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# **‘We’re Internationalists, not Nationalists’: the political ramifications of Welsh Labour’s internal power struggle over the ‘One Wales’ coalition in 2007**

## **Abstract**

The bitter arguments within the Labour Party in Wales in 2007 preceding its agreement to enter coalition with Plaid Cymru in the National Assembly have faced little substantive analysis, and the specific behind-closed-doors debates at the special conference held to vote on the deal have remained undisclosed. This paper fulfils both tasks, revealing how actors’ arguments tapped into historically resonant traditions in Welsh Labour thought, coalescing around a central ideological conflict over the party’s identity vis-à-vis nationalism. The article thus sheds light upon Welsh Labour’s internal power struggles at an important juncture in its recent history and their continuing ramifications.

Key Words: Welsh Labour; Plaid Cymru; Welsh nationalism; Devolution; One Wales

## **Introduction**

The narrow victory for Unionists in the September 2014 Scottish referendum on independence, and subsequent Conservative victory in the 2015 General Election, have both pushed devolution back to the forefront of British political debate. While media attention focuses upon further powers for Scotland and government plans for ‘English Votes for English Laws’ at Westminster, less commented upon is the cross-party consensus over the devolution of further, extensive powers to the National Assembly for Wales in the forthcoming Wales Act.<sup>1</sup> What these changes – in Wales, Scotland and seemingly England – point to, is a third wave of devolution.

The first wave came with the initial post-devolution elections in 1999, which inaugurated a period of Labour-led rule in Wales and Scotland with Liberal Democrat support, and (between bouts of direct rule) a ‘moderate’ fronted consociational government in Northern Ireland, with the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) as the largest parties. The second wave hit in 2007 when, following the third post-devolution elections, Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party ousted the UUP and SDLP as the largest parties, and nationalists entered government in Scotland (a minority Scottish Nationalist Party government) and Wales (a coalition between Labour and Plaid Cymru). It was this second wave that readied the path of the current third wave, the

independence referendum included. The purpose of this article is to help explain one of the elements which worked to clear this pathway – specifically, by looking back at the significant role of the ‘One Wales’ coalition between the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru in the Welsh Assembly, between 2007 and 2011.

The consensus remains that this coalition was not foreseen beforehand. Indeed, in the run up to the 2007 elections to the National Assembly for Wales, Peter Hain MP, then Secretary of State for Wales, emphatically rejected the possibility of any pact between Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru. He was “ruling it out” and there was “no prospect of that” he announced to the House of Commons; “This is a matter for Rhodri Morgan and his fellow Welsh Labour AMs” he told MPs, but, nevertheless, he did “not think Welsh Labour would allow that”.<sup>2</sup> Yet, post-election, with the failure to secure a majority, the prospect of just such a pact did arrive, bringing with it a passionate argument within the Labour Party in Wales over whether or not they should join a ‘One Wales’ coalition with the nationalists in the Assembly.<sup>3</sup> This argument and what it can tell us about the nature of Welsh Labour’s internal politics at the time and since, and the subsequent direction of politics in Wales, is the focus of this paper.

The coalition itself has been the subject of some analysis,<sup>4</sup> however, this intra-party row has faced little substantive scrutiny<sup>5</sup> and beyond a few morsels offered within wider discussions,<sup>6</sup> the specific behind-closed-doors arguments at the special conference Labour held to decide the issue have remained unreported. This paper fulfils both of these tasks, placing these deliberations within their correct historical context and analysing the argument within Welsh Labour over ‘One Wales’, providing a direct account of the special conference debate. Rather than merely reporting the content of these internal debates, however, this rhetorical data provides the basis for a discursive analysis aimed at uncovering the intra-party ideological power relations within Welsh Labour at a key juncture in the party’s post-devolution history, and politics in Wales more generally.

Such intra-party power relations are vital for understanding the actions of Welsh Labour then and since. Political parties, *qua* institutions, are discursive constructs, constituted by a mixture of formal rules, informal conventions and the (non-formal) interpretations by

party actors whose interactions institute the institution itself.<sup>7</sup> Included within this mixture is a plethora of different, often antagonistic ideological positions and related intra-party tendencies.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly true of the ‘big tent’ parties that coalesce within majoritarian, first past the post electoral systems such as the competition over the UK Parliament – a situation accentuated by devolution, whereby these parties must adapt to operate within a multi-level system of electoral politics and governance, where coalitions are more likely (due to a semi-proportional electoral system). This multi-levelling leads to numerous new openings for possible disagreements and their articulation within parties. In this light, far from focusing upon outcomes in terms of concrete decisions made (e.g. to enter coalition, or not?), ‘[u]nderstanding political parties and their internal dynamics thus necessitates recognition of the differential and conflictual aspect of identity creation: the role that different ideas – and importantly *disagreements and conflicts* over ideas – play in intra-party relations.’<sup>9</sup>

The reason that the debate over ‘One Wales’ was a significant moment in Wales’s post-devolution history has to do with what it signified for the hegemonic force in Welsh politics: the Labour Party in Wales. In Alan Trench’s words, Labour were ‘greatly shocked ... almost at an existential level’<sup>10</sup> by the results of the 2007 election in Wales (as indeed they were in Scotland also<sup>11</sup>). Faced with the alarming possibility of being out of power in Cardiff Bay for the first time since devolution, the party was forced to grapple with the very question of its identity as both a Welsh and socialist party. This argument and its outcome marked a major point of change for the party. According to Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully, the resulting ‘yes’ vote:

symbolized a shift in power in the party: from devolution sceptics to supporters of devolution, and from Welsh Labour in London to the Labour group in the National Assembly. After decades of ambivalence and often-bitter disagreements, it appeared that Wales’s most important political force had finally embraced devolution.<sup>12</sup>

This analysis of party actors’ rhetoric broadly accepts, but in part also refutes this interpretation. It is certainly true that the debate – which split across the party in Westminster, Cardiff Bay and the constituency parties – marked the high point of a long-existing division within the party.<sup>13</sup> What the analysis of antagonists’ rhetoric demonstrates, however, is how, while these intra-party arguments did coalesce around a central ideological conflict over Labour’s identity, this was not over devolution *per se*, but rather whether entering the

coalition amounted to Labour betraying its socialism and pursuing nationalist, rather than *internationalist* politics. The article thus sheds light upon the power struggles within Welsh Labour at an important juncture in the party's history, arguing that, rather than the moment devolution was embraced – an act long past – the final vote and subsequent coalition demonstrated the ascendancy of a (soft-)nationalist tendency within the Welsh party. Since then, moreover, this tendency has become the hegemonic ideology within Welsh Labour, shaping the direction of the party's politics and, as a resultant, the political culture within the former Principality more generally.

This article is structured in five parts. Following a brief section outlining the general research strategy in terms of theoretical approach and methods of data collection, it first sketches a brief history of the Labour Party in Wales's antagonistic relationship with the Welsh nationalist party with the aim of providing background and context to the subsequent analysis. This is followed, second, by the particular circumstances following the 2007 Assembly elections which led to the 'One Wales' deal being debated. The third section reports the intra-party argument within Welsh Labour; divided into two sections, it initially reports public pronouncements in the pre-conference period, followed by the behind-closed-doors arguments at the conference itself.

Fourth, the conceptual insights offered by discourse theoretical analysis and rhetorical political analysis are drawn together as a means of analysing the differing conceptions of (Welsh) Labour and 'One Wales' articulated during this internal row. In doing so, it notes how, in making their contrasting arguments, party actors were tapping into rich, historically resonant seams from the party's long-developed history of antipathy towards the nationalist party. Finally, the fifth part elaborates a set of conclusions, based upon the previous analysis, regarding ideological power relations within Welsh Labour then, and the subsequent legacy of 'One Wales' more than seven years later.

## Research Strategy

This article's research strategy draws upon a mixed methods approach, applying ethnographic research methods, alongside documentary analysis, to collect the data for a discourse theoretical analysis. As the latter label signifies, the purpose of this discourse analysis is not

to identify the beliefs *behind* actors' rhetoric – it is not interested in *what* people 'really believed'. Rather, aping the perspective of the Essex school of discourse theory, it is interested in the *affective* role of actors' rhetoric. Specifically, it aims to illuminate, analytically, 'the power strategies' of actors, engaged in an antagonistic struggle for dominance as they attempt to define what Sørensen and Torfing label the 'regimes of practice' which delimit what is deemed both preferable and feasible within their party's cultural discourse.<sup>14</sup> The aim is, thus, not to compare the systems of ideas *qua* ideas operationalised through actors' rhetoric, but to explore 'their performative dimensions'.<sup>15</sup> In practical terms, the interest lies in how, through the process of argumentation, actors rhetorically articulate the key concepts under debate in an attempt to make their own, particular, conceptual interpretation, accepted as the dominant, universal understanding.

From this, it is subsequently possible to draw a set of inferences regarding the nature of the intra-institutional ideological power struggles during this period. Analytically, this involves a process whereby, first, the key concepts around which actors' arguments are structured are identified, along with the boundaries of antagonistic inclusion and exclusion which their particular articulations create. These, secondly, provide 'signposts' to the ideological characteristics of the power strategies involved – which is to say the ideology that is articulated, which is not the same as identifying individual's 'real' ideology 'behind' the articulatory practice itself.<sup>16</sup> Drawing upon the rhetorical political analysis pioneered by Finlayson, Martin and Atkins<sup>17</sup> – and in particular, through references to the Aristotelian triad of *ethos* (appeals to the character of the speaker), *pathos* (to emotion) and *logos* (to reason) – the offensive/defence character, and thus relative positions of power, of those articulating these ideological positions can be determined.

Central to this article's discourse analysis is an account of the debate which took place on July 6, 2007, between Welsh Labour members, regarding the decision to enter into the 'One Wales' coalition. This account is based upon the author's own transcription of the debate on the day itself, as an undeclared (non)participant observer, which was taken by hand, openly. The parenthetical label '(non)participant observer' is used deliberately to emphasise the nuance of the researcher's position as neither a clearly defined participant or nonparticipant observer. As Fetterman describes, a nonparticipant observation could take the

form of ‘watching a school basketball team as part of data collection’,<sup>18</sup> which, to a large degree, matches the situation of the researcher in this case. The author was not present as a conference delegate and subsequently could not have spoken in the debate; in this sense the transcription of the proceedings can be seen as an example of ‘observation without participation’. However, unlike (it can be imagined) Fetterman’s school basketball game, the July 6 meeting itself was not a public event, *per se*, as, although there were no checks or physical obstacles to non-members entering the hall, attendance was *formally* restricted to members of the Labour Party in Wales – in which capacity the researcher sat-in to observe. While not *participating* in the debate, therefore, the author could be categorised as a participant insofar as they were, formally, a member of the observed ‘group’.

This access also raises questions regarding the ethics of transcribing itself which must be considered here. As noted, the recording of the debate was carried out openly and not hidden from participants. Nevertheless, this was undeclared ethnographic research and questions surrounding ‘covert’ research are a central concern of ethnographers.<sup>19</sup> However, as Fielding notes with regards to his analysis of the National Front’s internal politics, such undeclared research can be justified in settings where group members would be unlikely to express their views and feelings openly if the researcher’s role was declared.<sup>20</sup> Political parties fear reports of internal division and as a members-only meeting, the behind-closed-doors nature of the special conference undoubtable meant participants felt freer to express their views than they would have in a more public setting.

Since the type of discourse analysis undertaken here is interested in how party members sought, rhetorically, to convince *other* party members, it was vital to record how members spoke to other members, naturally, which the presence of a declared observer – even themselves a member – may have altered. Nevertheless, while the data itself is not of a sensitive nature, in recognition that participants spoke with an openness made possible by a fraternal audience, to maintain the anonymity of speakers names are omitted, genders randomised, and geographic information given only where pertinent to the subsequent analysis. Names are only provided when attached to quotations from the pre-conference period where were collected through a contemporary review of the Welsh media and from subsequent reports in secondary literature.

## Background & Context

### i) The Labour Party's historical relationship with Plaid Cymru

To understand the debate over 'One Wales', it helps to have some historical background into the antagonistic relationship between Wales's 'red and green'<sup>21</sup> tendencies – in particular Welsh Labour's relationship, from its own point of view, with the nationalist party, Plaid Cymru. As noted by Carwyn Fowler in 2003, '[a]t first glance, the extent of the mistrust and animosity between Labour and Plaid Cymru seems remarkable' based on the two parties' 'broadly similar policy platforms'.<sup>22</sup> Viewed today, the parties' outlooks appear closer still. Each advocates, at the level of the National Assembly at least, a political programme conforming to what has elsewhere been labelled Cardiff Bay's 'Welshminster consensus' – i.e. devo-maximising, soft-nationalist, state-welfarist politics.<sup>23</sup> Recent authors such as Alan Sandry have even disputed the very notion that Plaid Cymru is actually a nationalist party, arguing that they are fundamentally a socialist party.<sup>24</sup> Why then, was there such controversy in 2007?

A number of elements explain the reason why the prospect of a coalition between Labour and Plaid Cymru led to such deep disagreement amongst the former's membership. These are (i) the legacy of one-partyism in Wales; (ii) the dominant legacy within the pre-devolution Wales Labour Party of a centralist, internationalist ideology tendency; (iii) and an antipathy to Plaid's 'ethnic' Welsh nationalism, linked to historic charges of fascist sympathies in the 1930s and cultural conservatism, due to language 'extremism', since. Each of these is discussed briefly in order.

Labour's historic dominance beyond Offa's Dyke is the first point that helps explain the degree of antipathy for Plaid within the party. 'For much of the twentieth century', the Welsh political historians Kevin Morgan and Geoff Mungham write, 'it was possible to confuse Welsh politics with the politics of the Labour Party in Wales, such was its dominance in the political life of the nation.'<sup>25</sup> This was a state of one-party politics earned Wales the nickname 'LabourLand'<sup>26</sup> and one of the results of this hegemonic status, as Richard Wyn Jones describes, has been a tendency for Labour figures to see opponents not as equal and 'indispensable parts of a wider political context', but rather 'as enemies to be smashed and

obliterated – figuratively if not literally.<sup>27</sup> Even with an electoral system which has made coalition government normal, this sentiment has continued – and the question of how to relate to Plaid has become a question of identity.

In this context, while Conservatives may be the ‘old enemy’, by standing for different class interests, they pose no threat to Labour’s self-identity. Indeed, rather, by providing Labour’s ideological opposite, they structurally function as the party’s ‘constitutive outside’.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in 2007, Labour’s Assembly election campaign broadcast was a video entitled ‘Wales under the Tories’ which presented to viewers a sequence setting-out some of the detrimental effects previous Conservative governments had on Wales – a negative campaign whose fundamental message was ‘We are not the Tories: Vote for us.’

By contrast, the claim by Plaid that they, not Labour, offered the *real* voice of the Welsh, is experienced as an affront to Labour’s self-identity as *the* party representing Wales to the world. The name Plaid Cymru literally translates as ‘the party of Wales’ in English. The perceived insolence of this claim was and is taken as an affront by a certain Labour sensibility, not easily dismissed. This attitude was clearly displayed in the Labour Party’s reaction to Plaid Cymru’s successes in the first post-devolution Assembly elections in 1999. Plaid’s impressive electoral showing then was the cause of deep resentment in Welsh Labour, not only because they deprived the party of an Assembly majority it expected by ‘historical right’, but also due to nationalists’ capture of traditional Labour strongholds the Rhondda, Llanelli and Neil Kinnock’s former constituency Islwyn.<sup>29</sup> Faced with these shock loses, so the story goes, an emotional Peter Hain telephoned the Prime Minister to relay the hitherto unthinkable message: “Tony, I’ve lost the Rhondda!”<sup>30</sup> The Labour Party in Wales’s decision in 2000 to formally rebrand itself the full-blooded ‘Welsh Labour Party: the *True* Party of Wales’ points to the trauma of the previous year.<sup>31</sup>

The second reason for Labour antagonism towards Plaid has to do with the former’s ideological legacy in Wales. This also links back to the party’s dominance there, in particular in the post-war period that had a lasting impact on the party’s psyche. As Kenneth O. Morgan puts it, the years between 1939 and 1951 were, for Wales, ‘a period of reform, yet also social and cultural conservatism. Labour’s victory was for the old values. It was based on the

communal solidarity of the pit and the choir and the co-op and the Workers' Educational Association, transmitted from the industrial valleys throughout significant areas of the Welsh-speaking north and west as well.' In this form, post-war Wales has offered both a folk memory of what it meant for Labour to be in power and established an ethos attached to *Labour politics* based on 'people's power, solidarity, a collective response, central planning, a welfare democracy and social citizenship'.<sup>32</sup> Of these, *central planning* and *social citizenship* were key elements that pitted Labour against Plaid Cymru.

The dominant, if not universal sentiment attached to this ethos was anti-nationalist in nature. Indeed, for a Labour Party in Wales dominated by the National Union of Mineworkers, nationalism was viewed as fundamentally at odds with the *nationalisation* as a form of economic centralism, synonymous with the south Welsh coal and steel industry, and the correlative idea of cross-border, worker solidarity. Few individuals are claimed to encapsulate this ideological sentiment as was Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan, son of a coal miner, MP for Tredegar and founder of the NHS. His most famous intervention on this subject was in the 1944 Welsh day debate, whence he argued that 'Wales has a special place, a special individuality, a special culture and special claims', but that there was 'no special solution for the Welsh coal industry which is not the solution for the whole mining industry for Great Britain.' It was here that he deployed one of the subsequently most quoted phrases in the debate over Welsh political identity:

'There are sheep on the Welsh mountains, and there are sheep on the mountains of Westmorland and in Scotland, but I do not know the difference between a Welsh sheep, a Westmorland sheep and a Scottish sheep.'<sup>33</sup>

In reality, Bevan's 'antipathy to Welshness can be overdone'.<sup>34</sup> While Smith argues that '[t]he question of Wales, *per se*, was not one to which he gave much thought in isolation'<sup>35</sup>, Robert Griffiths describes it as, rather, something with which Bevan 'never fully came to terms'.<sup>36</sup> The ambiguity in Bevan's thought was demonstrated perfectly in his 1947 statement on 'The Claim of Wales' wherein he both declared that Wales 'has a claim for special recognition' in areas of language, art and culture, education 'and an excitement for things of the mind and spirit, which are wholly different from England and English ways' and that questions of policy affecting industrial and agricultural policy affected 'the rest of the country as well as Wales and can be settled only by decisions which embrace all'.<sup>37</sup>

Bevan was not alone in the latter sentiment. It found expression at the time and after in the arguments of Welsh Labour MPs such as Ness Evans, George Thomas, Leo Abse and Neil Kinnock, who made up what has been called the ‘materialist’ wing of the Labour Party in Wales, for whom matters of perceived cross-border, industrial commonalities took precedence over cultural differences.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Evans attacked ‘those who are nationalists first and Socialists second’<sup>39</sup> and Abse channelled Bevan when he declared “a steelworker is a steelworker, whether he works in Ebbw Vale, Llanwern, Scunthorpe or Sheffield and ... a fibre worker is a fibre worker, whether he works in Pontypool or Harrogate”.<sup>40</sup> It was Kinnock who most effectively articulated this ideological tendency’s message when, in 1975, he told the House of Commons:

“I believe that the emancipation of the class that I have come to this House to represent, unapologetically, can best be achieved in a single nation and in a single economic unit, by which I mean a unit where we can have a brotherhood of all nations and have the combined strength of working-class people throughout the whole of the United Kingdom brought to bear against any bully ... [The working class’s] misfortunes are not the result of being British, Welsh or Scottish. They have come about because their fate has been, in the system of economic organisation or disorganisation that we have had hitherto, to be workers...”<sup>41</sup>

This resolutely *inter*-nationalist position, which saw nationalism as a threat to working-class solidarity and central planning, was the dominant force within the Labour Party in Wales well into the early 1990s, and as such within Welsh politics in general. It was also key in delaying and blocking devolution of powers to Wales.

This is not to say alternative voices and tendencies did not exist with Welsh Labour. Alongside this ‘materialist’, Unionist tendency was another, elsewhere described as a nationalist or Welsh tendency.<sup>42</sup> This distinct tradition within the party saw purpose in reconciling international socialism with elements of cultural and governmental nationalism. This included influential figures such as Huw T. Edwards,<sup>43</sup> and Welsh Labour MPs Cledwyn Hughes, John Morris and (in some regards) Jim Griffiths MP. The sentiment was most clearly expressed, however, in Keir Hardie’s message to his Merthyr constituents in 1908, to “[h]ave the Red Dragon of Wales, but have it blazoned on the Red Flag of international socialism.”<sup>44</sup> Where the Unionists emphasised centralism and warned against separatism, their opposites

advocated devolution. Yet, while some such as Edwards would make the transition from the Labour Party to Plaid Cymru, others such as Griffiths would mix their support for greater Welsh autonomy within the Union with a still strong antipathy for Plaid; indeed, in the 1950s Griffiths went so far as to attack a Plaid Cymru candidate for sympathising with ‘Nazi ideology’.<sup>45</sup> This tapped into another aspect of the antipathy within Labour for the Welsh nationalists.

What both of these ideological traditions within the Welsh Labour Movement share is an internationalist politics. This has proved another point of friction between Labour and Plaid, rubbing up against some of the early politics both articulated by and ascribed to leading Welsh nationalists. At a time when miners from the south Wales valleys were joining the international brigade, for example, Plaid’s newspaper adopted a position, described by Kenneth O. Morgan, as one which ‘leaned towards Franco in the Spanish Civil War’,<sup>46</sup> while W. Ambrose Bebb, who founded Plaid in 1925 alongside Saunders Lewis, professed his support for Mussolini, even going so far as to declare that ‘Mussolini influences the Nationalist Party in Wales. He influences every well-read and thinking man’<sup>47</sup>. Come Britain’s formal entry into war with fascism in 1939, Lewis also declared his opposition to the conflict by alleging a moral equivalence between the British Empire and Axis powers. Kenneth O. Morgan’s opinion that Lewis ‘sailed close to the wind in his enthusiasm for totalitarian regimes of the right’<sup>48</sup> is one widely held today.

In his book *The Fascist Party in Wales*, Richard Wyn Jones has worked to demonstrate the genuine unfairness of claims linking Plaid and fascism.<sup>49</sup> These accusations left deep, easily referenced marks upon the party, and subsequently entered the collective memory as a dirty period in Plaid’s history. As political labels go, fascist is understandably toxic, and the claim that Plaid Cymru was founded by individuals expressing such sympathies tarred the party’s reputation within Labour circles. As late as 1998, Labour MP Kim Howells (Pontypridd), when asked about the left-wing credentials of Plaid, responded: ‘I’m never sure that nationalism has got anything to do with socialism. I keep putting the words together and coming up with Hitler.’<sup>50</sup>

The fascist claim is likely to have had particular resonance due to the ‘ethnic’ rather than ‘civic’ nationalism<sup>51</sup> that has underpinned Plaid Cymru’s political agenda. This has primarily to do with the protection and promotion (even assertion) of the Welsh Language, which key figures such as Saunders Lewis were happy to declare ‘more important’ than self-government.<sup>52</sup> This image of Plaid as a party whose fundamental role is to advocate for the Welsh language has led to charges of cultural conservatism *and* political extremism – the latter due to the direct action taken by Welsh nationalists inside and outside of Plaid in their campaigns against the language’s decline, especially in the 1960s-70s.<sup>53</sup>

Plaid thus gained a reputation among critics as an ‘anti-English’ party (both of the people and language), with concern among some Labour Party members in South Wales in particular that their politics represented ‘a concerted attempt by a Welsh speaking middle class elite to change the nature of Welsh society and politics to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the monoglot English speaking majority.’<sup>54</sup> Such sentiments were articulated by George Thomas (Labour MP and future Viscount Tonypanfy) when he attacked ‘the anti-English sentiment always beneath the surface in Welsh-speaking areas’ which nationalists represented.<sup>55</sup> Whatever the level of truth, these assertions had a negative effect upon how significant sections of the majority English speaking population came to view Plaid. Their influence can still be seen in comments such as those made in 2002 by Labour MP Wayne David (Caerphilly), who declared there to be a ‘strong strand of racism and xenophobia in Plaid Cymru’s history.’<sup>56</sup>

These above factors play significant roles in constructing a generally negative narrative within the Welsh Labour Party regarding the history of its nationalist adversaries in Wales. The claim that Labour was *the* party of Wales and the working class, while Plaid was a party that rejected internationalism, was tarred by fascism and militant in its campaigns around the Welsh language, provided fertile ground for distaste to grow. This is not to claim the authenticity of these three narrative elements, nor that they each have had an equal weight to them, or that these weights have not changed over time. Yet, grasping these elements as part of a Welsh Labour discourse is important to understand why it is that the debates of 2007 were so contentious; that is to say, why the decision to enter into coalition with another

centre-left party led to such rancour within the ranks. But how did this question even come about?

i) The 2007 Negotiations

Between 1999 and 2007, the Labour Party governed in the National Assembly for Wales either in coalition with the Liberal Democrats (2000-2003) or as a single party, be that a minority (1999-2000) or majority (2003 to 2007) government. In 2007, however, Labour, failed to retain a majority of seats in the May 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly election. The party won twenty six seats and Plaid won fifteen, making them the second biggest party. The Conservatives won twelve seats, the Liberal Democrats six, and one independent. As a result, Labour was forced to enter negotiations with its opponents to stay in power. Initially, most commentators expected these negotiations to result in a Lab-Lib coalition as had previously existed between 2000 and 2003. This was also, reportedly, the option preferred by the majority of Welsh Labour AMs and MPs.<sup>57</sup> Rhodri Morgan AM, leader of the Labour group in the Assembly, thus seemingly expressed the party's post-election feelings when he described the options Labour was faced with in choosing between governing with Plaid Cymru, or the Liberal Democrats, as one between the 'inedible' and merely 'unpalatable'.<sup>58</sup>

The prospect of a Lab-Lib deal was scuppered, however, when on May 17<sup>th</sup> the Welsh Liberal Democrat executive voted to suspend talks with Labour. Five days later Plaid's Assembly Group also suspended parallel negotiations on a lesser 'stability pact' wherein they would have held no seats in a Labour cabinet. Instead, both parties signalled their support for an alternative 'Rainbow Coalition' between themselves and the Conservatives.<sup>59</sup> The Labour Party thus found itself faced with the possibility that it could end up out of power in Wales for the first time. This threat itself collapsed, however, when, the following day, a split vote by the Welsh Liberal Democrats executive on the 'Rainbow' deal meant that no recommendation could go forward for a vote at a party special conference.

During the period it took the Liberal Democrats to rectify this result and pass such a recommendation, Rhodri Morgan was chosen as First Minister of a minority Labour government in the Assembly. Subsequently, as a result of their evident 'internal divisions and differing forms of disorganisation',<sup>60</sup> the other parties' leaderships deemed the Liberal

Democrats untrustworthy coalition partners and both the ‘Rainbow’ moment and possibility of a Labour-Liberal Democrats coalition were widely viewed to have passed.<sup>61</sup> Over the following month, therefore, talks resumed between the Labour and Plaid Assembly Groups, resulting in the ‘One Wales’ document, setting out the basis for coalition. Key points of this agreement included: an unqualified commitment to a referendum on primary powers for the Assembly, at or before the 2011 Welsh elections, which the Labour Party would campaign in favour of; a convention focused upon the case for further powers leading up to the referendum; an independent commission reviewing the Barnett formula; a commitment to consider devolving criminal justice powers to Wales; and a new Welsh Language Act.<sup>62</sup> In response to the proposals Labour subsequently announced a special conference would be held July 6<sup>th</sup> where the party would discuss and vote upon signing-up to ‘One Wales’.

Both in the run-up to, and at the conference itself, a passionate debate raged within Welsh Labour over whether or not the party should agree to the ‘One Wales’ coalition deal. While much of the argument, by the nature of party politicking, took place informally, out of sight within the party,<sup>63</sup> a significant amount took place out in the open. The importance members attached to the subject was thus demonstrated through their willingness to shake any illusion of party unity, not least with the tone adopted by senior figures within both the Parliamentary Labour Party and Assembly Group. With the background and context to this debate set out, the subsequent section details the content of the arguments themselves.

### The Argument Pre-Conference

In a pre-conference letter published in the *Western Mail*, Kim Howells MP wrote that: ‘It may be that many, or some, of Labour’s AMs agree with significant elements of the Plaid Cymru agenda and that they see no difficulty or danger in a much more powerful set of administrative functions for the Assembly...’.<sup>64</sup> ‘[T]here are’, Howells stated, ‘Labour AMs who are comfortable’ with adopting such policies as the devolution of tax raising/fixing powers, criminal justice and a ‘review’ of the Barnett formula<sup>65</sup> – policies he derided as ‘aspirations ... of course, at the heart of the nationalist agenda.’ Were such a path to be taken, Howells asserted, it ‘will lead ultimately to separation and independence’. His letter concluded that it was ‘ironic that the very same party that for so long held at bay the

separatists and cultural and political nationalists is prepared now to provide for their former enemies an Assembly vehicle that transports those same nationalists to the gates of independence.’

In the same vein, fellow MP Don Touhig declared himself ‘totally opposed to sharing power with Plaid in the assembly’ because Labour ‘have nothing in common with a nationalist separatist party and I think it would be wholly wrong’.<sup>66</sup> Entering the coalition, he said, would be ‘suicide for Labour’ and ‘walking into a trap.’ Touhig also echoed Howells in arguing that ‘One Wales’ was ‘pushing a nationalist agenda, not a Labour agenda’: ‘The nationalists want independence and all the things in this document accelerate that. Plaid gets more in this document than they have managed to secure in the last 50 years’.<sup>67</sup> Cllr. Robert Bevan, a Labour cabinet member of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, echoed this view in the *Western Mail*, writing: ‘Like many others, I have spent years fighting against the nationalists, whose philosophy I consider to be wholly alien to me as a socialist. I would rather Labour went into opposition than do any deal with them’.<sup>68</sup>

Lynn Neigel AM also argued against the deal. ‘One of the many fears harboured by those of us in the Labour party who oppose the One Wales document’, she stated, ‘centres on where this coalition is taking us long term – as a party and as a country’.<sup>69</sup> Fellow Labour AMs, Karen Sinclair, Ann Jones and Irene James, releasing a joint statement further arguing against the deal, on the basis that ‘The lack of any binding common philosophy between the two parties coupled with the different aspirations we have for the future of Wales would... make it very difficult for the coalition to withstand the rigours of a four-year assembly term’.<sup>70</sup> They disagreed, they continued, with ‘the Plaid Cymru-inspired policies included in the agreement’, describing the commitment to campaign for a referendum on further powers ‘even before the current new powers have had a chance to bed down’ as ‘undeliverable’. ‘One Wales’, they claimed, would lead to the relegation of socialist politics, with ‘the focus being taken away from the real social justice issues that the people of Wales clearly want us to concern ourselves with over the next four years’.<sup>71</sup> Touhig levelled the same criticism, declaring: ‘Most of it does not touch on the bread and butter issues I am interested in like jobs, the economy and tackling crime. It's all constitutional stuff that does not affect or interest my constituents’.<sup>72</sup>

Supporters of ‘One Wales’ argued back, also through the Welsh media. Speaking to BBC Radio Wales, Rhodri Morgan stated that he understood ‘the very strong emotions involved’, but hoped opponents would ‘see this as a historic opportunity to deliver Labour’s manifesto’.<sup>73</sup> As a proposition, he argued, coalition was ‘really’ about one question: ‘In order to deliver 100 per cent of Labour’s manifesto, what part of another party’s manifesto do we have to swallow ...?’ – a manifesto Morgan seemingly no longer deemed ‘inedible’. Now he claimed that he thought:

... most people on the Labour side realise that if Labour is the senior partner in a coalition and Plaid is the junior partner, that is very much better for Wales and for the delivery of Labour’s manifesto than having Plaid as the head of the coalition with Tory ministers in the middle of it and Liberal Democrats supporting it as well, which is the alternative.

Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Health in the Assembly, also vocalised support for ‘One Wales’, declaring:

I think we’ve got to recognise that this is grown-up politics we have in Wales. This settlement was never going to produce a majority every time. It’s taken us a long time to get here – we’ll be lucky if once in every 25 years a party gets a majority. It’s about parties of similar ideas working together, and we’ve got to grow up.<sup>74</sup>

Further support for the deal came from Andy Richards, head of the Welsh branch of the Transport and General Workers Union who - referring to the opposition voiced by Howells, Touhig, etc. – publically denounced ‘activities in sections of the parliamentary group ... which are singularly unhelpful at this time’, declaring that MP’s ‘self-interest must give way to democracy’.<sup>75</sup>

From within the party-in-the-media, Professor Kevin Morgan also expressed support, telling the *Western Mail*: ‘I, for one, welcome the prospect of the two great progressive forces in Welsh politics coming together’,<sup>76</sup> attributing opposition to the deal to a ‘British’ element within Labour:

For many years, there have been internal divisions in Labour between what might be called British Labour and Welsh Labour. Devolution has forced this division all the more into the open. ... There are those in the party who are viscerally opposed to any kind of link with Plaid Cymru.

Attacking the latter, he called for an end to the situation whereby, '[f]or too long in Wales, people have been stuck in their silos indulging in a kind of antediluvian juvenile politics that passes for mature politics'.<sup>77</sup>

### The Argument at the Special Conference

This internal party debate continued, equally as vociferously, at the conference itself. Given the chance to speak from a party sanctioned podium, behind closed doors at the Cardiff International Arena, many members forcefully attacked the deal. One party member told the room they had 'been blackmailed into supporting a nationalist agenda,' a view later echoed in one AM's declaration that 'the crazy nationalist odyssey' – the phrase, as they noted, Labour used to describe Plaid's policies during the recent election – 'is contained within this document'.<sup>78</sup> A different AM warned that 'the politics of social justice is in danger of being replaced with the politics of identity', while a member of the Women's Forum called upon conference to 'vote for your socialist principles, not for nationalist principles'; another delegate appealed to members to 'remember, we are socialists not nationalists!'

'Comrades', an MP and former Minister declared, 'I have *nothing* in common with that party [Plaid] and I do not want to join them on 'a journey', as this document says on the first page! That shows a perverse pride for this.' They were followed by a Constituency Labour Party (CLP) delegate who castigated supporters, declaring 'the party I joined is an internationalist one, not a nationalist one' – a message later repeated by an MP's declaration they were opposed to 'One Wales' because 'I'm not a nationalist, I'm an internationalist'. Plaid, another delegate announced, had 'successfully soured their socialism with the politics of nationalism.'

Adopting a different tact, some north Walian voices claimed southern members fundamentally misunderstood Plaid. The aforementioned Women's Forum member, for example, from a northern CLP, argued: 'They [Plaid] are not the cuddly group you think they are down here in the south,' claiming that 'in north Wales, English speakers are second class citizens' and explaining that 'we [northern opponents] want to stop Wales becoming a greater

Gwynedd'. The same point was made by a north-west CLP delegate who declared 'south Wales comrades don't seem to recognise the party we're talking about', labelling Plaid 'racist' and warning it was 'not alright to negotiate with a party because only part of it seems racist!'

A sense of frustration and powerlessness was evident in such members' arguments: one MP representing a northern seat claimed he had 'warned Welsh Labour in 1998' about the dangers of Plaid, but 'they labelled them a fringe north West party'; only when Plaid won southern seats did the leadership 'come to take them seriously.' The Women's Forum member also claimed: 'We have told you this before. You have not been listening to us, and this document shows that.' 'One Wales', she told conference, was 'a betrayal too far' and northern opponents such as herself, whilst 'activists', were 'not going to campaign for this!' An MP representing a south Wales valley seat also signalled his unwillingness to campaign on the contents of 'One Wales', declaring it right to want 'to hold onto power, but *not* at any price'.

Opening their remarks in *Cymraeg* before switching to English ('I think I've made the point...' they told the room), another MP warned that entering coalition would prove an 'escalator' to power for Plaid since Labour would be constantly battling against a 'Welsh media ... stuffed full of Plaid's friends'. A different MP reiterated this message, warning that 'the BBC and *Western Mail* will aid and abet the nationalists.' Describing nationalists as a 'cultural elite', one opposing AM urged the conference 'to hear the cry of the silent majority of members who reject this document', while another declared Welsh Labour would 'be tied to the nationalist mast [in coalition] as the nationalists constantly threaten to jump ship to the Tories'. Opponents also attacked the affiliated trade unions, a delegate lashing out at some uses of their bloc vote: 'I have a one member one vote democratic mandate from my CLP, *unlike* the unions' he told the conference – to some booing from the crowd – complaining that, as a member of the TGWU, 'no one has approached me and asked *my* opinion.' An AM struck out in the same manner, declaring himself 'disappointed by my union, UNISON, who have *not* sought my vote.'

Speaking to both cheers and laughter from the conference, an MP loudly declared ‘One Wales’ to be ‘a Trotskyist plot!’, claiming (to only partially ironic cheers): ‘Seriously, these are transitional demands. I’m not saying Plaid are Trots – well, some of them probably are – but this is transitional demands [sic] and Plaid will take all the glory!’ As well as warning about extra-party machinations, the MP also turned his sights inwards. There were, he continued: ‘certain elements within this party who want to deliver this [a nationalist agenda], and if people won’t say it, then I will. We’ve already seen people calling for [devolved powers over] criminal justice today. And if you want this, then go to it [i.e. join Plaid]!’

In terms of actual Plaid members, one particular figure was referred to throughout conference – not an AM, but Adam Price MP. In the run up to the conference Price had written a blog post describing ‘One Wales’, in Gramscian terms, as an “epochal” not merely ‘conjunctural’ choice within a wider ‘war of position’ by Plaid.<sup>79</sup> Price’s words were taken up by opponents and reproduced on leaflets distributed at the conference opposing the deal. Titled ‘*Don’t help Plaid wreck our Party*’, these leaflets argued that Price’s blog-post, ‘lays bare the real truth behind Plaid’s claims. They are using this deal to drive a stake through Labour’s hearts, electorally and politically. Plaid sees this coalition as the latest victory on the road to becoming the natural party of Government in Wales.’ Referring to this blog post, an AM further warned: ‘Adam Price actually said this would be their greatest victory in pushing our party towards independence by stealth.’

Altogether, roughly three quarters of speakers at the conference did so against the deal. However, while fewer spoke, supporters of coalition also argued their case from the podium. One delegate declared her CLP was ‘overwhelmingly in support’ of the deal because it allowed ‘delivery’ of Labour’s programme and Labour ‘owe it to the people of Wales to stay in power’. Other southern CLP delegates, as well as an MP (with low ministerial responsibilities), echoed this, the latter declaring his support on the grounds that ‘I want as a minister to be dealing with Welsh Labour ministers’, warning members against ‘revolutionary defeatism.’

Morgan's previous portrayal of 'One Wales' as – policy wise – a continuation of Labour's manifesto was re-voiced at the conference. Speaking prior to the card vote, a Welsh Labour leadership figure reminded members that a referendum on 'further powers' for the Assembly was *already* Labour policy and a manifesto pledge in the last election; only 'the timing' was different and 'what Plaid have asked for, is to implement Labour policy a bit early ... that's hardly a big deal to die in the ditch for is it?' Concluding their speech, they declared 'we've all carried the placards and worn the t-shirts' but now it was time 'to govern'.

This basic message was repeated on a second leaflet distributed at the conference in support of the deal. Produced by the party machinery in Cardiff's Transport House, its argument was set out as a scripted Q&A exchange. One asked: 'Does it change our position on powers for the Assembly that we agreed at our Special Conference in 2004?' Unsurprisingly, it answered 'No':

What the document contains is a commitment to holding a referendum in this Assembly term, following successful tests of public opinion and following the establishment of a Constitutional Convention. This will bring forward a piece of legislation that already exists and that was introduced by our Labour Government at Westminster through the Government of Wales Act.

The leaflet also addressed the question of whether other Labour policies would be lost, again answering 'No': 'Eradicating child poverty and the policies associated with it are all in place. The same is the case for the extra funding for the Wales Union Learning fund, the Union Modernisation Fund and funding for more modern apprenticeships.' Accepting the coalition was necessary it argued, 'if we wanted to have the opportunity to implement our manifesto commitments and to protect programmes like Communities First and the free breakfast scheme'. 'One Wales', the message went, was the necessary price for a strategic goal: 'it [is] best to be inside government, having the opportunity to lead and shape events and policies, rather than being on the outside as a party of protest'.

More than *should*, supporters also declared Labour *must* accept 'One Wales'. The party was 'placed in the position' of having to accept it, one MP declared, by 'a terrible failure of [the LibDem] leadership'; another MP declared that the first Welsh Labour administration (of which they had been a leading member) showed minority government

‘doesn’t work’,<sup>6</sup> blaming the ‘ramshackle electoral arrangement’ for forcing coalition upon the party. The idea that a Labour-Plaid coalition was necessary due to the electoral system was also raised by a representative of Labour Students, and a member of Labour’s leadership team, the latter stating: ‘We’re not used to the effect of proportional representation’, but that ‘probably in three out of four elections we’re going to go through this process.’

Finally, supporters claimed the deal would not fundamentally affect Welsh Labour: ‘One Wales’, a member of the party leadership argued, was an agreement between two Assembly groups, just as between two groups on a council, and would not limit ‘vigorous political action’ in areas outside the coalition’s remit; Labour would attack Plaid ‘at *all* elections’ they promised. The language of unity was also voiced by another leadership figure who finished their speech by repeating a phrase previously used by opponents of the coalition: ‘We’re not nationalists and we never will be’ they asserted, ‘we’re internationalists.’ Nevertheless, though their rhetoric may have overlapped in this one statement, as the following section demonstrates, in their arguments over ‘One Wales’, opponents and supporters of the coalition articulated fundamentally different conceptions of the party’s identity and what the deal would mean for it.

### Rhetorical analysis and intra-party power relations

As noted in the introduction, the purpose of this article is not only to delineate the hitherto unreported argument within Welsh Labour preceding the ‘One Wales’ coalition, but to use this as a means of gaining analytical purchase upon power-relations within the party at this point in time. Approaching the subject in this manner then, what do the arguments which played out around ‘One Wales’ indicate about ideological power relations within Welsh Labour in 2007?

#### i) Opponents’ Rhetoric

First, an analysis of party actors’ rhetoric finds two key lines of argument articulated by those opposed to ‘the coalition deal: (i) the relationship between Labour and Plaid was irreconcilably antagonistic on ideological grounds precluding coalition between the parties; and (ii) instituting ‘One Wales’ would consequently be an ‘elitist’ betrayal of Labour and its’

‘people’. Rejecting coalition with Plaid was thus not just *preferable* to alternatives, but should be a *shibboleth* for Labour.

The first part of the message – ineradicable antagonism – was articulated via such rhetoric as Councillor Bevan’s description of Plaid’s philosophy as ‘alien’, Touhig’s declaration that he had ‘nothing in common’ with Plaid, and the AMs’ claim there was a ‘lack of any binding common philosophy’ and ‘different aspirations’. Howell’s claim that coalition would inevitably mean a nationalist programme did the same. During the conference, moreover, by stating ‘One Wales’ contained ‘the crazy nationalist odyssey’, pushing a ‘nationalist agenda’, opponents portrayed Labour and Plaid as directly in conflict, between the former’s ‘socialist principles’ and the latter’s nationalism (‘we are socialists/internationalists not nationalists’); Plaid was an un-acceptable entity (‘racist’) which would contaminate (‘sour’) Labour’s socialism. This tapped into that section of the Labour narrative which sees Plaid Cymru as an institution with historical roots in support for fascism and a culturally conservative ‘ethnic’ agenda – in opposition to Labour’s own internationalist history.

The depth of this antagonistic relationship was also articulated via metaphors based around images of war and conflict; thus, Howells described Labour having ‘held at bay’ nationalist ‘enemies’, Bevan of years ‘fighting against the nationalists’. Touhig’s description of ‘One Wales’ as ‘a trap’ also evoked a militaristic warning. Conceptualised thus – as a partisan relationship, not of mere difference, but fundamental antagonism – assertions like Bevan’s that he would ‘rather go into opposition’ make sense: better to die fighting than lay down arms and capitulate.

The second part of the message, linked to this sense of capitulation, emphasised betrayal – specifically elite betrayal. For example, both Touhig’s comments and the AMs’ statement painted the deal as elitist by contrasting it with what the ‘people of Wales’ ‘clearly want’ and for allegedly relegating ‘bread and butter’ issues that ‘interest ... constituents’ in favour of cultural and constitutional ‘stuff’ which does not. While not directly stated, such anti-elitist rhetoric actually, counterintuitively, played into Labour’s legacy as the hegemonic party in Wales. This was due to the linked narrative of Labour as the *true* voice of the people

of Wales (both in terms of the *Welsh people* as a whole and the *working class people* of Wales in particular). It also tapped into conceptions of Plaid as a middle-class elite representing Welsh language interests.

This linkage was expanded and developed by northern opponents' attacks upon southern supporters (i.e. the Cardiff Bay based leadership) for not realising the Welsh nationalists' 'true nature' (a party of 'racists'), linking this to a portrayal of 'activists' (i.e. the grassroots) on the 'frontline' against nationalism (the north particularly), being ignored by a distanced (southern) elite that included Plaid's Welsh media 'friends' and 'undemocratic' trade union bosses. The latter were also traduced via portrayals of 'One Wales' as part of a 'plot' by nationalists (both outside Labour – as with Adam Price – or, like the 'Trotskyite entryists' supporting his 'alien' ideology, within) to turn Labour into a nationalist party, betraying its socialism, deemed the *historical* politics of the Welsh people. In contrast to this, the 'cry of the silent majority from within the party' was invoked in direct challenge to the 'cultural elite' supporting 'One Wales'.

Such emotionally laden, *pathos* heavy rhetoric made extensive appeals to the *ethos* of those opposing 'One Wales', linking their fight to the protection of the party's values and contrasting this with the low morals of supporters. Opponents' appeals to *logos* were grounded in the overarching argument that, socialism and nationalism being ideologically antithetical, logically a deal between Labour and Plaid was also.<sup>80</sup> This differed extensively from the arguments made by supporters of the deal.

## ii) Supporters' Rhetoric

Rhetorically, supporters of 'One Wales' relied far less upon *pathos* laden appeals to sentiment; instead, their arguments referenced opponents' 'very strong emotions' as part of a wider argumentative appeal to *logos* and *ethos* that emphasised the rationality of their case by arguing that, for a party of government, coalition was the only way to implement party policy. Opponents' passionate espousal of their position was thus turned into an attack by supporters upon the former's *ethos* due to a lack of *logos*. Thus, in her call for the party to 'grow up' and embrace 'grown-up politics', Hart insinuated that opposition to 'One Wales' was based on outdated and childish reasons – temper tantrums even – a view echoed in Kevin

Morgan's portrayal of opponents' 'visceral' position and 'antediluvian juvenile politics that passes for mature politics', and Andy Richard's claim opposition from MPs was merely 'self-interest'.<sup>81</sup> Framing opponents' position as a refusal to accept the reality of the electoral 'settlement', Hart's argument also framed the coalition as the logical position while arguably painting opponents as stuck in the past (and with outdated views of the party's history). Opposition was thus 'revolutionary defeatism' and not the behaviour of rational actors; a theme also evident in claims Labour needed to move on from 'placards and t-shirts' to 'govern'.

The second element was to reject the basic logic of opponents' case by refuting the notion that rejecting 'One Wales' was axiomatic because socialism and nationalism are either irreconcilable, or reconcilable only as National Socialism. Rhodri Morgan thus emphasised policy-overlap, the deal providing '100 per cent of Labour's manifesto' and 'better ... for the delivery of Labour's manifesto' as, far from ideological betrayal, 'One Wales' merely implemented Labour policies 'a bit early'. Similarly, Hart declared the possible partners were 'parties of similar ideas' while Kevin Morgan described them as, together, 'the two great progressive forces in Welsh politics'. Underlying this was the message that coalition would not alter Labour; even accepting 'One Wales' Labour would not be nationalists: 'and we never will be, we're internationalists'.

Together, this message emphasised a *responsibility* by Welsh Labour to enter power and the *necessity* of not splitting the Labour governments in Westminster and Cardiff. Labour, after all, is by self-regard *the* party of power in Wales. As such, this was a matter of *ethos*, more than *logos*, as it played to the need 'to protect programmes', and implement a manifesto which supported Labour's voters (as Nye Bevan, for example, would have wished...). Identification by Kevin Morgan and Richards of certain party elements as impediments to implementing these policies (i.e. 'British Labour'/the 'parliamentary party') even framed such internal elements as more ideologically distanced from Welsh Labour politics – and the legacy of working class solidarity which came with it – than 'progressives' in Plaid. In so far as the party at Westminster was implementing a 'Blair-ite' neo-liberal agenda while Plaid Cymru advocated social democratic policies, claims that the latter were actually more Bevanite than the former had teeth; the charge of a historic betrayal was thus

turned back against opponents. What then can this tell us about the ideological state of the Welsh Labour Party in 2007 and its subsequent direction?

### Analytical Conclusions

Speaking before the card vote at the special conference, one member of the party leadership described that day's debate as 'a very good test of what sort of party we want to be', this being one 'that will not fall apart' and a 'family' that, 'no matter how much we fight', stays together. Another leadership figure echoed this message, telling members: 'To start, let's knock on the head the self-important professor in the *Western Mail* [Kevin Morgan] ... who claims there are two parties, one in London and one in Cardiff. We are one Labour Party and always will be, standing together.' The party, they declared, 'was divided as a Welsh Labour Party because of predicament' alone, and that 'what unites is immeasurably greater than the divisions'.

The resulting conference vote itself seemingly demonstrated such assertions of cross-party unit were a reality; a resounding victory for coalition supporters, 'One Wales' won a clear majority of both affiliates (96%) and constituencies (61%), passing with 78% of the collated vote.<sup>82</sup> For all the debate, this outcome had in fact been known from the outset, the affiliate and CLP votes having already been counted; what the conference had allowed, however, was an opportunity for the losing side to vent. Recognition of this leads to the question of what this particularly bitter debate (this venting), as analysed above, can tell us about the power relations within Welsh Labour *behind* the ultimate result of this vote.

Two facts point to the intra-party argument over 'One Wales' as more than a one-off policy spat, but rather symptomatic of a wider ideological division between different tendencies within the party. First, its linkage by both sides to the fundamental nature of the party itself, its ideology and values, and the manner in which each tapped into historical trends within Welsh Labour thinking. Secondly, the consistency of the different elements across the two deeply antagonistic positions articulated by the different sides' rhetoric. What was the nature of this deep, intra-party divide? The previously referenced claim by Jones and Scully<sup>83</sup> that the argument over 'One Wales' was between supporters and opponents of devolution lacks subtlety on two points.

First, confusing support for ‘One Wales’ with supporting and embracing devolution, is to equate a Labour aversion to Plaid Cymru with a rejection of devolution. There are historical precedents for this claim, as some of Plaid’s harshest critics within Labour were also anti-devolutionists (Evans, Thomas, etc.); but others, such as Jim Griffiths, were both anti-nationalists *and* pro-devolutionists, demonstrating the dangers of equating the two. The debate within Labour was, rather, to do with the party’s subsequent political identity if it entered coalition. The key division each side articulated was related to ideology rather than policy (or at least, where it was against specific policies it was due to claims of their *ideological* nature). Specifically, both defined Labour’s ideology as socialist; however, while one articulated this ideology as the *antithesis* of nationalism, the other accepted they were different, but not un-reconcilably. The fundamental antagonism which characterised the argument over ‘One Wales’ was thus not about *devolution* or about accepting coalitions, but about *nationalism*, and accepting coalitions with *nationalists*. The problem for opponents was articulated as Plaid itself – and anti-nationalist is not the same as ‘devo-sceptic’. The argument was about whether accepting ‘One Wales’ would mean Labour was no longer an *internationalist*, but rather a nationalist party – and as such tapped into deeper narratives within the party of both Labour and Plaid Cymru’s respective histories.

Second, as the debate reported above shows, portrayals of the argument of ‘One Wales’ as one between Cardiff Bay and London is pernicious: MPs, AMs, councillors, and CLP delegates argued across both sides of the debate. Nevertheless, the formal divisions do offer lessons: Ultimately, the coalition was (i) supported by the Party nomenclature and political leadership in Westminster, Cardiff Bay, Transport House and affiliates; and (ii) debate aside, ‘One Wales’ accrued the overwhelming majority of votes in the special electoral college. As such, supporters of the coalition without question dominated the formal structures of the party.

Actors’ arguments also expressed these power-relations: Opponents were clearly on the back-foot, striking an insurgency pose of ‘the people’ versus elites with appeals to *pathos* and *ethos* – playing up values and ideals related to the party’s glorious past, rather than offering logical solutions to a problem in the here-and-now. Opponents had a clear, loud

voice in the post-election debate; theirs was, however, an argument *against* the position advocated by those with formal power (aka ‘the elite’). Supporters, by contrast, demonstrated their dominance within the party via their rhetoric of reasonableness, the need for pragmatism and maturity. Such appeals to *logos*, tied to a governing party *ethos* (as *the* historic party of Welsh government), were possible as those making them already occupied the position most members perceived as the post-devolution political ‘reality’. If opponents spoke-up more than supporters during the debate this was a sign not of strength but weakness; one side was more confident it would carry the day regardless of the argument itself. While opponents claimed the ideological high ground, they nevertheless failed to win the majority of grassroots votes in the CLPs and (some) affiliates when put to the vote. The view that nationalism was antithetical to Labour politics, once a significant force within the party’s narrative, ultimately lacked weight; those who saw accommodation (the ‘red dragon on the red flag’) as an acceptable part of a Labour-led coalition government were in control.

Overall, the ‘One Wales’ debate marked the first and so far last time, post-devolution, that a major ideological conflict has broken out in Welsh Labour. Eight years after the loud and bitter arguments set out here, there are currently no clear voices from within Labour that dispute the cross-party consensus in Welsh politics supporting the devolution of the same powers to Wales as to post-referendum Scotland.<sup>84</sup> Yet, as this analysis has sought to demonstrate, this conflict and subsequent acceptance of a red-green coalition did not signify a shift within the party from an anti-devolutionary tendency to a pro-devolution one. The fact that opponents articulated their problem as the nationalists, not devolution, indicates that the ideological dominance of the latter was already a reality.

Rather, it marked the solidification of a (soft-)nationalist ideological predisposition within the Welsh Labour leadership and wider party; the debate in 2007 can thus be seen as the key moment when Welsh Labour became a ‘One Wales’ party. This has remained the hegemonic position within the party since the coalition ended in 2011 and subsequently Welsh politics in general.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, in the 2011 Assembly elections Labour won 50 per cent of the seats and formed a functioning one-party government. Plaid Cymru, by contrast, fell to third place behind the Conservatives – one explanation for this fact is that, through its adoption of clear devo-maximising programme framed in soft-nationalist rhetoric, Labour has

both ‘spiked Plaid’s guns’ and through its dominant position, shifted the centre of political gravity onto this same ground which they can now control.<sup>86</sup>

The electoral benefits of this position for Welsh Labour may not be as clear cut as they appeared in 2011, however. Thus, while Labour topped the polls in Wales at the 2015 General Election, and Plaid Cymru were relegated to fourth in the share of the vote, the party’s overall performance was poor, securing only 25 seats – one fewer than in 2010. The Conservatives, by comparison, won three, achieving their best result since 1983. Furthermore, Welsh Labour faces a threat from a different nationalism, UKIP coming second place behind them in six seats and a close third in a number of others, eating into their majorities.<sup>87</sup> Faced with these significant threats from the right, rather than the left, the 2016 Assembly elections thus heralds a key test for the ‘One Wales’ Welsh Labour approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Barford, 'UK Devolution'.

<sup>2</sup> Livingstone. 'Coalition would be 'made in Wales deal' insist Lib-Dems.

<sup>3</sup> The coalition took its' name from the titular coalition document: Labour Assembly Group & Plaid Cymru Assembly Group .*One Wales*.

<sup>4</sup> McAllister and Cole, 'The 2011 Welsh General Election'; McAllister and Kay, 'Core tensions in Wales's new politics'; McAngus, 'Office and Policy at the Expense of Votes'; Palmer, 'Coalition and Minority Government in Wales.'

<sup>5</sup> See: Osmond, *Crossing the Rubicon*.

<sup>6</sup> See excerpts quoted in: Moon, 'Welsh Labour in Power,' 81.

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism'.

<sup>8</sup> Moon and Bratberg, 'Conceptualising the multi-level party,' 55.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Trench, 'Introduction,' 6.

<sup>11</sup> See: Hassan and Shaw, *The Strange Death of Labour Scotland*.

<sup>12</sup> Wyn Jones and Scully, *Wales Says Yes*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Fowler, 'Nationalism and the Labour Party in Wales'.

<sup>14</sup> Sørensen and Torfing, 'Theoretical Approaches to Governance Network Dynamics', 40.

<sup>15</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 14.

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- <sup>16</sup> For a similar approach to the analysis of intra-party relations via the analysis of rhetorical articulations, see Moon, 'Rhetoric and Policy Learning', 314.
- <sup>17</sup> Atkins and Finlayson, "'...A 40-Year-Old Black Man Made the Point to Me'"; Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments'.
- <sup>18</sup> Fetterman, *Ethnography*, 37.
- <sup>19</sup> See discussion in Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*.
- <sup>20</sup> Fielding, 'Observational Research on the National Front'.
- <sup>21</sup> Balsom, Madgwick and Mechelen, 'The Red and the Green'.
- <sup>22</sup> Fowler 'Nationalism and the Labour Party in Wales,' 97.
- <sup>23</sup> Moon, 'Welsh Labour in Power'.
- <sup>24</sup> Sandry, *Plaid Cymru*.
- <sup>25</sup> Morgan and Mungham *Redesigning Democracy*, 69.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Wyn Jones, *The Fascist Party in Wales?*, 66.
- <sup>28</sup> Mouffe *The Democratic Paradox*, 12.
- <sup>29</sup> Fowler, 'Nationalism and the Labour Party in Wales,' 97.
- <sup>30</sup> Flynn, *Dragons Led by Poodles*.
- <sup>31</sup> Hopkin and Bradbury, 'British Statewide Parties and Multilevel Politics,' 144; Taylor, 'Labour,' 170-1.
- <sup>32</sup> Morgan, *Revolution to devolution*, 244.
- <sup>33</sup> Hansard, HC Deb 17 October 1944, vol. 403, 2311-12
- <sup>34</sup> Morgan, *The Red Dragon and the Red Flag*, cited in Morgan, 'Towards Democratic Devolution', 185.
- <sup>35</sup> Smith, *Aneurin Bevan*, 71.
- <sup>36</sup> Griffiths, 'The Other Aneurin Bevan'
- <sup>37</sup> Bevan, 'The Claim of Wales', 151, 153.
- <sup>38</sup> Jones, 'The Development of the Devolution Debate,' 26.
- <sup>39</sup> David, *Remaining True*, 87.
- <sup>40</sup> Hansard, HC Deb 16 December 1976, vol. 922, 1793.
- <sup>41</sup> Hansard, HC Deb 03 February 1975, vol. 885, 1031.
- <sup>42</sup> Morgan and Mungham, *Redesigning Democracy*; Shipton, 'Lib-Lab pact on way amid fear of Plaid win in 2011.'

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- <sup>43</sup> See: Ward, *Huw T. Edwards*.
- <sup>44</sup> Davies, *Devolution A Process Not An Event*, 3.
- <sup>45</sup> Wyn Jones, *The Fascist Party in Wales?*, 19.
- <sup>46</sup> Morgan, *Revolution to devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy*, 43.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Wyn Jones, *The Fascist Party in Wales?*.
- <sup>50</sup> Quoted in: Ibid, 21.
- <sup>51</sup> Fowler, 'Nationalism and the Labour Party in Wales,' 100.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, 98.
- <sup>53</sup> See: Thomas, *Hands of Wales*.
- <sup>54</sup> David, *Remaining True*, 88.
- <sup>55</sup> Thomas, *Mr Speaker*, 95.
- <sup>56</sup> Wyn Jones, *The Fascist Party in Wales?*, 22.
- <sup>57</sup> BBC News, *Morgan given 'mandate for talks'*; Roderick, 'Labour-led assembly 'most likely'.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> Osmond, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 13.
- <sup>60</sup> Trench, 'Introduction,' 4.
- <sup>61</sup> Osmond, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 31.
- <sup>62</sup> Labour Assembly Group and Plaid Cymru Assembly Group, *One Wales*.
- <sup>63</sup> For example, Peter Hain, then Secretary of State for Wales, reportedly persuaded many Welsh Labour MP to support the deal by telling them that a referendum would not take place earlier than 2014. See, Osmond, 'The day Labour became Welsh'.
- <sup>64</sup> Osmond, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 8
- <sup>65</sup> The marks around 'review' are Howells' own, likely denoting scepticism and/or sarcasm.
- <sup>66</sup> Davie, 'Coalition means 'suicide' for Labour'.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> Shipton, 'Labour AM raps party'.
- <sup>69</sup> Shipton, 'Howells in attack on Plaid pact'.

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<sup>70</sup> BBC News, *Opposition to Plaid deal spreads*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Davie, 'Coalition means 'suicide' for Labour'.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Osmond, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> Shipton, 'Howells in attack on Plaid pact'.

<sup>76</sup> Shipton, 'Labour AM raps party'.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Even some supporters of 'One Wales' voiced their unhappiness with what they saw as its 'nationalist' nature. As one MP who backed the deal complained: 'The problem with this agreement is it gives the nationalists everything.'

<sup>79</sup> Price 'A short history of Wales in the last twenty five years as seen through the eyes of Antonio Gramsci'.

<sup>80</sup> On rhetorical appeals to *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, see: Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments'.

<sup>81</sup> Representing opponents thus, framed them as closed to reasoned argument regarding the benefits for others *beyond themselves*, and as such non-rational and indeed immature.

<sup>82</sup> Albeit omitting the usual voting section in the electoral college for MPs/AMs, which would almost certainly have demonstrated greater divisions internally.

<sup>83</sup> Wyn Jones and Scully, *Wales Says Yes*, 25.

<sup>84</sup> Jones, 'Our Future Union'.

<sup>85</sup> See: Moon, 'Welsh Labour in Power'.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>87</sup> Cutts and Moon, 'Why the rise of UKIP is a significant threat to Welsh Labour'.