The Fourth National Assembly Election

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Roger Scully (Aberystwyth University)

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Outline of Seminar

1. Introduction
2. The 2011 Election: the Result
3. The 2011 Welsh Election Study
4. The Survey Evidence:
   – Attitudes to the Parties
   – Attitudes to the Leaders
   – The Major Issues
   – Turnout Effects?
5. Attitudes to Devolution
6. Questions and Discussion
2011: The Result

Constituency
- Labour
- Cons.
- Plaid
- Lib-Dems

Regional List
- Labour
- Cons.
- Plaid
- Lib-Dems
- Others
Changes From 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Cons.</th>
<th>Plaid</th>
<th>Lib-Dems</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<td>12.00%</td>
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1st Vote

2nd Vote

Legend:
- Labour
- Cons.
- Plaid
- Lib-Dems
- Others
The Best of Times...Labour

- Highest vote share ever on constituency ballot (2.3% better than 2003)

- Highest vote share ever on regional ballot (0.3% better than 2003)

- Equal best seats ever: 30 (as in 2003)

- Labour vote share increased in all five regions, and in 38 of 40 constituencies
The Best of Times...Conservatives

• Highest vote share ever on constituency ballot (2.6% better than 2007)

• Highest vote share ever on regional ballot (1.1% better than 2007)

• Best seat total ever: 14

• Less consistency than Labour in performance: vote share actually fell in 12 constituencies
The Worst of Times...Plaid Cymru

• Lowest vote share ever on constituency ballot (1.9% worse than 2003)

• Lowest vote share ever on regional ballot (1.8% worse than 2003)

• Lowest seat total ever: 11

• But not uniform decline: vote share actually increased in 11 constituencies
The Worst of Times...Lib-Dems

- Lowest vote share ever on constituency ballot (2.9% worse than 1999)
- Lowest vote share ever on regional ballot (3.7% worse than 2007)
- Lowest seat total ever: 5
- Near uniform decline: vote share rose in only 3 constituencies
- Close to Disaster: 4 List Seats could easily have been 2 (won MWW seat by 198 votes; SWW by 54 votes)
The 2011 Welsh Election Study

• Support from Economic and Social Research Council (Grant RES-062-23-2625)
• Fieldwork conducted by YouGov, via internet
• Sampling conducted in two waves:
  – Pre-election wave conducted as ‘rolling sample’ through the 4 weeks prior to the election; N = 2359
  – Post-election wave conducted immediately after election; N = 2217
  – Post-election wave drawn from pre-election respondents: Panel Data on the same individuals
• Questions on many potentially relevant areas: Parties, Leaders, Issues etc
Parties’ Popularity: % 0/10

- Labour
- Cons.
- Lib Dems
- Plaid
- Greens
- UKIP
- BNP

Bar chart showing the popularity of various political parties.
Political Parties: Popularity (Average Rating /10)
Political Parties: change in average popularity May 2010-11

Labour: +0.5
Cons.: -0.1
LibDems: -1
Plaid: -0.5
‘How much does each of these parties look after the interests of...?’ (% ‘great deal’/’fair amount’)

Working Class People

- Labour: 70.00%
- Cons: 10.00%
- LibDems: 20.00%
- Plaid: 30.00%
‘How much does each of these parties look after the interests of...?’ (% ‘great deal’/’fair amount’)

English people in Wales

- Labour: 50.00%
- Cons: 30.00%
- LibDems: 25.00%
- Plaid: 25.00%
‘How much does each of these parties look after the interests of...?’ (% ‘great deal’/’fair amount’)

- Labour
- Cons
- LibDems
- Plaid

People who speak Welsh
‘How much does each of these parties look after the interests of...?’ (% ‘great deal’/’fair amount’)

**Welsh people in general**

- **Labour**: 60.00%
- **Cons**: 20.00%
- **LibDems**: 10.00%
- **Plaid**: 50.00%
‘How much does each of these parties look after the interests of...?’ (% ‘great deal’/’fair amount’)

People like you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LibDems</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaid</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you usually think of yourself as being a supporter of one political party?
Overall Attitudes to Parties

Labour: recovered ground over last year; strong profile across all categories

Conservatives: Core support; but (despite decontamination/Welshing-Up) still widespread hostility

LibDems: Major change in public attitudes in last 12 months → greater negativity

Plaid Cymru: Little hostility and much positive feeling: but not translating into electoral support
Potential Influences on Vote Choice

*Longer-Term:* Attitudes to parties / party identification

*Short-Term:*

- Campaign
- Leaders
- Performance in Govt (relevant to all four main parties)
Campaign Contact: % recalling contact from any party in campaign

Labour
Cons
LibDems
Plaid
Others
No Contact
Which party ran best campaign?

- Labour: 30.00%
- Conservatives: 10.00%
- Liberal Democrats: 5.00%
- Plaid Cymru: 2.00%
- DK: 57.00%
Of those viewing TV Leaders’ debates (c.17% of sample)
Which leader best in campaign?
Party Leaders: Popularity
(Average Rating /10, among those offering view)

Bar chart showing the popularity ratings of different party leaders.
# Government Competence Evaluations

‘How Good or Bad a Job in running Britain/Wales?’ (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cons.</th>
<th>LD</th>
<th>Lab.UK</th>
<th>LabWG</th>
<th>PCWG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly Good</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly Bad</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy Change Since 2007 (2011, %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NHS</th>
<th>Educ.</th>
<th>Std.Liv</th>
<th>L&amp;O</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Diff.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: NHS

- Better: 100.00% (WAG)
- Worse: 30.00% (WAG), 20.00% (UK Govt)
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: Education

Better

Worse

WAG
UK Govt
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: Standard of Living

Better

WAG

UK Govt

Worse
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: Law and Order

- Better: WAG (45.00%), UK Govt (15.00%)
- Worse: WAG (0.00%), UK Govt (45.00%)
# How ‘Welsh’ an Election was it?

## Level of voting decision (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Wales</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Britain</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both equally</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / DK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Converting Attitudes into Votes

% of people giving 8-10 on party popularity scale who actually voted for party on constituency ballot

Labour: 70.00%
Cons.: 60.00%
LibDems: 50.00%
Plaid: 50.00%
The Overall Verdict

**Labour**: Most popular party, most popular leader, most visible & effective campaign, able to run against unpopular UK government. BUT – if they can’t win outright majority in these circumstances...

**Conservatives**: Successfully mobilised much of potential vote (suggesting good ‘ground war’ campaigning); but still significant hostility to party, limiting future growth

**Plaid**: Plenty of positive sentiment towards party; but campaign did nothing to convert that into party identity or votes

**Lib-Dems**: Considerable tide of ill-will towards party; leadership (and sheer luck) helped limit damage and created opportunity to re-build in better times
Three Assemblies and a Referendum

After 12 years of devolution, what do the people think?

• Clear majority support for devolution, and for NAW to be a powerful body in many policy areas
• Growing perceptions of importance
• But how deep-rooted is support for the Assembly and Devolution?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>WAG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence &amp; Foreign Policy</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of taxation</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The way Wales is run’</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% believing WAG ‘has greatest influence’

- NHS: 2007, 60%; 2011, 60%
- Schools: 2007, 50%; 2011, 60%
- How Wales Run: 2007, 30%; 2011, 60%
‘If X started making lots of decisions that most people disagreed with, it might be better to do away with X altogether’: % Strongly Agree/Agree
How would you feel if...?

- NAWS abolished
- Wales independent
And to find out more...

Project website:
http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol/research/research-projects/welshelectionstudy/aboutthestudy/

Contains:
• Descriptions of the aims and methods of the 2011 Welsh Election Study and 2011 Welsh Referendum Study
• Presentations on the two studies made by the research team
• Downloadable files containing survey questionnaires and (forthcoming) the raw SPSS data
Questions and Discussion