VOTES AND VOICES: MINORITY LANGUAGES AND ELECTORAL SUBSTATE

NATIONALISM IN SPAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

by

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DEDICATION

For Matt, who has always been there for me through the good times and the bad. I

wouldn't have made it this far without you.

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ABSTRACT

Substate nationalist political parties are a key component of the electoral politics of Spain and the United Kingdom. The demographic support that these parties receive is often tied to speakers of regional languages. In this paper, six regions in the two countries - Scotland, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Galicia - are examined using geographic data analysis to determine whether communities with a high level of minority language speakers are more likely to vote for substate nationalist parties. In most of the cases, I find that there is a strong connection between the two.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UK   United Kingdom

COA   Census output area

SNP   Scottish National Party

ERC   Republican Left of Catalonia (*Esquerra Republicana Catalunya*)

CUP   Popular Unity Candidacy (*Candidatura d'Unitat Popular*)

PNV   Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*)

SDLP   Social Democratic and Labour Party

BNG   Galician Nationalist Bloc (*Bloque Nacionalista Galego*)

FPTP   First past the post

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

On October 1st, 2017, the global community was shocked by images of horrific police brutality in Catalonia, where hundreds of civilians were injured for simply attempting to cast a ballot. They were voting to declare their opinion that Catalonia should become its own independent nation, and separate from Spain. Although they may have failed that day in the face of resistance from the central government, many European countries have regions similar to Catalonia that have strong national identities. This substate nationalism is often defined by identity-driven politics, pushing for either greater autonomous authority for a region within a country or even driving towards the extreme of independence. The prevalence of this substate nationalism varies greatly - and in an increasingly interconnected European continent, it is undeniable that certain regions across various countries have placed a renewed interest in their own national projects. The two countries that have seen the most activity in this regard are the United Kingdom and Spain. Both of them have long histories of strong regional identities and equally strong tensions with the central state. These tensions have also become especially strained over the opening decades of the 21st century.

Substate nationalism is generally defined within the literature as nationalist movements or sentiment taking place within a distinct region of a larger state (Lecours 2012). Phenomena of this type are undeniably an important piece of the political landscape of the UK and Spain. However, a question that remains relatively unanswered is what sort of groups are most motivated to participate in these substate nationalist

movements. In this paper, I will be examining what communities are driven to vote for political parties that advocate for substate nationalism. Specifically, I will be measuring whether or not the prevalence of minority language speakers in communities within the United Kingdom and Spain tracks with support for substate nationalist political parties across three regions in each of the countries. By looking at recent election and census data, I analyze on a geographic scale the extent to which these communities tend to vote for these nationalist parties.

Overall, I find that there is often a strong correlation between areas that have high levels of minority language speakers and areas that tend to vote for substate nationalist parties. Support for the relationship is found in five of the six cases to varying degrees of strength. This shows that this analysis can likely be applied to a broad scope of cases.

In the first section of the paper, I analyze the reasons why I expect to find a positive relationship in the data analysis. Secondly, I cover the research design, discussing which parties I chose for analysis and how the analysis is conducted using GIS. And, lastly, I explain each of the six cases individually and discuss both relevant background information and the results of the data analysis in detail.

CHAPTER TWO: MINORITY LANGUAGES, SUBSTATE NATIONALISM, AND

VOTE CHOICE

Throughout regions of the United Kingdom and Spain, there are geographically concentrated groups of people who speak minority languages in their everyday lives. The formation of a separate, regional identity is an essential piece of substate nationalism developing, and having communities that speak a language that differs from the primary one of the nation may make this identity even stronger (Cetrà 2019). As such, my central hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Is the prevalence of minority language speakers positively correlated with vote share for substate nationalist political parties?

It has been established by scholars that language is one of the strongest effects in the creation of regional identity, more so than factors such as ideology or geographic periphery (Fitjar 2010), which makes it the most desirable factor to analyze. Speaking a different language may create a feeling of otherness or alienation among these groups, which in turn emboldens their stance against the central state. This could be especially accentuated when the language is substantially different from the main state language, as can be seen in cases such as the Basque Country.

Given that individuals who use a minority language may have a separate social identity from the rest of the population, they may want special cultural protections to preserve these social identities. As such, this could encourage voters who use minority languages to vote for substate nationalist parties who will pursue policies to protect the

group's identity. Many substate nationalist parties explicitly incorporate measures for the protection and promotion of minority languages into their manifestos, giving a direct appeal to minority language speakers. Policies of this variety include mandating the teaching of the regional language in schools, establishing regional language media such as TV and radio stations, and using the language in government communication. There is reason for voters to believe that voting to support these types of policies can bring about substantive change; one example is the establishment of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, a program targeted at universities in Wales to make them provide more Welsh-language courses and resources. This was able to be established due to the participation of Plaid Cymru, Wales' main substate nationalist party, in the Welsh government of the time (BBC, 2011).

In the face of a minority language declining in usage due to the strong influence of the use of the majority language, individuals who speak the minority language may feel a stronger need to vote for parties that would protect the language. Substate nationalist parties' policies are often directly aimed at solving this problem by having proposals to help preserve these languages (Arnau 1997). A minority language speaker, especially for an endangered language, may be motivated to vote for these parties out of feelings of self-preservation for the language that they speak. Policies of this type can include constitutional protection for languages, and areas that are designated as "language homelands". Homelands of this variety have already been proposed, such as the Y Fro Gymraeg in Wales and the Gàidhealtachd in Scotland. This concept has precedent, as a similar protected area known as the Gaeltacht was established in the Republic of Ireland (Maguire 2002). The degree to which substate nationalist parties focus specifically on

language varies from case to case, but it could be expected that their message resonates with voters even if language is not their primary focus (Hoppe 2007). The parties may also use the language as an identity marker to encourage voters who use the language to vote for them (Olivieri 2015). This could act as a function of descriptive representation, incentivizing voters in these communities to desire to be represented by their peers (Anderson 1991).

Additionally, it is important to define the difference between the types of substate nationalism that are encountered across the analyzed cases. Primarily, these fall within the two major categories of nationalism: ethnic and civic. In basic terms, ethnic nationalism is generally driven by *exclusionary* sentiment, placing value upon blood heritage to define a nation. On the other hand, civic nationalism tends to be driven by more *inclusionary* sentiment, positing that a nation is defined by shared moral values and traditions rather than blood heritage (Koht 1944). Most substate nationalist movements adhere to one of these archetypes, though differences still exist. This is especially so in Spain, where substate nationalism has developed into its own unique blend of these two forces (Muro and Quiroga 2005). This means that parties will not be as explicitly categorically defined in the Spanish cases as they are in the U.K. ones.

Given that minority language speakers may be more likely to vote for regional national parties, we should expect that in geographic areas where minority language citizens are concentrated, substate national parties should have a higher vote share. In the next sections. I analyze the relationship between minority language usage and regional party vote share in 3 regions in Spain and 3 regions in the UK.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

To assess whether there is a relationship between minority language usage and vote share for regional national parties, I will be conducting a geographic data analysis that compares votes for regional nationalist parties in recent elections to census data for minority language speakers within 3 regions in Spain and 3 regions in the UK. This section discusses the types of data I will use in the analysis, and the manner in which I will analyze the data.

In order to get a clear picture of support for substate nationalism in the six regions, all of the relatively major nationalist parties in each of them will be included in the analysis. The number of parties varies in each region; some, like Scotland and Galicia, only have one major nationalist party, while Catalonia has a large number of them. For the purposes of inclusion, I selected whichever parties managed to win seats in the election that was analyzed. See Table 1 for the list of regions and parties.

With respect to the data on these regional parties, I will use the most recent election data as a point of reference. For Spain, I will analyze municipal election results in each region's most recent regional elections, taking place in 2020 for Galicia and the Basque Country, and 2021 for Catalonia. For the UK, I will analyze the 2019 Westminster election, as it is the most recent date for which both levels of data are available: the aforementioned census output area data, and constituency-wide level data as well. Since the UK does not atomize its election results, the official data for the census

Table 1   **List of Analyzed Regions, and Political Parties Therein**

Regions	Parties (* = support for independence, not just autonomy)		
Scotland	Scottish National Party* (SNP)		
Wales	Plaid Cymru/Party of Wales (PC)		
Northern Ireland	Sinn Fein** (SF)	Social Democratic and Labour Party** (SDLP)	
Catalonia	Republican Left of Catalonia* (ERC)	Together for Catalonia* (JxCat/Junts)	Popular Unity Candidacy* (CUP)
Basque Country	Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)	EH Bildu* (EHB)	
Galicia	Galician Nationalist Bloc* (BNG)		

**Technically promotes independence from the UK via reunification with Ireland

output area does not exist. As such, I will use estimates for census output areas for this

analysis produced by Electoral Calculus, a UK-based statistical institute (Baxter 2022).

Since constituency level data is not estimated, it will also be included in the analysis as a

confirmation.

For language demographic data, I measured language usage using census data

compiled by statistical institutes or governments in each of the regions.[1] In all regions

except Scotland, the indicator measures the extent to which people indicate on the census

that they speak a language. Scotland is an exception, due to the measures employed to

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[1] Scotland: https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ ; Catalonia: https://www.idescat.cat/?lang=en ; Basque Country: https://en.eustat.eus/indice.html ; Wales: https://statswales.gov.wales/ ; Northern Ireland: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/ ; Galicia: https://www.ige.eu/web/index.jsp?idioma=en

define who speaks Scottish Gaelic or Scots, but this is explained further in the region's section below.

I use ArcGIS Pro to analyze the impact of language on the electoral success of these substate nationalist parties, by comparing the language census data and the electoral data to see if they are correlated or otherwise related. For the UK I analyze data in both census output areas and Westminster constituencies, and in Spain, I analyze data in municipalities. This data paints a clear geographic picture of the distribution of language speakers and the voters of nationalist parties, and whether or not they match up as the hypothesis predicts they will. This data will be presented through a number of different methods and maps. The Spanish case data and the constituency level data in the UK cases will be analyzed through a bivariate color scheme, a method in ArcGIS that compares two numerically based variables and measures them up against each other. For these, it will be displayed as a 2x2 relationship, which divides the categories into "High" (>50th percentile) or "Low" (<50th percentile) and then compares them, providing a loose correlation. Both of these data types will also be put through a basic correlation analysis, as a confirmation. In the case of the UK census output areas, dots will be used to represent tracts that are estimated to have voted for the party of interest, since the Electoral Calculus data simply provides an estimate of the overall winner and not percentages of vote like is used in the other data analysis. This will then be overlaid atop the map representing the percentage of language speakers, and analyzed through cross tabulation to see if the two variables seem to overlap to a sufficient degree.

Table 2   Summary of overall findings

Region and Language	Does it fit the hypothesis, and how strongly?
Scotland (Scots Gaelic, Scots)	Weak support (Gaelic), No (Scots)
Catalonia (Catalan)	Yes, strongly
Basque Country (Basque)	Yes, very strongly
Wales (Welsh)	Yes, very strongly
Northern Ireland (Irish)	Yes, very strongly
Galicia (Galician)	No

Overall, the results from each region tend to fit the main hypothesis, often strongly. The two major exceptions are Scots, the second language analyzed in Scotland, and Galicia. The data and the results provide strong evidence for the main hypothesis, and show that this idea could potentially be applied to other regions within Europe and across the globe.

The following sections will break down the case analysis of each of the regions. I will explain case by case to discuss whether or not the data fits the main hypothesis, and will present a narrative including historical context for the languages and parties to provide an explanation for the relationship.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCOTLAND

Scotland is arguably the most fervent hotbed of substate nationalism in Europe, with pro-independence sentiment at record levels in recent years. Within this case, I examine the impact that two languages - Scots Gaelic and the more Germanic-based Scots - have on the electoral outcomes of the Scottish National Party, or SNP. It is important to note that neither of these languages is particularly common. Only 1.1% of respondents to the 2011 Scottish Census reported being able to speak Scottish Gaelic, and about 24% of people have claimed some skill in speaking Scots. Yet my findings suggest that although Scots Gaelic is less frequently spoken, its impact on vote share of the SNP is stronger and more consistent than the impact of Scots. Additionally, the SNP does well in areas where minority languages are not spoken, which diverges from the other cases. This is likely due to the SNP's position as an explicitly civic nationalist party, in contrast to many of the other analyzed cases.

Language Background and Distribution

Both Scots and Scots Gaelic have a unique history within Scotland as to who speaks them and why. Scots Gaelic is, naturally, a Gaelic language related to other tongues in the Atlantic Archipelago like Irish and Manx (Russell 2014). For much of early Scottish history, it was the nation's dominant tongue, but it endured a steady decline over many centuries beginning with the increased Anglicanization of the region in the early Middle Ages (Russell 2014). The British census of 1755 measured Gaelic speakers as making up 23% of Scotland's population - by 2011, this figure had declined to 1.1%

due to industrialization and the popularization of English over the intervening centuries.

Nowadays, it is primarily spoken by more isolated populations like those of the

Hebridean Isles, the Isle of Skye, and other parts of the Highland region.
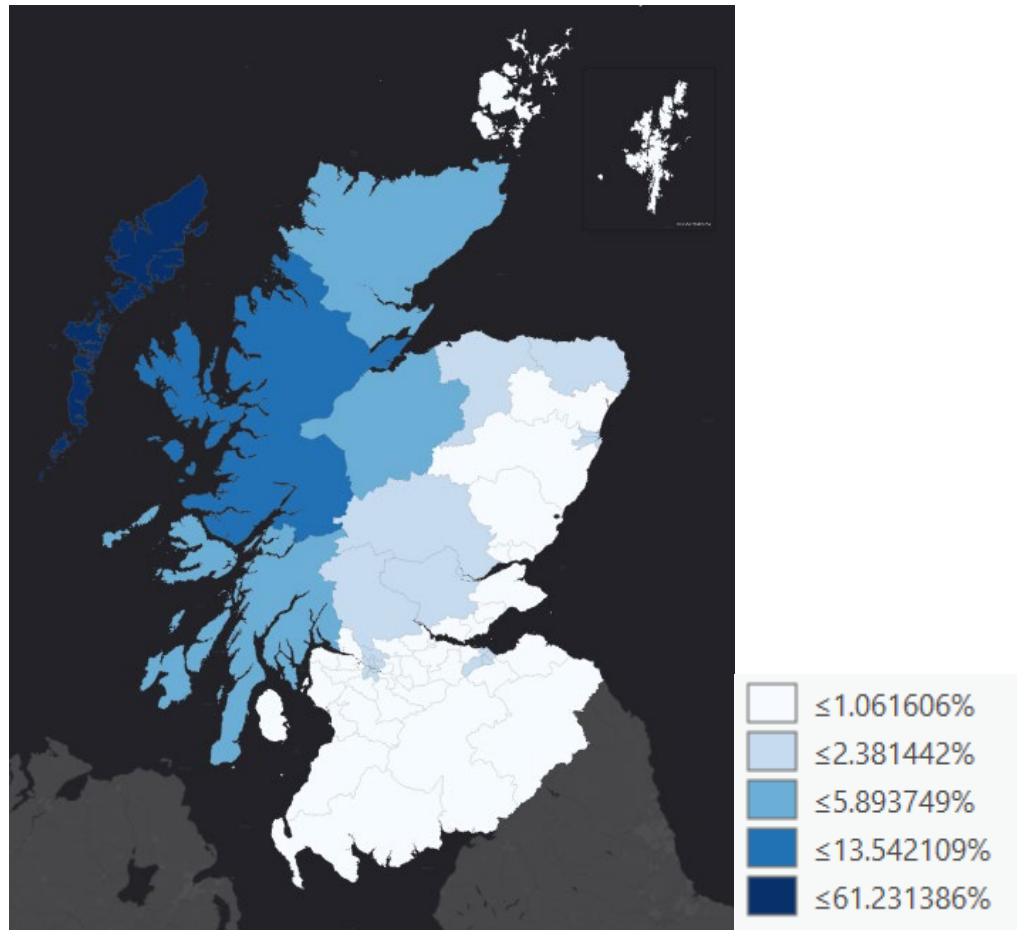
Map 1   **Scots Gaelic fluency, by Westminster constituency**

The Scots language is of a different origin entirely, being a Germanic language that was

spread northward from the old Kingdom of Northumbria (Macafee 2002). Like its Gaelic

counterpart, the use of Scots was discouraged in favor of English as the centuries rolled

on, but it never endured the precipitous decline that Gaelic did. The differentiation of

Scots from English has long been a debate among linguists, and it is perhaps because it is

seen as more analogous to English that it was able to endure in a way that other

languages in the UK like Irish, Welsh, or Scots Gaelic were unable to (McArthur 1992).

Either way, it is still a very prevalent language throughout the country, claimed to be

spoken by roughly 30% of the population according to the 2011 census, which was the

first census to directly measure Scots proficiency. It is most heavily spoken in the

northeastern areas of Banffshire and Aberdeenshire, the Southern Uplands, and the isles

of Orkney and Shetland.

≤14.322849%
≤33.491319%
≤39.056769%
≤45.858497%
≤65.054178%
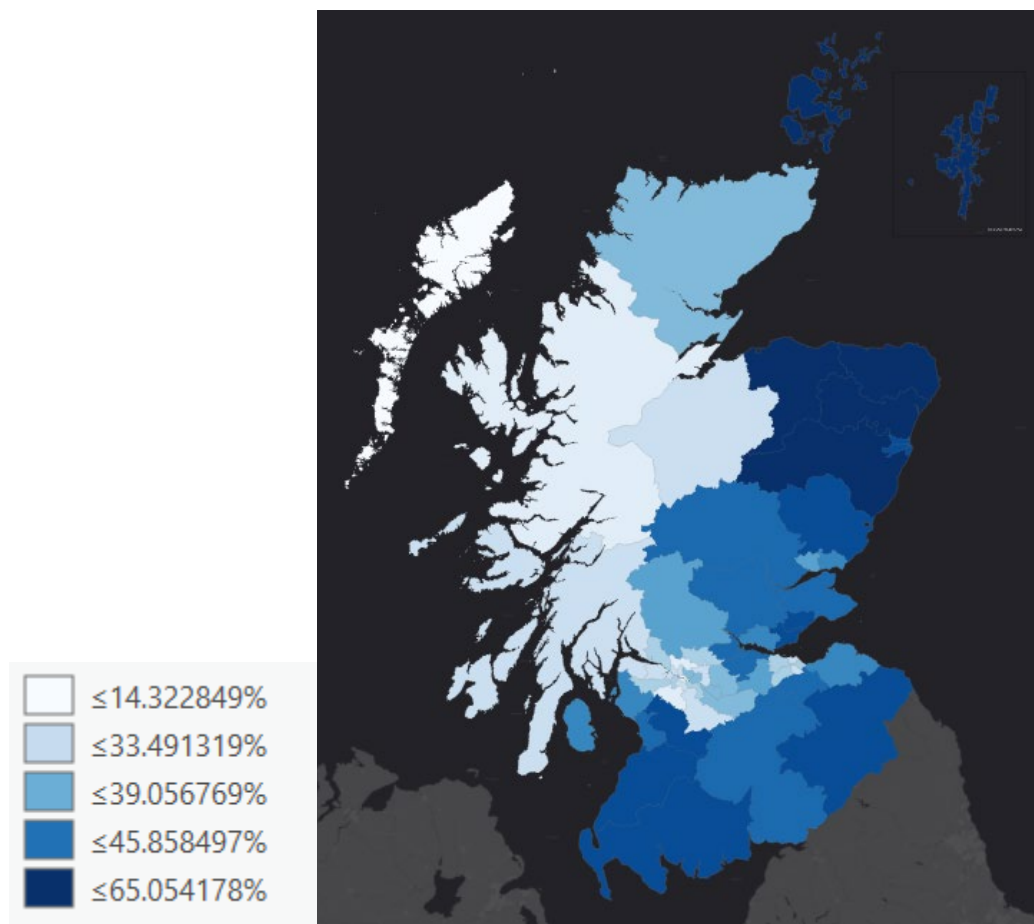
Map 2   Scots fluency, by Westminster constituency

When it comes to language advocacy and protections, there are once again

numerous differences between the two. Both are recognized by the Scottish government

as indigenous languages, but are not included as official or national languages of the

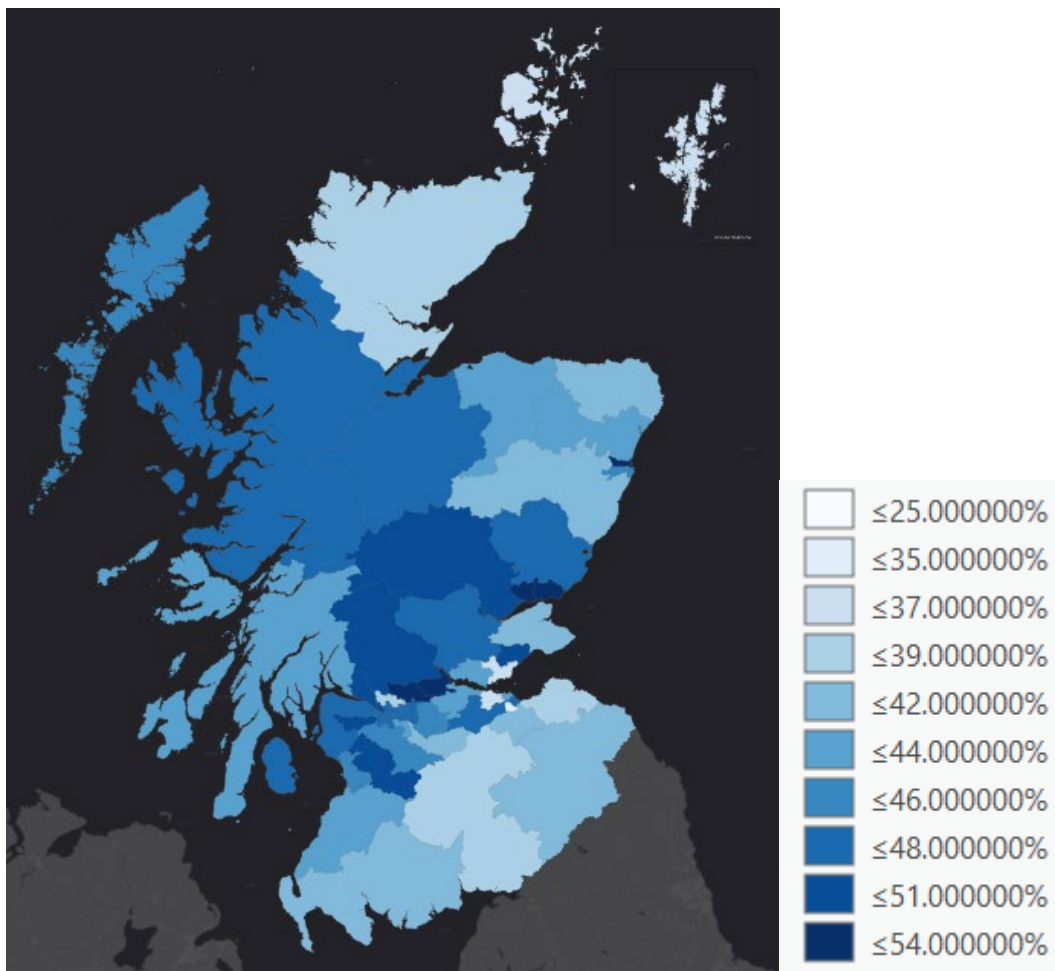United Kingdom. And on the regional level, Gaelic has largely been the focus of most language-advocacy measures. Scots received some policy priorities by the government, such as the inclusion of a Scots fluency question on the 2011 census and normal language-protection sentiments such as "[developing] a national Scots language policy, with increased support for Scots in education" (SNP 2021). But Scots Gaelic has been much more specifically focused on by both the Scottish government and the SNP. It has been the target of numerous laws, such as the Gaelic Language Act of 2005, specifically mentioned support within the Education Act of 2016, and the creation of a Gaelic-language TV channel in the form of BBC Alba in 2008. The SNP also has a specific page on their campaign website dedicated to Gaelic-language issues - and do not have one for Scots. When looking at the results later in this section, these differences could provide some clear explanation as to some of the conclusions that are come to in the data.

History of the Scottish National Party

The center-left, pro-independence SNP has been a longtime fixture of Scottish politics, having won a few seats in most Westminster elections since the latter decades of the 20th century and rising to greater prominence with winning the Holyrood government in 2007. Under the leadership of Alex Salmond, they grew that minority government to a majority one in 2011 under the promise for a referendum on Scotland's independence from the UK, paving the way for the 2014 vote. After the failure of the referendum, Salmond stepped down and the face of the party became Nicola Sturgeon, a Glaswegian MSP and Deputy First Minister in both of Salmond's governments. It is under her stewardship that the SNP has reached the apex of its political power, becoming the dominant electoral force in Scotland on both the devolved national level and in

Westminster. This level of success had eluded the party until its overwhelming 2015

victory that left it with 56 of Scotland's 59 seats in the House of Commons. The SNP has

continued to find success up to the present. As a result, Sturgeon has prioritized the

balloting of a second independence referendum, with support for independence

consistently hovering around the 50% mark in opinion polling since the United

Kingdom's exit from the EU.

|	
	≤25.000000%
	≤35.000000%
	≤37.000000%
	≤39.000000%
	≤42.000000%
	≤44.000000%
	≤46.000000%
	≤48.000000%
	≤51.000000%
	≤54.000000%

Map 3   SNP 2019 vote share, by constituency

It is also worth noting that the SNP has had a significant ideological evolution

over time. In its early decades, the party was far more centrist to center-right leaning than

it is in modern times, earning them the moniker of "tartan Tories". But they shifted

significantly leftwards under the leadership of Alex Salmond, and nowadays the party is a solidly center-left and social democratic political force (Hassan and Curtice 2009). This has likely been a boon to them, since Scotland has traditionally been one of the more left-wing regions of the UK, and most of their electoral success has come in this latter era of the party. When considering substate nationalism, Scotland and the SNP is an absolutely essential case to include for both its significance in the past two decades and a continued focus from the international community on its fate going forward.

Language Impact on Electoral Success of the SNP

Map 4 shows the comparison between the percentage of Scottish Gaelic speakers and all of the census output areas (COAs) that are estimated to have voted for the SNP in 2019, each represented by a single yellow dot. As can be seen here, the vast majority of COAs that have a high percentage of Scottish Gaelic speakers also are estimated to have voted for the SNP. This is especially true in the two places that have the highest numbers of Gaelic speakers, the Hebridean Isles (the only area where a majority of people speak it) and the Isle of Skye in the western highlands. It is also borne out by historical election results as well - the first seat in Westminster that the SNP ever won election for outside of a by-election was the Western Isles (now Na h-Eileanan an Iar) constituency in 1970. These areas have continued to be some of the strongest for the SNP in the five decades that have passed since then, with the SNP continuing to hold the Western Isles seat for the majority of that time save for a period in the 90s during the height of the Blair era.
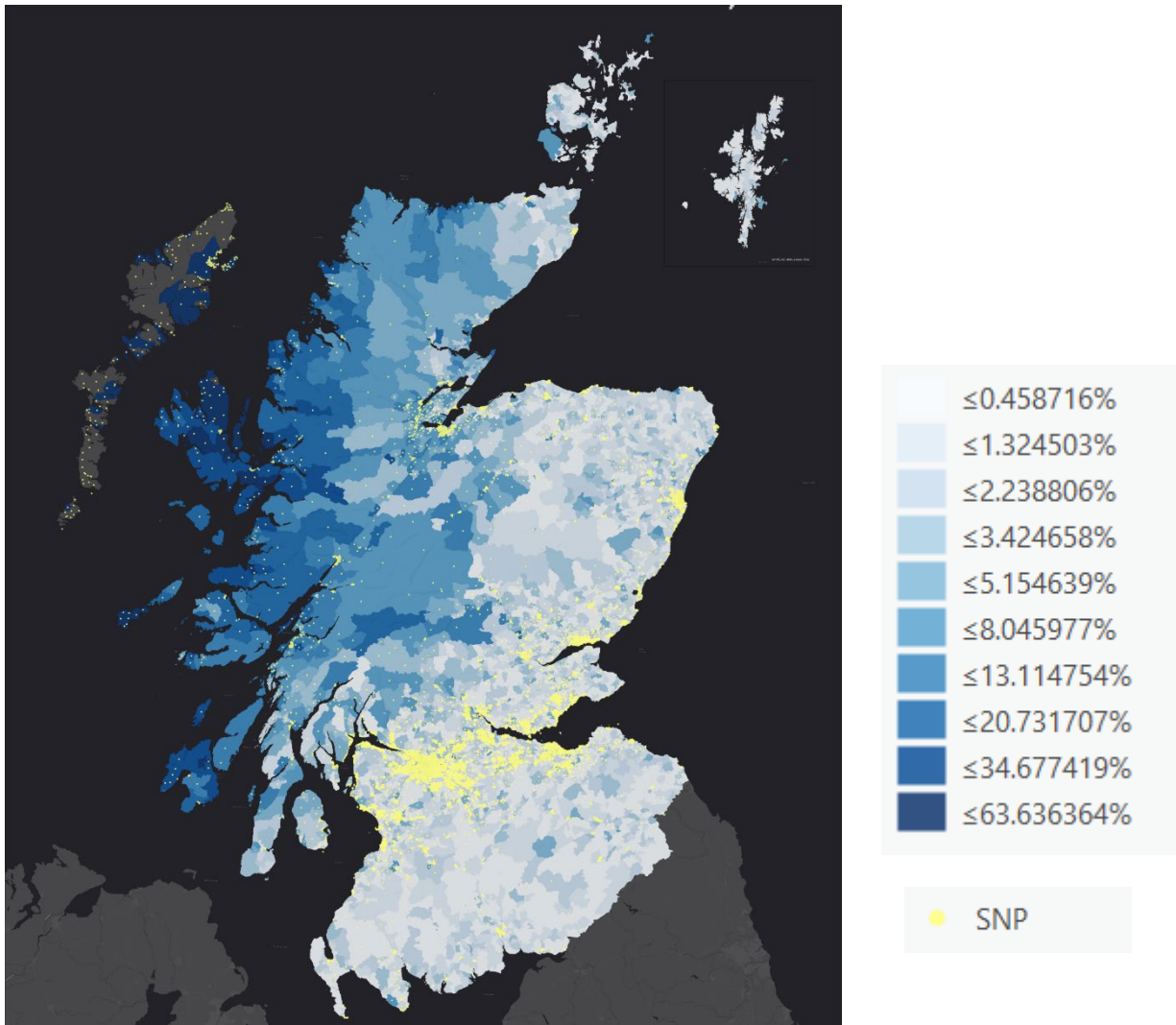
Map 4   Scots Gaelic fluency by COA, overlaid with SNP-won COAs

When looking at the relationship on a constituency level, which is displayed in Map 5 and the accompanying legend, it is slightly more muddled. This is played out with the correlation analysis, which produces a correlation of only 0.0105. Many of the constituencies that have high levels of Scots Gaelic speakers also tend to support the SNP, but it is not a perfect relationship. This is due to the fact that unlike other parties, the SNP also performs extremely well in areas *without* minority language speakers. As a result, a seat like Na h-Eileanan an Iar is classed by the bivariate analysis as High
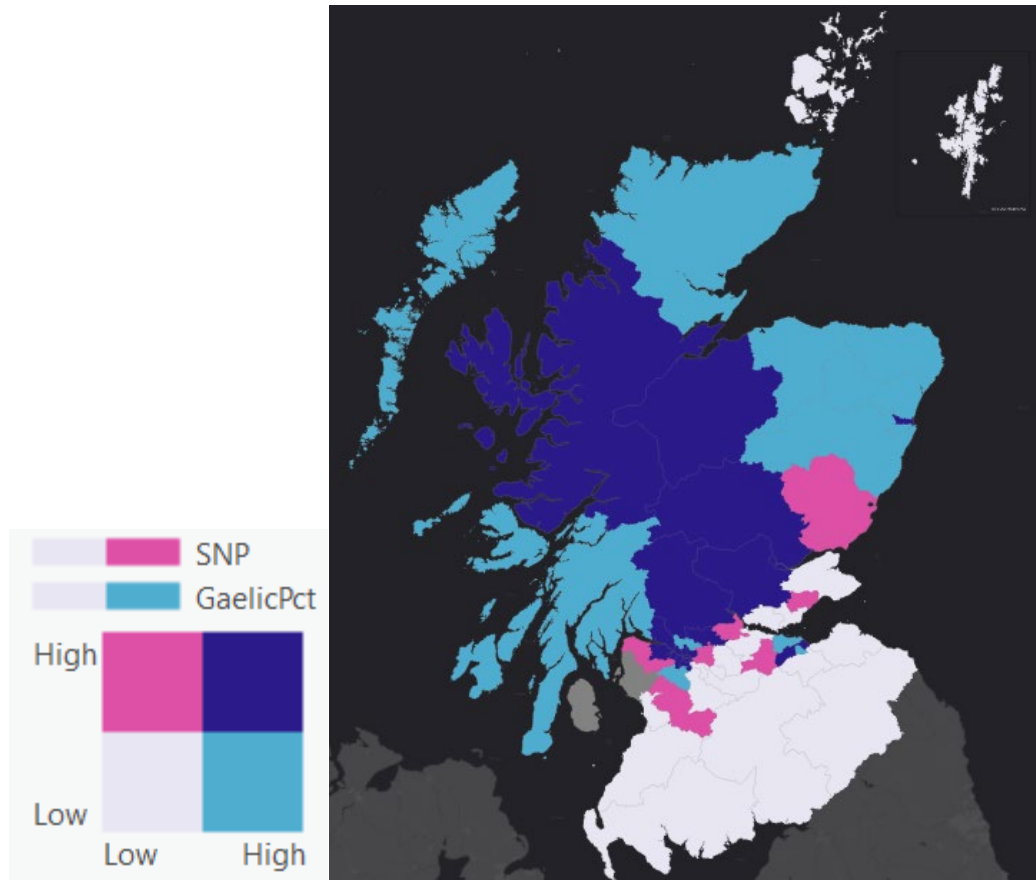
Map 5   **SNP + Scots Gaelic bivariate**

speakers/low vote even though the SNP received 45% of the vote there since they did so well elsewhere. Additionally, the cross tabulation in Table 3 shows that there is not a great amount of difference between areas with above-average numbers of Gaelic speakers and those without.

Table 3   **Scots Gaelic cross tabulation**

Gaelic	>1.7%	<1.7%
Nationalist	79.3% (9735)	74.1% (25694)
Non-nationalist	20.7% (2537)	25.9% (8980)
Mean: 1.7%	12,272	34,674

So, despite the small number of speakers that this language has, it seems evident that those who *do* speak it are very likely to support the SNP, but due to the large number of votes they receive elsewhere it is not a particularly strong correlation. The manner in which Scots Gaelic speakers could be attracted to the SNP could be a result of the party's prioritization of the protection and promotion of Scots Gaelic as explained earlier in the section, especially when compared to Scots. Knowing that their language is a high priority to the SNP could be a strong motivator for voters to cast their ballot for the party.

Moving on to Scots, there is far less clear evidence of a correlation than there is with Scots Gaelic. The correlation analysis only showed a coefficient of -0.123,
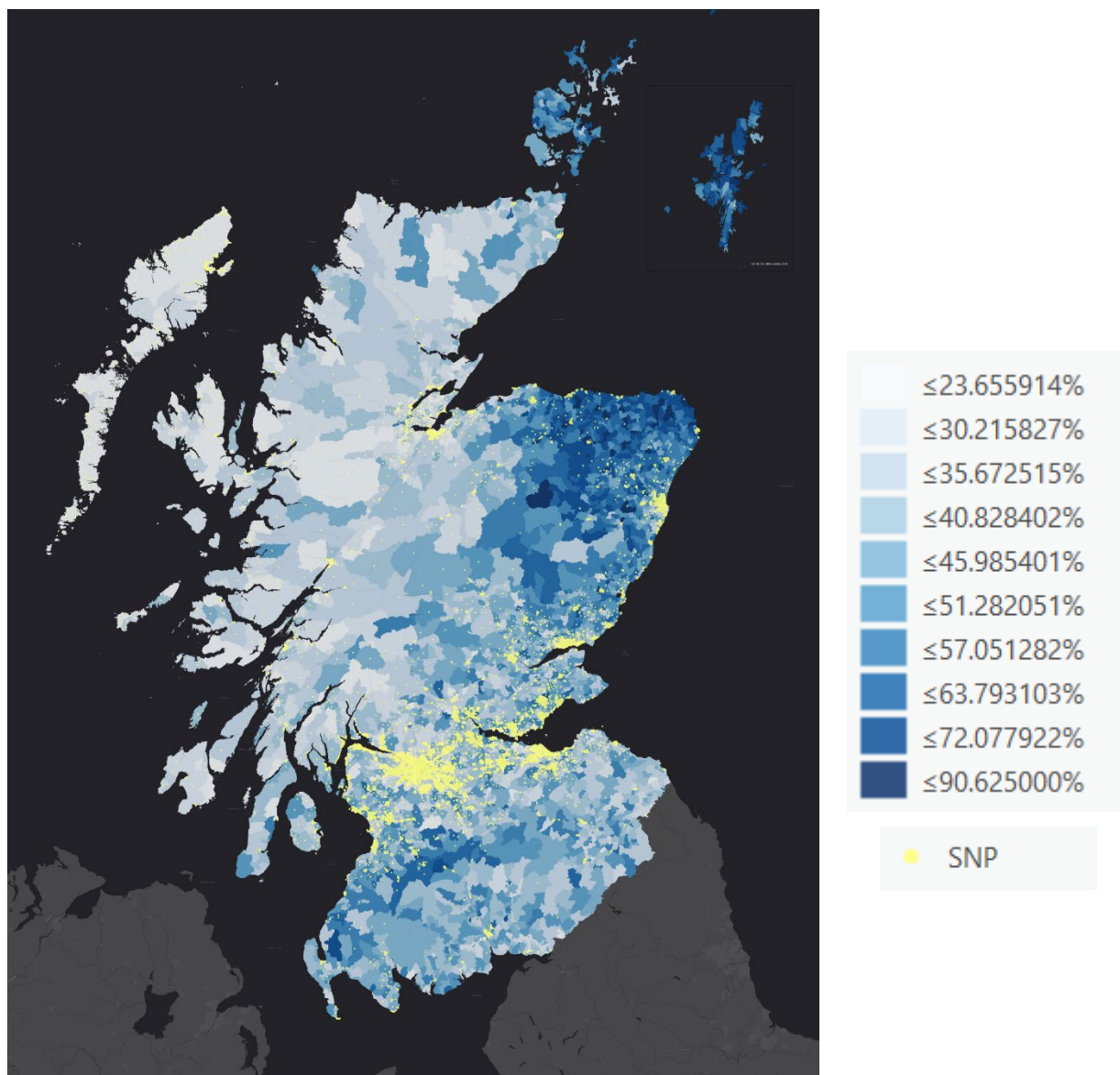
Map 6   Scots fluency by COA, overlaid with SNP-won COAs
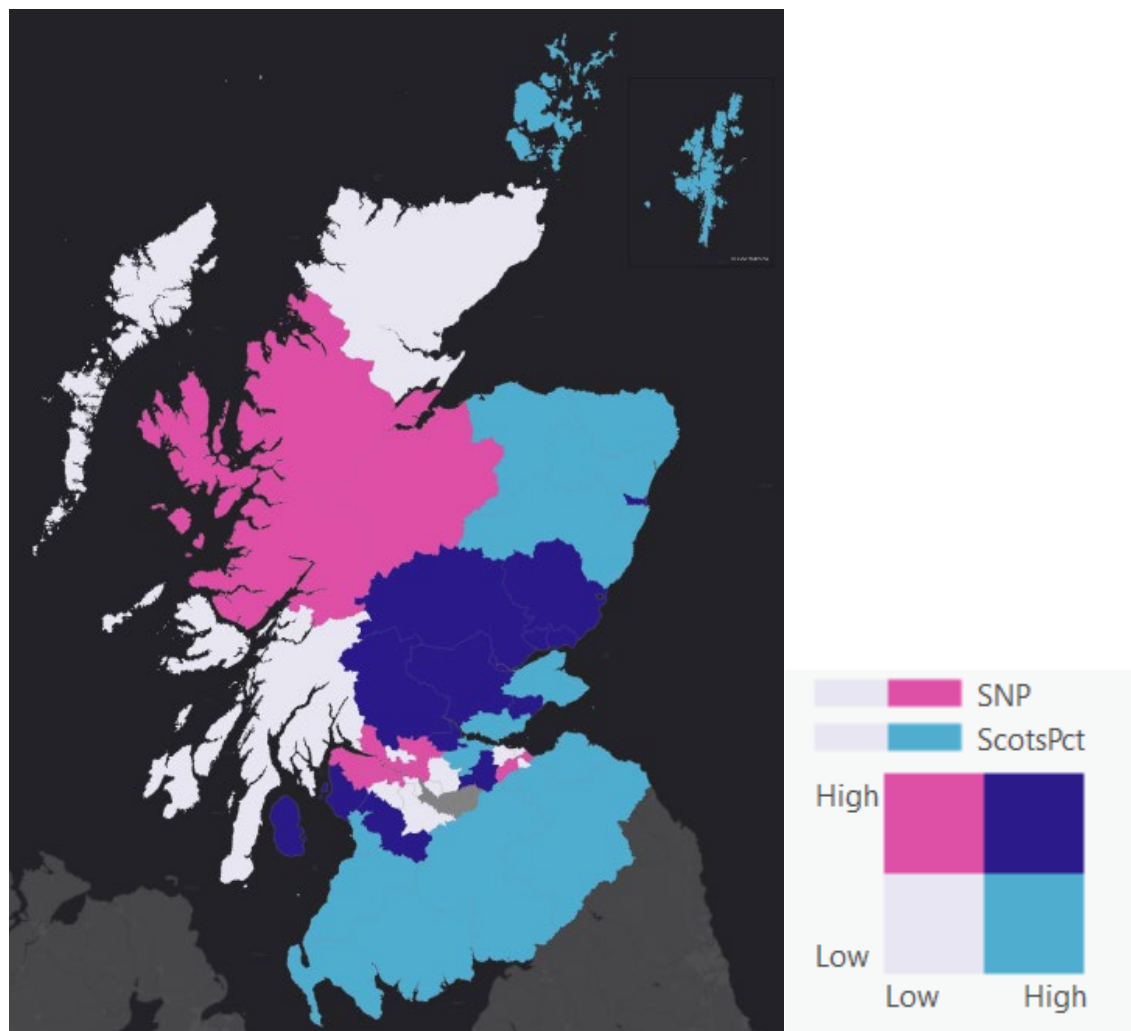
Map 2   **SNP + Scots bivariate**

indicating the absence of a strong relationship. As previously mentioned, speakers of Scots tend to be much more prevalent in the northeast of Scotland and in the more northerly islands of Orkney and Shetland. And with reference to Map 6, it actually appears that many of these areas actually tend to be some of the *weaker* ones for the SNP.

Table 4   **Scots cross tabulation**

Scots	>38%	<38%
Nationalist	70.8% (15773)	79.7% (19682)
Non-nationalist	29.2% (6509)	20.3% (5020)
Mean: 38%	22,282	24,702

Table 4 shows that the cross tabulation has a similar result to Scots Gaelic, with not much difference between above or below average areas.

But this is a relatively recent phenomenon, and bears investigation. Banff and Buchan, the most Scots-speaking constituency and located on the northeastern coast, was historically a very strong locale for the SNP, having been held by former party leader and First Minister Alex Salmond from 1987 until 2010. But their performances in this region took a nosedive in recent years, with the party losing the seat in their 2017 electoral slump and failing to regain it in 2019 (though they did manage to regain its southern neighbor Gordon, which has similarly high levels of Scots speakers). The constituency level of analysis, shown in Map 7, also shows that there is not much of a relationship - despite the presence of a few High/High constituencies (primarily in Perthshire and Angus) the High Scots speakers/Low SNP vote relationship is far more prevalent, covering essentially the entire northeast and south of the country. Once again, this could be contributed to by the fact that Scots has received far less focus both in governing and campaigning than its counterpart. If Scots speakers feel that their language is not being sufficiently promoted or protected, they could naturally move away from the SNP.

Additionally, if Scots is considered as more analogous to English than Scots Gaelic, individuals may feel less "othered" and therefore are less motivated to vote for a party like the SNP.

There is also another relatively clear explanatory factor for this, and it shows that there are some demographic and political factors that can have just as strong - if not stronger - impacts than language. Banff and Buchan is the only constituency in Scotland that voted in favor of the 2016 Brexit referendum, albeit narrowly, as the rest of the country rejected it by massive margins. Like similar areas across the rest of the United Kingdom, this Brexit-voting area has moved away from left wing parties like the SNP or Labour and has become more strongly Conservative. The rural northeast as a whole has also moved further away from the SNP in general, with the party struggling or failing to win seats in that region on both the Westminster and Holyrood levels in recent times. Additionally, the other area that has a high number of Scots speakers, the Shetland Islands, is not historically friendly to the SNP either. Its Westminster seat has been a stronghold for the Liberal Democrats (and its predecessor in the Liberal Party) for nearly a century, and has only seen close results in the SNP's 2015 electoral landslide - when it was one of only three constituencies in the country that they did not win - and a surprisingly close result in the 2020 Holyrood elections. So in general, it appears that there is not much of a correlation between Scots speakers and votes for the SNP in the modern day, though it may have been a prevalent phenomenon historically.

It is also significant that unlike any of the other case studies presented in this paper, the SNP manages to win a massive number of votes *outside* of these communities with minority language speakers. In some ways, this reliance on minority language voters

is both an electoral boon for these parties in that it gives them a solid base of support, but it is also an Achilles' heel in that it has proven very difficult for some of them to expand past that base. But what makes the SNP able to do this, when no other parties can to such a degree? A good explanation could be the fact that the SNP is by far the most explicitly civic nationalist party of any included in this study, as opposed to the ethnic nationalism that tends to define parties of this nature. By advocating for an inclusive Scotland where, according to a common party activist adage, "anyone who wishes to be Scottish can be", they are far less constrained by not needing to appeal directly to minority-language voters who may have less inclusive sentiments (Fusaro 1979). But it does not necessarily turn *off* these minority-language voters, especially groups that they make great efforts to appeal to as can be seen with the Scots Gaelic voters. This civic nationalist strategy may make them less significant to this study's hypothesis, but it also is ultimately borne out in greater current levels of electoral success than any other substate nationalist party has managed to achieve.

CHAPTER FIVE: CATALONIA

In Catalonia, there are several substate nationalist parties. As such, I analyze the impact of Catalan language usage in Catalonia on the collective vote share of three nationalist parties, the ERC, Junts, and CUP. About 81% of the population has the ability to speak Catalan, so it is widespread throughout the region (Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2018). My findings in this section heavily suggest that Catalan language usage is strongly correlated with votes for the three major substate nationalist parties in Catalonia.

Language Background and Distribution

Catalan is a quite prevalent language, having been the official language of the Crown of Aragon for centuries and being spoken around all of its territories. Its use began to decline somewhat when Castile and Aragon merged, and the intervening centuries saw Spanish take a more dominant position in the region (Vallverdú 1984). Catalan remained very strong however, and continues to be spoken in large numbers in its homeland of Catalonia and in neighboring provinces like Valencia and the Balearic Islands (Statistical Institute of Valencia, Statistical Institute of the Balearic Islands 2011). It came under major threat during the regime of Francisco Franco, when the teaching and speaking of Catalan in public spaces was essentially banned, in his efforts to create a more homogenous Spanish population (Uchechukwu 2009). But since Spain's re-democratization, Catalan has been enshrined as an official language of Spain and is a

mandatory subject in Catalonia's schools, to ensure that the language remains the primary tongue of the region (Arnau 1997).

Even though Catalan is a protected language, substate nationalist parties tend to have very strong platforms when it comes to language promotion and protection. The ERC, for example, has a detailed 7-point structure for its manifesto pledges regarding language (*La República Que Farem*). As it states, "Catalan and Occitan, as Catalonia's own languages, as well as Catalan Sign Language, must become the backbone of the new Republic…" This shows the commitment that the ERC and both of the other parties analyzed in this case study have to the Catalan language.
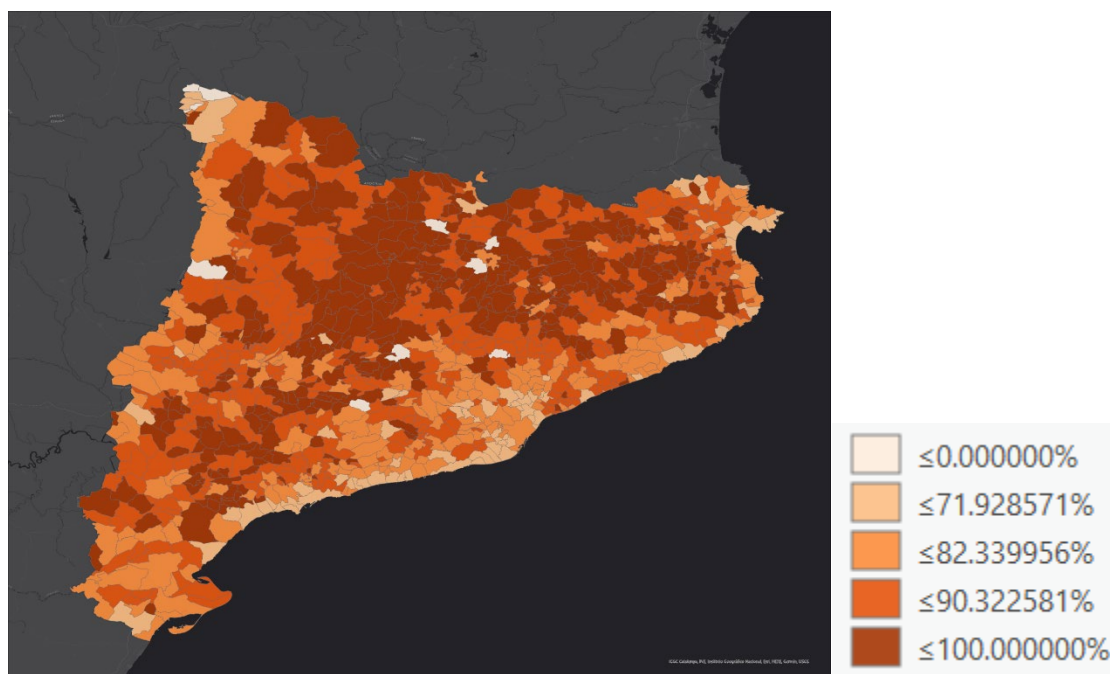
Map 8   Catalan speakers, by municipality

As to the current distribution of Catalan speakers, Map 8 shows which areas of the region have a higher concentration of speakers. In contrast to Scotland and the other UK constituent countries analyzed in this study, all three of the regions in Spain tend to have relatively high proportions of their population that speak their respective regional

languages. Catalan, for example, was measured by the recent census to be spoken by 81% of Catalonia's population. However, it is only the native/primary language for ~39%. Fluency tends to be highest in the rural environs of the province and is generally lower in and around the larger cities, especially in Barcelona. It also is generally much lower than normal in the northwesternmost comarque of Aran. The small area is actually quite culturally distinct, and even has its own language, Aranese (a dialect of Occitan), which is more widely spoken there than Catalan is. As can be seen in the map, there are also a few very small rural towns where the census data is incomplete (as will also be seen in the other two Spanish regions) but the data is still able to paint a clear overall picture.

History of Nationalist Parties in Catalonia

If Scotland is the most well-known hotbed of substate nationalism in Europe, the northeastern Spanish province of Catalonia is an extremely close second place. As the wealthiest region in Spain and one of its most culturally distinct, there has long existed a tension between Barcelona and Madrid. Prominent in the Spanish Civil War and heavily repressed under the regime of fascist dictator Fransisco Franco, Catalan nationalism has become a defining fixture of Spain's contemporary politics (Miley 2002). Pro-independence parties have held regional government since 2010, and two controversial referenda on the issue were held in 2014 and 2017. With nationalist parties winning the majority of the popular vote for the first time in the 2021 regional elections, it is evident that nationalist sentiment will not be waning any time soon.

This case, along with the two other Spanish ones, also contain a unique bent to their nationalism in that it does not strictly adhere to the traditional categories of ethnic or civic. Rather, substate nationalism in Spain has developed over the centuries into a hybrid

of the two. Muro and Quiroga (2005) approaches this in depth, discussing how 19th-century strains of "liberal" and "conservative-traditionalist" substate nationalism merged into a unique ideology that incorporated pieces of both ethnic and civic nationalist ideals, which are emphasized differently depending on the political environment. This lack of differentiation is a key piece of understanding substate nationalism in Spain, and is why these parties are not categorized in the ways that the ones in the U.K. cases are.

There are a plethora of different pro-independence or pro-autonomy parties within Catalonia, but I only focus on three in this analysis. Firstly, the Republican Left of Catalonia, or ERC, has been the most historically prominent nationalist party in the region. It headed the first regional government during the brief days of democracy prior to the Spanish Civil War. It also has been one of the major competitors in Catalan elections since re-democratization and the largest on the nationalist left, even heading the current administration under Pere Aragones.

The second party is Together for Catalonia (JxCat, alternatively styled as simply Junts since 2020), the other major nationalist party alongside the ERC. It is the more right-leaning of the two. It has been headed by former President Carles Puigdemont, who has famously lived in political exile from Spain since his involvement with the 2017 independence referendum. Along with ERC, it forms the current government in the Catalan Parliament.

Last is the Popular Unity Candidacy, or CUP, the junior partner in the aforementioned coalition government and the most left wing of the major nationalist parties. It is a relatively minor party, but does perform quite consistently in regional elections and participates in government, so it is worth including.

I chose the ERC, Junts, and the CUP as they are the only nationalist parties to have consistently won seats in the Catalan Parliament in the past several elections. There is one other party that fits this model, the Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCAT, formerly Democratic Convergence of Catalonia/CDC), but I did not include it in this analysis as it failed to win any seats in 2021 following its separation from its electoral coalition with Junts. These three parties are also representative of the diverse viewpoints that make up Catalan nationalism, and should provide a wide window into the electoral intricacies of the movement.
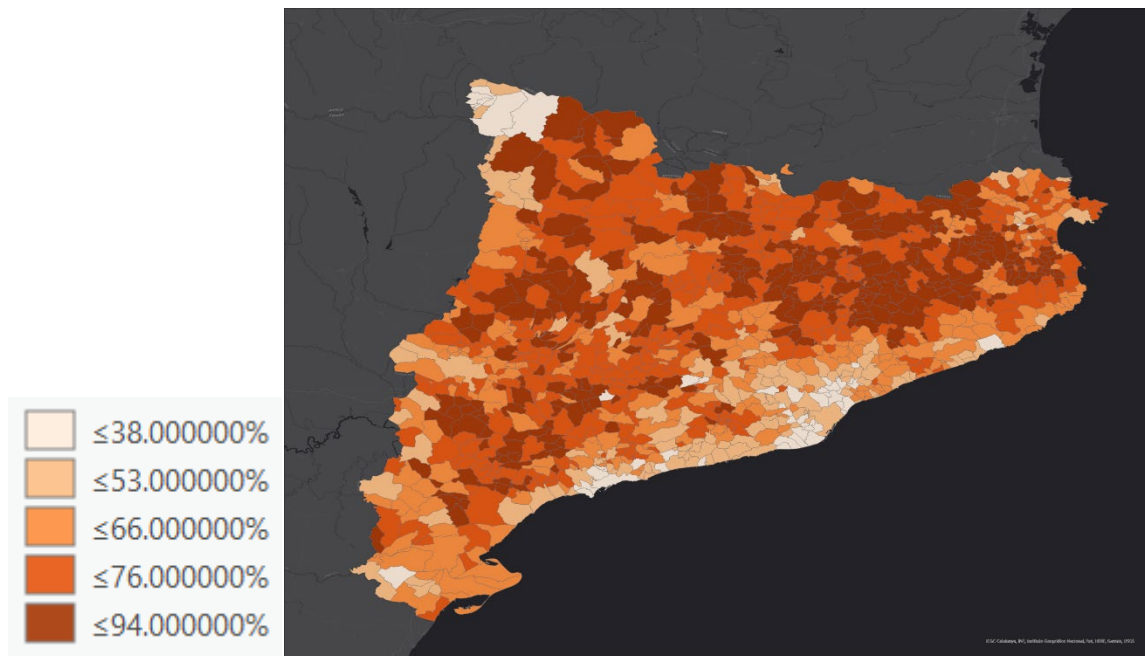

Map 9   Nationalist vote share (ERC + Junts + CUP) by municipality

Language Impact on Electoral Success of Substate Nationalist Parties

I display the variation of electoral success of substate nationalist parties in

Catalonia in Map 9. The vote share for these parties tends to generally be strongest in the

rural regions where there is a larger share of Catalan speakers. Yet the strength of each

individual party varies across the region. The center-left ERC does best in the western

regions of Tarragona and Lleida, as well as generally being the best-performing

nationalist party in the big cities. The center-right Junts does best in Girona in the

northeast (home to its longtime figurehead Carles Puigdemont) and in more of the central

rural regions. The CUP is less relevant, but also still generally does best in the rural areas.
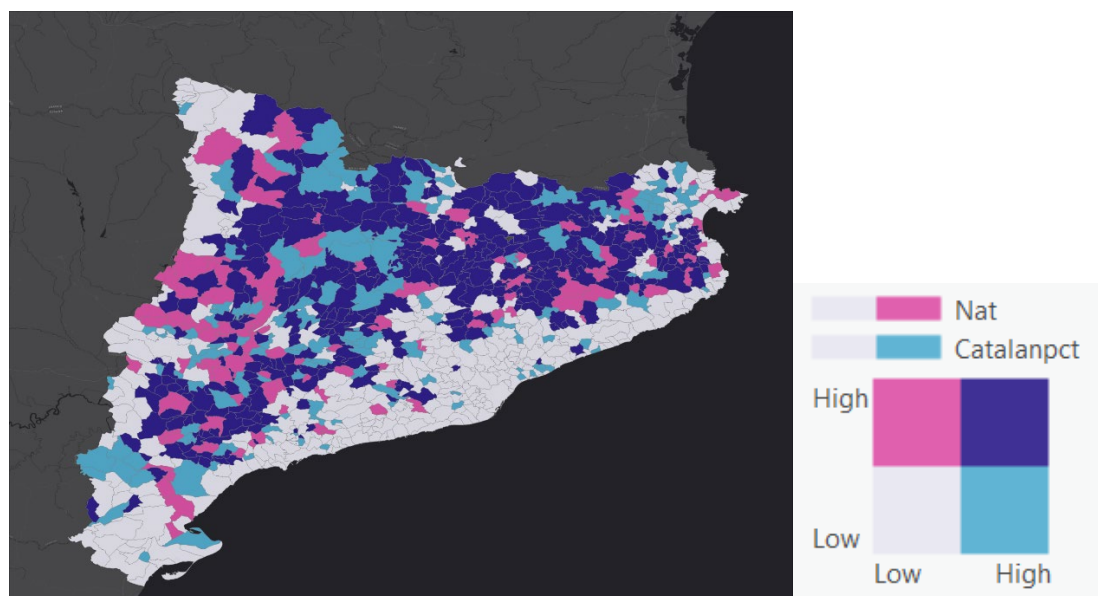
Map 10   Nationalist vote % + Catalan speaking % bivariate

Map 10 demonstrates how this relationship plays out under the bivariate analysis,

and shows that for the most part, the primary thesis is supported. The correlation analysis

also shows this, producing a coefficient of 0.517. There is an abundance of both the

darkest color (high language percentage/ high vote percentage) and also the lightest color

(low language percentage + low vote percentage). So this means that for the most part,

where the nationalist parties get a large percentage of the vote, there also tends to be more Catalan speakers, and vice versa. Interestingly, in terms of singular parties, the high/high areas seem to match up best with Junts as compared to ERC; some of ERC's stronger areas like the southwest have a lot of low/low municipalities. There does not appear to be much of a pattern with either of the types of high/low municipalities other than that they tend to still be clustered closer in with the high/high areas. But the bivariate color scheme seems to show that in this case, the main hypothesis has relatively strong support.

As to why these voters are more likely to support nationalist parties, there are a great number of reasons. As previously mentioned, Catalan speakers have special historic grievances towards the central government of Spain, especially due to the manner in which they were treated during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. The speaking and teaching of Catalan was either banned or heavily discouraged for the middle decades of the 20th century, and as soon as Spain re-democratized in the 1980s, Catalan nationalist parties became important political players in the region. These voters, especially older ones with first hand experience of the Franco regime, may be more motivated to want promotion and protection of their language, as well as still holding these grievances against the central Spanish state.

CHAPTER SIX: BASQUE COUNTRY

As another region of Spain that has seen a great amount of separatist and pro-autonomy sentiment over the years, the Basque Country, or Euskadi, is another case where this study's hypothesis could be revealing. For this section, I take the distribution of Basque language speakers and measure it up against the performance of the region's two most prominent nationalist parties, the PNV and EH Bildu. The data demonstrates that the relationship between language and electoral substate nationalism is extremely strong, perhaps the most of any of the six cases.

Language Background and Distribution

Of all the languages examined in this study, Basque is definitely the most unique. It has no recorded linguistic relatives and is completely different from any of the languages spoken in the surrounding regions, making it Europe's last language isolate.

☐	≤31.754875%
☐	≤49.985896%
☐	≤67.708333%
☐	≤81.083157%
☐	≤94.642857%
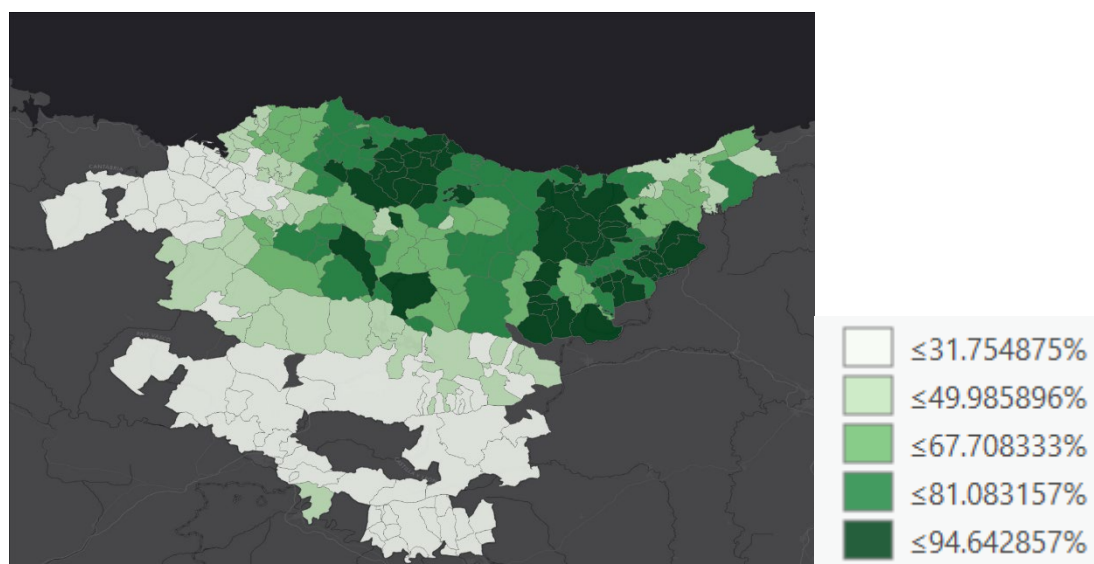
**Map 11   Basque speakers, by municipality**

Roughly 34% of the citizens of the Basque Country proper (also referred to in administration as the Basque Autonomous Community) are primary speakers of the language, with an additional ~14% being "passive bilinguals" who are fluent but do not speak it in everyday life for the most part. These numbers represent an increase in fluency that has occurred since re-democratization, since Basque received the same hostile treatment by the Franco regime that was detailed in the Catalonia case (Hulade, Lakarra, and Trask 1996). When moving to look at the distribution of Basque language speakers in Map 11, there is a very prominent north-south divide. The southern province of Álava has far less Basque speakers than the rest of the region. An urban-rural divide is also present, with the largest cities such as Bilbao, San Sebastian, and Vitoria-Gasteiz having relatively low Basque speaking populations, as do the municipalities immediately surrounding them. The most heavily Basque-speaking pockets are along the rural areas of the central coast and in the east along the border with Navarre.

History of Nationalist Parties in the Basque Country

The Basque Country has, for most of its history as a part of a united Spain, had an extremely prevalent nationalist political scene. Its drastic cultural differences not only from the rest of the country but from Iberia as a whole have long set it apart, resulting in many years of violent separatist activity from the infamous ETA. But behind the violence, democratic politics in the region have also long held a nationalist bent. Its regional government has been controlled by the Basque Nationalist Party for all but three years since redemocratization, and separatist and autonomy-minded sentiment has been a steady presence within the region (Vasquez 2010). Unlike Catalonia, the central Spanish government has placed an explicit ban on independence referendums within the Basque

Country, so opinion polls such as the Euskobarometro conducted by the University of the Basque Country are the best measure of sentiment in that manner. But in the electoral arena, there are two primary nationalist political parties, which will both be included in this analysis.

First is the aforementioned center-right Basque Nationalist Party, or PNV. Its electoral dominance of the region has been a constant in the era of modern democracy, and it also holds the title of being the second oldest extant party in Spain, having been founded in 1895. The party continued to exist as a "Basque government" in exile during the Franco years, and has historically been by far the loudest voice of the Basque people in Spanish politics. The second party, the left-wing EH Bildu, is a far more recent phenomenon. It was only founded in 2012 after the Spanish courts had banned the creation of a different left-nationalist party, Sortu. Since its formation, it has been the second largest party in the Basque Parliament and an interesting challenger to the right-wing PNV after the many decades in which it was the major political voice of Basque nationalism. It is also far more explicitly pro-independence, unlike the PNV which just advocates for greater regional autonomy. Since these parties are the primary nationalist players in the region, it is clear that they are the best choices for analysis.
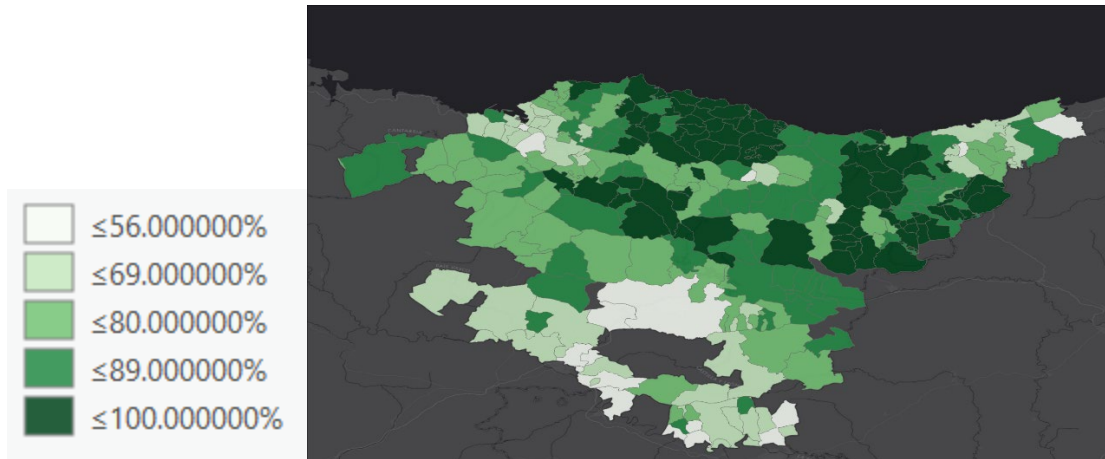
Map 12   **Nationalist vote share (PNV + EH Bildu) by municipality**

Language Impact on Electoral Success of Substate Nationalist Parties

Similarly to Catalonia, I have combined the vote shares of the different nationalist parties that are present in the Basque Country into an overall "Nationalist" vote share measure for this analysis. Map 12 illustrates the distribution of these votes, which hew in a now oft-observed pattern. It is extremely high in many of the rural areas, especially in the north where they often break 90% of the vote. At the same time, it is generally lower in and around the major cities, along with being lower in the southern province of Álava as compared to the northern two of Gipuzkoa and Vizcaya. For the breakdown of the two individual parties, the center-right PNV generally performs much better overall, but especially in the west; the left-wing EH Bildu performed better in the east.

When these two lines of data are put together in the bivariate analysis in Map 13, the results show extremely strong support for the main hypothesis. Virtually the entire region either fits into the high/high or low/low categories. The only exceptions are some scattered high vote/low speakers municipalities in the west and south, and some high speakers/low vote in the east. "High/low" is still just relative though -one of the municipalities that is counted as having a "low" vote percentage for the nationalists still

has them winning 84% of the vote. Additionally, the correlation analysis shows an

extremely strong relationship, with a coefficient of 0.806. This shows that Basque

speakers tend to vote for substate nationalist parties.
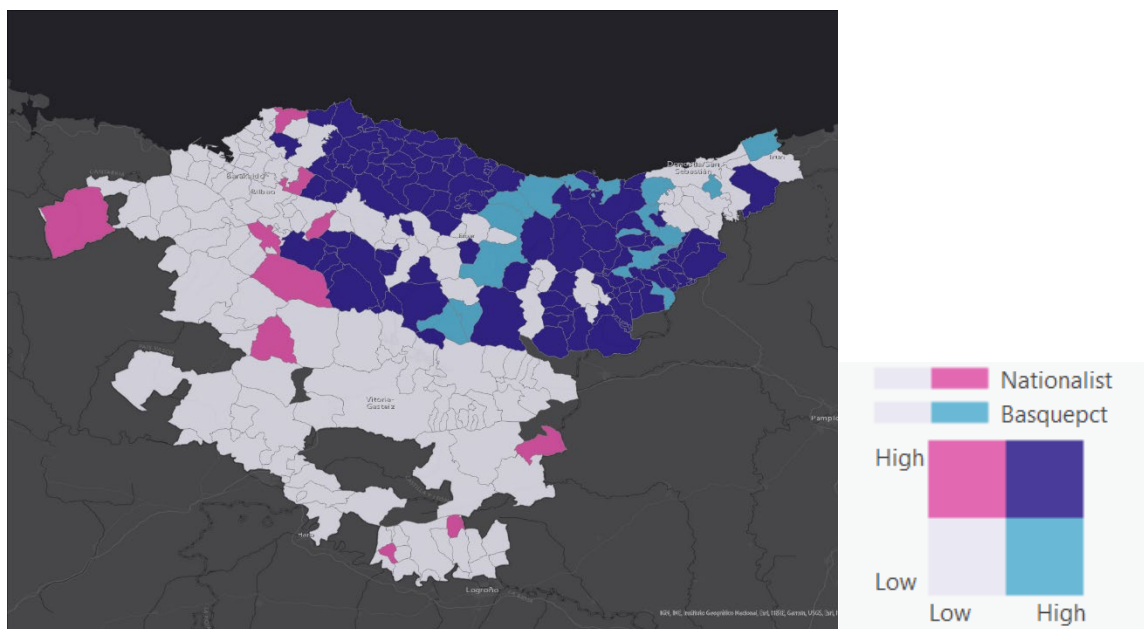
Map 3 Nationalist vote % + Basque speaking % bivariate

As to why this association is so much stronger than in the other cases, there are a

number of possible explanations. Potentially first and foremost is the uniqueness of the

Basque language. As previously mentioned, it is a language isolate, completely unrelated

to any of the other languages in its geographic vicinity. This is unlike the two other cases

in Spain, where Catalan is still relatively intelligible to Spanish and Galician is closely

related to Portuguese. This uniqueness may make them feel even more alienated from the

rest of Spain, and therefore perhaps speakers of the language feel more motivated to vote

for special interests to represent them. This could especially be the case when the parties

are making specific efforts to advocate for said language. It also could be affected by how

long-standing and important the PNV is in Basque culture as a whole - it is the second

oldest extant political party in Spain, and has extremely deep roots in many communities across the Basque Country. Vasquez (2010) shows just how deep those roots are, as the party has served to "define Basque society" over many decades, during both the oppression of the Franco years and the turmoil caused by the violence of the ETA. It helps explain how the PNV has remained so dominant in the history of the Basque Country's politics since redemocratization. There are a number of other potential explaining factors, but the data ultimately shows that perhaps the best predictor of whether or not someone will vote for a nationalist party in the Basque Country is if they speak Basque.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WALES

As the home to the UK's largest community of minority language speakers, Wales has not exactly been the same kind of nationalist hotbed that the previous regions have been. However, it has still hosted a persistent contingent of nationalist political sentiment. In this section, I compare the distribution of Welsh language speakers with the votes of Plaid Cymru, and the data shows that there is quite a strong relationship between the two. This case is also one of the best for illustrating how the relationship may be strong, but it can also be a large drawback for these parties on a larger electoral scale.

Language Distribution and Background

Unlike the Spanish regions where their languages are still quite prevalent or Scotland where Scots Gaelic went into decline many centuries ago, Welsh was still the majority language in Wales as recently as two centuries ago, and it began a very sharp and well-documented decline over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Due to the discovery of coal in southern Wales, the rise of the Industrial Revolution drove massive numbers of new residents from England into the valleys of Glamorgan. At the same time, migration into northern Wales was driven by new industries such as slate quarrying. This influx of English-speaking workers, and the continued growth of these industrial regions, made Welsh less and less important in the most populated areas of Wales (Davies 1990). It was neglected until late into the twentieth century, when there have been some efforts to promote the teaching of Welsh in schools to save it from being erased.

In the present day, speakers of the language are primarily limited to four regions: Gwynedd, Ynys Mon, Ceredigion, and Carmarthenshire, as seen by the green shading in Map 14. It also is common in some of the more rural and depopulated areas of the north in Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire, but only accounts for a small portion of the population.
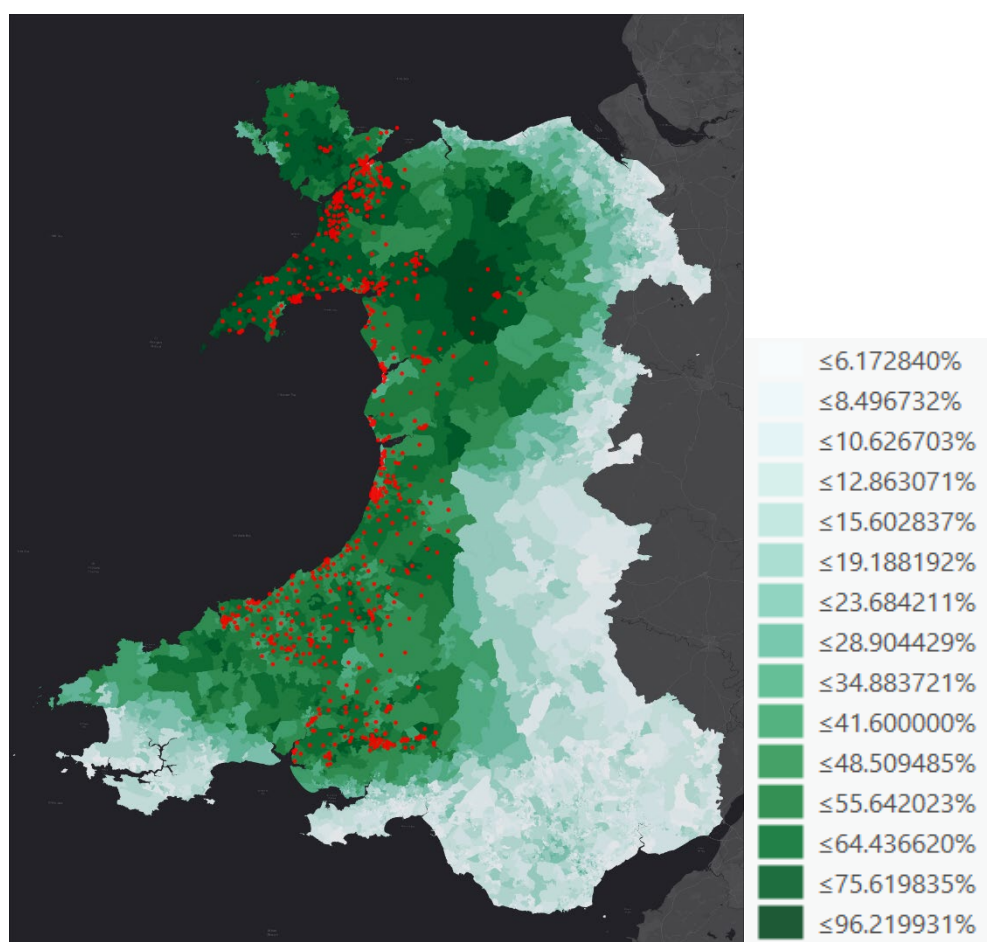
History of Plaid Cymru

Wales is likely the most analyzed case included in this study in terms of how language impacts voting, and has been the subject of several pieces of scholarship including van Morgan (2006), Lutz (1981), and Winter, Huri, and Christiansen 2003. It has long been observed that the heavily Welsh-speaking areas (known as Y Fro Gymraeg) of Wales tend to vote very strongly for Wales' substate nationalist party, the left-leaning Plaid Cymru. It was founded in the early 20th century with the very explicit goal of preserving the Welsh language, and that has remained a central goal of the party to this day (Davies 1990). However, separarist sentiment has generally been low, and even autonomy was not a great priority - the referendum for the establishment of its devolved government in 1997 barely passed. In spite of this, Plaid Cymru has consistently won seats in Westminster since 1974, and has often performed well in Senedd elections, to the point where it even served as the junior partner in a coalition government with the Labour Party after the election of 2007. The fact that a party such as Plaid Cymru has been able to maintain such a firm, albeit small, grip on electoral power shows that the constituency for Welsh nationalism does indeed exist. Also, the historical lack of separatist sentiment is not necessarily guaranteed to continue - some opinion
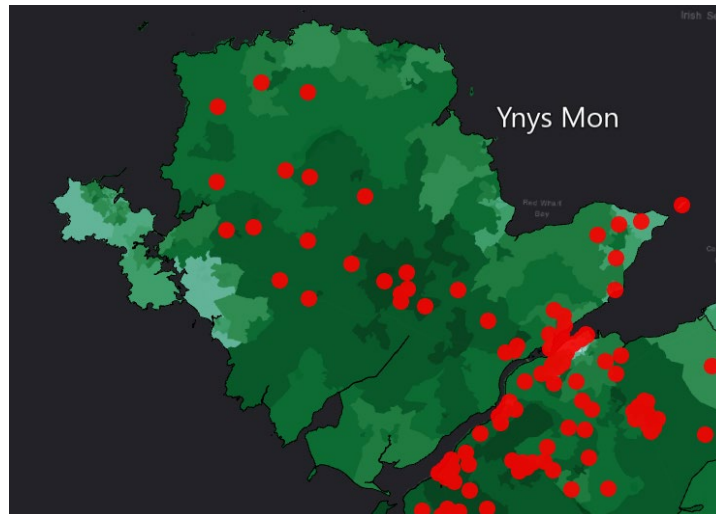
polling in the wake of Brexit has shown a rise in support for independence (Langfitt 2021).

Language Impact on Electoral Success of Substate Nationalist Parties

Looking at the distribution of Welsh speakers on the census output area map, it lines up very closely with the votes for Plaid Cymru, as seen in Map 14. The two areas where it seems to be less significant are in rural Denbighshire, which tend to be in very strongly Conservative constituencies, and in Ynys Mon. The latter is mostly a product of the primary data for this analysis being from the 2019 election. The constituency of Ynys Mon is a three-way battleground seat between Labour, the Conservatives, and Plaid

|	
	≤6.172840%
	≤8.496732%
	≤10.626703%
	≤12.863071%
	≤15.602837%
	≤19.188192%
	≤23.684211%
	≤28.904429%
	≤34.883721%
	≤41.600000%
	≤48.509485%
	≤55.642023%
	≤64.436620%
	≤75.619835%
	≤96.219931%

Map 14   Welsh speakers by COA, overlaid with PC-won COAs

Map 15   Ynys Mon constituency, with 2017 PC-won COAs

Cymru. And in 2019, the Conservatives won it at the expense of a particularly poor

performance from Plaid Cymru. If the map is instead done with the data from 2017, when

it was a closer three-way contest, it can be seen that the data supports the hypothesis

better; Map 15 shows that Plaid Cymru tends to perform best in the heavily Welsh-

speaking rural central areas of the island and towns along the southern coast near Bangor.

Comparatively, they do much worse on Holy Island in the west, which is the least Welsh-

speaking part of the constituency.

Unlike the other two regions of the UK in this analysis, the Welsh census does not

provide language measurements on the constituency level. As a result, precise bivariate

or correlation analysis cannot be done, but comparisons can still be made. Map 16 below

shows the strength of Plaid Cymru across Wales' 38 constituencies; it is extremely

evident that their vote share is the highest in seats like Dwyfor Meirionnydd and Arfon,

which when comparing with the census output areas are also the regions with the highest

concentrations of Welsh speakers. They are at their weakest in the inland region of

Powys, and in the far south and southeast. This once again appears to correlate with the
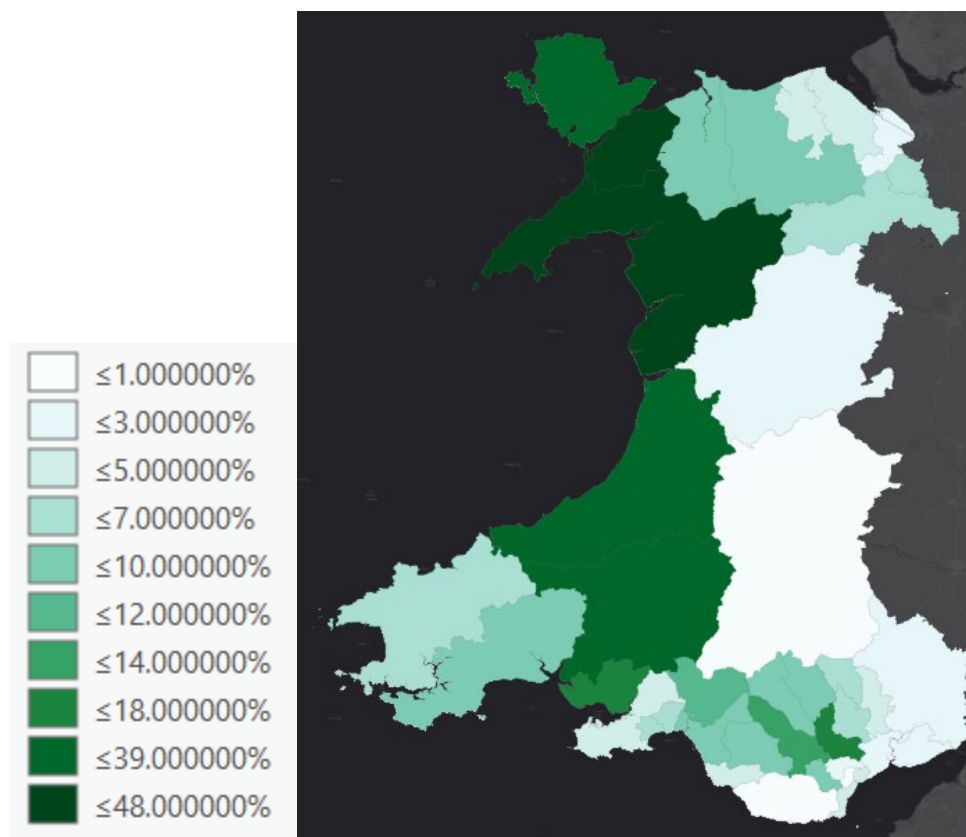
Map 16   **PC 2019 vote share, by constituency**

areas on the census output map that have the lowest number of Welsh speakers - though

Montgomeryshire is likely lower than it would otherwise be, since it was not contested by

Plaid Cymru in 2019 and the only Welsh nationalist party running was the small, pro-

independence Gwlad Gwlad. The only place that Plaid seems to have beaten out their

baseline of language-based support was in Caerphilly, where they won 16% of the vote,

higher than the 11% measured across the entirety of the Caerphilly local authority

(although some of the local authority is also contained in the neighboring constituency of

Islwyn.) Additionally, the cross tabulation in Table 5 shows a similar result - there are

essentially no areas with below-average levels of Welsh speakers that vote for Plaid

Cymru, and nearly all of their support comes from above-average areas.

When considering why Welsh speakers may be motivated to vote for Plaid

Cymru, there are quite clear reasons. As mentioned, when Plaid Cymru was founded as a

Table 5   Welsh cross tabulation

Welsh	>19.7%	<19.7%
Nationalist	30.6% (836)	0.2% (8)
Non-nationalist	69.4% (1894)	99.8% (7727)
Mean: 19.7%	2730	7735

political party back in the early twentieth century, one of its central goals was the

preservation and promotion of the Welsh language - in fact, it was *the* core reason for its

founding. Welsh poet Saunders Lewis, one of the party's founders, stated that "the

party's principal aim was the achievement of a Welsh-speaking Wales" (Davies 1990,

548). These origins have persisted with the party to this day, where language remains as

one of the central pillars of their manifesto, promising the mandatory teaching of Welsh

in schools and "Prosiect 2050", their goal of having 1 million Welsh speaking residents

of the country by 2050. All of this goes to show how committed the party is to the

language, and why voters who are concerned about language would naturally gravitate

towards them.

However, when reviewing all of this evidence, it becomes clear that Plaid

Cymru's evident strength with Welsh-speaking voters is counterbalanced by the fact that

throughout its entire electoral history, it has struggled greatly to expand its appeal beyond

these communities. The need to focus on Welsh-language issues makes them struggle with both English-speaking and bilingual voters (van Morgan 2006). Southern Wales, both in large cities like Cardiff and Swansea and in the post-industrial valleys, has a dearth of Welsh speakers due to the migration that came into these areas during the mining boom (Davies 1990). The vast majority of the country's population, and 24 of its 40 Westminster seats, are in these same areas. Plaid is only ever really competitive in 6 seats - Ynys Mon, Arfon, Dwyfor Meirionnydd, Ceredigion, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, and Llanelli - and never manages to achieve much success outside of them. On the Sennedd level, where there are also proportionally allocated regional seats as well as constituencies, they still struggle to compete in other seats. In 2007, when they helped form a coalition government, they managed to win Aberconwy in the north, and more recently they won the Rhondda in the southern valleys, but proceeded to lose the seat in the 2021 election. These are the only two times that Plaid Cymru have managed to win a seat outside their traditional strongholds, and shows the limits of the minority-language coalition, especially in a FPTP electoral system like the one that is employed in Wales and the rest of the UK.

CHAPTER EIGHT: NORTHERN IRELAND

It is difficult to think of a region in Europe - or perhaps even the world - that has seen as much nationalist tension and violence as Northern Ireland has in the past half century. The infamous conflicts between the Irish Republican Army and the British government have calmed somewhat in recent times, but nationalist sentiment still exists to a great degree in the region. In this section, the relationship between the Irish language and the two substate nationalist parties of Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour Party is examined, and the data shows an extremely strong relationship between the two that can be observed across the region, in both rural and urban areas.

Language Distribution and Background

When discussing the substate nationalist divides in Northern Ireland, researchers often focus on religion rather than linguistic divides. The Protestant/Catholic schism in Ulster is far more historically prominent, and covers a much larger swath of demographics than Irish language speakers do. Irish is only spoken by 6% of the population in Northern Ireland, as compared to roughly 40% in the Republic of Ireland. But the geographic divides of language in Northern Ireland are still very extreme, and paint a fascinating picture when comparing it to votes for either of the region's two major nationalist parties. Map 17 shows the distribution of the Irish language by constituency in green, and Map 19 features it by census tract. Irish speakers tend to be the most prevalent in many of the regions close to the border with the Republic, like County Armagh, the southern parts of County Down, and the west side of Derry. It is also more widely spoken

in some of the central rural areas near Lough Neagh, and in specific parts of Belfast. This

mirrors historical developments, with the Plantation of Ulster that was originally settled

in County Antrim driving Irish communities out to more peripheral areas of the region

(Moody 1938). The decline of Irish that was experienced all over the island of Ireland

during the oppressive rule of the British Empire was most severe in Northern Ireland. It

was seen as "backward", and was heavily shunned by both the growing Protestant settler

population and by the English authorities (Ó Doibhlin 2021). Today, the level of Irish

fluency in Ulster is so low that more people on the 2011 census reported speaking Polish

than they did the land's native Gaelic tongue. It is perhaps more strongly tied with

identity than any other language in this study is, especially due to the stigma and

challenges facing those in Northern Ireland who have identified themselves vociferously

as being Irish.
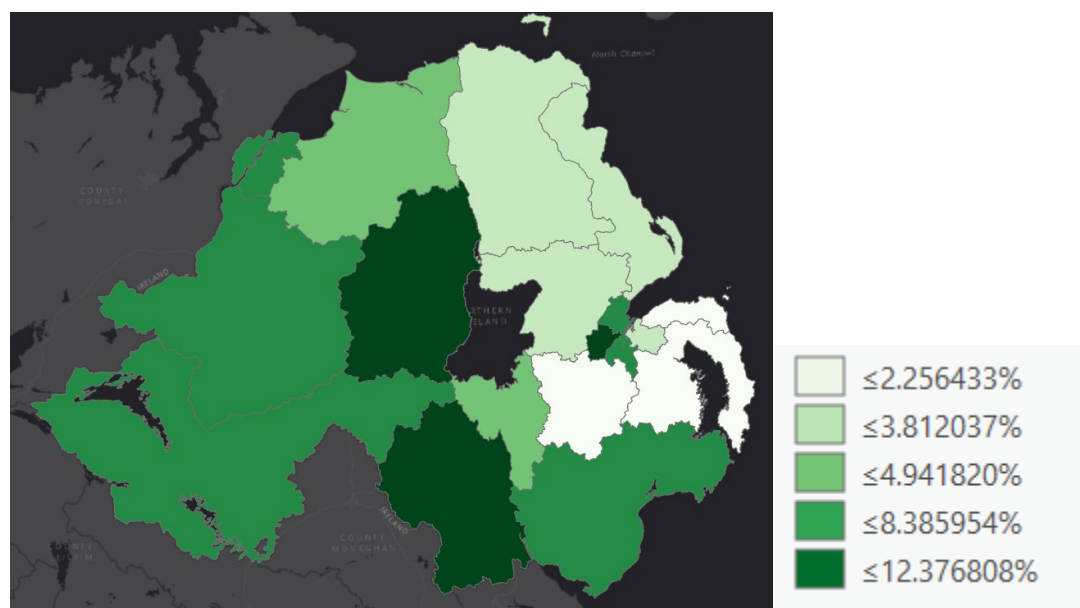
Map 17   Irish speakers, by constituency

In addition to Irish, there is another minority language that is widely spoken in Northern Ireland, that being Ulster Scots. It is heavily related to the Scots language looked at in the case of Scotland, but has been excluded here for a specific reason. Ulster Scots is almost exclusively spoken by the ethnic group of the same name, which is concentrated in County Antrim. And this group generally forms the core of support for the unionist (or anti-nationalist) parties in Northern Ireland, like the DUP or UUP. So it seems relatively evident that it would not be relevant to the hypothesis being considered in this study, even though it still illustrates that linguistics can fuel strong political divides.

History of Nationalist Parties in Northern Ireland

To begin, it is important to note that the variety of nationalism found in this case is both quite different from not only the others in this study, but from most varieties of substate nationalism. Rather than being an advocacy for increased autonomous power to the region or independence from its current state, Irish nationalism (or republicanism) has the goal of the region reuniting itself with another state, the Republic of Ireland. (Ó Broin 2009). Including this case within the study could possibly be revealing as to whether or not this differing strain of nationalism will affect the significance of the hypothesis, or if it will be similar to the other cases. As to which parties will be analyzed, there are two nationalist-minded ones within Northern Ireland. First is Sinn Fein, the original and primal electoral form of Irish nationalism that came to prominence in the early 20th century when its success managed to secure the Republic of Ireland's independence from the United Kingdom. It continues to operate as a party in both the Republic and the North, and in contemporary times is the most important nationalist party in Ulster.
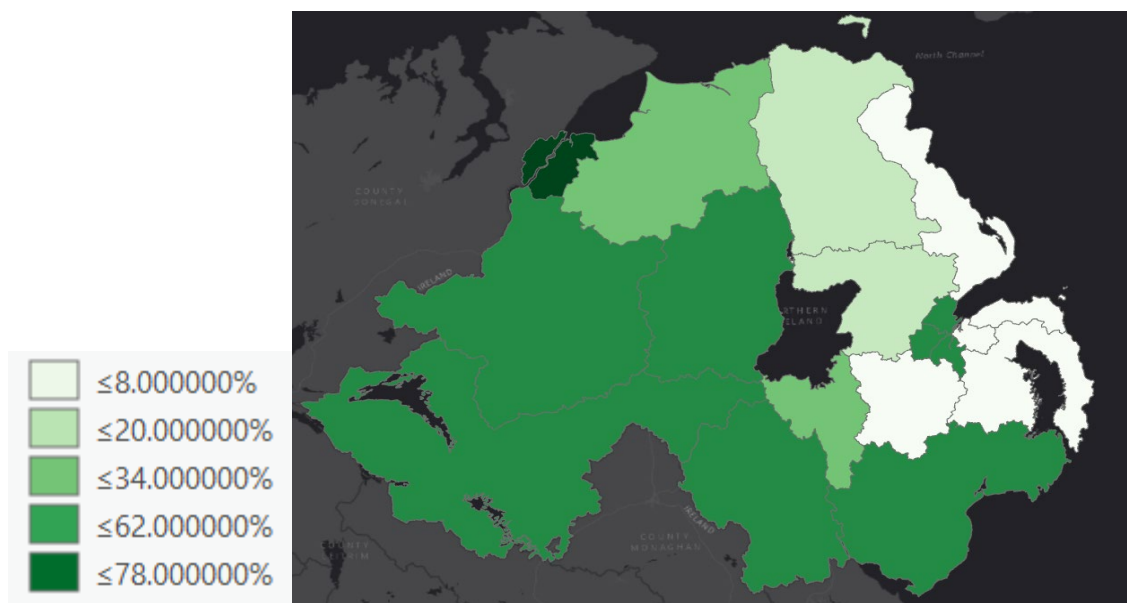
Map 18　　　**Nationalist (SF + SDLP) vote share, by constituency**

Historically, it had been shunned due to its ties with the IRA (Feeney 2003), but it

has become more and more competitive, winning 7 of Northern Ireland's 18 Westminster

constituencies in the 2019 election. Secondly is the Social Democratic and Labour Party,

or SDLP. During the more tumultuous period in Northern Ireland, it was the most popular

of the nationalist parties, but in the 21st century it has lost most of its ground to Sinn

Fein. However, it still remains a powerful secondary force within the region, having won

two constituencies in 2019.

Map 18 shows the distribution of nationalist votes across Northern Ireland's

constituencies, and they tend to perform best in the areas that border the Republic and in

the western half of Belfast. For much of the history of Northern Ireland during its time as

a distinct administrative entity, nationalist parties did not find much success. Instead, the

region was dominated by right-wing unionist parties like the DUP or the UUP. This was

likely due to their association (especially in the case of Sinn Fein) with the violence of

the IRA (Feeney 2003). It was not until the mid-1990s, as the Troubles began to fade,

that the two parties began to enjoy some level of electoral success. This success has grown further over time - the election of 2019 was the greatest level of victory that the nationalists have ever reached, managing to win half of Northern Ireland's Westminster seats.

Sinn Fein also employs a political stance that is unique among all of the parties in this study. Instead of serving as a direct governmental advocate for Irish communities, they practice parliamentary abstention, where the MPs who win election to their constituencies choose not to take their seats at Westminster as a form of protest. This hypothetically could be an extreme factor in how people choose to vote, as it essentially means that a vote for Sinn Fein is purely a protest vote and not a vote for promoting
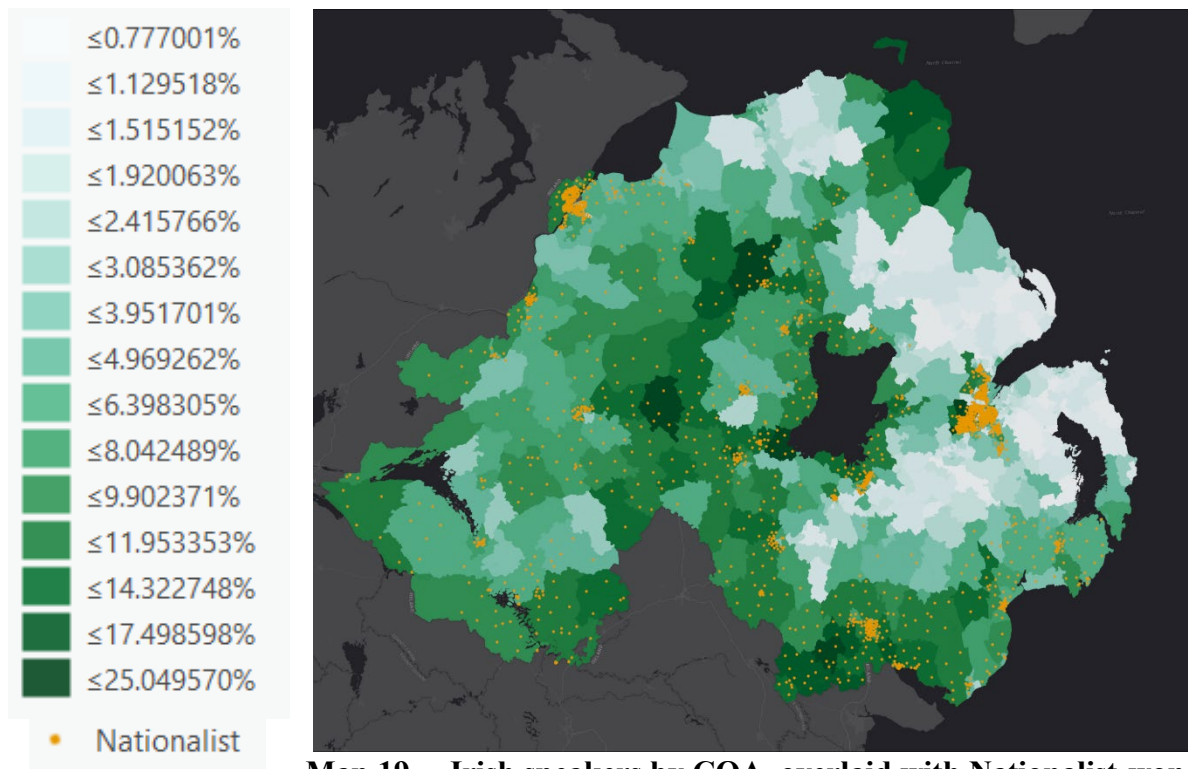

Map 19   Irish speakers by COA, overlaid with Nationalist-won COAs

specific policy ideas. But the type of substate nationalist voters who may vote for Sinn Fein could see abstention as a form of advocacy, showing the British government that they are not interested in remaining a part of the United Kingdom (McAllister 2004).

Language Impact on Electoral Success of Substate Nationalist Parties

As Map 19 shows, there yet again appears to be a strong correlation between the areas that have high levels of Irish speakers and those that vote for nationalist parties, as marked by the orange dots. When broken down between the two parties, most of the areas that voted nationalist are for Sinn Fein with a couple of exceptions that were SDLP-voting; the constituencies of Foyle and Belfast South, and some of the southeastern parts of County Down. Judging by the map, it is quite evident that the SDLP tends to do a bit better in less Irish-speaking parts of their particular constituencies. This seems to fit with the perception that the SDLP is far less "extreme" in its nationalism than Sinn Fein is, and has more widespread appeal (Feeney 2003).
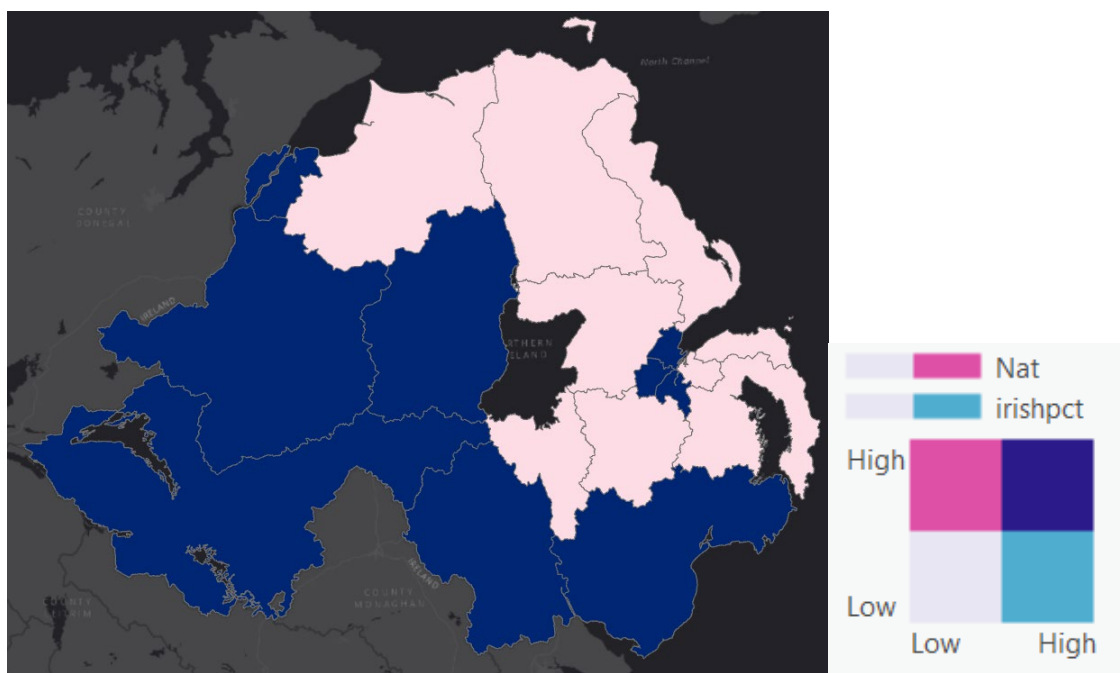

Map 20   Nationalist % + Irish % bivariate

When examining the relationship on a constituency level, it is even more evident. The correlation analysis produced a coefficient of 0.905, indicating an incredibly strong relationship. And as shown in Map 20, every single constituency is categorized as either High/High or Low/Low, which is a perfect correlation with the main hypothesis. And generally within the measurements, the places with the highest votes for nationalist parties also tend to be the areas with the most Irish speakers. The 8 constituencies with the highest percentages of Irish speakers were also the only 8 constituencies where the nationalist parties won an outright majority of the votes. And, if not for the massive popularity of the SDLP in Foyle, the individual constituency with the single highest level of votes for the nationalists would also be the constituency with the highest percentage of Irish speakers (Belfast West). The cross tabulation in Table 6 also shows a very strong relationship, with the vast majority of above-average areas voting for nationalist parties and a comparable majority of the below-average areas voting against them.

Northern Ireland is also quite unique out of the UK-based cases in that it has significant pockets of urban minority language speakers. In both Scotland and Wales, speakers of minority languages are primarily limited to rural areas, but Belfast has several

Table 6   **Irish cross tabulation**

Irish	>5.9%	<5.9%
Nationalist	80.2% (1645)	12.6% (360)
Non-nationalist	19.8% (407)	87.4% (2491)
Mean: 5.9%	2052	2851
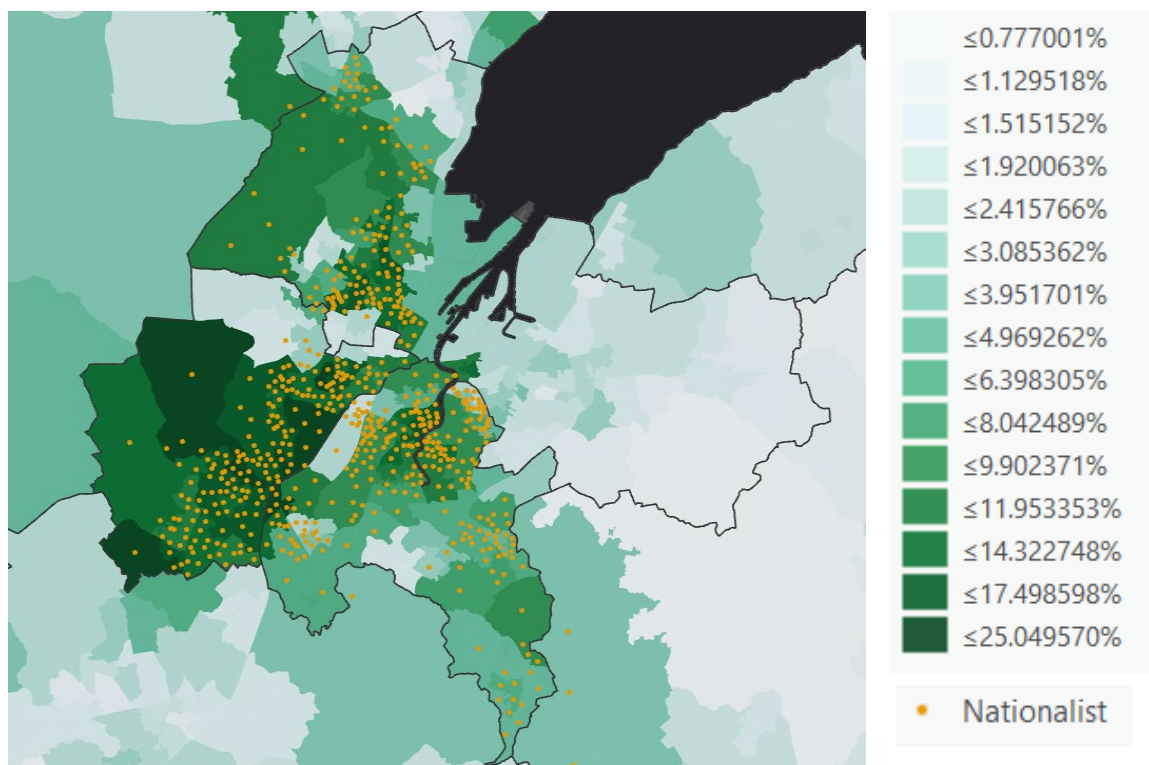
Map 21   COA map (Map 19) focused on Belfast.

distinctly Irish-speaking areas. Map 21 gives a closer look at the city, with its four

constituencies outlined. Belfast West is by far the most Irish-speaking part of the city,

and has historically been the most prominent nationalist stronghold in Northern Ireland. It

has elected an MP from a nationalist party continuously since 1964, including Gerry

Adams, who led Sinn Fein for three and a half decades. But even in a strongly nationalist

constituency like this, the less Irish-speaking parts in the north of it - including the

infamous neighborhood of Shankill - tend to not vote for the nationalists. This pattern can

be continued to be observed city wide. The least Irish-speaking constituency, Belfast

East, tends to have very low vote share for nationalist parties. This shows that linguistic

divides and their impact on votes are not just limited to region-wide results and in rural

areas, but can fuel similar patterns in urban settings.

CHAPTER NINE: GALICIA

Located in the northwest of Spain, Galicia has far less of a nationalist bent than all of its predecessors that have been listed. But its uniqueness in this and other aspects makes it a compelling case to include within this study. Galicia has its own extremely distinctive culture that divides it from the rest of Spain, with its Celtic roots and relative closeness to Portugal. It also has its own widespread language, Galician (or Galego), and the region has the highest level of minority language speakers of any of the six cases. But despite this, it has had only a small amount of substate nationalist activity in the electoral arena. And unlike all of the other cases, the results in this section show that there is not much of a correlation between votes for the nationalist party and Galician speaking communities. This is possibly related to the high level of minority language speakers present, which could make voters less motivated to want language-focused electoral representation.

Language Distribution and Background

The Galician language originated as a medieval tongue that eventually split in two, becoming the modern languages of Galician and Portuguese. Some linguists even argue to this day that Galician is simply a dialect of Portuguese, but it remains very distinct in both history and culture from its southern neighbor (Palmeiro Pinheiro 2009).

For several centuries after Galicia was integrated with the Kingdom of Castile andthen Spain, Galician was primarily an orally spoken language, and written material was quite rare with Spanish being known as the language of law and power (Paz 1999).
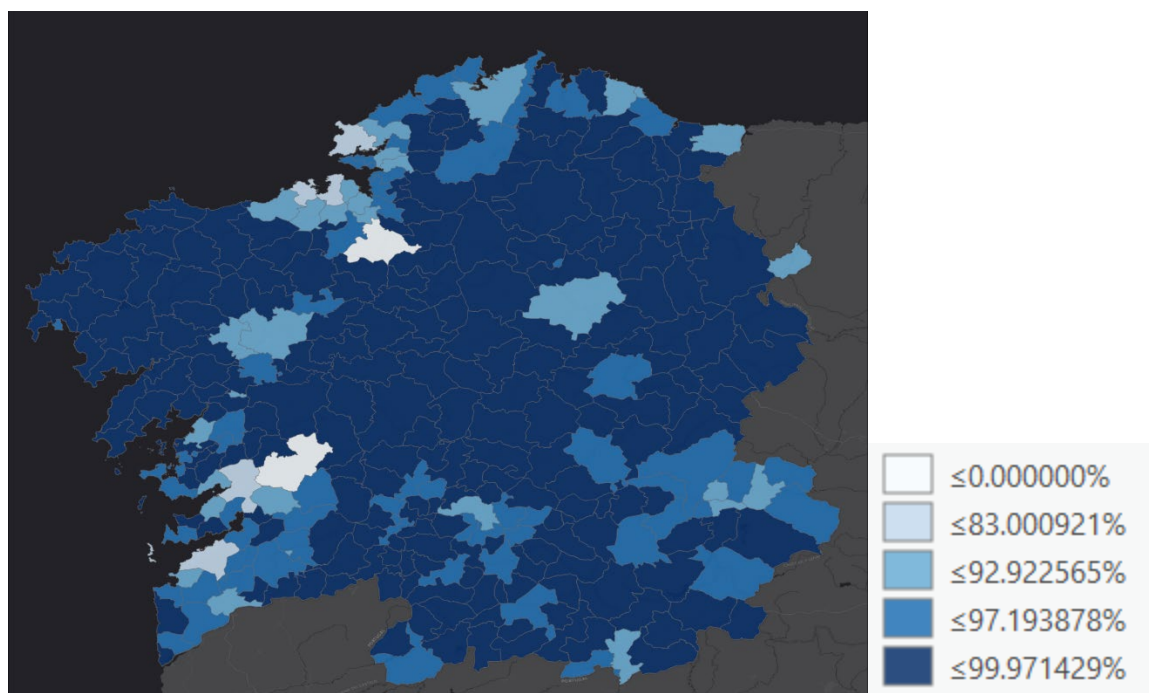
Map 4 Galician speakers, by municipality

Similar to Catalan and Basque, its use was banned during the Franco years and since re-democratization it is now co-official with Spanish.

As the least nationalist region in this study, it is also quite intriguing that Galicia also has the largest population of regional language speakers. Map 22 shows how across the entire region, the number of people that speak Galician/Galego is extremely high, with even the lowest percentile represented still being above 80%. There is a major difference, however, between people that indicate the *ability* to speak Galician, and whether or not they commonly speak it in daily life. When that statistic is used, the overall percentage of the population who speak it drops down to ~40%, with those active speakers mainly living in the more rural areas of the province where the language is also most prevalent. It once again shows an urban-rural divide, with the municipalities in and around A Coruña and Pontevedra being the lowest.

History of the Galician Nationalist Bloc

The one major nationalist party that operates within the region is the Galician Nationalist Bloc, or BNG. It has only really held any clout at the regional level; it took a paltry 0.5% of the vote in the November 2019 general election, but has often broken double digits in Galicia's regional elections. It has even been the second largest party in the region during two time periods, from 1997 to 2005 and then again in the present, following its best-ever result in the 2020 regional elections. The fact that the BNG achieved this result in 2020 is an indicator that perhaps, nationalist sentiment may be on the rise in the region after the chaos that it has seen unfold in Catalonia, and the rise of the anti-autonomy VOX party on the national level.

Two aspects of the BNG's appeal may be both its nationalism and its left-wing positioning. In terms of how the party treats language, it is not so much in the "preserve and promote" attitude that most other parties in this study hew to. Instead, they specifically seek the "social normalization" of Galician. Since such a high percentage of the population speaks Galician, but it is treated as a backwater tongue in favor of Spanish, they seek to get rid of the stigma surrounding the language and provide a right to "live in Galician", according to their manifesto. Additionally, unlike most of the other regions in this study, Galicia is generally electorally right-leaning on the national level. The election that this data on the BNG is taken from was won very resoundingly by the PP, Spain's main center-right party. Perhaps this mutes their appeal due to their very openly left-wing policy stances, or maybe it provides an attractive alternative to voters tired of the region's right-wing politics.
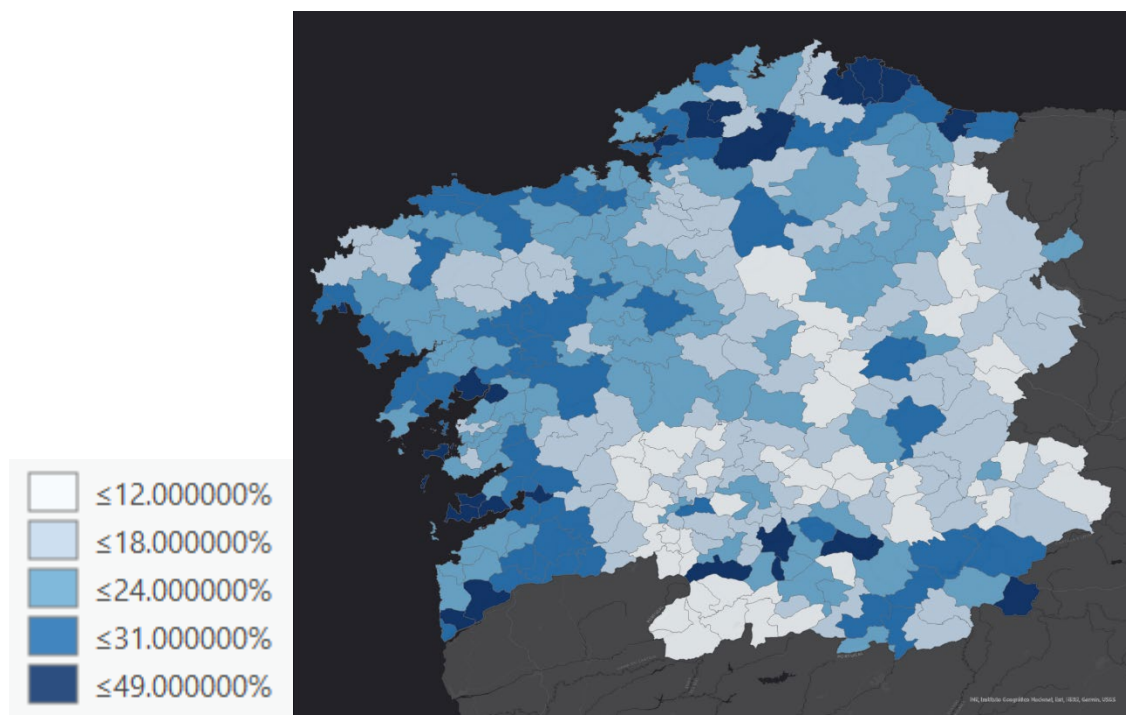
Map 23   BNG vote share, by municipality

Language Impact on Electoral Success of Substate Nationalist Parties

When looking at the performance of the Galician Nationalist Bloc, or BNG, the pattern is far less clear than it is in the other cases. The BNG are not a historically well-performing party like others that have been examined. Except around the turn of the century and in the most recent elections, it is typically mired in the low to mid-teens of percentage of the vote. In the 2020 regional elections, it put up its best-ever performance and won close to 24%. But when their support is broken down geographically, it does not seem to have much of a discernible pattern. Their strongest patches of support seem to be scattered around the northern and southwestern coasts, along with some pockets in the southern province of Ourense. But they do not have any particularly strong geographical base of support.

When applying the bivariate analysis to this case, it presents an equally convoluted picture. There is very little of the high/high and low/low that is a sign of

strong support for the hypothesis, with there instead being a lot of high/low in either direction - high vote and low language in coastal regions, and high language low vote in the inner rural areas. Additionally, the correlation analysis indicates a similar lack of a relationship, with a coefficient of -0.078. So it does not appear to adhere to the main hypothesis. But it is worth considering *why* that might be the case.

There is the potential that the overall prevalence of Galego is actually a reason as to why it does not provide a base of nationalist support. For someone who speaks a language like Irish, or Welsh, or Basque, that person and their community only represent a small percentage of their nation. But when the "minority" language is actually spoken by a large majority of the population, there may be less of a perceived need for direct representation. And this, theoretically, could lead to the patterns that are seen in the data. The fact that where there are relatively less speakers, the BNG gets more votes, could indicate that speakers of Galego in these areas feel more of a need for that direct representation precisely because they are more of a minority in their own communities. This could coincide with the previously explored attitude that the BNG takes towards language, with its advocacy of "social normalization". (*Carta de Principios Políticos, ideolóxicos e valores do BNG.*) A Galician speaker who lives in a large city like Pontevedra is likely being socially coerced to use Spanish in daily life, due to the stigma associated with speaking Galician. This voter might be far more motivated to vote for the
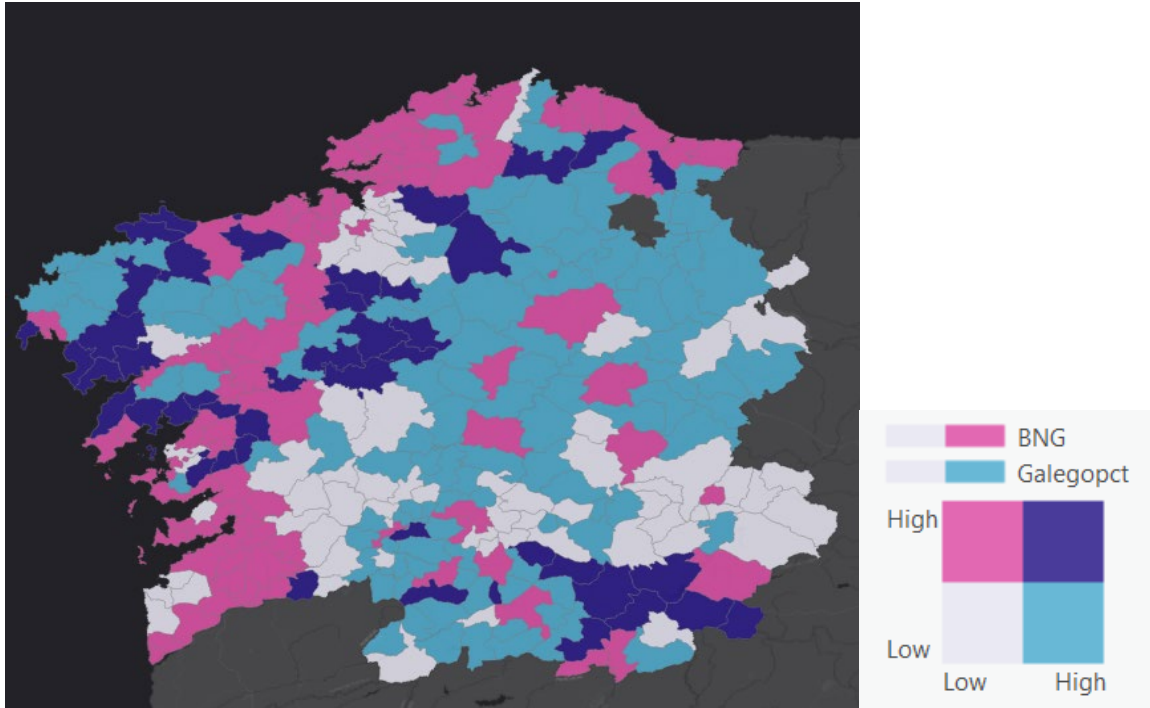
Map 5 BNG % + Galician % bivariate

BNG than someone who speaks Galician in a rural community, where there is little to no stigma and social normalization is already extant, and is not something that has to be achieved through electoral or governmental means. This is purely theoretical, and would need to be substantiated with perhaps a specific survey to collect data, but it could provide a potential explanation as to why this particular case does not fit the hypothesis.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

Across all 6 of these cases, there is a connection between minority language speakers and substate nationalism that is a key to understanding the electoral success of substate nationalist parties. I show that these communities more often than not form their core base of support, providing strong support for the main hypothesis. The vast majority of the cases adhere to the hypothesis, with Northern Ireland and the Basque Country being particularly strong, while the Scots language within the Scotland case and Galicia are the ones that do not fit. But even in those two cases, it can be understood *why* they do not adhere to the hypothesis, and language still plays a large part. It is likely that if the same data analysis was done in previous election years, a similar conclusion could be made.

It is important to note that it is quite likely that language is only one of the potentially explanatory demographic factors that influences support for substate nationalist parties. Further analyses should examine whether factors such as income, left-right ideology, or education levels could also have a correlation with areas that support substate nationalist parties. These types of analyses could be especially useful for places like Catalonia, where nationalist parties often cite the fact that they are the wealthiest region in Spain as a reason for separatism (Cetrà 2019) or in Scotland, where the SNP uses the region's left-wing lean as compared to the rest of the UK as a motivator for independence (Hassan and Curtice 2009).

Beyond analysis of these additional factors, the findings of this thesis suggest that minority language usage also may influence votes for substate national parties in other parts of the world. This type of analysis could easily be applied to other regions in Europe and in other parts of the world, to see if language is a primary driver of electoral substate nationalism across the globe. Some potentially interesting cases to apply it to could be South Tyrol in Italy, Corsica in France, or in areas of the former Yugoslavia - all have similar substate nationalist parties that advocate for greater autonomy or independence and significant minority language populations, so a similar pattern of language-based support could be observed. These types of linguistic political divides can be observed through much of modern history, and analyzing them in this way could provide new insight. Understanding how language is applied within a state's electoral arena could be key to how it may drive both democratic movements and potential conflicts in the future.

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APPENDIX

Correlation and Cross Tabulation Results

- Scotland (Gaelic) - 0.010569

- Scotland (Scots) - -0.12337

- Catalonia - 0.517767

- Basque Country - 0.806213

- Cannot do Wales

- Northern Ireland - 0.9051167

- Galicia - -0.07876

SCOTS	>38%	<38%	GAELIC	>1.7%	<1.7%
Nationalist	70.8% (15773)	79.7% (19682)	Nationalist	79.3% (9735)	74.1% (25694)
Non-nationalist	29.2% (6509)	20.3% (5020)	Non-nationalist	20.7% (2537)	25.9% (8980)
Mean: 38%	22,282	24,702	Mean: 1.7%	12,272	34,674

WELSH	>19.7%	<19.7%	IRISH	>5.9%	<5.9%
Nationalist	30.6% (836)	0.2% (8)	Nationalist	80.2% (1645)	12.6% (360)
Non-nationalist	69.4% (1894)	99.8% (7727)	Non-nationalist	19.8% (407)	87.4% (2491)
Mean: 19.7%	2730	7735	Mean: 5.9%	2052	2851