE was less sharp than that between the 1999 regional elections and the 1997 GE.<sup>22</sup> The GE currently scheduled for mid-2005 will help determine whether differential voting is declining in importance or whether, conversely, it remains an important feature of contemporary electoral behaviour in Britain.

We have shown that neither the changes in the electoral system adopted for the Scottish parliament and the NAW nor an SOE model of voting behaviour account adequately for the remarkable drop in support suffered by Labour, and the concomitant increase in support enjoyed by both the SNP and PC, in the regional elections of 1999 and 2003. Instead, we advanced the argument that in regional elections the nationalist dimension to voting behaviour gains relevance at the expense of the traditional left-right cleavage. Our findings confirm that this argument holds for the Scottish case but not for the Welsh case. Thus while differential voting has appeared in both regions, its sources are, apparently, different.

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<sup>22</sup> The same can be said for trends in rates of abstention.

In fact, the reasons for Labour's ills and for PC's relative success in the two sets of NAW elections held to date remain unclear. What *is* clear, however, is that our findings challenge the received wisdom concerning the dynamics of voting behaviour in Wales since 1997. It does so in two ways. First – and contrary to (our own) expectations - the nationalist dimension to voting is *not* enhanced in elections to the NAW. As such, arguments for PC's success couched in terms of its alleged ability to exploit the increased saliency of “Welsh issues” in NAW elections are invalid. Second, we found that ideology, since 1997, has ceased to be a significant predictor of voting choice between Labour and PC. Consequently, PC's relative success at the expense of Labour in the regional context can be explained by neither the former's leftward turn in the economic and social arena nor the latter's identification (later reversed) with New Labour at Westminster. The manner, therefore, in which devolution has undermined Labour Party hegemony in what was, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an almost unassailable stronghold, remains the task of future research.

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## APPENDIX: Construction of variables

**Ideology:** for the multinomial logit regressions, ideology is constructed from five variables which measure, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), preferences with respect to the following issues on the left-right scale:

- 1- public services and industries should be publicly owned
- 2- it is the government's responsibility to provide jobs
- 3- private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems
- 4- ordinary working people get a fair share of the nation's wealth
- 5- there is no need for strong trade unions

**Nationalism:** this variable is the same for both types of logit regressions and measures, on a scale from 1 to 5, the preferences of voters regarding the issue of independence for Scotland as follows:

- 1- independent from both the UK and the EU
- 2- independent from the UK but inside the EU
- 3- in the UK, with own parliament with tax powers
- 4- in the UK, with own parliament but without tax powers
- 5- in the UK, with no Scottish parliament

**Evaluation of government performance:** this is created from three variables which measure, on a scale from 1 (has increased a lot) to 5 (has fallen a lot), the level of voters' agreement with the following:

- 1- general standards of living have increased since the last general election.
- 2- the quality of education has increased since the last general election.
- 3- the quality of the NHS has increased since the last general election.

### **Ideal types:**

*Average Voter:* probability of vote for the different parties keeping all variables at their mean.

*Differential Voter:* When we use the same sample for two different elections (Scottish 2001 general and hypothetical regional elections, and Welsh 1997 and 1999 elections), the values

of the differential voter ideal type are the means of the variables for the sub-sample of those who voted Labour in General Elections and nationalists (SNP or PC) in Regional Elections. Differential voters in the other elections are more complicated to specify as they involve different samples. In that cases (1997 and 1999 for Scotland and 2001 and 2003 for Wales) we only apply one of the two samples to determine the values of the ideal type ( and we use these values in both samples.