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*MSc(Econ) Welsh Politics and Society (RT)*

‘Change’ or ‘Continuity?’

*The Sub-State Politics of the Welsh  
[British?] Conservative Party*

*1997-2007*

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September, 2008

DECLARATIONS

The word length of this dissertation is 14992 words, including footnotes

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# **‘Change’ or ‘Continuity?’**

## **The Sub-State Politics of the**

### **Welsh [British?] Conservative Party**

#### **ABSTRACT**

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A notable characteristic of the academic literature has hitherto been a largely unquestioning acceptance that political parties should be studied with reference to their role within the nation-state. The response of state-wide political parties to the establishment of sub-state government remains a relatively neglected research area. This thesis seeks to remedy this situation by analyzing the Conservative Party’s adaptation to devolution in Wales. As an often historically centralized and unitary party, steadfast in its support for the United Kingdom and vehemently opposed to political devolution, the advent of the National Assembly for Wales posed many challenges to the Conservative Party. The ideological and organisational re-definition of the Conservative Party was thus seen by many commentators as a vital step for the so called ‘English’ Party, long considered to be of little or no relevance to the Welsh electoral context. This thesis considers to what extent the Welsh Conservative Party has successfully responded to the challenges of sub-state government in Wales. In seeking to establish the extent of organizational and ideological change within the Welsh Conservative Party, the thesis utilizes a mixed methodology of extensive archival research and close reading of party literature, coupled with interviews with leading personalities and officials within the party which form the empirical backbone of this enquiry. Drawing on the broader party change theory and literature, the thesis identifies a number of factors and pressures which have prevented or frustrated the party’s attempts to re-invent and renew the party as a Welsh political force. Factors such as the party’s highly centralized and institutionalized organization, the role of its membership and party leadership, coupled with the party’s ideological rigidity have frustrated attempts to re-invent or renew the Welsh Conservative Party and to respond positively to its sub-state politics along unambiguous and unashamedly Welsh lines.

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#### **KEY WORDS:**

▪ The Conservative Party ▪ Devolution ▪ Wales ▪ Party Organization ▪ Ideological Change

*'Amynedd yw mam pob doethineb'*

## **‘Change’ or ‘Continuity?’**

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# INTRODUCTION

## CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION AND JUSTIFICATION

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A notable characteristic of the academic literature has hitherto been a largely unquestioning acceptance that political parties should be studied with reference to their role within the nation-state. The primacy of this state-centric paradigm is not surprising, considering the nation-state has constituted the core analysis within the discipline of political science. In recent years however, institutional and constitutional innovation in a number of Western European states, most recently the devolution reforms in the United Kingdom, have undermined this traditional state-centric paradigm. The thesis' central research question asks 'how do state-wide parties adapt to the establishment of regional government and sub-state electoral competition? Long defined, both politically and culturally for its opposition to devolution and steadfast support for the integrity of the United Kingdom (Lynch, 1994 and 2004) the challenges of sub-state government are particularly acute for the Conservative Party. The emergence of a strong nationalist cleavage to the sub-state electoral context, and the increasing centrality of Welsh national identity in the voting deliberations of the Welsh electorate (McAllister, 2000: 222; Scully, 2004: 81; Wyn Jones and Scully, 2006a: 125), complimented by a gradual rise in support for further devolution of power to the National Assembly for Wales over the past decade (Scully and Wyn Jones, January 2008: 67-68), constitute fundamental challenges to the ideological and organizational orthodoxy of the British Conservative Party. As a historically centralized party with very little tradition of regional organisation or electoral appeal in Wales (Aubel, 1996: 96; Griffiths, 2002; Morgan, 1981: 45-46), coupled with the party's historic steadfast defence of the United Kingdom and homogenous conceptualisation of British identity (Lynch, 1999 and 2004), the British

Conservative Party's organizational and ideological adaptation to devolution in Wales should make for an interesting and fascinating case study as to how do state-wide parties adapt to sub-state government. Whilst primarily empirically based, the thesis utilises the broad and sophisticated party change literature throughout the textual corpus in order to supplement our understanding of the Conservative Party's organisational and ideological adaptation. Whilst acknowledging the potential limitability of making broader generalisations or inferences to other parties based on the Welsh Conservatives' experiences, it could be justifiable in making tentative nomothetic claims as to how we should theorise party adaptation to sub-state environments, which may latterly be substantiated by future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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The literature concerning European state-wide parties has mostly ignored the way in which political parties accommodate the territorial or regional cleavage within the party's organisations and strategies. The prevalent discourse with regard to the study of political parties has more often than not been concerned with merely 'single-level language' and the literature regarding European multi-level governance has astonishingly been 'a party-free zone' (Deschouwer, 2003:213). Most standard works on European political parties have failed to focus on the way in which parties adapt to devolution or regionalism, in particular, the rate of decentralization or ideological re-alignment undertaken by parties to accommodate the changing electoral dynamics of the devolved territory. Tentative attempts have been made more recently to remedy the absence of any academic deliberations as to the strategies, organisation and discourse of state-wide parties within sub-state political contexts. Lancaster (1999) and Hopkin (2003) focus on the effects of regionalisation on the organizational structures of state-wide parties. The authors' findings suggest that centre-periphery tensions and organisational changes are most likely to be incurred in the field of candidate



recruitment. Building upon this, Deschouwer's contribution (2002) provides for a sophisticated theoretical exploration of European multi level party systems, offering insightful observations as to the role and nature of state-wide parties within sub-state electoral systems.

The academic literature regarding devolution in the British Isles is rapidly growing, none more so than the literature discussing the way in which the main British political parties have adapted and fared in the novel electoral context of post-devolution Britain. Laffin et al (2004a, 2004b, 2007) have delineated the organisational changes and ideological re-alignment undertaken by the Labour Party in Scotland and Wales as a consequence of devolved politics. Likewise, Bradbury's contribution (2006) accounts for the challenges posed by devolved politics to the British Parties and the way in which the main state-wide parties have adapted in order to accommodate the territorial dimension within their national organisational structures. Nevertheless, the glaring omission from the academic literature remains a comprehensive analysis of the Conservative Party's sub-state politics and organizational and ideological adaptation.

## METHODOLOGY

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A notable feature of both classic studies of political parties (Ostrogorski 1903, Michels 1911, Eldersveld 1964) but also a significant proportion of contemporary empirical research (Katz and Mair 1992b, 1993 and 1994; Panebianco, 1988) is the importance which is put upon looking inside the 'black box' of party organization. A vital component of this empirical research is how do parties structure and organize themselves, recruit members and political elites, and acquire and apply their resources. Another 'given' within the academic literature is that political parties are purposive organisations which typically embody ideological values or ideas. The policy positions and ideological standpoint of parties are

reflected in their selection and marketing of policy preferences to the electorate (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987, Budge et al. 2001). Likewise, a number of academic works have focused their attention upon the relationship between political parties and the institutional dynamics or political environments of their respective countries (Rae 1971; Muller 1993; Lijphart 1999; Tsebelis 2002). These studies have often focused on the organisation of the state and the nature of the electoral system, yet no substantial effort has hitherto been made to elaborate upon the impact of the institutional framework on party strategies and party goals. Notable exceptions include cross-national studies by Cox (1997), Katz (1997) and Lijphart (1994), which enlighten our understanding of how the institutional or constitutional framework may dictate party strategies, organizations and competition.

Drawing upon these works, this master's thesis seeks to bridge these separate disciplines and form a unified and comprehensive study of how state-wide parties adapt to the institutional and electoral dynamics of sub-state government. Building on the foundations of this initial introduction, subsequent chapters will gauge how the Welsh Conservative Party has responded and adapted, both in terms of its organization and ideology, to the novel challenges and electoral dynamics of sub-state government in Wales. Chapter 1 will consider and elaborate upon the Welsh Conservative Party's organisational adaptation to sub-state government in Wales, contextualising the party's adaptation within a broader theoretical framework. The chapter will consider whether the party has demonstrated oligarchic or stratarchical tendencies since devolution. The chapter will further consider whether the Conservative Party's efforts to adapt and renew its structures and organisations are strained by its institutional and organizational rigidity (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Panebianco, 1988).

Through close reading of a representative selection of party manifestos between the inaugural Assembly election of 1999 and the most recent election of 2007, complimented by empirical research such as interviews with political elites and archival research, the second

chapter attempts to establish whether the Conservative Party has undertaken a significant ideological re-alignment since devolution. A close reading of manifestos will allow for the deconstruction of the party's ideology, permitting us to ascertain the salience of particular language, policies, themes and rhetoric in these political texts, and to establish whether the party's policies have changed sufficiently since 1997. The final chapter will seek tentative theoretical conclusions from my research, considering whether we can readily apply existing theories of party change to future analyses of state-wide parties within sub-state contexts.

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

## INTRODUCTION

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Although there have been many efforts to theorise organizational change, there remains however few theoretical attempts which have explicitly defined what ‘organizational change’ actually means or includes. The academic literature on party organizational change has not always made the distinction between general forms of change and more substantial or ‘innovative’ change (Appleton and Ward, 1997: 342). Operationally, different studies have analysed and explained different phenomena, hence undermining the authoritativeness of certain theories and models in the academic literature. A further disappointing feature of the literature has been the failure of many theories to distinguish between organizational ‘complexity’ and organizational ‘power’ (Janda, 1993: 170-172). Panebianco (1988: 243) however attempts to establish clarity in this regard in his conceptualisation of party and party change, distinguishing between ‘continual change’ and ‘fundamental change’, as well as organizational magnitude (1988: 185-92), organizational complexity (1988: 199-202) and organizational professionalization (chapter 12). In this regard Panebianco has demonstrated the value to be gained from elaborating and clearly defining theory of party change (Harmel, 2002: 137). Panebianco (1988: 38) further suggests that theories of organizational change must take in to consideration the dominant coalition within political parties, and consider how power and resources are distributed within parties:

... A party’s dominant coalition is composed of those- whether inside or, strictly speaking, outside of the organization itself- organizational actors who control the most vital zones of uncertainty (e.g. professional knowledge, environmental relations, communications, rules, financing, and recruitment). The control over these resources, in its turn, makes the dominant

coalition the principal distribution centre of organizational incentives within the party (Panebianco, 1988: 38).

This inquiry draw upon the conceptual clarity of Harmel and Janda's understanding of party change as being:

[In the broadest sense] any variation, alteration, or modification in how parties are organized, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for, and what they do. But this usage is so broad that it raises unrealistic expectations about the scope of a theory of party change (1994: 275).

## OLIGARCHY V STRATARCHY

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The structure of power within political parties, principally measured in terms of the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the level of interaction between the party's different levels in devising campaigning and electoral strategies can be considered a strong indicator of how successful political parties are adapting to federalism or devolution (Riker, 1964: 91-101 quoted in Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 136; Clark, 2002: 2). Whilst many party typologies view party change as a linear process, Clark suggests political scientists should conceptualise political parties dichotomously (2002: 2-3). Many previous theories of organizational change have considered party change to be the product of evolutionary conversion from one party type to a new ideal type, dictated by socio, geographical and historical circumstance (e.g. Duverger, 1954; Eldersveld, 1964; Kirchheimer, 1966). Clark suggests that conceptualising party organizational change as a movement along a spectrum (2002: 3) or as 'endpoints on a spectrum of democratic party organisation' (Scarrow, 1993: 378) may present a fuller and more substantive account of party organizational change and

the location of power within parties. These end points have traditionally been represented in the academic literature by notions of 'oligarchy' and 'stratarchy' respectively.

Robert Michels' (1962) seminal book 'Political Parties,' in which he proposed his infamous 'iron law of oligarchy', suggested that political parties which had previously advocated noble ideals of intra-party democracy and mass integration would soon succumb in future to oligarchic tendencies (Clark, 2002: 3; Koelbe, 1996: 253; Tan, 1997: 363). As party memberships grew ever larger, so too did the organizational and bureaucratic complexity of political parties (Michels, 1962: 62-65). In order to maintain discipline and order over these complex and bureaucratic structures, some form of hierarchical and elite leadership would inevitably develop over time. For Michel, the need arose for the Social Democratic Party of Austria to develop a system of organized representation, suggesting 'where the labour party sometimes numbers its adherents by tens of thousands, it is impossible to carry on the affairs of this gigantic body without a system of representation (1962: 65). Michels considered it a prerequisite that in order for parties to successfully contest future elections, parties would inevitably have to professionalise and concentrate authority and decision making structures 'at the top' (Lipset, 1962: 16; Michels, 1962: 71). This would ultimately result in the inevitable uneven distribution of power within political parties and the concentration of power and control within a small and narrow clique of elite officials at the expense of the democratic membership (1962: 71). Whilst Michels' theory was based on his personal observations of the Austrian SDP, he did not qualify the applicability of his findings to this case study alone (Tan, 1997: 365). In fact, his 'iron law of oligarchy' has been applied to many scholarly works on parties and used as a measuring stick for the location of power within political parties, underpinning many party typologies such as the catch-all (Kirchheimer, 1966) and electoral-professional (Panebianco, 1988) parties respectively.

The oligarchic thesis has been challenged by scholars such as Samuel Eldersveld (1964) and R. Kenneth Carty (2004) who work in the stratarchical tradition. According to Eldersveld, the original proponent of the stratarchical thesis, political parties are coalitions of ideological, social and territorial interests whose competing demands need to be managed in order to sustain party unity and the cohesiveness of the party brand. In marked contrast to the oligarchy thesis, Eldersveld argues that sustaining such party unity and enhancing the party's electoral appeal to different social and territorial contexts across the country requires 'the party develops its own hierarchical pattern of stratified devolution of responsibility for the settlement of conflicts, rather than jeopardise the viability of the total organization by carrying such conflicts to the top command levels of the party' (Eldersveld, 1964: 9). The interests of the party's multiple social, ideological and territorial constituencies are protected by dispersing a 'stratarchical' pattern of power across a wide array of constituents and actors, so as to avoid concentrating power and prerogatives within a small clique or central leadership, such is envisaged by the oligarchy thesis. Stratarchical parties are thus characterised by healthy intra-party democracy, and by the 'proliferation of ruling groups and a diffusion of power prerogatives and power exercise' (Eldersveld, 1964: 9) between the party's various strata. The position of party leaders and party elites is ultimately conditional on the support and good will of the party membership and the party's varying constituents through leadership and candidate selection ballots. The party leadership cannot therefore concentrate power and enhance its prerogatives at the expense of the lower party strata (Clark, 2002: 4).

Within devolved or federalist contexts, stratarchical forces are particularly acute. The novel dynamics of sub-state competition in Scotland and Wales require parties to develop differentiated electoral strategies, campaigns and policy platforms to those they are accustomed to in UK-wide general elections. The salience of territorial issues and the

prominence of national identity within sub-state electoral contexts stimulate state-wide leaders to acknowledge that sub-state leaders are better equipped to read the local electoral mood and compete in sub-state contexts than the central party. This leads to what Eldersveld coined, a 'downward deference' from the leadership to the party at large (Eldersveld, quoted in Clark, 2002: 3-4). The analytical task is to determine whether oligarchic or stratarchical patterns persist in the Conservative Party following devolution. If 'oligarchic' tendencies persist, then this thesis would expect to discover that the Westminster leadership and the Conservative Party's Central Office would continue to assert central organizational control over the party in Wales, resisting efforts to develop a decentralised territorial 'polity' or Welsh 'franchise.' If stratarchical patterns emerge, such as the stratified diffusion of power and autonomy across the party's territorial constituents, then the objective is to ascertain why such stratarchical organizational patterns have emerged since 1997.

## WHY DO PARTIES CHANGE?

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Political party scholars have shifted their attention in recent years from studying changes to the rhetoric and policies of political parties, to analysing changes to party organization (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 260). To this end, researchers interested in the organizational change of political parties have turned to the extensive organizational theory to illuminate the causes and dynamics of change, incorporating concepts such as 'change' and 'adaptation' firmly into the lexicon of theories of change and party typologies (1994: 275). Political parties have not emerged or evolved in a continuous or unilinear manner (Gunther and Diamond, 2003: 193). Organizational change has been attributed to a number of environmental and system-level phenomena, some of which are related to short term factors or stimuli, others to broader and more unpredictable long-term social or technological advances or innovations. Some scholars in the field of party research have tended in recent



years to focus on less sweeping changes in party organization (Appleton and Ward, 1997: 341; Harmel, 2002: 125; Scott, 1987: 19). Participants in this school of thought have tended to concentrate on the effect of discrete or gradual changes to a party's environment as the stimulus for abrupt changes to a party's organization (see for example Harmel and Janda, 1994; Janda, 1982; Wilson, 1994). There is considerable validity argue Katz and Mair (1992: 8-9) in considering party change as the product of gradual or environmental adaptation. Their cross-national research project analysing changes in Western European Parties between 1960 and 1990 concluded that parties were gradually changing 'and adapting to the challenges' which new electoral environments present.

Panebianco argues (1988: 261) that the inclusion of party institutionalization is a key determinant in analyzing organizational change. He contends that political parties inherently suffer from a high level of party institutionalization and are inherently inclined to stasis, factors which tend to stifle efforts to promote change and renewal:

...given equal conditions for [the seriousness of the challenge] and [the internal preconditions for change], change is more extensive the weaker the institutionalization (Panebianco, 1988: 261).

Rather than simply seeing political parties as components of a wider party system, Panebianco advances a theory which emphasises the theoretical and empirical value of studying the 'hard-shell' of political parties and their organizational origin. His theoretical emphasis on attempting to understand why parties will often have great difficulty in adapting successfully to such challenges through the lenses of institutionalization and organizational complexity has enriched the academic literature's rather more simple external assessment of what is rational for parties to do and how to behave (Hopkin, 2003: 228). His emphasis on the institutionalization of parties and their inclination to stasis is supported by Harmel and Janda

(1994: 264) who support his premise that parties are essentially conservative organizations. Likewise, in Epstein's view, the more centralized a political party's organization, the less likely it is to innovate (Epstein, quoted in Appleton and Ward, 1997: 347).

Scholars of party change have long presupposed that political parties are purposive organizations which take deliberate actions and decisions on matters relating to policy, campaign strategy and party organization. Party change simply 'does not just happen' (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 261). Whilst acknowledging the determining influence of the environment as a source of party change, Katz and Mair suggest that the 'immediate source of changes in these [organizational] parameters is to be found in the internal politics of the party' (1990: 18). On the question of whether party change is 'evolutionary' or 'developmental', Panebianco suggests that organizational change is the 'effect of changes in alliances among organizational actors, not as stemming from an organization's necessary development. There is no obligatory path to organizational change in this perspective' (1988: 239-240). On the second question of whether party change is intentional or non-intentional, Panebianco considers organizational change to be the fruit of both non-intentional choices, such as changes to the party's political environment, but principally 'as the effect of deliberate and conscious choices' (1988: 240). From this perspective, change to a party's organization is perhaps best understood as a strategic leadership action (Muller, 1997: 294). Parties after all are inherently conservative (Wilson, 1980: 542). Change in the party's electoral or political environment cannot be a necessary or sufficient condition for organizational change. To this end, many academic studies analysing party development have stressed the 'the key role of party leadership' in determining party change (Wilson, 1980: 542-544). Accordingly, party change requires party leaders who recognize the need to change and have the authority and political will power to overcome internal resistance and carry the party with them. Panebianco himself equates party change with an acknowledgment of the

effect of an external stimulus such as environmental or electoral anomaly, which latterly joins forces with intra-party factors which ‘undermine the power structure’ (1988: 242).

Harmel and Janda (1994: 266) share many of these assumptions, citing a change in a party’s leadership as a key independent variable in explaining party change. They argue that change in party leadership may be perceived as part of a commitment to broader party change, in which case change of leadership is deemed necessary to push and accomplish substantial change (ibid.). Likewise, they equate party change as the purposive-action of new party dominant factions (1994: 267). Change of dominant factions create the circumstances for these new elites to assume control of the party’s grassroots and key decision making levels, enabling the party to press for organizational change, as contentious as that may be. Yet, in the absence of a significant dramatic external shock, these new dominant coalitions and groupings within the party are likely to find it harder to justify any wholesale or radical changes to the party, than perhaps a newly elected party leader would (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 267).

## WELSH CONSERVATIVE PARTY ORGANISATION

### INTRODUCTION

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The asymmetric nature of the UK devolved settlement was likely to induce countervailing pressures in favour and against organizational adaptation and greater autonomy for the Conservative Party’s sub-state units in both Scotland and Wales. The first of such pressures was the need to maintain a cohesive Conservative brand and electoral strategy in order to fight future UK-wide General Elections. Such pressure presupposed that the party’s electoral platform and the activities of the party’s candidates and officials would

be unitary, with the party's strategy tightly controlled and overseen by the party's professionalised leadership (Bradbury, 2004: 216, see also Webb, 1994; Webb, 2000). Yet devolution and its narrower focus on territorial issues would also seem to point in the direction of greater organisational decentralisation and autonomy for the Welsh Conservative Party, and the embracement of a distinct and unambiguous Welsh brand (Bradbury, 2004: 216).

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN WALES

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Historically speaking, the Tory party has never enjoyed much organizational autonomy in Wales, as the party's organization has long been integrated in to the UK party's tightly centralised and hierarchical organization (Carter and Ladrech, 2007: 60-62; Peele, 1998: 140-142). According to Brian [now Lord] Griffiths, Margaret Thatcher's former head of the Downing Street Policy Unit:

Too often in the past, the Conservative Party in Wales has been seen as a regional branch of an English institution. For many in Wales, the word Tory has a distinctly foreign, if not hostile ring, to it. It is a brand with a history to which people do not relate (Griffiths, 2002).

The inaugural election to the National Assembly for Wales was thus a particularly acute challenge for the Conservative Party. Nevertheless, organizational renewal was initially a step too far for the Conservatives in 1998 (Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 142). Eschewing comprehensive organizational restructuring and the development of a coherent and distinct Welsh identity, the Welsh party contented itself with a merely superficial name change, from being the 'Conservative Party in Wales' to the 'Welsh Conservative Party (Bradbury, 2004: 232; Jones, 2001: 115; Osmond and Jones, 2003: 204; Walker, 2003: 21; Wyn Jones, 2001:

50). The newly baptised Welsh Conservatives were granted a Board of Management, with scarcely more powers and autonomy than an English Regional Council, and which remained subordinate to the UK Board (Bradbury, 2004: 232; Melding, 2008; Osmond and Jones, 2003: 204). Moreover, powers over short listing parliamentary candidates in Wales and control over party finances were not explicitly devolved to the party in Wales (Melding, 2008). These changes were hardly a reflection of a new and innovative organisational structure and more autonomous Welsh Party.

Not content with the piecemeal and insignificant autonomy devolved to the party in 1999, David Melding, a South Wales AM provoked a debate on the party's constitution and organization in Wales following the second successive general election landslide defeat of 2001 (BBC News, 2001), which ultimately provoked the creation of a Welsh party commission under the chairmanship of party stalwart Wyn Roberts, charged with reviewing the party's constitution (Bradbury, 2004: 232; Osmond and Jones, 2003: 203; Walker, 2003: 21). Lord Roberts' Commission had a choice of four options for the future organizational structure of the Welsh Conservative Party. Firstly, the Commission considered the option of adhering to the status quo, whereby the Welsh party would remain encompassed within the broader UK party constitution. Power over parliamentary candidate selection would remain a centralised prerogative, and policy and campaigning autonomy at the discretion of the UK party leader (Walker, 2003: 21). The second option was whether to establish a Welsh Conservative Party along more devolved lines. The party in Wales would be granted wide ranging powers which would be constitutionally entrenched within the UK party constitution. Most significantly, power over the selection of parliamentary and Assembly candidates would be devolved to the party in Wales, as would the ability to refer members to the UK party's Ethics and Integrity Committee (*ibid.*). More radical considerations included establishing a fully autonomous party, much akin to the Scottish model (see Scottish

Conservatives, 1998a) whereby the Tory party would become a 'sovereign' and constitutional party in its own right, yet aligned with the wider British Conservative family (Walker, 2003: 21). Building upon this option, a bolder option, often described as the Bavarian Option after the CSU's relationship with the German CDU, was to establish an independent Welsh Conservative Party which would be in charge of writing its own manifesto and would sit as an independent group in parliament, yet would form coalitions and cooperate with the UK Conservative Party if deemed electorally advantageous (Osmond and Jones, 2003: 204; Walker, 2003: 21).

The Commission's recommendations, reporting in 2001, would ultimately disappoint figures such as Melding and his ally Glyn Davies, finding little consensus or appetite for any fundamental change to intra-party relations (Bradbury, 2004: 232). Alternatively, the commission recommended a dozen detailed changes which together would move the party in a more autonomous direction. Instead of wholesale organizational renewal and restructuring, the commission proposed a series of piecemeal, yet detailed policy recommendations, ranging from how the party leader should be elected to the recruitment of parliamentary candidates in Wales (Osmond and Jones, 204-205). The commission proposed that any leadership election within the National Assembly group should only be triggered if a majority of the group demanded such a contest. At the time, a contest could simply be triggered if two Assembly Members wanted one. Secondly, the commission advocated the establishment of an eye-catching independent 'high quality, high powered think tank' which would be charged with developing original 'Made in Wales' party policy. Furthermore, the commission proposed that candidates selected to stand for parliament in Wales should in future be vetted by the party in Wales, in order to bar candidates with few local roots and knowledge from standing (Osmond and Jones, 2003: 204-205).

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES: CHANGE IN SCOTLAND

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The Scottish Conservatives' electoral decline had been more dramatic than that of the Conservatives in Wales. From securing a plurality of the Scottish vote and Scottish seats at the 1954 election, the party's post-war support has steadily been eroded, culminating in the party's electoral wipe-out in Scotland in 1997 and fourth place in terms of vote-share in the inaugural Scottish Parliament election of 1999 (Seawright, 2004: 2-4). Naturally the 'tartan' Tories were more open to radical debate on the future organization of the party north of the border, and sympathetic to the need to reposition the Scottish party in the minds of the Scottish electorate as a distinctly 'Scottish' brand (Bradbury, 2004: 231; Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 142). The Strathclyde Commission recommended establishing a new constitutionally sovereign Scottish Party which would be affiliated with the UK-wide party in early 1998 (Scottish Conservatives, 1998a). This constitutionally confederal relationship would allow the party in Scotland to determine its own approved list of candidates for selection to the Scottish parliament as well as elect its own leader north of the border (Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 142). Such constitutional innovation was deemed symbolically significant, as the party sought to overcome its anti-Scottish image with the Scottish electorate, and sought to re-energise a tarnished Scottish Conservative Party by fighting the inaugural Scottish election based on the Scottish credentials and pragmatic unionism of the party (Lynch, 2000: 64). In the inaugural 1999 Holyrood poll, the Scottish Tories' manifesto declared that 'this is a new party' in wake of the fundamental organisational change enacted by the Strathclyde, and latterly Rifkind commission respectively (Seawright, 2004: 11).

As for the development of distinct territorial elites, the situation was somewhat 'more prosaic' (Seawright, 2004: 11). The Chairman of the newly reformed Scottish Party remained an appointee of the UK-wide leader. Moreover, despite organizational changes which integrated the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary wings of the Scottish party under one

common banner, there remained ambiguity as to who provided the political leadership for the Scottish Conservatives. There remained three separate figureheads of the Party in Scotland, the Chairman of the Party, the President, as well as the Leader of the Scottish Tories at Holyrood (Bradbury, 2004: 234; Seawright, 2004: 11). It wasn't particularly easy for the average Scottish voter to clearly identify the parameters of leadership within the Scottish party, despite organizational innovation which had sought otherwise. In terms of candidate selection, an area identified by both Hopkin (2003: 230) and Katz and Mair (2001: 278) as a potential arena for intra-party conflict, constitutional reforms to the Scottish Tories' organization failed to undermine the party's ostensible oligarchic features (Clark, 2002: 10). Whilst the party membership in Scotland was granted the right to elect the Tory group leader in the Scottish Parliament, and the right to participate and vote in constituency candidate selection meetings, the Scottish leadership demonstrated an unhealthy appetite to exert considerable control over such processes as the vetting and ranking of parliamentary candidates for the Scottish Regional lists (Clark, 2002: 10), much to the distain of the Scottish membership and proponents of a genuinely stratified Scottish Conservative Party.

#### OLIGARCHIC TENDENCIES RE-ASSERT

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UK Conservative Party leader William Hague broadly supported the organizational autonomy fashioned by the Scottish and Welsh parties between 1999 and 2001; happy to take advantage from any electoral advances they could possibly muster (Bradbury, 2004: 233). Yet, the party leadership's willingness to allow greater autonomy and discretion for the Scottish and Welsh parties did not represent any 'sophisticated adaptation to multi-level politics' argues Bradbury (2004: 233). It rather reflected ambivalence towards the devolved elections and the party's constituent territorial entities. Under Hague the Conservatives' sub-state leaderships failed to achieve any clarity over their political strategy or identity, and



remained at pains to develop coherent and unashamedly Scottish/Welsh organizations which could curry wide-spread electoral support. The election of Iain Duncan Smith heralded a new beginning in intra-party relations. It appeared that Smith was more sympathetic to developing a strategy which would seriously engage with the party's territorial units (Bradbury, 2004: 234). One of the first initiatives of Duncan Smith's leadership was to appoint a full time shadow-minister for Wales, in the guise of Nigel Evans. On top of this, Duncan Smith decided to invite the party leaders from Scotland and Wales, as well as Welsh Conservative MEP Jonathan Evans to regular meetings of the Conservative shadow cabinet (Bourne, 2003: 39; Clark, 2002: 9; Evans, 2002: 27). Whilst under Hague, Wales had no formal voice in cabinet, under Iain Duncan Smith the Welsh Tories had three prospective champions. Whilst this development was interpreted as recognition of the important role the party's sub-state leaderships had to play following devolution, other commentators interpreted the development as merely the Conservative Party's oligarchic and centralising tendencies reasserting themselves. For Bradbury, 'this bespoke a firmer re-imposition of central control' which would gradually bring the Scottish and Welsh parties to heel and integrated further in to the UK Party's organizational structure (2004: 234).

## CONCLUSION

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Despite the ostensible efforts of the British state-wide parties to devolve power to their regional elites, the Conservative Party if anything sought to consolidate its position by means of re-balancing the location of power and authority at the centre of the party, at the expense of efforts to devolve and decentralise greater authority to the party's territorial units (Bradbury, 2004: 244). The Welsh Conservative Party's long-standing structures and practices remain largely intact following devolution, and organisational change and innovation since 1999 merely cosmetic and insubstantial. Nationally, the Conservative

Party's organizational change has thus far been relatively asymmetric, maintaining a relatively centralised and oligarchic organization in Wales, whilst ceding greater organizational autonomy to territorial elites in Scotland and establishing a more autonomous and devolved party structure (Clark, 2002: 13; Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 149). Pressure for greater organizational autonomy for the Scottish Party were stronger than in Wales, 'which in turn is a reflection of the differing pressures of territorial politics in Scotland and Wales' (Bradbury, 2004: 245). To date, there have been far more important battles for the Conservative Party to overcome, principally the party's ideological re-positioning as a viable and attractive Welsh political force (Melding, 2008). In future however, further devolution of power to the Welsh Assembly may yet re-ignite calls for further organizational adaptation and greater autonomy for the Welsh Conservatives, and greater centre-periphery tensions between London and Cardiff.

Whilst beyond the remit of this dissertation to hypothesize directions of change for political parties within sub-state contexts, state-wide parties such as the Conservatives would do well to reconcile their centre-periphery tensions by adopting Kenneth Carty's (2004) 'franchise model'- a model which may provide just the framework to accommodate the countervailing pressures of stratarchy and oligarchy respectively (2004: 10). Drawing comparisons with the franchise model within the world of business, Carty argues that the franchise business model can easily be transposed to the organizations of political parties (2004: 11), with the party's central leadership in charge of devising the overall campaigning strategy and policy, and the sub-state units charged with 'delivering the product' and tailoring the party's national message to the particular needs of the sub-state electorate on the ground (ibid.) Such a franchise framework could provide for the functional autonomy of the political party's organizational elements, whilst promoting considerable room for relationships and robust cooperation between the party's different strata.

# IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE

## DEFINITION

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It was Budge's contention that any attempt to build a truly comparative theory of political parties should seek to analyse those aspects which bind all their diverse components together – principally: party ideology and policy (Budge, 1993: 695). The ideological positions and policies promoted and adopted by political parties are crucial to the functionality of modern democracies. The respective ideological choices of parties represent the fundamental core identity of parties, serving as an important 'domain of identification' for the electorate and their voting deliberations (Volkens and Klingemann, 2005: 144). Nevertheless, many studies which have used the term 'ideology' have failed to define it. Many studies presuppose the centrality of ideology and policy packages in empirical analyses of parties, yet clear parameters of definition remain ambiguous. Drawing on the clarity and conciseness of Budge's definition, this thesis understands ideology to be the 'core political attitudes and stances' as identifiable with political parties; and 'policy' to constitute the package endorsed by the party (Budge, 1993: 696). As Budge notes, both terms are closely related, yet are independent of one another. Whilst the policy packages of political parties traditionally reflect the ideological heritage of the party, the extent to which these policies reflect the party's ideological legacy will vary according to strategic considerations (ibid).

## READING POLITICAL TEXT

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Despite the relative continuity in party ideologies and programmes from one election to the next, the ideological positions of parties are not frozen. The academic literature on parties in Western Europe is in fact 'redolent' with images of change (Volkens and

Klingemann, 2005: 146). Election programmes are an important source for measuring changes to the policy and ideological positions of parties. Although very few voters read party manifesto at all, party manifestos nonetheless represent the official statement of party policy, embodying the ideological and policy preferences of political parties which are widely disseminated by the media, and for which the party may be held accountable for by the electorate (Benoit and Laver, 2006: 64; Budge et al., 1987: 18; Katz and Crotty, 2005: 415; Klingemann et al., 2006: 165). Moreover, analysing political texts has the advantage that they are collective authoritative statements of policy made at a particular place and time by political parties and actors (Budge, 1993: 699; Budge, 2001: 210; Klingemann et al., 2006: xvi). As such, manifestos provide us with both the abstract and narrower, concrete policies and ideological commitments of political parties, and are as such, an invaluable source of information for political scientists.

## METHODOLOGY

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Left-right measurements are the core currency of political activity in European democracies (Huber and Inglehart, 1995: 74; McDonald et al., 2007: 62). Many theoretical models and substantive descriptions of party competition and ideological change have often used the left-right continuum as a ‘fundamental part of their conceptual toolkit’ (Benoit and Laver, 2006: 90). The Manifesto Research Group (MRG) and its successor, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), were developed in order to estimate the policy positions of political parties over a period of time. They are widely considered the best available data source for analysing manifesto data and to analyse the ideological movement of political parties (Caul and Gray, 2000: 210). Estimating the policy positions of political parties by analysing the content of their election manifestos over a period of time, the CMP uses trained human readers to code every sentence and statement within manifestos into a predefined 56

category coding scheme (Benoit and Laver, 2006: 65; Volkens, 2006: 56). Such systematic left-right content analysis of manifestos permit political scientists to develop a one-dimensional map which can be used to measure changes in party policies and identity between elections (Katz and Crotty, 2005: 423). Yet strong substantive doubts remain over whether reducing all policies to one dimensional abstract statements through computer aided content analysis software can truly capture the substantiveness, sincerity and nuances of party goals and policies. This thesis is primarily concerned with the Conservative Party's change of attitude on such issues as devolution, the promotion of the Welsh language and Welsh culture, and the development and advancement of the Welsh political nation. Such issues are not easily 'boxed' within the socio-economic variables measured along a left-right continuum. Categories such as 'Domain 3: The Political System' (CMP Data Set) do include variables, such as variable 301 'Decentralization: Positive' which strive to measure a party's support, amongst other things, for federalism, devolution, regional autonomy, regional customs and symbols, and deference to local expertise (Klingemann et al., 2006: 186). But such broad and abstract variables do not necessarily capture the nuances of the Welsh Conservative Party's policies and attitudes to such issues.

A further problem with using the Comparative Manifesto Project's data is that the project does not afford the same authoritativeness and legitimacy to local or regional manifestos as they do to manifestos for national office (Agasoster, 2001: 76; Budge and Farlie, 1983; Volkens, 1992: 4). Consequently, the CMP deems only national election manifestos suitable for programmatic research and content analysis, omitting manifestos to the Welsh and Scottish Assemblies from their data set. Moreover, manifestos do not cover all aspects of party identity and party policy. As Harmel and Janda (1995) argued, manifestos do not necessarily establish the actual policy positions or political identity of parties. Some manifestos after all strategically stress some issues more so than other more contentious

issues, so as to both appease their political base and attract the floating voter. According to Klingemann et al., political rhetoric is as much the subtle matter of ‘nuances’ as it is of political emphasis (2006: 7). ‘Like Holmes’ dog’ a manifesto is just as important ‘for what it leaves out’ (Budge, 2001: 701). Certain policy areas are either not mentioned at all or only mentioned briefly in election programmes. As such, it might well be the case that changes to a party’s ideology and policies might well be the case of subtle tampering with the political nuances of policies, or the re-branding or packaging of a party’s policies rather than any substantive change in policy goals and policies.

Rejecting the CMP data set for this inquiry, and despite some reservations as to the usefulness and reliability of reading manifestos and other political texts in ascertaining the policy goals and profiles of parties, it is this thesis’ contention that future analyses of state-wide parties’ ideological adaptation to sub-state government should do so through close representative reading of local and regional manifestos, supplemented by extensive empirical research. This method will allow us to establish the sincerity and substantiveness of ideological change following the advent of sub-state government, which computer aided content analyses simply cannot ascertain.

## WHEN AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS DO PARTIES CHANGE THEIR POLICY PLATFORMS?

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Various scholars have sought to explain why, and under what conditions, parties reinvent their ideology and respective policy platforms. Lippman (1914) and Panebianco (1988) have analysed ‘external shocks’ as a determining factor in explaining party change. Appleton and Ward (1991) conceive the political environment or climate as having a determining effect upon party organization and party policy platforms. Internal factors, particularly the role of political personalities, the innovation of the party leadership and the

sociological complexion of the party membership are attributed by both Deschouwer (1992) and Panebianco (1988) as a further source of ideological change.

Spatial models of voting behaviour assume that parties are vote-seeking creatures, primarily driven by office-seeking considerations rather than policy-orientated goals (Downs, 1957: 28). Accordingly, political parties formulate policies simply in order to win office, rather than win office in order to formulate policies. As Downs explained:

We assume that they act solely in order to attain the income, prestige and power which comes from being in office...their only goal is to reap the rewards of office per se. They treat policies purely as a means to the attainment of their private ends, which they can reach only by being elected (1957: 25-6).

Downs' (1957) 'Economic Theory of Democracy' presupposed that parties had the freedom and flexibility to change their policies and to move from one end of the political spectrum to the next. Downs assumed that parties could easily re-locate themselves at any point along the political continuum, as party leaders themselves were relatively indifferent to policy and ideology and were principally driven by office seeking and vote seeking considerations. The policies and ideologies of political parties were thus relatively free-floating and party leaderships relatively flexible to change their policies from one election to another in order to maximize their electoral appeal (Budge, 1993: 706; Caul and Gray, 2000: 209).

Harmel and Janda (1994: 276) developed a theory of party change which is built on three foundations: leadership change, change in a party's dominant faction, but above all else, an environmental event. Underlying their theoretical assumptions is the notion that specific environmental events, happening at particular times during the electoral cycle, will influence party change. Such 'events' or 'environmental' shocks might constitute one of a number of

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events, for example constitutional or electoral reform (see Albinsson, 1986), industrial action by trade unions, as well as poor election results (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 267). Many theorists in the academic literature have primarily concentrated their attention on this latter environmental shock, theorising organizational change as principally the product of poor electoral performance. Janda (1990: 5) argued the influence of particular environmentally generated stimuli such as poor electoral results was a key determining factor which accounted for party change. He went so far as labelling electoral defeat ‘the mother of party change’ (ibid.). Addressing Janda’s ‘performance theory’, Harmel et al. (1995) found support for previous electoral performance as a source of party change, albeit no evidence to suggest a exclusive or determining influence on party change. Katz and Mair (1990: 18-22; 1992: 9) distinguish between the ‘immediate’ and the ‘ultimate’ source of party organizational change. They cite changes to the internal politics of parties, such as the election of a new leader, as the ‘immediate’ source of organizational change. The ‘ultimate’ source of change however is based on their observation ‘that parties adapt to changes in their environments.’ Panebianco (1988) is another theorist who identifies electoral stimuli as a source of party change. His theory develops three phases of organizational change:

The first is introduced by an organizational crisis unleashed by strong environmental pressure. Electoral defeat and deterioration in the terms of exchange in the electoral arena are classic types of external challenges which exert very strong pressure on the party (Panebianco, 1988: 243)

Harmel and Janda (1994) argued that whilst particular changes to the party’s internal dynamics, for example, the election of a new leader, are likely to result in party change, the ‘most dramatic and broadest changes will occur only when the party has experienced an external ‘shock’ (1994: 262). The authors conditioned the influence of poor electoral results



as a source of party change based on the political goals of political parties. Political parties have numerous goals, but each has principal or primary goals (Appleton and Ward, 1997: 346; Harmel and Janda, 1994: 267; Strom, 1990). External shocks or stimuli will have the greatest external affect on the party's principal goals. For parties whose primary goal is vote-maximizing 'the more pronounced their electoral failures, the more likely they are to change' (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 281).

Yet presupposing that parties are free and flexible to change their ideology is a fundamental flaw of Downs' and other spatial modellers' theories. Political ideologies 'represent fundamental forces for continuity, and, therefore, suggest the presence of a substantially more complex situation than is often taken to be the case' (Mair and Mudde 1989: 169). As essentially historical beings, stemming from major cleavage lines, ideology imposes severe limits upon political parties (Budge, 1993: 707). Parties are not as free as any other organization or business to change their identity and their policies, since this will firstly alienate many of the party's core membership, but also attach little credibility to such a party in the eyes of the wider electorate. Parties are, after all, expected to be principled and to actually stand for something that separates them from their competitors (Budge, 1993: 707; Volkens and Klingemann, 2005: 145; Klingemann et al., 2006: 109; Katz and Crotty, 2005: 414). The party's ideological heritage and core principles act as an important tool to mobilise and keep the party's activists on-board (Budge, 1993: 696). This sense of loyalty and attachment to the party would be lost if the party surrendered many of its deep rooted principles and abandoned many of its core policies from one election to the next (ibid.). Parties will naturally be wary of repudiating previous electoral promises for fear of alienating the membership. Ideology thus provides a fundamental force for continuity and conservatism within political parties.

Whilst Harmel et al., (1995) argued that ideological change or platform moderation was correlated to previous electoral performance, Katz and Mair, (1990: 22) suggest that parties will not always adapt so readily to changing environments. Admittedly, some parties believe that they might be able to weather the storm and dictate or control their electoral environments. Norris and Lovenduski (2004) postulate that there remain certain barriers which prevent rational vote-seeking parties from moderating or changing their policies. It is their contention that any change in policy platform or strategy depends on how accurately elected officials understand and appreciate the extent of any shift in public mood or opinion (2004: 90). The authors advance their theory of 'barriers of selective perception', which may encompass a number of different organizational barriers which prevent parties from being in tune with the wider electorate (2004: 90). Sanchez-Cuenca (2004) further argues that moderation is not an inevitable response to poor electoral performance. He argues that in order to fully explain ideological moderation, or lack thereof, we must introduce, as John Roemer (2001) has argued too, some form of ideological rigidity into the utility function of parties (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2004: 325). The author postulates that political parties do not value electoral success if such electoral advances are the result of 'distorting' or 'diluting' their ideological position and principles. It is reasonable to assume the possibility that many political parties derive utility from defending and upholding their ideological integrity and legacy, even if such actions forgo electoral gains (2004: 330.).

Despite the centrality of the election programme to studies of ideological change and theories of political parties, 'we still know very little about where these programmes come from, and particularly, about the role of intra-party democracy in the process' (Scarrow, 2000: 144). A closer analysis of the 'internal-shell' of the political party might yet shed greater light on the ideological motivations of political parties. Election manifestos are not, after all, made up of a series of discrete statements on different areas of policy which are

haphazardly thrown together without wider consultation and engagement. On the contrary, it is not unusual for each party manifesto to be carefully considered by a 'revising committee' – or for the whole project to be supervised by a leading thinker or individual within the party, principally the leader (Klingemann et al., 2006: 7). Consequently, the final say on the style and content of the electoral manifesto will generally be made by a small group surrounding the leadership team, sympathetic to the ideological foundations of the party and the wants of the grassroots, but above all else, based on the 'leadership's interpretations of what is most marketable' to the electorate (Scarrow et al., 2000: 145-46).

## WELSH CONSERVATIVE PARTY IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE

### INAUGURAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION

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As the standard bearers of the political right and the unitary British State, the challenge for the Conservative Party following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales was to carve out a distinctive new policy agenda which would remain true to the party's fundamental Unionist roots (Lynch, 2004: 386), yet position the party as the champions of Welsh interests (Evans, 2002: 1-2; Osmond and Jones, 2003: 196). In the first Assembly poll, the Conservatives pursued a fairly limited electoral strategy. The party attempted to put the party's hostility towards the new institution behind it, and fully committed itself to making the new institution work effectively for the good of the Welsh people. In wake of polling evidence which suggested many of the 'no' voters would deliberately abstain from voting in the Assembly poll, the party pursued a limited strategy of mobilising their core vote and the 500,000 or so who had opposed devolution to entrust their votes with the Welsh Conservatives (Melding, 2008). It was however unwise to classify these 'no' voters as being

otherwise sympathetic to the Conservative Party, as many of them were in fact disillusioned Labour supporters who did not agree with their party's policy (Evans, 2002: 14).

A further strategic failure was to treat the inaugural 'Welsh General Election' as if it was merely another 'UK General Election.' The newly elected party leader, Rod Richards, was a staunch devo-sceptic, who had successfully defeated the establishment's more moderate choice of Nick Bourne (Bradbury, 2004: 233). Richards sought to treat the Assembly poll as a 'mini UK election', presenting himself as the 'leader of the opposition' and parading his 'shadow cabinet' colleagues to a press conference on the eve of poll (Jones, 2001: 117). Ideologically, Richards positioned the party as a populist right-wing party, advocating more neo-liberal and free-market policies coupled with a greater distrust of devolution than was the case of the Scottish Tories (Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 145). Richards' campaigning style itself was belligerent and confrontational. Whilst livening up the campaign trail, his manner and aggressive rhetoric was likely to have alienated a number of more moderate Welsh electors from supporting the Conservatives. Such British electoral characteristics would ultimately prove counterproductive, as the party failed to take account of the surge in support for Plaid Cymru and the centrality of 'Welsh' specific issues and grievances in the new voting deliberations of the Welsh electorate (Jones, 2001: 117).

## 1999 MANIFESTO

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The Welsh Conservative Party manifesto, *Fair Play for All: Your Voice in the National Assembly* (Welsh Conservatives 1999), represented an advanced step in devolution within the Conservative Party. For the first time in the party's history, the Welsh Conservatives did not lean heavily on London Central Office for the publication of the manifesto, and was rather the product of the Welsh party, a precedent which would latterly be followed in subsequent Assembly elections (Jones, 2001: 117; Melding, 2008). Richards'

manifesto reflected a British orientation to electioneering, giving it an uncompromising populist and right wing edge with little concession or focus on exclusively Welsh issues. Overall the manifesto itself was a somewhat bland and unimaginative document, concentrating the party's narrative on populist issues such as the Assembly's cost and bureaucracy, as well as consistent sniping towards ineffective Labour controlled Local Authorities (p.8) and the 'Linguistic Apartheid' enforced by Plaid Cymru run Gwynedd County Council (p.12). The Manifesto itself is overtly negative in tone, attacking the many failings of the constitutional plans of the Labour government and the threat posed by devolution to the United Kingdom. Yet no systematic effort is made to outline any innovative or expansive policy agenda which might better the quality of life of the Welsh people.

The Manifesto opens with an unambiguous British and unitary vocabulary: 'Wales Our Nation: Britain Our Country'. One could be forgiven for reading the party's manifesto for the inaugural Assembly poll as if it was merely another UK-wide general election. The manifesto's foreword includes twelve references to Britain or Britishness, with only two references reserved for Wales and one to the Welsh people and Welsh identity. This opening underlines the party's commitment to Britain as a unitary state, whilst making limited concessions to developing a Welsh dimension for the inaugural Assembly poll. The party's commitment to upholding the territorial and political integrity of the UK is underlined by the manifestos' unambiguous opposition to any further devolution of powers to the Assembly in the immediate future, committing the Conservative Party to securing 'that devolution does not become an instrument that undermines our British identity and leads to the breakup of the United Kingdom.' The manifesto further warns of the simultaneous dangers which European integration and devolution pose to the territorial and political integrity of the British state, with devolution considered as a means by which European Leaders might develop a Federal Europe! Mentioning Europe six times in the opening pages of the manifesto, and affording

greater prominence than any other issue again serves to reinforce the view that the party had not fully come to terms with the dynamics of multi-level government in the UK, and the dramatic need to re-orientate the party's policy platform so as to accommodate a distinctly Welsh dimension.

Populist taglines such as 'Fair Play For The People Who Pay', coupled with attacks on the 'cronyism', 'junketing' and 'high living' of Wales' newly elected Assembly members are particularly characteristic of the Manifesto. Throughout the manifestos, Richards stresses that the Conservative Assembly group will scrutinise every policy and action by the Assembly so that it passed the Conservative 'fairness and common sense' test (yet failing to outline any concrete positive policy proposals of his own). The overwhelming sense of negativity and apathy towards the Welsh electorate and the Welsh Assembly is summed up by the party's suggestion that many people are likely to 'lose out' as a consequence of devolution, adding:

New Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Nationalists have raised expectations of the Assembly beyond all reason. We are told that the Assembly will solve all of Wales's problems overnight. It will not. Promises of a Welsh Utopia are as cruel as they are unfair (p.2).

The manifestos' policies on the Welsh language are particularly striking. Whilst insisting the party had done more than any other previous government to safe guard and promote one of the cultural 'building blocks of Britain' (p.12) [an interesting take on the Welsh language nevertheless], the subsequent policies elaborated upon by the manifesto would mark a dramatic reversal in official party policy on the language. The manifesto states that:

...every school in Wales should provide Welsh lessons up to GCSE; but we also believe it is fair that parents, who think compulsory Welsh lessons during the two years of preparation for GCSE is not appropriate, should have the right to decide whether or not their children should continue to be taught Welsh (p.6).

The subsequent colourful choice of vocabulary used in the chapter on the party's Welsh language policy was particularly contentious, raising many eyebrows for its populist and hard-edged language. Arguing that non-Welsh speakers should be treated as fairly as Welsh speakers, the manifesto unleashes a uncompromising attack on the 'linguistic apartheid' of Gwynedd County council for employing only Welsh speakers, suggesting that 'the nationalists have gone too far and are now applying the 'English Not'' (p.12). Far from positioning themselves as champions of the Welsh language, Richards positioned the party as if it was fighting a UK-wide General Election, adopting a populist right-wing rhetoric which would curry great sympathy with middle-England and the party's core vote. Such language hardly endeared the party to the mainstream moderate Welsh electorate.

The Tory party's electoral nadir of 1997, coupled with the narrow vote in favour of a National Assembly in September of that year demanded that the party undertake considerable re-thinking and much soul-searching between the referendum result and the inaugural Assembly poll. It is evident from this reading of the party's manifesto that the party failed to undertake a root and branch re-thinking of the party's ideology, and to re-position the party as an attractive Welsh political force. Alternatively, the party's historic legacy and vehement opposition to devolution, coupled with the election of a right-wing populist leader, frustrated efforts to re-package the Tory Party as a moderate Welsh political entity, a mistake which was akin to electoral suicide on the eve of the Assembly poll.

## CHANGE OF WELSH PARTY LEADER

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Following Rod Richards' resignation as party leader (BBC News, 1999), the opportunity presented itself for the Welsh Conservatives to develop a more moderate and 'Welsh' tone to the party's policy platform. The election of Nick Bourne, the regional member for mid and west Wales, allowed the Conservative Party the opportunity to re-position itself as a moderate right-of-centre force once more. During this period of change, the party moderated its attitude to policies on the Welsh Language, citing the perceived electoral benefits from doing so, but also sensing the opportunity of greater collaboration between the opposition parties. This proved the case within a matter of months in to Bourne's leadership as the party cooperated with Plaid and the Liberals over the issue of Objective One funding to bring down the Labour First Secretary Alun Michael in a vote of confidence (Osmond and Jones, 2003: 199). The efforts of Bourne and his party's collaboration with Plaid helped re-position the party as a more distinctively Welsh party, and enshrined the perception that the Conservatives, despite the party's historic reservations about devolution, genuinely wanted to make the Assembly a success for the people of Wales (ibid).

Under Bourne's leadership, the Conservative group in the National Assembly seemed to be quietly attempting to carve out a position that is more akin to continental Christian Democracy than the Thatcherite rhetoric advocated by Richards and which has prevailed at the UK level (Wyn Jones, 2001: 51) – a deliberate and calculated ploy to moderate the party's tarnished image in Wales in the hope of reaping future electoral dividends. Yet there remained a significant portion of the Welsh Conservative Party membership which remained unreconciled with the advent of devolution and which remained lukewarm to the Welsh party leaderships' efforts to moderate and modernise the Conservative brand (Wyn Jones, 2001: 50). As Evans notes, as a democratic party these dissenting views must be respected and addressed (Evans, 2002: 23). Whilst party policy expressed a commitment to making the

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National Assembly a success this inevitably was at pains with a number of the party's core activists (Evans, 2002: 23-24). Yet the UK party leadership has made it steadfastly clear that policy on devolution is a matter to be deliberated and 'made in Wales' (Evans, 2002: 24; Lynch, 2004: 389; Melding, 2008).

## NARROW ENGLISH NATIONALISM

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The General Election of 2001 frustrated the efforts of the Welsh Conservative Party to re-position the party as a progressive 'Welsh' political force. The 2001 Manifesto demonstrated the Welsh party leadership's lack of influence over national party policy, as William Hague fashioned a populist, right-wing manifesto which pandered to the party's English core vote (Conservative Party, 2001). Hague reverted to the English nationalism and unitary rhetoric of Thatcher, vehemently opposing the expansion of the EU and the introduction of the Euro (p.29), and further devolution of power to Scotland and Wales for fear of undermining the British Union State (p.45). The Manifesto of 2001 stressed the need to maintain the role of Secretary of State for Wales in UK cabinet, yet argued for an imminent resolution to the so called 'West Lothian question', which would exclude Welsh and Scottish MPs from 'English' parliamentary votes (p.46). Whilst the party leadership argued that such a move was required in order to protect the political integrity of the United Kingdom, the policy was rightly interpreted as a form of narrow English nationalism, counterproductive to the Scottish and Welsh party leaderships' efforts to fashion a new brand of Celtic Conservatism. Such developments only served to strengthen the Welsh and Scottish electorate's perceptions of the party as an alien and remote 'English' brand (Lynch, 2004: 386; Seawright, 2004: 13).

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2003 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

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The Welsh Conservatives' draft manifesto for the second Assembly elections was published for consultation in October 2002 (Melding, 2008). Entitled *Fighting for the Vulnerable* (Welsh Conservative Party, 2003) there was a marked softening of emphasis on traditional Conservative stances on social and economic questions, which reflected the wide-ranging consultation which had taken place in formulating the party's policy package. The manifesto was the product of a year-long comprehensive, and hitherto unprecedented consultation exercise carried out by the Conservative Party between the autumn of 2001 and October 2002 (Melding, 2008). This consultation took place both internally within the party's membership, and externally with broader Welsh Civil Society. Consultation documents addressing the broad policy areas covered by the Assembly's subject committees were widely circulated to the 40 conservative constituency branches and some 500 external organisations in Wales (ibid). The final Manifesto was unofficially rubberstamped by the party's membership at both the North and South Wales Autumn Conservative Policy Forum Meetings in 2002, before being approved by the party's Strategy Policy Group, comprising of Bourne, Melding, Carol Hyde the Party Chair, Lord Roberts, Jonathan Evans MEP, as well as the Tories' Welsh affairs spokesman at Westminster, Nigel Evans MP in the Spring of 2003 (ibid).

## 2003 PARTY MANIFESTO

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The party's ostensible efforts to fashion a new brand of Conservatism along distinctive Welsh lines were underlined by the party's Manifesto for the second Assembly poll (Welsh Conservatives, 2003). Whilst constitutional divisions persisted within the party over whether to support further devolution of power to the Assembly in the run up to the poll

(BBC News, 2003c), the manifesto itself marked an ambitious and innovative policy document, characterised by moderate choice of language, distinctly Welsh overtones and an expansive and highly original policy agenda. The manifesto outlines a detailed programme for government, running to a staggering 80 pages in length (Welsh Conservatives, 2003). The Manifesto's introduction has eight references to 'Wales' or to the 'Welsh', whilst in marked contrast to the 1999 manifesto, not a single reference is made towards Britain/British identity or Europe. Nevertheless, one cannot but help and believe that Nick Bourne, the party leader, is addressing his party membership in his foreword, rather than directly addressing the Welsh electorate. Bourne thanks the Welsh Conservative Party membership for their 'positive response' to the party's extensive policy consultation in formulating the 2003 manifesto, further thanking them for their steadfast loyalty and support for the Conservative Assembly group (ibid.).

Whilst the 1999 Manifesto was more than prepared to ridicule present government policy without offering much of an alternative policy agenda, the 2003 manifesto is characterised by a breadth of detailed and innovative eye-catching policies. The party proposes an expansive vision of what can best be characterised as 'Nation Building' policies, advocating the establishment of such national institutions as a National Art Gallery of Wales and a Welsh National Public Records Office and Archives Service located in the National Library in Aberystwyth (p.69). The party further commits itself to developing and building upon the successful University of Wales Brand which has served the Welsh nation so well. Culturally speaking, the party is positively committed to celebrating the cultural heritage and talent of Wales by investing greater sums of money in national, international and local Eisteddfodau as well as establishing an annual National Assembly Award for Contemporary Art (ibid.). The party's positive and sympathetic vocabulary on the Welsh language is in marked contrast to the negative and hostile tone of the party's 1999 manifesto. The manifesto

states that the findings of the 2001 census on the growth in the language is indeed encouraging news, and building upon the excellent legacy of previous Conservative Governments, ‘the Welsh Conservative Party is committed to the principle of a genuinely bilingual society,’ determined to ensure that the language ‘remains at the heart of Welsh life’ (p.68). Achieving this vision of a bilingual Wales, the party proposes maintaining the Welsh Language Board in its present form, as well as channelling its efforts in to promoting the benefits of Welsh medium education and expanding the resources available in Key Stage One and in Ysgolion Meithrin (p.17). However, this ostensible support for the language is qualified, as the manifesto cites that any Welsh language policy should equally remain ‘sensitive to those who cannot speak Welsh’ (p.17-18). In this regard, the manifesto suggests a ‘degree of targeting and flexibility on the teaching of Welsh’, which would allow parents and schools to opt children at Key Stage 4 out of Welsh language lessons.

On the issue of further devolution of power to the Assembly, the manifesto seeks to hit a reconciliatory tone by acknowledging the party’s historic opposition to the devolved body, yet maintaining that no other party has worked as constructively in the National Assembly in order to make the newly devolved body and effective and relevant institution to the entire Welsh people. The manifesto is blunt, stating that the party will oppose primary legislative and tax raising powers for the Assembly. Nevertheless, the 2003 manifesto strikes a markedly more positive tone than the overwhelmingly negative and hostile view of the Assembly expressed in 1999. The 2003 manifesto recognised many of the flaws in the institutional design of the body as expressed in 1999, yet advocates, where Rod Richards failed, many constructive and innovative policies which might strengthen the devolved Assembly, rather than simply reverting to undermining the institution. Such innovation includes strengthening the present constitutional foundations of the devolved body and strengthening its transparency and accountability. It is suggested that these goals might be

achieved by getting rid of the Assembly's corporate structure and splitting its executive and legislature, establishing the National Assembly Government as a Department of State to be known as the Welsh Executive (p.74). Moreover, the manifesto senses the benefit of developing closer working relations between the Assembly and Westminster, in order to preserve the political integrity of the United Kingdom (ibid). Integrating the Assembly more closely with Westminster parliamentary procedures would be mutually beneficial to both institutions. The party propose issuing guidance notes on relations between London and Westminster so as to foster closer working relations, as well as regular monthly questioning of the Secretary of State for Wales in full Assembly plenary (p.76-77). Further devolution of powers, akin to the 1999 manifesto, must again be ratified by a popular referendum of the Welsh people. The party qualify this statement by stating that they foresee no immediate need for such a referendum on primary powers (p.79).

The Manifesto further included a mix of emphasis on some of the party's more traditional bread and butter issues, such as crime and asylum (p.64-65), despite neither issue being devolved. This may be interpreted as an effort to mobilise the party's core vote, which had failed to vote in sufficient numbers in the 1999 poll, and to reassure a number of the party's traditional followers who might have been alienated by the party's new found 'Welsh' rhetoric. It further suggests that despite the party's ostensible 'Welshness' and efforts to embrace devolution, the party was perhaps not yet fully reconciled with devolution and continued to be in a British election mentality. Nevertheless, the 2003 Manifesto marked the eschewing of the party's Thatcherite legacy and a genuine and sincere effort to fashion a more moderate and unashamedly Welsh political discourse which was particularly sensitive to the plight and grievances of the Welsh electorate.

## ‘TARTAN’ DISTINCTIVENESS

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The Scottish Tories since 1999 have espoused a new form of ‘unionism’ (Lynch, 2004: 389). Few, if any leading personalities within the party oppose the existence of the Holyrood parliament, let alone advocate returning to pre-devolution days. This accommodation of devolution has coincided with the party’s commitment to developing innovative and distinctive ‘made in Scotland policy’ or ‘tartan distinctiveness’ to Scottish policy (Seawright, 2004: 9). Under David McLetchie’s leadership, the party sought to draw a line under its previous opposition to devolution by accepting the will of the Scottish people (Bradbury, 2004: 232-233). Yet divisions remained over where to locate and present the Scottish Conservatives to the Scottish electorate along the left-right continuum. Many party members which had championed greater autonomy for the party north of the border were likely to be inclined to re-position the party as a moderate right of centre force (Bradbury, 2004: 233). Party traditionalists and devo-sceptics were likely to eschew attempts to undermine the party’s neo-liberal Thatcherite legacy (ibid). The Scotland’s Future Commission chaired by Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Scottish Conservatives, 1998), which undertook an extensive public consultation including over 400 informative meetings throughout Scotland (Seawright, 2004: 9) agreed upon a moderate one-nation tone to the Scottish party’s policy platform in advance of the inaugural Holyrood poll (Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 145; Seawright, 2004: 8). The Commission supported greater policy autonomy for the party in Scotland, and the development of distinctive Scottish executive policies which differed from the party’s policies at Westminster, such as the abolition of student tuition fees and support for free long-term care for the elderly north of the English border (Bradbury, 2004: 232-233; Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006: 145). Compared to the grassroots memberships of the SNP and Labour Party, Scottish Tories ceded very little formal influence over the party’s policy agenda to its membership following the advent of

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devolution (Clark, 2002: 8). Whilst Scottish Conservative constituency associations may submit motions and papers for debate at the party's annual conference, these motions are subject to a screening process by the party leadership's Policy Forum, in order to sieve contentious motions from the conference agenda (ibid). Moreover, the party's conference decisions only have an 'advisory status' for the Scottish party leadership, maintaining the party's tradition of investing policy-making authority 'in a small leadership group, and in particular the party leader' (Clark, 2002: 9), much akin to the Conservative Party in Wales (Grainger, 2008)

## SECOND ASSEMBLY TERM 2003-2007

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Since the Assembly elections of 2003, the Welsh Conservative Leadership has not shied away from advocating the establishment of 'Clear Blue Water' between Welsh Conservatives and the party at Westminster. Whilst acknowledging that a fundamental set of coherent values and principles unite Conservatives across the United Kingdom, the leadership of Nick Bourne has acknowledged the need to adjust these values to the novel social, economic and electoral context of post-devolution Wales. Since the 2003 Assembly elections, the party leadership has established two Standing Committees - one to look at public service delivery in Wales, and the other responsible for developing the party's Welsh language and culture policy (Bourne, 2003: 39). The party's new found confidence on Welsh issues in the Assembly's second term resulted in a number of other exciting initiatives. The establishment of the party's internal newspaper, 'Y Ddraig Las/The Blue Dragon' (Welsh Conservative Party Winter 2003) has been rightly acknowledged as an important development within the Welsh Party, promoting many of the party's Welsh activities, personalities and policies. Bilingual publications such as 'Dathlu'n Bywyd Diwylliannol/Celebrating our Cultural Life' (Welsh Conservative Party 2007) marked with a 'MADE IN WALES' stamp, is a further

demonstration of the party's new found confidence and enthusiasm on such matters as the Welsh Language and Welsh Culture. Glyn Davies' audience with Welsh Language pressure group *Cymuned* further exemplified the party's new found confidence on the issue of the Welsh language (BBC News, 2003d). Efforts to develop and re-invent a Welsh Conservative discourse or narrative have yet to find a suitable intellectual home. Proposals were developed to build upon the foundations of the newly established Public Service Delivery and Welsh Language Committees respectively, and establish a Welsh Policy Forum lead by some of the party's foremost thinkers, such as Lord Griffiths, Lord Roberts, and Catrin Edwards the party's Vice Chairman responsible for policy. This noble ambition, regrettably, has yet to be achieved (Melding, 2008).

#### DEVELOPMENTS AT A UK LEVEL

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The Conservative Party's 2005 Election Manifesto seemed to undermine the efforts of Welsh Conservatives to reconcile the party's differences with regard to devolution. Michael Howard's Conservatives stood on an election platform at the 2005 General Election which undermined the ostensible 'Welsh' rhetoric of the party in Wales by proposing a 'preferendum' to the Welsh electorate on the future of the Welsh Assembly (Conservative Party 2005). In spite of the opposition to the policy from the party in Wales, Howard promised voters a choice of enhancing the powers of the Assembly in future, adhering to the status quo, or scrapping the body entirely in a future referendum. The election of David Cameron however as UK Party leader in November 2005 came as encouraging news to the Welsh party leadership. Cameron has committed himself to allowing the Welsh party the greatest possible freedom to determine their own policy preferences and position on future devolution of powers (BBC News, 2005). His early abolishment of the 'preferendum' policy, coupled with the appointment of Cheryl Gilligan as Shadow Welsh Affairs Spokesman



instead of one of the three devo-sceptic Welsh MPs demonstrated Cameron's commitment to the Welsh party's efforts to re-invent an unambiguous and unashamedly Welsh narrative (BBC News, 2006a and 2006b).

## 2007 MANIFESTO

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A decade or so since the establishment of sub-state government in Wales, the 2007 Conservative Party manifesto marks the culmination of the party's efforts to develop a new Conservative narrative of relevance to post-devolution Wales (Welsh Conservatives, 2007). 'Change' is very much the 2007 manifesto's buzzword. The manifesto opens by recognising the electoral misfortune of the Conservatives in Wales and striking an almost conciliatory tone by apologising for the party's poor management of the principality, pleading 'Vote Welsh Conservatives for a change' as the 'Conservative Party has changed' (p.3). Moreover, we are told that the party's policies have been devised 'in Wales, for Wales' rather than by the party leadership at Westminster (p.3). Despite stating the party's policies 'are made in Wales', the party's manifesto is promoted by party elders in Westminster, by both David Cameron the UK Party Leader as well as Cheryl Gilligan the Welsh Affairs Spokeswoman. Previous election manifestos for the 1999 and 2003 Assembly polls did not carry forewords by the UK Party Leader. This anomaly might be interpreted as being counterproductive to the party's ostensible efforts to present a strong 'Welsh' image to the Welsh electorate. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as an effort by the Welsh party to dovetail Cameron's coattails as he was riding particularly high in national opinion polls at the time. More so, Cameron in many respects exemplifies the 'change' agenda of the Welsh Conservatives, and was thus a suitable signatory to the party's manifesto foreword.

The most significant thing about the 2007 manifesto is the absence of any substantive attention or mention of the constitutional question and the future of the Assembly. The

manifesto is incredibly muted on the issue of devolution. Not a single passing reference is made throughout the manifesto on the future of devolution, or any such mention of the need for a referendum on any further primary legislative powers. The chapter discussing devolution merely says that since the initial referendum of 1997:

More and more people believe devolution is necessary for a strong Britain. Welsh Conservatives believe this too, despite our fears in 1997. We freely acknowledge that devolution has not weakened Britain. Our task now is to use devolution imaginatively to make Britain stronger (p.35).

The manifesto merely goes on to outline many soft and vague policies which might make devolution stronger, such as the establishment of a devolution forum to exchange ideas and best practices between the devolved Home Nations and Westminster, as well as establishing petitioning procedures to encourage greater public participation in the Assembly and Assembly government's work (p.35). The absence of a hostile attitude to devolution which exemplified the 1999 and 2003 manifestos, and the party's efforts to develop a banal nationalism to its narrative, seems to suggest that this was a calculated strategy by the party in order to appeal to potential coalition government partners post election day. This was a high risk strategy by the party, potentially upsetting and alienating many of the party's traditional supporters. Nevertheless, the very vagueness and ambiguity of the party's attitude on devolution and the absence of a definitive party policy on the future of the Assembly allowed the Conservatives to appease its grass-roots membership, yet present themselves as a moderate Welsh political force to successfully court potential coalition partners. The party's open mind on reviewing the arrangements for local government elections with a view to a possible referendum on introducing proportional representation to local government (p.31) is one such policy which its inclusion in the manifesto can only be interpreted as a calculated

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move to appeal to potential coalition partners, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

Traditional Tory themes of law and order, the economy, and family are conspicuously missing from the manifesto, whilst Cameron's 'green' stamp is particularly evident on the party's 2007 manifesto (p.15-17). Cameron's foreword to the manifesto stresses the need to 'put the environment at the heart of policy making in Wales,' committing his party to making Wales 'more green, more local, more family friendly' (p.3). The most spectacular feature of the 2007 manifesto is the hitherto unprecedented prominence and attention afforded to the Welsh language and to Welsh culture. On the matter of the Welsh language, the 2007 manifesto marks the party's boldest policy statements on the Welsh language in living memory, going further than any previous Conservative government in resoundingly supporting a new and revised Welsh Language Bill which would afford official status to both English and Welsh languages (p.27). The manifesto further commits to placing a duty upon the Assembly Government and Welsh local authorities to create a genuinely bilingual society, statutorily enforced by a new and powerful office of the Language Commissioner (ibid.). Further suggestions such as establishing a 'Welsh order of chivalry' and lobbying for the Welsh dragon to be included on Welsh number plates are some of the party's more innovative, if not ridiculous policies relating to Welsh culture and 'nation building'(p.35). Nevertheless, along with such commitments to establishing St David's Day as a National Bank Holiday in Wales, these policies represent a new form of banal nationalism to the party's narrative, and the culmination of the party's re-positioning as a progressive centre-right Welsh party.

## CONCLUSION

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The Conservative Party cannot, and will not cease to be a Unionist party, resolute in its support for the political and territorial integrity of the United Kingdom. However, the establishment of sub-state government in Wales has presented the Conservative Party with the challenge of developing a brand of conservative unionism which is compatible with Welsh identity. Characteristic of Conservatism, the Welsh Conservative Party has responded pragmatically to the establishment of sub-state government in Wales, accepting the new democratic institution in spite of its ideological opposition to it, striving to make the young institution a political success. Since the referendum and the inaugural Assembly poll, the Conservative Party has sought to present itself to the Welsh public in new ways which displays a clear awareness of the role that national identity plays in the new devolved electoral context, ‘competing for the mantle of the party that ‘stands up for the interests of Wales’ (Wyn Jones, 2001: 52).

The empirical findings of this thesis demonstrate that the Conservative Party’s ideological re-alignment and moderation in Wales since 2003 has been as much the product of a reduction in the party’s ideological rigidity, as it has been a response to the party’s dire electoral performances in 1999 and 2003. Nevertheless, whilst the party leadership, as epitomized by the speeches of Nick Bourne, Melding and Davies recognise the virtue in aligning the party with a strong Welsh identity and supporting greater devolution of power to the Assembly, questions remain however over the substantiveness and sincerity of such opinions, and to what extent their views reflect the wishes of the wider Conservative grassroots. Polling of Conservative members has consistently demonstrated hostility towards further power to the Assembly, albeit recent polling suggests a decade long opposition to devolution is finally being reversed (Scully and Wyn Jones, January 2008: 67-68). The party’s current three Welsh MPs however remain vehemently opposed to further devolution

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(see for example Crabb 2007). The party's electoral success at the 2007 Assembly poll came in its traditional Conservative heartlands in Pembrokeshire and the Welsh marches, suggesting that the party is not necessarily reaping any significant electoral rewards from its new-found 'Welshness' (Scully and Elias, 2008). Nevertheless, the party's demonstrable efforts to develop and present a distinct Welsh Conservative narrative curried favour with the opposition parties in the Assembly post May 2007, as the Conservatives for the first time were realistically considered as viable coalition partners in an anti-labour 'rainbow' coalition. Suffice to say, such developments would have been incomprehensible a mere decade or so ago, testament to the party's considerable efforts since 1997 to re-invent its sub-state politics in Wales.

The current challenge for the party is particularly acute. Despite all the 'Welsh-friendly rhetoric' since 1999, the convening of the All Wales Constitutional Convention and the Assembly coalition government's commitment to holding a referendum on primary legislative powers within the next two years will require the Conservative Party to finally decide in the coming months upon its official party policy with regard to the future of devolution (Wyn Jones, 2008: 16). For too long, the Conservative Party have attempted to avoid constitutional questions, failing to establish a definitive position on the future of devolution. In the interim, the party awaits the recommendations of the Roberts Commission which is likely to chart a policy course for the Conservative Party on the question of devolution (BBC News, 2008) Roberts' recommendations may well have wide-ranging ramifications for the Welsh Conservatives, demonstrating the sincerity and genuineness of the party's commitment to developing a Welsh narrative, or rather exemplifying continuity to the party's sub-state politics.

Whilst the absence of a strong Welsh Conservative organization and an active Welsh membership has often been attributed as a reason for the Conservative Party's electoral

demise in Wales, this lack of organizational presence and active grassroots may yet be the party's saving grace in future (Jones, 2002/03: 7). Whilst a dogmatic and participatory membership in England have frustrated attempts to modernise and renew the Conservative Party, the absence of a Conservative tradition in Wales and a diminishing and un-awkward membership may yet present the opportunity for the Welsh party to be bolder than her Scottish and English counterparts, affording the opportunity to renew and re-invent the party's discourse along unashamedly and unequivocal Welsh lines.

## CONCLUSION

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Political parties are by no means all alike (Muller and Strom, 1999: 279-280). A generalization about their behaviour and adaptation to sub-state government is thus an endeavour which is fraught with difficulty. Whilst acknowledging the potential limits of drawing wider inferences or notions of generalisability from a single case study, this thesis considers it justifiable to make some tentative nomothetic claims as to how state-wide parties adapt to sub-state government based upon this thesis' empirical findings, whilst also advancing a tentative theoretical framework for the future analysis of sub-state party change.

Political scientists have long developed models of political parties in order to make sense of how parties organize and change. The contemporary literature is rich with theories of party change and numerous party typologies, many of which have come to be considered classics in the scholarly field of party politics. Questions remain however over whether these theories and conceptual tools are of any use to contemporary theory-building with regard to political parties within sub-state contexts. Many of the existing party typologies are the products of particular 'temporal and geographical context[s],' many of which are derived from state-centric analyses of 19<sup>th</sup> century European party systems (Gunther and Diamond, 2003: 167). The devolution reforms of 1997, and the increasing de-nationalization of politics has put paid to this hitherto dominant state-centric paradigm, posing significant problems for the operationalisation of party families, but also analytical challenges for scholars and students engaged in empirical study of political parties within sub-state contexts.

Whilst often neglecting the territorial dimension of party politics, the extensive literature on political parties and party systems can, nevertheless, be readily adapted to the needs of research into sub-state politics. Many classic typologies and theories of party change have illuminated and enriched our understanding of political parties over the years, and may

continue to do so within the context of sub-state government. The analytical challenge is to reconceptualise many of these classical theories of party change so as to accommodate a robust territorial dimension. The first chapter reviewed many of the key theoretical debates within the academic literature regarding how, and under what circumstances do parties change. Whilst many of the theoretical models outlined, such as those of the environmental and purposive-action approaches respectively have often been presented as competing or rival explanations for party organizational change, this thesis' findings suggest that these theories need not be considered to contradict one other. By merging environmental approaches with purposive-action theories, and conscious of independent regional or territorial variables, we are more likely to present the optimal circumstances for broad and fundamental party change, at both state and sub-state levels respectively.

The overview of the methodological literature on quantitative analyses of party ideological positions identified problems of operationalising content analyses of manifestos to sub-state electoral contexts. Whilst systematic left-right content analyses of manifestos permit political scientists to develop a one-dimensional map which can be used to measure changes to party policies and identity between elections, strong substantive doubts remain over whether reducing manifestos to one dimensional abstract statements can truly capture the substantives, sincerity and nuances of sub-state party goals. Many of the political debates within sub-state contexts pertain to the right to self-determination, and the protection and promotion of indigenous cultures and languages, issues which cannot easily be 'boxed' within broad and abstract socio-economic variables measured along a traditional left-right continuum. Traditional left-right measurements of ideological change cannot capture the main political divisions and debates within sub-state contexts, and are thus of little or no relevance to producing authoritative and purposeful mapping of sub-state party systems. The absence of a variable concerning attitudes to devolution, coupled with the MRG/CMP's lack



of data pertaining to sub-state electoral manifestos deems such quantitative content analyses inappropriate for future analyses of sub-state adaptation.

Many party typologies and theories of party change have measured parties along a left-right continuum. Whilst acknowledging that oligarchy and stratarchy have many flaws as conceptual tools, least of all their inability to say much about the nature of organizational change and the intensiveness of such change in parties, they are however useful conceptual tools for measuring the degree of centralization within parties. Applying the notions of ‘oligarchy’ and ‘stratarchy’ respectively, measured in terms of the centralization-decentralization dichotomy, we are likely to present a fuller, and more substantive account of the location of power within state-wide parties, a strong indicator of how successful political parties are adapting to devolution.

The consequences of sub-state government for state-wide political parties can be rather unpredictable and difficult to hypothesize or measure. From this preliminary investigation, the Conservative Party’s adaptation to sub-state government was particularly asymmetric and piecemeal. Whilst many of the novel institutional and electoral challenges posed by sub-state government in Wales, for example, the increasing centrality of national identity in the voting deliberations of the Welsh electorate and the emergence of a strong ethno cleavage to electoral politics may hold true of other European sub-state contexts, it would be unwise to generalise or infer the dynamics of sub-state government in Wales to other European sub-state contexts. The analytical task is to generate more empirical evidence by studying from a comparative perspective. Only then might the electoral challenges identified for the Conservative Party in sub-state Wales be generalised more broadly to other European state-wide parties and sub-state contexts.

In sum, future party theory-building efforts must do so beyond the dominant state-centric lenses in which political parties and liberal democracies have hitherto been analysed.

The challenge in future is for the territorial dimension of party politics to be firmly integrated into the lexicon of parties and theories of party change. The empirical challenge of developing future theories of party change and adaptation to sub-state government is to generate a wealth of comparative and empirical evidence, both temporal and geographical. Only then might we substantiate and legitimise a truly integrated theoretical framework for the analysis of party change within sub-state contexts.

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