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Excelling Extremists or Pedestrian Populists?

- **The British National Party in contemporary European far right politics**

Abstract:

This study takes a closer look at the British National Party (BNP) in the context of contemporary European far-right politics. Influenced by rising media attention for the BNP and by the fascinating debate on how to explain far-right electoral success, two closely linked questions are asked: *How should the BNP be categorised?* and *what explains its electoral performance?* Various authors have described the BNP as an extreme right or neo-fascist party while others have put it in the populist radical right family as defined by Cas Mudde. Against a backdrop of Mudde's theoretic framework, official BNP publications are researched and discussed leading to the conclusion that the party belongs in the populist radical right mould. That conclusion begs the question why the BNP performs relatively poorly in national elections compared to the likes of *Front National* and *Vlaams Belang*. Comparing the three parties in a most similar systems design, assessing the explanatory value of different variables, the analysis shows that the BNP's lack of success is most likely explained by Britain's party system, unfavourable conditions of competition from other parties and an unfavourable relationship with the media. Without harbouring ambitions of definitive answers, this study seeks to contribute both to a greater understanding of the BNP and to add to the already impressive but nonetheless still developing theories of far-right politics.

To My Grandparents

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Acknowledgements

This work contains considerably more than the one hundred or so pages you are about to read. It is not only the climax of my five years as a student at the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo: it is the final stop of an educational journey that started 18 years ago in a classroom not far from where this is written. Therefore this is not only the product of the knowledge of all the fine professors and lecturers I have had the pleasure of listening to at university level, but also the product of the inspiration I received from a great number of teachers I have had throughout my childhood and teen years. They are a pride to their vocation and I will never forget them.

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1: Introduction

The persistent right-flank attack on established European party systems is now one the more keenly researched subjects in the field of comparative politics. At last, a certain level of agreement has been reached when it comes to describing different typologies and party families on the far right of the European party political spectrum. Most researchers now seem to acknowledge there are important differences between neo-fascist movements, extreme right groups, populist radical right parties and so on. More disagreement surfaces when scholars are left to place individual parties in the established categories. Not surprisingly, perhaps, as the question of placing political parties in distinct party families is not a straightforward one (Mair and Mudde 1998).

British partisan politics is conventionally characterised as a two-and-a-half party system where the dominance of the two main parties is reinforced by the first-past-the-post electoral system. However, there is life stirring to the right Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party. Despite their lack of success in parliamentary elections, the British National Party (BNP) are making a name for themselves through hard line opposition to the established parties on issues such as immigration and law and order, establishing themselves as a force to be reckoned with in elections for the European Parliament as well as for local councils. This has caught the attention of some (mainly British), scholars but the party's lack of electoral breakthrough on the national arena leaves the party often overlooked by much of the general literature on right-wing parties being produced in continental Europe. The more successful parties, such as the French National Front (*Front National,* FN) and Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) to name two, naturally receive most of the attention.

Right wing parties are not only a popular topic for scientific research. Given their strong views on some sensitive issues they are also a highly controversial and flammable topic. Most scholars do not tend to share the BNP's views on these issues and their personal opposition to the party is only stronger if they are themselves British (which indeed most of those who write about the BNP are). Hence, there is naturally a

tendency to treat the party as a problem (e.g. the prolific use of the word fascism in describing the party (see Copsey 2008 or Goodwin 2011)). This is a legitimate view in public debate but it may not be the best basis for objective research. If we categorise the BNP without thorough comparative research and with a normative bias it may lead to rushed conclusions that the BNP are extremist or neo-fascist and in any case dangerous. This tendency is even more obvious in how the BNP are described in British media. Right wing newspapers are as damning in their coverage of the party as the more liberal and left-leaning media. My goal is therefore, with the advantage of being an outsider, to describe the BNP using the established framework available in the vast literature on right wing parties. Should the BNP establish themselves as a noticeable factor in British politics it will be all the more important to have a clear understanding of what the party is.

If we can agree that there is a significant difference between neo-fascism and the extreme right wing on one side and populist radical right on the other, as will hopefully become more apparent in a later section, it follows that it matters a great deal in which of these categories we place an individual party, and in the case the BNP. Neo-fascism and right wing extremism implies anti-democratic sentiments and militant tendencies. The populist radical right (as defined by e.g. Cas Mudde 2007) are, regardless of your own views, legitimate democratic players and far more visible in mainstream parliamentary politics than the extreme right. If we treat the BNP as a problem right from the get-go, we are likely to end up misunderstanding them. This problem of subjectivity creates analytical problems, which are in turn added to by the fact that the available data on far right parties is relatively fresh. By providing an objective analysis of the party's place in contemporary far right politics in Europe, I hope to establish a more constructive platform for future debate of the BNP. I wish to provide clarity to the issue of analysing one particular far right party, a level of clarity I see as largely missing from the literature on the BNP. The British literature on the party is packed with sound empirical data whereas the broader European literature on the far right is full of excellent analytical tools for categorising parties of the far right. In the case of categorising the BNP, these two advantages seem to have passed each other by somewhat. Where the British literature seems to have paid too little attention

to the European debate on far right parties, the European literature has so far not paid the BNP the attention needed to provide enough data to give a reliable categorisation of the party. Over the following pages, I will seek to combine these two.

With an open mind I will conduct a thorough case study of the BNP ask the very broad but nevertheless important **question "how should the BNP be categorised within the European far right?"** The underlying questions are many and vast: What is the historical background of the BNP and what is their ideological profile? How does the party present itself to the public and what are their policies? What is the organisational structure of the BNP? Clarifying the party's ideological profile answers what the party stands for and believes in, which is a cornerstone in the discussion of what the party is. Establishing the party's historical background aids us in establishing their *raison d'etre* and as is usually the case, knowledge of history is paramount to the knowledge of the present. Identifying how the party presents itself, what their policies are and describing their organisational structure sheds light on what the party intends to be and tries to be, and what it aims to represent. All these questions must be answered before I move on to discussing how the BNP best can be categorised and before I can answer the question of whether the BNP are extremist or neo-fascist, or merely right wing populists. With this research design I aim to shed light on a particular case using existing theory. I do hope, though, that in doing this I can contribute helpful guidelines for future case studies of radical right parties in Europe.

Categorisation is not just useful for the sake of truthfulness and clarity, however. How we categorise the BNP, or any other party for that matter, affects how we approach further studies of the party. If we conclude that the BNP is in fact an extreme right party, we could also conclude that they would be one of the most successful parties of its kind in European party politics, perhaps second only to the Hungarian *Jobbik* party. The challenge for further research would therefore be to explain the party's success. If we on the other hand conclude that the party belongs to the populist radical right family, our challenge would be inversed: We would have to explain the party's lack of electoral success from a comparative perspective.

Not only does the categorisation of the BNP dictate the direction of the question we pose in terms of explaining electoral performance, it also has a great influence on the methodological approach in further research of the party. In the following chapters the theoretical and methodological issues of explaining far right success (and failure) will be discussed in greater detail and explanatory variables for empirical research will be defined. While choosing explanatory variables isn't necessarily dependent on how we categorise the BNP our application of said variables certainly are. In the theory section I will show that while the variables we use to explain variation in electoral performance within the group of PRR parties can also be used to explain variation within the group of ER/N-F parties, our categorisation of the BNP greatly influences our methodological tools in terms of research design and operationalisation of variables. One could go as far as saying that all comparative research of the BNP depends entirely on our categorisation of it. Rather obviously, our objects for comparison, e.g. the proto type populist radical right party of the French *Front National* or the extreme right German outfit of the National Democratic Party (NDP), differ greatly depending on how we categorise the BNP.

Thus, explaining the BNP's success or lack of success will be the focus of part two of this study. After establishing where the BNP belongs in the landscape of the European far right, I will use the analytical tools available from European comparative political studies to explain the party's electoral performance. Leaving the issue of categorisation open for now, I raise a second research question: **What explains the electoral performance of the BNP?**

Answering this question takes this study more directly into the realm of comparative studies. In the theory section I will identify the general factors that explain far right electoral success, in the shape of empirically measurable variables. Having identified these variables, I can use them to study empirically what explains the BNP's electoral performance. As will be discussed in the methodology section, comparison with similar parties in similar countries will here be a crucial tool to isolate the explanatory variables although how we go about designing such comparative studies depends greatly on how we categorise the BNP.

1.1: Theory

1.1.1: Categorising a party of the far right

In this chapter I will outline the differences between the extreme right and neo-fascism on one side and the populist radical right on the other, as described in the existing literature on right wing political parties. The theoretical background on the populist radical right will rely heavily on Cas Mudde's highly acclaimed book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (2007). Mudde (2007: 22-23) defines what he calls three core ideological features of the populist radical right.

The first of these features is so-called *nativism* which is the notion that the nation state should (almost) exclusively be inhabited by members of the indigenous ethnic nation and that the rights and privileges that come with being a citizen of a given state should be predominantly exclusive to members of the same ethnic nation. This is not always the same as racism, as nativists more often subscribe to the idea of "equal but different" – different ethnic groups and cultures are normatively equal but they are generally unfit to coexist within the same society and state.

The second feature is *authoritarianism*, again not to be mistaken for the more sinister authoritarianism of un-democratic and totalitarian regimes. Here the term is understood as a set of values that promotes a society of strict "law and order", moralism and similar "tough on crime" ideas.

Finally, the third core feature of the radical populist right ideology is *populism*. This is understood here as the notion of "the people knows best" on the basis of which the populist politician will typically profile himself as the champion of the people in the struggle against a vaguely defined but perceived to be dominant liberal elite consisting of established parties, the media and the intellectual and cultural elites. Together, these three features constitute the very core of the populist radical right ideology.

Mudde (2007: 49) moves on to define what is *not* populist radical right and therein defines what constitutes, among others, the *extreme* right. The watershed between the extreme right, including neo-fascist parties, and the populist radical right is relatively easy to identify. The extreme right and neo-fascist are at the core un-democratic and anti-systemic. They are more often elitist rather than populist. These groups can also be expected to be more inclined towards outright racism as opposed to nativism, and more prone to lapses into militant or violent rhetoric and behaviour. This gives us a framework in which we can find valid indicators to be used in the later discussion of how to categorise the BNP.

It is worth mentioning, if only for the sake of clarity, that populist radical right and extreme right are not the only two groups of parties on the European far right. Labels such as neo-liberal populist right and neo-conservative are also used to distinguish the populist radical right from "the rest". For the purpose of this study, though, I suggest that paying much attention to these alternative categories is rather redundant. I will defend this position with two very brief but, in my opinion, sufficient arguments: First of all, I have not come across any literature that would suggest that the BNP should be categorised as neo-liberal or neo-conservative. Secondly, just a quick glance at the party's profile and history should be enough to reject these alternative labels at face value. Although it is obvious that, as one would expect is the case with most party families, within the realms of populist radical right and extreme right parties there are grey areas and potential sub-categories, I will let these two categories stand as the vantage point for my analysis.

Moving on, I will summarize how various authors have described the BNP within the context of extreme right/neo-fascism vs. populist radical right. Cas Mudde (2007: 49) puts BNP in the latter category, but his empirical basis is limited given that his book aims to cover all far right parties in Europe. British authors such as Matthew Goodwin (2011) and Nigel Copsey (2008) use the headlines *New British Fascism* and *Contemporary British Fascism* in their studies of the BNP. This is in contrast to where Mudde places the party within his own conceptual framework**.**

Nigel Copsey (2008: 161) raises the question himself under the headline "National Populism or Neo-Fascism?". Copsey (ibid) admits that on the surface, the case could be made that the BNP have evolved into a more moderate outfit compatible with continental national populism (best understood as equivalent to populist radical right). However, Copsey (ibid) rejects this thesis for the following reasons: First, he claims that the party is still susceptible to illiberal ideas citing the BNP's outspoken criticism of liberalism as evidence of this (ibid: 162). Secondly, Copsey (ibid) writes that the BNP still understand the British nation and British nationalism in racial terms, and argues that this proves that the party's ideology is inherently racist and therefore extremist. Thirdly, he rejects what has blatantly been a moderate evolution of the party's attitude towards policy and strategy as nothing more than *for show*, using quotes from BNP party leader Nick Griffin to underline his argument (ibid: 164). This stance is maintained by Copsey and Graham Macklin (ed. 2011) in the anthology *British National Party – Contemporary Perspectives*. I will revisit Copsey's arguments when I reach my analysis where I will explain why none of these arguments are sufficient in rejecting the BNP's claim to membership in the populist radical right family.

Matthew Goodwin (2011) is primarily focused on explaining the BNP within a British context. Thus, the label of extreme right seems to be accepted as appropriate for the BNP more or less at face value without paying too much attention to the European comparative landscape in which the BNP after all does exist. Although Goodwin (2011: 5) addresses the question "what is right-wing extremism?" using comparative tools, few or no questions are raised about whether or not the BNP actually belongs to this family of political parties.

This raises another question of whether or not some of the disagreement on how to categorise the BNP might have to do with semantics or an issue of context. Might it be that Goodwin, for instance, is saying *po-tay-to* to Mudde's *po-tah-to*? Or could it be that given Britain's tradition for two-party politics, divergence from the mainstream is simply perceived as extreme by default? I will return to this in my analysis.

As we have seen from existing literature, we can identify two roughly sketched hypotheses or positions on where to place the BNP in the landscape of far right parties in Europe. One suggests that the party belongs on the extreme right and displays fascist tendencies, in contrast to the other which suggests the party belongs squarely in the more moderate camp of populist radical right parties.

I described in the introduction how which one of these positions that is right dictates how we should approach further research of the BNP, as exemplified by the study of electoral performance. In the following section I discuss both general approaches to the phenomenon of far right politics and the different theoretical approaches to explaining the success and failure of populist radical right parties on the one hand and extreme right/neo-fascist parties on the other.

1.1.2: Explaining electoral performance

The rise of a new family of more or less successful parties to the right of the established party political spectrum prompted a wave of interest from scholars by way of explaining the new phenomenon. Despite repeated waves of right-wing populism and nationalism since the mid 19th century and onwards, not counting the atrocities of Mussolini's and Franco's fascism and Hitler's Nazism, the first electoral breakthroughs made by the far right came in the shape of anti-tax protest parties such as the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties (Simonsen and Kjøstvedt 2009: 12). Coupled with deep scepticism of the third world immigration waves that hit Europe from the 1960s and onwards, the anti-tax line was moderated and from the 1980s a broadly defined group of right-wing populists have put persistent electoral pressure on the established political parties from Scandinavia to Belgium, Austria and France (ibid).

Even further to the right of the populist family, extreme right parties have struggled to achieve much success. Somewhat unsurprisingly, perhaps, if we recall that many of these movements reject the electoral system of modern European democracy and the label of political party outright. However, members of the extreme right family

more or less frequently do contest elections and occasionally enjoy some success, such as in the case of the blatantly fascist *Jobbik* party of Hungary (European Election Database: 2012a).

Many general explanations have been offered towards the rise of new party families to the right of the established spectrum. One explanations that most scholars seem to agree upon is that the rise of far right parties is closely linked to modernisation and the consequences thereof and that supporters of far right parties are so-called "losers" in the transformation of European societies into post-modern society (Minkenberg 2003: 182-183). They are losers either in the sense that they have become unemployed or experienced similar economic disadvantages as a result of globalisation or they have experienced a relative loss of social standing, as social standing has become increasingly linked to education and cultural capital at the expense of traditional working class values in post-industrial Europe (ibid). In other words, support for far right parties does not necessarily correlate with a decreased standard of living for certain groups. It is linked, rather, to a perception of lost social standing. The success of far right parties is thus linked to their ability take sides with those who perceive themselves as the losers of modernisation in the perceived struggle against those who have gained from it (in the eyes of the far right) such as immigrants and the liberal "elites", e.g. established political parties, the media or the financial sector. Some (e.g. Betz 1994) have even described this conflict as a new "cleavage" in the sense that Rokkan and Lipset (1967) explained European party systems.

Although there is a level of agreement among scholars that the modernisation thesis is part of the explanation for the rise of far right parties, it is an inherently general explanation at the macro-level, treating far right success as a pan-European phenomenon – something it most certainly is not (Mudde 2007: 201). So while the modernisation thesis arguably can be said to provide a necessary condition for far right success, i.e. the perceived negative consequences of modernisation, *it is not a sufficient condition in explaining the success of a specific party in a specific country.* If we treat modernisation as the explanatory variable and far right electoral success as the dependant variable, there is very little variation on the independent variable among

(primarily Western) European states contrasted against very much variation on the variable we seek to explain. Thus in the case of the BNP, if we decide to treat them as a populist radical right party and seek to explain their relative lack of success, it would be a folly to say that the BNP fare poorly because Britain has seen low levels of modernisation: that is quite obviously not the case.

In other words, in order to explain variation, i.e. why far right parties are successful in some countries but not in others, and more specifically why the BNP perform differently than other similar parties, we must provide a bigger arsenal of explanatory variables. While most comparative studies using the variables I will now discuss focus more on PRR parties than ER/N-F parties, I will argue that the variables themselves are applicable to the study of both groups. I will elaborate on this as I discuss each variable.

1.1.2b: Variables

Cas Mudde (2007), influenced by e.g. Roger Eatwell (2003), provides an extensive and greatly helpful set of variables to study variation in electoral performance. While Mudde's work is specific to the PRR group of parties, I believe the following variables are relevant also to the ER/N-F group. The following arsenal of variables can be broken down into three sub-sets of variables: Demand-side, external supply-side and internal supply-side (Mudde 2007).

At the demand-side, the relationship between socio-economic and sociological indicators and PRR performance is discussed. This includes the macro-level variables of modernisation, economic[1] and political crisis[2] and ethnic conflict (i.e. high levels of immigration or significant national minorities creating discontent among the majority native group), and micro-level variables such as individual attitudes and economic

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[1] The argument is that economic down-times creates the same negative social consequences as discussed with regards to modernisation, such as unemployment, thus leading disenfranchised voters to opt for PRR parties (e.g. Jackman and Volpert 1996).

[2] The logic is that political distrust is directed towards the established parties or the established regime thus ushering voters in the direction of the PRR parties in opposition to the establishment (Mudde 2007: 209), which can in turn be linked to Richard Katz and Peter Mair's (1995) thesis of party "cartelization".

insecurity. As discussed with regards to the modernisation thesis most of these demand-side variables can be said to provide some explanatory value as far as explaining why the PRR party family exists at all and why the existence of politically relevant, applying the conditions of coalition potential or blackmail potential (Sartori 1990), PRR parties is almost exclusively a European phenomenon. It seems, however, that there would be greater difficulty in using these variables in terms of explaining variation across European borders, as in the case of why the BNP perform differently from whichever party or parties we should decide to compare it to. Most European countries, including Britain, are affected by macro-level process in a fairly similar way and would thus score quite similarly on macro-level indicators, providing very little explanation for variation. The same problem arises for micro-level variables, as these are assumed to be created by macro-level factors (Mudde 2007: 230-231). With this in mind, I propose to exclude demand-side indicators from analyses of variation in PRR electoral performance in Europe. The same basic argument holds water also when we look at it in the context of comparing ER/N-F parties. The parties we would study might be of a different ilk but the universe in which they exist remains more or less unchanged.

Moving on to external supply-side explanations (Mudde 2007: 232), these include institutional and political factors such as party system and political "space", and cultural factors such as stigmatization[3] of PRR parties and the role of the media. The combination of these factors create what Mudde (2007: 253) has called political opportunity structures. The nature of these structures can either facilitate an electoral breakthrough or create significant barriers for smaller parties if we interpret the term generally and, in the context of this study, specifically for parties of the far right. As a theoretic group of variables, political opportunity structures remain relevant regardless of how we categorise it and in the case of explaining the BNP's electoral performance, I will argue that the political opportunity structures of the BNP's British habitat is of great importance. The importance of categorisation, as in determining where the party

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[3] The argument here is that some countries have more favourable cultural conditions for far right parties through the presence of large nationalist subcultures combined with a lack of stigmatization of far right parties (Mudde 2007: 254)

belongs in the far-right landscape, arises when we move on to apply these variables to a specific party and a specific context. I shall return to this point, by way of discussing the theoretic assumptions in greater detail and by way of operationalisation of the separate variables in the methodology section and when I move on to part two of this study.

The third and final subset of variables is called the internal supply-side (Mudde 2007: 256) and deals with the PRR party itself. Three aspects must be considered: firstly, the ideology of the party is of importance, but then only when we look at the far right in general including in the analysis both PRR parties and extreme right/neo-fascist parties alike: ideologically more moderate parties tend to fare better than ideologically extreme parties. However, we have to assume that parties that are categorised in the same group of parties will have roughly similar ideological profiles thus leaving ideology in itself unable to explain variations in electoral performance within the specific group of parties (ibid: 276).

Greater variation can possibly be found in the second and third aspect of the internal supply-side, namely that of leadership and organisation. Both of these aspects are crucial in creating the popular image and perception of the far right party. Charismatic and popular leaders are crucial in attracting supporters to the party (Sandberg and Moreman 2011) while a well-structured party organisation makes the party able to be persistent in its quest for electoral success (Mudde 2007: 276). Both of these are of great importance regarding the party's ability to convey effective policy messages (ibid). As was the case with the external supply-side, the internal supply-side holds potential for explanatory value in the case of explaining the electoral performance of the BNP. Looking at party leadership and organisation will be relevant for the study of both PRR and ER/N-F parties but categorisation will determine the context in which we apply these theoretic variables. To exemplify, BNP leader Nick Griffin might be regarded as unpopular and uncharismatic compared to the Le Pens of Front National but might fare better when compared to leaders of various ER/N-F parties. Again, I shall discuss this in greater detail in following sections and in part two of this study.

Thus, the following theoretic explanatory variables will be included in the analysis of the BNP's electoral performance, regardless of categorisation: The external supply side, which includes party system, political space, cultural environment and media landscape, and the internal supply side which includes party leadership and organisation. As I now move on to discuss the methodological approaches to this study, the operationalisation of these theoretic variables will be made clear.

1.2: Methodological approach

1.2.1: Variables and indicators - Categorisation

As I hinted to in the previous sections, categorising far right parties raises some methodological concerns questions that are analytically interesting. In the introduction I hinted to the problems concerning placing political parties in specific party families. There are many possible criteria available for the researcher, ranging from self-categorisation by the parties to researcher-based analysis. Our categorisation of a party may very well depend on which criteria we use and which indicators we focus on (Mudde 2007: 35-36). I intend to trust pre-determined analytical categories more than I will trust the self-categorisation of the party. Leaning on party self-categorisation may be efficient but given the fact that many far right parties are at best ambiguous in their presentation of themselves, extending such trust could lead us into muddy waters (ibid). That is not meant to outright discard the BNP's self-categorisation: the party's self-image is interesting in its own right, but best understood as official self-perception rather than a definitive conclusion. Having established this much, it remains to be discussed what sort of indicators and in that what data to use in my analysis. As is the case with all party research, this question depends on which level we intend to focus on: grassroots or leadership, local branches or national party (ibid). While I believe that in the context of a thorough study of a political movement it is of value to look at both levels, I believe it is important to emphasise the national and leadership levels. Not only does this generally provide more reliable data but more importantly the national and leadership levels are truly representative of the party in a way that grassroots and local actors cannot possibly be (ibid).

Identifying valid indicators for my analysis is perhaps the greatest methodological challenge in my research design. In the theory section I identified three conceptual ideological indicators for radical populist right parties: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. These concepts are in obvious need of

operationalisation. How could they best be measured in the relevant context? The table underneath suggests a set of indicators.

Table 1.1: Core concepts and corresponding indicators of the populist radical right

Concept	Indicators
Nativism	Outspoken criticism of existing immigration policy.
	Outspoken policies of national/ethnic preference in questions of citizenship, benefits etc.
	Outspoken isolationist/anti-integration foreign policy.
	Outspoken ideas of the notion of "equal but different", suggestions that a multicultural society is a folly.
Authoritarianism	Support for tougher sentences for criminal behaviour.
	Support for capital punishment.
	General emphasis on "morals and discipline".
	Opposition to liberal or radical ideas such as feminism and opposition to e.g. gay marriage/civil unions.
Populism	Explicit criticism of perceived elites.
	Explicit self-imaging as the champion of common sense and "the common man".

Identifying indicators for extreme right/neo-fascist traits is perhaps more straightforward, as this is a question of identifying episodes of violent behaviour in the context of organised party activities, violent rhetoric from party leaders, elitist organisational and systemic policies, championing of racist doctrines in rhetoric and party publications and finally explicit criticism of democracy as the system of government. Relevant sources here includes primarily the party's manifesto(s), official

publications and major public addresses made by party leaders with emphasis on policy, principles and rhetoric.

Moving on from these rather ideology/policy-based indicators, I must strive to find indicators of the other concepts I discussed in the theory section. As previously mentioned, one feature that separates the populist right from the extreme/neo-fascist right is their respective views on democracy and the established political system. One indicator for this could be the different parties' organisational structures and strategies. It is logical to expect populist right parties to emphasise membership and grassroots influence and democratic internal channels, akin to the prototypical mass party described by Duverger (1963) whereas the more extreme right can be expected to disregard such values and sometimes reject the label of "political party" outright.

To illustrate the difference between a populist radical right party and an extreme right/neo-fascist party, a simple table might be helpful. The following table lists a number of attributes a party of the far right might be expected to have. Then the columns represent the populist radical right family (PRR) and the extreme right/neo-fascist family (ER) respectively. A cell filled with an X indicates that a party of this party family is expected to have the corresponding attribute:

Table 1.2: Illustrating differences between the populist radical right and the extreme right

Attribute	PRR	ER
Xenophobia	X	X
Blatant racism		X
Authoritarianism	X	X
Anti-establishment	X	X
Anti-system		X
Populism	X	
Professionalism	X	
Violent tendencies		X

1.2.2: Variables and indicators – explaining electoral performance

As I begin this section, remember the theoretical variables presented in the theory section and recall also how they are relevant for the study of electoral performance both for populist radical right parties and for extreme right/neo-fascist parties alike. The variables were the external supply side variables of party system, political space, cultural environment and media landscape, and also the internal supply side which includes party leadership and organisation. This section will focus on the operationalisation of these variables as we draw closer to my final analysis, and here I will also show how important a precise categorisation of the BNP is when we seek to conduct a comparative analysis of the party. First I will discuss the operationalisation of the theoretical variables in the case of PRR parties before I move on to do the same for the case of ER/N-F parties.

1.2.2a: Operationalisation of variables: PRR parties

The first set of variables to be operationalised is the external supply side. I begin with a variable that should be reasonably straight forward: party system. Party systems are obviously closely linked to electoral system (Duverger 1951), but I elect to focus on the party system as it tells us more about the level of party political pluralism (see Lijphart 1999), which can either facilitate PRR breakthroughs or greatly obstruct them, than the bare formalities of electoral systems. Initially, there are a number of ways we can operationalise this variable. We can merely count the number of relevant parties, by way of Sartori (1990) or Laakso & Taagepera (1979)**,** and create a continuous variable to use in a statistic regression analysis, however this seems to me to offer a level of detail that for my purposes over-complicates matters rather than providing helpful information. Rather more interesting is the difference between two-party (or two and a half-) party systems and multiparty systems. Theoretically we can assume, more or less a priori, that multiparty systems are a more fertile ground for party political pluralism and thus PRR electoral breakthrough. Hence, I propose a

dichotomised operationalisation of the variable party system with the possible values being two (and a half) party system or multiparty system.

Rather less obvious at first glance is the operationalisation of the second variable of the external supply side: "political space". The term is to be understood as the relation between other political actors and the far right party (Mudde 2007: 237). In other words, we are dealing with political context. Theoretically, we assume that for a party to achieve electoral breakthrough it needs to fill a hole of ideological demand in the political spectrum where the demands of voters are not being supplied by other parties. In other words, the significant point for investigation is the political positioning of the established parties (ibid: 238). In the case of far right parties, we particularly need to address the nature of the established centre right or right wing party. The thesis is such that convergence between the established left and right, thus the ideological wandering of the established right wing party towards the centre of the spectrum, creates political space for a PRR party (Kitschelt and McCann 1995). In other words, we assume theoretically that the more liberal and centre-leaning the established right wing party is, the more fertile the breeding ground for PRR electoral breakthrough. Operationalised, this variable can then be called "nature of the established right wing party". In assigning possible values for this variable, it is prudent not to over complicate matters. Again, I propose that a dichotomy is sufficient. We assume that the established right wing party has either more or less converged towards the centre or remained more or less at the traditional conservative end of the spectrum (although, in reality the scale is obviously sliding and dynamic), with the theoretical assumption being that the former is favourable for a PRR electoral breakthrough.

To this initial operationalisation, though, I should add a second element: Competition from other parties and groups on the right of the political spectrum. In some countries, the PRR party may be the only significant challenger to the established right-of-centre party, whereas in other countries other types of parties may compete for attention. While these parties might be very different from the PRR party indeed, as they might be neither populist nor radical, they might compete with the PRR

party on specific and important issues such as the EU, immigration or law and order and thus steal potential voters from the PRR party. The existence of such competition will then potentially hinder PRR electoral success. Again, this aspect can be reduced to a dichotomy: Simplified, we could say that there either is competition from other right-wing parties or there isn't. The combination of these two dichotomies provided by the operationalisation of the theoretic variable "political space" provides a map in which we can place the individual PRR party: The combination of a liberal established right-of-centre party and the absence of right-wing competition is obviously the most favourable situation for a PRR electoral success. Naturally, the inversed situation is the least favourable. The two "mixed" situations both have their pros and cons, and must be considered neutral territory of sorts in which other variables and explanations are perhaps more salient.

Nature of the established right-of-centre party

	Liberal-centrist	**Traditional right**
Yes	Neutral	Least favourable for PRR parties
No	Most favourable for PRR parties	Neutral

Right-wing competition

Figure 1.1: Favourability of party competition conditions for the PRR

The third external supply side variable, cultural environment, is arguable the most abstract of all of the variables in the set of explanations. One side of the theoretical assumption is that countries with a history of fascist rule and/or experienced internal divide during World War II and thus have a less unequivocal collective understanding of Europe's history of extremism and turmoil, creating a continuum of far right intellectual discourse and national populist sub-cultures, is more fertile soil for PRR electoral success (Mudde 2007: 246). While the theoretic argument makes a great deal

of sense, it does not fare well against empirical evidence. Norway and Denmark are just two examples of cases that do not support this theory, both with an unequivocally negative collective understanding of the extremism and turmoil of WWII while at the same time being home to two of the more successful PRR parties in Europe. Spain, on the other hand, is a case of vice versa. The other side of the theoretical assumption is that the popular opinion in some countries is less stigmatic towards PRR ideology and attitudes, thereby making it easier for such parties to experience a degree of success (ibid: 247). This is by all accounts a valid assumption, but it is a complicated operation to research such "cultural stigmatisation" in itself. Therefore, I propose combining the cultural aspect of the external supply side with the media aspect, making the media both a variable in its own right and a proxy for the cultural aspect. There is theoretic support to be found for such a move in the literature on media and politics: While the media certainly do play the role of agenda setters and shapers of opinion, popular opinion also shapes the agenda of the media. The relationship between media and popular opinion is a complex one of continuous mutual influence (Aardal and Waldahl 2004).

Thus I am left to operationalise the media variable. The theoretical assumptions are as follows: Firstly, the most important issues for a PRR party needs a certain level of attention in the media so that the party is able to be visible to the voters. Thereby, a PRR party needs a media landscape, or just one or two widely read newspapers, that at least to agree is sensationalist and tabloid and that will consistently present immigration, the most important issue for PRR parties, as a problem and in a negative light (Mudde 2007: 248). Secondly, assuming with Aardal and Waldahl (2004: 298) that the media at least to a degree influences voters' opinions on political issues and political actors, the PRR party is dependent on a level of positive coverage, or at least the absence of unequivocally negative coverage (Mudde 2007: 248). If we follow this line of argument, we can create a set of possible relationships between the media and the PRR parties, based on a combination of values on the two different conditions and we can make theoretical assumptions about how favourable each situation is for PRR electoral success: The most favourable combination, we should assume, for a PRR party is a situation where the media are both sensationalist, negative towards

immigration and favourably (or not negatively) inclined towards PRR political actors. Here, the PRR party might tap into voters who have lost faith in the establishment and the established party. Less favourable, but perhaps not all together unfavourable, is a situation where the media is generally less willing to speak the PRR narrative of the negative consequences of immigration, in other words a relatively liberal media landscape, and at the same time give the PRR negative coverage. Here, the PRR might not be able to fully advertise itself but at the very least it can mobilise the core vote using the textbook PRR rhetoric of portraying the liberal media as part of the "elite establishment" as discussed in the theory section. Perhaps, counter-intuitively, we should assume that the worst possible conditions for PRR electoral success is a situation where the media, or part of it, is indeed sensationalist and present immigration as a problem, while still giving the PRR unequivocally negative coverage. Here, the PRR can no longer reasonably claim that the media is part of a liberal elite, and voters sceptical of immigration will be inclined to follow the advice of the media and stay clear of voting for the PRR party, thus creating potential for the PRR party to lose significant shares of their presumed core vote (Michelsen 2011). This creates the following form of values to be assigned to cases in researching the relationship between media and PRR parties:

Table 1.3: Possible relationships between the media and PRR parties, by favourability for PRR electoral success

	Sensationalist media that is negative towards immigration	Media gives the PRR party unequivocally negative coverage
Most favourable	X	
Neutral		X
Least favourable	X	X

Moving on to the internal supply side, I first look at the operationalisation of the variable leadership. This variable is rather more straightforward than the previous one. It simply deals with the popular opinion, in other words popularity, of the party leader.

The theoretic assumption being that charismatic leaders with a certain level of personal popularity among voters is an integral part of PRR electoral success, we can operationalise this variable by looking at opinion poll data on people's views on PRR leaders in different countries. Big differences regarding share of respondents who take a positive view towards the PRR leader could contribute towards explaining differences in electoral performance. It is important to add, that simply looking at the popularity rating of the leader could be misleading. Although leadership popularity is a potentially an important factor in explaining PRR electoral success, the two are not altogether independent from each other. A more valid way of looking at this is to compare the popularity of the leader to the popularity of the party he or she represents. A leader that is more popular than its party can be said to affect the party's electoral performance positively and vice versa.

The final variable is that of organisation. The assumption is that professionalised and stable organisations are important for PRR parties in order to consistently challenge the established parties and achieving electoral success. One aspect of this is membership, as consistent and comparatively high numbers of due-paying members provides both consistent support, stable levels of income and, to an extent, a degree of public legitimacy (Scarrow 2000) – which is as true for PRR parties as it is for any other type of party. This aspect can be operationalised *at face value* even though membership data, especially for far right parties, are notoriously unreliable and must be handled with the utmost caution (Mudde 2007: 268). The other aspect of importance regarding explaining electoral success is organisational stability. This is less straight forward in terms of operationalisation. On the one hand, it overlaps somewhat with the membership aspect but membership is important in its own right. Then we might look at party splits but these more often happen *after* electoral success is achieved (Mudde 2007: 266). Hence, I propose to look at the party's ability to contest elections consistently, i.e. its ability to field candidates in a significant proportion of constituencies from election to election (ibid). Growth will be interpreted as consistency.

1.2.2b: Operationalisation of variables: ER/N-F parties

Moving on to the operationalisation of variables for ER/N-F parties I will follow a parallel structure to the one used in the previous section, but in doing so I will reveal the significant differences that arises when you deal with a different type of party.

Beginning with the variable of party system, it is perhaps the variable where there isn't a great difference between the two types of parties. As is the case with PRR parties, ER/N-F parties are outsiders compared to the establishment of older, bigger parties. Thus, the inherent pluralism of multi party systems are generally more favourable also for ER/N-F parties as they indeed are for all new or smaller parties (Lijphart 1999).

Much greater differences arise when we look at the second variable of political "space". Whereas PRR parties, as previously discussed, tend to compete with the established right-of-centre party, meaning that their success depends on the nature of said competing type of party, the ER/N-F parties do not tend to seek the same type of relatively moderate groups of voters. As non-populists (Mudde 2007: 49), the extreme right are not as ready to shift position depending on the ideological climate to actively seek voters. The extreme right would prefer the voters to come to them, so to speak. Hence there will, to a certain extent, always be a place to the right of the established right-of-centre party if you are only willing to venture far enough to the right. When we assume that a centrist and liberal established right-of-centre party creates space for a PRR party we should at the same time expect that a traditionalistic conservative party closes that same space. This could spill over into the discussion of ER/N-F parties. If the established right-of-centre party is the main competitor of the PRR party, PRR parties must be said to be the main competitor of the ER/N-F party. Thus, the absence of a viable PRR alternative creates space for an ER/N-F party to compete for the more radical elements of potential PRR voters. Furthermore, the extreme right is a group of parties that is highly susceptible for splits and fragmentation, perhaps as a consequence of their inherent hesitation towards acting as an organized party organisation (see ibid). This makes ER/N-F parties vulnerable to competition from each other. Where more than one viable PRR alternative is very rare, it is more

common to see two or three similar parties on the extreme right competing for the same voters. Operationalising these theoretic assumptions, we are again left with a combination of two different variables that creates a similar "map" of situations as in the discussion of PRR parties. We have two dichotomies to investigate: Whether or not there is a viable PRR alternative and whether or not the extreme right is fragmentised.

Viable PRR alternative

Fragmentation of

the extreme right

	YES	**NO**
YES	Least favourable	unfavourable
NO	unfavourable	Most favourable

Figure 1.2: Possible political space for the extreme right by favourability

Moving on to the third aspect of the external supply side, that of cultural environment and the media, we must apply different standards when we look at ER/N-F parties compared to the standards we apply when we look at PRR parties. As the extreme right do not necessarily seek mainstream votes, nor do they need them in order to be viewed as comparatively successful, they are not as vulnerable to cultural and media stigmatisation. The operationalisation of this variable is in this case much less complex than it is in the case of PRR parties. The extreme right strives on attention more than anything else, which is apparent also in their organisational structure and organised behaviour. The old adage "all PR is good PR" seems to ring true for the extreme right more than for other types of parties who generally seek respectability and mainstream appeal to a much larger extent than does the ER/N-F. Therefore, where in the case of PRR parties I proposed an operationalisation of the cultural/media variable that included a review of certain media's qualitative coverage of the party we can here focus on a comparison of plainly quantitative coverage: That is how often the party of

interest is mentioned in national media at all. However, as PRR parties, the extreme right can be expected to rely on a segment of the media that puts their core issues on the agenda, i.e. a sensationalist and tabloid press that is critical of immigration.

As I move on to the final category of variables, the internal supply side, in other words the party itself, I begin with the variable "leadership". This variable offers little in terms of difference between the two different types of parties. The operationalisation thus remains the same as in the case of PRR parties, however, as I will elaborate on when I discuss research design, the points of comparison and such the levels of popularity required to be considered a charismatic leader in a comparative perspective differs greatly when we move from PRR parties to the extreme right.

At the organisational level the extreme right, without great ambition to seek mainstream voters, cannot be expected to even attempt to operate as a "mass party" (Mudde 2007: 49). Thus, we cannot either expect extreme right parties to maintain a nationwide apparatus of campaign machinery or to maintain a high level of stability in their push for seats. The extreme right therefore relies heavily on local visibility and protest mobilisation. This is difficult to operationalise with a satisfactory level of precision, and we must therefore rely on a qualitative interpretation of available data. In doing so, we must look for indicators such as the party's number of active local branches and furthermore the number of attention bringing (in terms of media coverage) protest activities and a general impression of the participation in such activities.

1.3: Research design

In researching the question of categorisation, I shall mostly rely on a detailed study of data while keeping a close eye on the theoretical framework I have already established. Hence, I will systematically discuss BNP party literature and asses it against the indicators I outlined in the theory section. While it would be possible to rely on this alone, a comparative perspective would be beneficial. Therefore, as I go along, comparing the BNP to indisputable members of the PRR and ER/N-F families respectively would provide useful weight to my arguments. The French *Front National* (FN) is regarded by many as the prototype for PRR parties (Mudde 2007: 14). It therefore makes sense to include the FN here as a comparative reference at certain crossroads of the analysis. On the other side, the German National Democrats are the obvious example of a *bona fide* extreme right party and will therefore be used for comparisons in that direction.

The basic principles of research design are not altogether that different when researching either PRR parties or the extreme right in the context of explaining electoral performance. The same could probably be said for any kind of research *within* a given party family. In a nutshell, we rely on comparison with similar parties in different countries by looking at the relevant variables and look for variation on explanatory variables to explain the dependent variable. By looking at relatively similar parties in relatively similar countries that nonetheless experience significantly different levels of electoral success, we adopt what is called a most similar systems design (MSSD) (see Lijphart 1975 and Collier 1993: 111). This research design can, in the context of this study, be applied to both PRR and ER/N-F parties alike and would schematically resemble the setup of table 1.4:

Table 1.4: Theoretic assumptions of a most similar systems design. Different values on the independent variable X6 are assumed to determine the different outcomes on the dependent variable Y when the values on variables X1-5 are equal for both cases.

Variable	Unit 1	Unit 2
X1	1	1
X2	1	1
X3	1	1
X4	1	1
X5	1	1
X6	*1*	*0*
Y	*2*	*3*

Where the research design differs is when we choose objects for comparison. Should I conclude that the BNP belongs on the extreme right, it must be compared with other parties in the same group. Should the conclusion be that the BNP rather belongs to the PRR family, comparisons must be found within the PRR group of parties. Furthermore, if we see the BNP as belonging to the extreme right we must also deem them relatively successful and thus explain their success. Therefore, in order to have the variance on the dependent variable as an MSSD requires, we must compare it to one or more *less* successful parties. Should the opposite conclusion triumph, I must perform the opposite operation and compare the BNP with *more* successful members of the PRR family.

The list of candidates is potentially big, but I choose to narrow it down to two candidates for each type of party. In terms of PRR parties, I have several to choose from. Indeed, many PRR parties are more successful than the BNP and many of these

parties are both well established within their respective party systems and as such thoroughly researched. This gives us an advantage as data is readily available. The FN has been a role model for the BNP and Nick Griffin (Copsey 2008: 163). Thus, they are an obvious candidate for comparison and I see no reason not to follow that path. Then there is the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (VB) which in turn is something akin to a Flemish blueprint of the FN – perhaps ironically as one of their main objectives is separation from the francophone Wallonian half of Belgium, however the similarities are abundant (Kjøstvedt 2009: 255). The VB, too, must be considered a relatively potent electoral force compared to the BNP.

Seeking out candidates for comparison on the extreme right is immediately more challenging, as the group's lack of electoral force leaves them less thoroughly researched than their (distant) PRR relatives. It would be tempting to go with the well-known and well-documented case of the previously mentioned National Democratic Party of Germany however their success in national elections is reasonably on par with that of the BNP and thus is not consistent with the MSSD design I have described. Remember, I am looking for a party that is less successful than the BNP as indeed most extreme right parties are. The NDP are affiliated with a group of other parties through the European National Front and from here we can select possible candidates for inclusion in this context. The Greek party *Golden Dawn* (Gr: Chrysi Avyi) seems to fit the criteria nicely. It has a clear and indisputable extreme right/neo-fascist profile and has little to show for in terms of electoral success[4]. Another suitable candidate is the Italian outfit *New Force* (It: Forza Nouva) which is equally indisputable in its neo-fascist credentials as its Greek siblings and similarly have no history of electoral success matching recent showings by the BNP. Thus, as two parties that fit the criteria of being unquestionably extreme right/neo-fascist and electorally less successful than the BNP, I keep Golden Dawn and New Force as would-be comparisons if my initial analysis proves the BNP to be part of the ER/N-F group.

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[4] Written before the 2012 election in which Golden Dawn polled a whopping 6,97 per cent of the vote.

1.4: Data

I have already praised the British literature on the BNP for being rich in interesting, in-depth empirical research. Likewise I have praised the general European literature on far right parties for providing an arsenal of analytical tools, as described in the previous section. In this study of the BNP I intend to merge the advantages of both the existing literature on the BNP and the existing literature on the European far right. On the one hand I will conduct wide empirical research into the BNP, while on the other hand keeping an eye on the analytical framework provided by established theories. My hope is that this will add a certain level of analytical nuance to the empirical research and some, in the case of the BNP, much-needed empirical meat to the bone of the existing analytical framework.

This does not mean that I will rely only on existing literature in my quest to categorise the BNP and to explain its electoral performance. The existing data may be in need of revision or updating, and some data might not already have been provided. I will therefore provide much data of my own. In collecting data, several roads are open to exploitation. Revisiting the data used in existing literature can prove to be very helpful, and perhaps my own interpretations of the data may differ from the ones of the writers who have interpreted the data before me thus providing new perspectives on previous research. The existing literature may indeed prove to be a valuable data source in its own right, where these works contain original data collection such as interviews etc.

Living in the internet age, researchers are blessed with immediate access to party publications and documents. I intend to use this for what it is worth and make the BNP's official website an important portal for information. This information will obviously have to be processed with a high level of scrutiny, but handled right this type of first hand information may be one of my richest sources of data.

I will use this data first to provide an empirical profile of the BNP in chapter two. In that chapter I collect all the empirical threads to create the background for the third chapter. There I will move on to put the empirical profile of the BNP into the

theoretical framework provided in the theory section and thus discuss the question asked in the introduction: how to categorise the BNP. The same blueprint will be followed in part two of the study where I seek to explain the BNP's electoral performance, although the data from part one will certainly have to be supplemented with data more specific to part two of the study such as more general literature on respective countries' party systems and literature on different parties relevant for comparison.

2: Introducing the BNP

In the following section, I will introduce the British National Party to provide an empirical background for the following analysis. The first step will be to give a brief history of the party, touching briefly upon ideological development, organisational development and electoral performance. Next, I will come to a presentation of the present outlook of the BNP, considering their present ideology, policies and organisational outlook. This overview will include a glance at the current manifesto and other recent party publications.

2.1.1: A brief history of the BNP: The early years (1982-1993)

The British National Party was formed in 1982 by inaugural leader John Tyndall and his followers, who had collectively broken from the already established right wing movement *The National Front* (NF). The NF was, and to an extent still is, a hard-line, militaristic group infamous for naked racism, thuggish skinhead elements and violent behaviour of which Tyndall had been an influential actor and chairman (Goodwin 2011: 25). Although the NF received much attention during the 1970s and reached an electoral peak of 0,6 per cent of the vote in the 1979 general election, it remained a movement with scant political influence despite the level of attention it received (ibid: 29)**.**

Tyndall's break from the NF came not so much from ideological differences but rather over internal wrangling over his handling of party finances as chairman. The ideological continuity between the NF and Tyndall's early version of the BNP is therefore evident (Goodwin 2010: 36).   This is also reflected in the overlapping strategies of recruitment and a membership profile consisting predominantly of disenfranchised urban, working-class, young males (ibid). Still rooted in the ideas of the NF, Tyndall continued to champion unconventional (in relation to established, mainstream partisan politics) tactics of blunt racism, marches and allowing for lapses

into violence by skinhead elements (Copsey 2007: 66). Tyndall's way of thinking was apparently that of the old adage "all PR is good PR" but he was not vindicated by the party's performance, neither in terms of recruitment nor in terms of electoral success: the general elections of 1983 and 1987 saw a return of just over 14,000 votes and 500 votes respectively, with the BNP fielding only two candidates in the latter. The BNP failed at leapfrogging the NF as the main force of the far right.

This lack of success may possibly be attributed to then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's leadership of the Conservative Party, shifting the party towards patriotism and euro-scepticism thus tapping into groups of voters targeted by the far right (Michelsen 2010). Institutional conditions also constituted a barrier, with the UK's first past the post electoral system making what Cas Mudde (2007) has called *political opportunity structures* unfavourable for small parties of the far right. However, and more to the point of my quest for categorisation, the party's scant success at the polls may also be attributed to it being too extreme and in all areas unable to gain mainstream credibility. This will be discussed in more detail when I arrive at my discussion of the BNP's electoral performance.

Membership numbers also remained at a minimum for the first decade or so of the party's history, accredited by Matthew Goodwin (2010: 37) to Tyndall's highly centralised style of leadership and his near complete disregard of party politics *per se*.

I wrote earlier that Tyndall's early version of the BNP in many ways represented an ideological continuum of the NF. In many ways, John Tyndall *was* the early version of the BNP. In a highly centralised party organisation with relatively few members, Tyndall was more or less able to do all the "thinking" remaining faithful to the blunt racism, extreme nationalism and tendencies towards anti-Semitism (Copsey 2007: 72). In short, the early version of the BNP under the leadership of John Tyndall was a continuation of the brutish National Front of the 1970s, with borderline fascist views, an apparent lack of interest in appeasing more moderate sympathisers of anti-immigration policies, stuck in ideas of hard-liner tactics refusing to be a *bona fide* political party (Goodwin 2010).

2.1.2: A brief history continued: Towards modernisation (1993-1999)

The party's first hint of modernization came with a taste of electoral success in the form of winning a council seat in East London in the 1993 local elections. This victory was won through more conventional methods of campaigning akin to moderate activism, despite the leader John Tyndall's tendencies towards militant behaviour (Copsey 2007: 66). This surely planted seeds of frustration over John Tyndall's inability to deliver political gains for the party and encouraged fresh ideas of modernisation and electoral appeal.

Although the seed had been planted in 1993 and modernisation had existed as a current within the party ever since, leader-to-be Nick Griffin would finally emerge as the most prominent advocate of modernisation within the BNP. Although he himself had a background as a National Front hard-liner, he was (is) a Cambridge-educated lawyer with a new-found sense for pragmatism (Copsey 2007: 66). Griffin did in fact not join the party until 1996, but soon enough saw an opportunity to pick up the baton from the early supporters of modernization. Modernisation, according to Griffin (in Copsey 2007: 66) would have to include becoming more voter-friendly, thus making it a necessity for the party to distance themselves from the extremism inherited through Tyndall's continuation of NF legacy.

Griffin seized the moment and stood successfully against Tyndall in the 1999 party leadership poll. Griffin opened up the party, and immediately saw a rise in membership numbers: Sitting at just over 1,000 in 1999 BNP membership more than tripled in three years (Goodwin 2010: 38). While the idea of modernisation wasn't born with Griffin's emergence, the leadership change of 1999 can be said to mark the beginning of a new era for the party both organisationally and ideologically. Griffin would seek to modernize the party through pragmatism and professionalism and through stripping off the elements of extremism (e.g. biological racism and anti-Semitism) that were deemed electorally inedible (see both Copsey 2007 and Goodwin 2010).

2.1.3: The age of Nick Griffin: A "new" BNP? (1999 and onwards)

Under Nick Griffin's leadership the BNP have taken considerable strides towards becoming a recognisable player in British politics. Despite notable set-backs such as the failure to win any seats in the 2004 European Parliament (EP) elections, the party have made noteworthy gains in local- and European elections: At the local level, the number of council seats won and held by BNP candidates increased steadily from the year 2000 towards the end of that decade. Peaking at nearly 60 seats compared to no seats held at the start of Griffin's leadership this is a rather formidable increase even when you account for significant losses in 2010 and 2011.

The BNP's most notable success is the 2009 EP elections in which it won two seats. Andrew Brons was elected from the Yorkshire & Humber region of England, backed by 9,8 per cent of the vote. Party leader Nick Griffin was elected from the North West region of England backed by 8 per cent of the vote. Nationally, the party received 6,2 per cent of the vote, or almost one million votes. All this while facing stiff competition for anti-EU votes from the single-issue UK Independence Party (UKIP) which sensationally polled as first runner up to the Conservative Party beating both Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

The party organisation also grew substantially, as membership numbers increased throughout the past decade. I mentioned earlier that already during the first three years with Nick Griffin at the helm membership increased from around 1000 to just over 3000. By 2008 this number had continued to increase, to around 12 000 (Goodwin 2010: 38).

While success in national elections has not yet materialised for the BNP, their electoral performance after the turn of the millennium is noteworthy. Furthermore, this is pertinent for my analysis as it can be interpreted as a symptom of a fundamental change in the party's political identity, both ideologically and organisationally. I will elaborate on the details of this in later sections but I find it useful to provide a brief overview here.

I have already hinted at the differences between John Tyndall and Nick Griffin. Where Tyndall was committed to the old National Front ideas of outspoken racism and militant behaviour, Nick Griffin had gone through a political transformation since his days as a NF activist and organiser. Developing a taste for populism and political marketing, Griffin advocated moderation (Copsey 2007: 68). For this strategy, he found a role model in the success of Jean-Marie le Pen's French far-right outfit *Front National*, which in 2002 bested the French Socialist Party to compete with Jacques Chirac in the second round of the presidential elections. Taking a leaf out of Le Pen's political play-book, he developed a new language for the BNP. Ideas of racism and bigotry were cast aside in favour of identity politics of preservation of cultural heritage, preservation of Western ideals of democracy and freedom and a programme of social policy as well as foreign policy, areas that had previously not been subject to much attention from far right movements in the UK (Copsey 2007: 69).

Organisationally and tactically, Griffin distanced himself from Tyndall in advocating professionalism and traditional campaigning methods. Seeking to gain the attention of not only disenfranchised working class youths he wanted to woo the middle class through becoming more accessible and "family friendly". Promoting membership activities, professionalising party publications such as the newspaper *Identity* and adopting a "clean" image akin to the outlook of the more established party, Griffin wanted the party to appear respectable and a serious contender for real political influence (Copsey 2007: 69).

2.2: Ideology, policy and organisation: the BNP today

In the following sections I shall go into the details of the BNP's present political outlook, venturing a step closer to my analysis. I will closely examine the party's manifesto, their publications and pertinent media appearances. I will also pay attention to the organisational statutes of the party, specifically the party constitution and the publication "BNP activist handbook". This will provide the lion's share of empirical background for approaching the question of how to categorise the BNP.

2.2.1: Ideology

The leader Nick Griffin is adamant in rejecting the label of neo-fascism, nailing the party firmly to the mast of "popular nationalism" (Copsey 2007: 62). The term national populism must in this case be seen as largely synonymous to what Cas Mudde identifies as radical right populism. Whether or not this claim is backed up by the party's official programme of principles is the subject of this section. In reading this, recall the indicators for radical right populism discussed in the theory section: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Recall also how this is juxtaposed with the anti-democratic and racist sentiments of right wing extremism and neo-fascism. I shall apply these features analytically in the next chapter, but it is useful to keep them in mind already at this stage. In identifying the core ideological features of the BNP, I have chosen to look at how they summarise their own positions. This can be found by looking at a) the article "Introduction" (Griffin 2011) found on the party's website bnp.org.uk or b) the chapters by the same name in the BNP's election manifestos. I have chosen to look at the manifestos for the 2010 general election and the 2011 English local elections for a representation of the BNP's current ideological outlook.

A recurring theme in all three of these sources is talk of the plight of the "native Briton" in a difficult economic environment. Examples of this are many: "While we struggle to pay the bills and live in fear of losing our jobs" writes Nick Griffin (2011) on the party website. "[W]hile keeping all essential services for

local people" he argues in the 2011 manifesto (BNP 2011a: 3). Similarly we can read "(...)without cutting front line public services to the British people" in the 2010 manifesto (BNP 2010: 12).

Another common denominator is a focus on safety and being "tough on crime". From the 2011 manifesto we can read (BNP 2011a: 2):

"We believe it is the elementary right of local people everywhere to feel secure in their homes and their communities and to demand the best of their police. Our policy is one of zero tolerance on crime, and we mean it."

Similar rhetoric can be found in the 2010 manifesto, mentioning "safe neighbourhoods" and other sentiments along the same lines.

The BNP seem keen to present itself as staunch defenders of democratic principles and it transpires that the school of thought is that the people (i.e. not politicians) knows best. Herein we can find more than a touch of scepticism towards the ruling parties, the European Union and also towards the war in Afghanistan (BNP 2010: 12).

Unsurprisingly, the most prominent element in these programmes of principles is scepticism of immigration and a tough stance of opposition to the immigration policies pursued by the ruling parties. It is noteworthy that the party is very careful not to link this to any kind of racist sentiment and that it stresses a fundamental belief in the equal worth of races and cultures. The 2010 manifesto (BNP 2010: 12) even goes as far as saying

"The word "identity" appears in the title because the BNP believes in genuine ethnic and cultural diversity and the right of all peoples to be free of colonisation and rule by others(…)"

I should not leave out that the manifesto adds "(…) - including the indigenous peoples of these islands". Therein lies the key to the BNP's approach to questions of multiculturalism and immigration. They reject racism but maintain that while cultures and races are equal, they aren't necessarily fit to co-exist within the same state. The BNP believe that the rights and privileges of being a British subject should primarily belong to members of a group of *ethnically* native Britons. From this it follows that the BNP's ideology is dominated by ideas of preserving what they deem to be a uniquely British cultural identity, linking this to positions of nationalism, patriotism, isolationism and anti-immigration. Nick Griffin (2011) connects the dots perfectly with this line:

"What would our War Heroes think if they could see Britain today? They fought to keep this country British. They fought to keep our nation free, sovereign and independent. They did not fight for multiculturalism, political correctness, or to see our country flooded with foreigners and our own people made into second-class citizens.".

2.2.2: Policy

This section will see how the ideology of the BNP translates into specific policy solutions. I have deemed the 2010 General Election manifesto as the most reliable source of BNP's policies. It is generally accepted that national election manifestos gives the most faithful representation of a party's positions as a collective group (Budge 2001: 211). In the following I will summarize the BNP's positions using the 2010 General Election.

2.2.2a: Social and economic policy

The BNP's social and economic policies leave a general impression of championing "the working man", playing on a perceived struggle between ordinary workers and big multi-national corporations. The party's budget policies are ones of "cut and protect", that is cut everything that doesn't benefit British interests (BNP 2010: 9) and protect the welfare of honest, hard-working Britons (ibid: 10). Proposed cuts include more or

less all spending on environmental programmes, programmes to promote multiculturalism, asylum, foreign aid, overseas military operations and EU membership dues (to be achieved by leaving the EU all together) (ibid). This, in turn, should allow for considerable lowering of the personal tax burden for working Britons, raising thresholds on income tax and inheritance tax and reducing the council tax (ibid).

Aiming to be the champions of the working man, the BNP wants to reward working over "idle unemployment". Under the slogan "workfare not welfare" the party wants to create programmes in which those who seek unemployment compensation from the state would have to work or receive training in order to receive pay-outs, thus aiming to end what the party has identified as a culture of benefits-dependency and outright scrounging among many Britons (BNP 2010: 5).

The BNP advocate protectionist trade policies to build and preserve domestic industry and "British jobs for British workers". This includes bans on foreign imports that threaten British production, heavy taxation of companies that outsource production to low-cost countries, heavy regulation of foreign companies' ownership in British companies and a general rejection of globalisation and international *laissez-faire* capitalism (BNP 2010: 69). The party also favours nationalisation of so-called natural monopolies, hereunder opposing privatisation of e.g. the Royal Mail (ibid: 81).

The party generally favours increased spending on healthcare and education. The BNP claims to be a staunch supporter of a "free, fully funded National Health Service for all British citizens" (BNP 2010: 50). The party seems sceptical of privatisation in the health care sector (ibid). With regards to education policy the BNP's approach is, pun intended, an "old school" one. In fact, BNP education policy is dominated by an affinity for traditional approaches emphasizing discipline, tougher demands for pupils and students, tougher exams and the re-introduction of grammar schools, more competition for younger pupils and more room for teaching of traditional Christian values (BNP 2010: 55). The party also advocates spending more money on education, finding that money by cutting what the BNP identifies as "pointless" bureaucracy (ibid).

2.2.2b: Law and order

The BNP are eager to obtain an image as "the party of law and order". The party is generally in favour of longer and tougher sentences and increased spending on law enforcement and the party's manifesto emphasizes stern values of conformity and moral. This general impression comes from a host of examples of specific policy proposals found in the section of the 2010 manifesto called "Time To Get Tough On Crime and Criminals" (BNP 2010: 47): The party is in favour of bringing back capital punishment for certain crimes, constructing a penal station for violent offenders on the island of South Georgia and the option of corporal punishment for certain crimes. The BNP also favours forced, physical labour as part of serving a sentence, and they support the right to physically discipline children (now illegal in the UK). The party believes a homeowner should have the right to use "any means they deem fit" in stopping an intruder (i.e. burglar) in effect removing all legal responsibility from a person "defending his or her home".

2.2.2c: Defence and international relations

The BNP's approach to defence and international relations is a mixed bag of patriotism and isolationism. On the one hand, the party is strongly in favour of increased spending on national defence accusing the Labour Party and the Conservative Party alike of "undermining" the armed forces of the UK (BNP 2010: 13). On the other hand, the BNP pledges to immediately withdraw from what they see as "immoral and illegal" military operations overseas (i.e. Afghanistan). The sole purpose of the armed forces, according to the BNP, is to defend vital British interests and protect the homeland (ibid). Continuing along this theme, the BNP are in favour of what they have called "a neutral foreign policy", criticising perceived tendencies of previous governments to blindly follow the US (ibid: 63).

As a combination, perhaps, of patriotism and isolationism stands the party's strong opposition to British membership in the EU. Advocating a complete withdrawal from the European integration process, the BNP sees the EU as "an organisation

dedicated to usurping British sovereignty and to destroy our (...) national identity" and as an "Orwellian super-state" (BNP 2010: 27), citing the cost of membership dues, EU legislative superiority and crucially the prospect of Turkish (Muslim) membership as the main reasons why the UK should abandon the EU (ibid).

Unsurprisingly, one would suppose, the BNP do not look favourably on foreign aid, calling it a "swindle" (BNP 2010: 64). Foreign aid, according to the party, is only thinkable when all poverty in the UK is eliminated or if it is linked with arrangements of voluntary resettlement, a concept I will return to shortly. Meanwhile, every penny spent on foreign aid the BNP pledge to allocate to domestic spending (ibid),

2.2.2d: Immigration and multiculturalism

It is no surprise that immigration and multiculturalism receives much attention in the BNP manifesto of 2010. Calling it an "unparalleled crisis which only the BNP can solve" (BNP 2010: 16) the BNP waste no time in identifying immigration as the biggest challenge to the continued welfare of British citizens, and stopping immigration as part of the solution to a host of problems ranging from the economy, crime and justice to the environment, housing and transportation. There is no debating that the BNP is an anti-immigration party. It is more interesting to see what means they propose to deal with the perceived problem of immigration.

Although I have discussed the rationale behind the party's anti-immigration policies in the ideology section, I will briefly use some examples to elaborate on this here. Remember the underlying principle seems to be the perceived incompatibility of cultures and the perceived impossibility of integrated coexistence. The BNP fears that so-called mass-immigration and immigrant birth-rates will make the so-called indigenous group of ethnic Britons a minority in the UK sometime in the foreseeable future (BNP 2010: 16). Given the vantage point of cultural incompatibility and these interpretations of demographic development, it follows logically that the solution is to stop immigration. The BNP's fears are both economical and cultural: immigration

costs a lot of money and puts pressure on social services, while at the same time contributes to the erosion of British culture (ibid: 17).

Hence, the BNP has a detailed list of pledges and suggestions for how to halt immigration. The party proposes to halt all further immigration; end what they call the "asylum swindle"; deport all foreigners with a criminal record; review all citizenships granted since Labour took power in 1997; promote voluntary repatriation (i.e. giving financial incentives for foreigners to return to their countries of origin) and significantly increase UK border controls (BNP 2010: 16).

All these policies considered, the BNP firmly acknowledges "the right of legally settled and law-abiding minorities to remain in the UK and enjoy the full protection of the law ", providing that the indigenous native group preserves the right to remain in majority (BNP 2010: 16).

2.2.2e: Not a single-issue party

While anti-immigration certainly receives great attention, it is striking how the 2010 manifesto is extremely careful not to present the BNP is a single-issue party. The manifesto is an elaborate effort to convince voters that the party offers legitimate solutions to all major areas of political debate. While immigration is mentioned in many sections not strictly dedicated to that policy area, more often than not solutions independent of the immigration issue are provided. It seems rather as though the party seeks to present a coherent package of policies following a pattern of preservation of national identity, culture and traditions and the championing of the glorified honest, hard-working, law-abiding Briton against the pressures and dangers of a globalized, capitalist, multi-culturally integrated world.

2.2.3: Organisation

In this section I will outline the organisational outlook of the BNP. I believe this to be of importance as the internal laws and statutes of a party can tell us something about what kind of party it strives to be and of what nature they want their activities to be (Poguntke 1998). Furthermore, a party's internal organisation can reflect its views on society in general, as democratically inclined views on society should usually be followed by a certain level of internal democracy. My main sources of information are the BNP constitution and the party's "activist handbook".

2.2.3a: The internal democracy and organisational structure of the BNP

The BNP is a hierarchical organisation with a national, regional and local level. Under the national umbrella the party is organised in regional councils and local branches and groups. The party's constitution is a very detailed legal document which among other things streamlines the internal democracy of the party including the relationship between the national, regional and local levels and between organisation and individual members. As the constitution is so detailed, it would be ill-advised to go too far into the specifics of it. In the following few paragraphs I shall concern myself only with the statutes that are directly relevant to describing what sort of organisation the BNP is.

The office of chairman and leader of the party has been held by Nick Griffin, MEP since 1999. Leadership elections are to be held every four years, although a snap-election may be called if one or more challengers successfully collect a certain amount of signatures. The constitution grants the elected leader full executive power of party affairs, effectively giving the office complete control over the day-to-day political and organisational decisions of the national party (BNP 2011b: 33). While the leader has the final say, the office of leader is supplemented by a National Executive Committee (NEC) through which authority and responsibility over various areas is delegated. The NEC is in part appointed by the office of the chairman and in part elected in the shape of delegates from the regional councils (ibid: 42). Although much power is granted to

the leader and the NEC, the constitution emphasises the importance of the local level as the arena for grassroots activism and community leadership (ibid: 47).

The constitution says very little about the authority of the annual party conference, other than that a party conference is to be held annually; that it shall be the arena for national party elections and that all members with voting rights are eligible for attendance (BNP 2011b: 63). Although the constitution is vague on this point, we can at least assume that the national conference has the authority to elect the party's chairman and leader, and further we can assume from a report from the 2011 party conference (BNP 2011c) that the conference has authority to vote on matters of policy as well.

2.2.3b: Membership in the BNP

Membership restrictions have been a source of controversy surrounding the BNP. Until as late as 2010 only individuals of "indigenous British origin" were allowed to be members of the party. While discussions over whether or not to allow "non-whites" to join the party had been many since Nick Griffin's ascendancy to leadership, it was a court-ruling that finally resulted in a change in the party's constitution (Goodwin 2011: 122). Now, the party constitution declares that individuals who are "of any other origin or descent" are welcome to join the BNP (BNP 2011b: 9). Furthermore, the constitution requires members to be legal residents of the UK or any other country (i.e. not illegally residing in any country); to be 16 years of age or older and not to be a member of any other political party. The constitution also explicitly prohibits members from any association with so-called proscribed organisations (i.e. organisations promoting and executing violence or in any way represents the possibility of a member causing discredit to the BNP) (ibid: 10). The constitution otherwise details certain codes of conduct and compliance with party rules and principles, clearly in an effort to prevent individual members from giving the party a bad (worse) reputation (ibid: 11).

According to Matthew Goodwin (2011: 125) the BNP as of 2010 had more than 14,000 members in total, reflecting the steady increase since 1999 as discussed in

previous sections. Goodwin (ibid: 126) goes on to describe BNP members as largely middle-aged or older (white) men from the working class, with little education and who are pessimistic about the economy. Furthermore they are likely to reside in urban areas with large Muslim communities. Further examination of membership data leads Goodwin (ibid: 127) to conclude that BNP membership is more prolific in areas with a history of far-right activism, i.e. the North West, Yorkshire, the Midlands and certain areas of London.

2.2.3c: Party activities and activism

The so-called "activist handbook" (BNP 2011d) is available through the party website. This is a 57 page document full of tips, guidelines and regulations aimed at local level party activists and can be read as a list of "dos and don'ts" in political marketing. Included in this document is a detailed description of everything from how to go about handing out leaflets or pamphlets to how to organise a community festival on St. George's day.

The activist handbook emphasises the importance of BNP activists not acting according to "negative media stereotypes" (BNP 2011d: 5). Generally throughout the handbook the recurring theme seems to be how to make the BNP and their members palatable to the general public and to prospective voters. The guidebook encourages BNP members to be leaders in their own communities creating "deep, strong roots within [them]" (ibid). To achieve this, the guidebook recommends that to display positive attitudes and staying away from doom-mongering is the best way to sell the party to potential voters (ibid).

It is evident that the party has a strong desire to rid themselves of the image of thugs and skinheads that many Britons (according to the BNP themselves) have of BNP members and supporters. Therefore, among other things, the guidebook prohibits anyone out leafleting for the party from displaying skinhead haircuts and provides instructions of "tidy" clothing (BNP 2011d: 8). Furthermore, the guidebook firmly instructs activists to be professional and polite in meeting the public. Opposition

should not be met by raised voices but with reasoned discussion. Potential supporters and people who are negative to the party should both be met with phrases such as "sir" and "madam" (ibid: 13).

The guidebook also provides suggestions for activities that can be helpful tools of political marketing. One is called "the clean up campaign" where local activists are encouraged to organise events where groups of people wearing visible party logos should spend a day picking litter from a blighted area or removing graffiti from neighbourhood walls etcetera (BNP 2011d: 28). Another recommendation is to organise a St. George's Day event every year or at the very least take part in the organisation of such an event (ibid). Generally, BNP activists are encouraged to act as a link between the community and local authorities, to do charitable work in the community such as providing free help to elderly citizens and to act as enthusiastic, responsible good neighbours in their local areas.

Throughout this chapter I have described the empirical facts about the BNP. With the question of categorisation in mind, I have researched three critical sets of indicators: ideology, policy and organisation. The findings from this research will now provide the backbone of my analysis as I move on to the next chapter and repeat my first research question: **"How should the BNP be categorised within the European far right?"**

3: Understanding the BNP: Categorisation

In the theory section of this study, I emphasised three concepts that make up the core ideology of a populist radical right party. Following the ideas of Cas Mudde (2007) I described which indicators of nativism, authoritarianism and populism respectively that I would look for in studying the party. These concepts are not all mutually exclusive to the core features of the extreme right but are often juxtaposed to the blatant racism, violent tendencies and elitist anti-systemic core of that group. In this chapter I will systematically discuss the BNP within the framework of these different core concepts, and determine whether the party should best be described as a populist radical right party or a party of the extreme right/neo-fascist right. As I go along, please recall table 1.2 that illustrated the differences between PRR and ER using these core concepts. I shall use this table to summarise the discussion later on.

3.1: Identifying the core features of the BNP

3.1.1: The BNP and the multicultural world: Nativism or racism?

In the theory section I referred to nativism as something different to racism. Nativism is highly critical of the very idea of a multicultural society but does not go as far as racism, which is the idea that different ethnicities have different value (e.g. the notion that whites are better than blacks). I have provided certain indicators of nativism in a previous section that I will look to as I discuss the empirical material but I will briefly repeat them here: I will look for outspoken criticism of existing immigration policy, policies of ethnic preference, isolationist foreign policies and promotion of the notion of "equal but different" regarding the concept of multiculturalism. By the same token I must also look for indicators of racism, e.g. whether or not the BNP's ideology and policies show evidence of ideas that say that their own race is in any way better or more worthy than others and so on.

The importance and salience of immigration policy for the BNP is abundantly evident in the data I have researched. In my presentation of the party's ideological- and policy platform I have already made the point that the party is eager not to come across as racist in any way, and many of the principles and policies are strikingly close to the very definition of nativism as opposed to racism as exemplified in the following extract from the 2010 manifesto (BNP 2010: 12):

"The word "identity" appears in the title because the BNP believes in genuine ethnic and cultural diversity and the right of all peoples to be free of colonisation and rule by others(…)"

Further, the BNP do not advocate forced deportation of so-called legally settled and law-abiding minorities (ibid: 16), nor do they in any way flirt with blatantly racist notions in any of the official party documents that I have researched. Although I would not hesitate to say there is more than a hint of xenophobia in the BNP's understanding of multicultural society, it is difficult to ascribe this to blunt racism on the back of the material I have researched. Rather, it seems that the xenophobia of the BNP is born out of a fear of "differentness" and the fear of losing the perceived ideals and qualities of traditional British culture.

Compared to the ideological profile and policies of the FN, the similarities are many. Like the BNP the FN (2012), in their online campaign material for Marine Le Pen's 2012 presidential election bid, blame immigration for a host of social and economic struggles as well as labelling immigration a threat to France's national identity. The policies advocated are equally similar to those of the BNP, including forced deportation of criminals (but not law-abiding and legally settled minorities) and national preference with regards to benefits and employment (ibid). Looking towards the extreme right the German NDP, on the other hand, goes a step further and equals immigration and integration of foreigners (emphasising the perceived dangers of Islam) with genocide (of the native people) while they among other policies advocate a constitutional amendment making it illegal for foreigners to purchase property in Germany (NDP 2009). The party even laments the popularity of German footballers

with immigrant backgrounds: A protest against players with immigrant backgrounds representing the German national team was made during the 2006 FIFA World Cup, in which Germany was the host nation, when a leaflet saying "White – not just the colour of the shirt!" was printed up by the party (Der Spiegel 2008).

Both the BNP, the FN and the NDP alike hold apparent and unveiled views of a xenophobic nature but there are significant differences between the two former and the latter: The official publications of the BNP and the FN are very careful not to touch upon topics such as skin colour but rather emphasise how the respective parties are not racist. The NDP do not proceed with the same caution and are at times rather blunt in its understanding of the world in racial terms.

The implication for my analysis to be drawn from this is that, considering the theoretic framework and indicators for nativism and racism and the emphasis on official publications of the national party, the BNP seem closer to nativism than they do to racism. As far as the indicators of nativism I presented in table 1.1. the researched material seems to tick every box. Xenophobia is certainly present in the material I have researched and nativism is such a recurring theme that it has to be considered a core feature of the party's ideological profile. While racist elements can possibly be found by conducting interviews of individual members of the BNP or by looking at "behind closed doors" remarks, racism is not a present theme in the official publications of the national party, and thus cannot be said to be official policy or ideology of the party.   Revisiting the first two rows of table 1.2, table 3.1 illustrates how the BNP scores on the features of xenophobia and racism (the absence of the latter combined with the existence of the former then indicates the presence of nativism), i.e. whether or not these features are present in the ideological and political profile of the party.

Table 3.1: Xenophobia, racism and the BNP

Feature	PRR	ER	*BNP*
Xenophobia	X	X	*X*
Racism		X	

As we can see from table 3.1 the BNP scores the same combination of values as the theoretically defined populist radical right group, where the existence of xenophobia and the absence of racism indicates the presence of nativism as one of the ideological features of the BNP.

3.1.2: Law and order! Authoritarianism and the BNP

The authoritarian aspect of the BNP and its ideology and policies is fairly indisputable and can be interpreted quite unequivocally in the context of our discussion. The party advocates a generally higher level of sentencing, the legalisation of physical punishment of children by their parents and corporal *and* capital punishment for certain crimes among other policies of a clearly authoritarian ilk (BNP 2010: 47). Combined with a general emphasis on restoration of traditional (Christian) values, a stricter moral code for contemporary British society and an "old school" education policy it is safe to say that authoritarianism is indeed a core feature of the BNP's ideological profile without further discussion. Going back again to table 1.2, table 3.2 illustrates how the BNP scores on the feature of authoritarianism.

Table 3.2: Authoritarianism and the BNP

Feature	PRR	ER	*BNP*
Authoritarianism	X	X	*X*

As was expected, the BNP shares the feature of authoritarianism with the theoretically defined groups of comparison, a feature that does not constitute a dividing line between the two groups.

3.1.3: Anti-system or just anti-establishment populists? The BNP and democracy

An important difference between the populist radical right and the extreme, neo-fascist right, as you will recall from the theory section, is their respective views on the current political regime, i.e. parliamentary democracy. While the PRR will play the role of champion of the people's will and the protector of democratic values, the ER are more likely to challenge the very foundations of a parliamentary democracy. However, both groups will be strongly critical of the ruling *establishment*, i.e. the dominating - often leaning towards the centre of the political spectrum – parties and other leading opinion leaders such as the media or so-called cultural elites. While the establishment is a target for both groups, the PRR will seek to champion the "common man" whereas the ER are more liable to seek to play the role of a new elite. As such, with the clue very much in the title, the populist radical right are at the core populists while the extreme right are more elitist.

Starting with the feature of anti-establishment, which as mentioned is a common feature for both the PRR and the ER, the BNP are clearly critical of the dominant parties of British politics, seemingly equally unimpressed with both Labour's and Tories' alike as far as their credentials for serving the British people and

British interests go and with a noteworthy emphasis on a perceived lack of care for the *common man* by *the establishment* (BNP 2010: 12).

When it comes to being anti-systemic, the BNP show very little in terms of criticism of the concept of parliamentary democracy. At no place in the material I have researched does the party advocate changing the political system of Britain. Rather, it defines itself as a, if not *the*, champion of democratic principles quite explicitly (BNP 2010: 12) and sticks to the principle of majority rule and democratic influence by advocating regular use of referenda on certain issues. There is absolutely no evidence in the material I have researched to support any claim for the BNP to be anti-systemic and by looking at the same material it cannot be claimed that the official policy of the BNP is anything other than to support the continuation of parliamentary democracy.

As for populism, you can already see traces of that in the anti-establishment rhetoric described earlier but it is the combination of that rhetoric with the emphasis on democracy and *popular* rule, the notion that the people is always right, that hints at a strong presence of populism in the BNP's ideological core. Note also how the party staunchly supports a "common sense" approach to social and economic policy (section 2.2.2a) in the interest of so-called ordinary British people. The party is very keen indeed to portray itself as the champion of the common working man, and thus seems to fit neatly with the theoretically defined indicators of populism.

To sum up the arguments from the last few paragraphs, I propose that the BNP are clearly anti-establishment (as is expected of both PRR and ER parties), certainly not anti-systemic (as an ER party would have been expected to be) and very definitely populist. Continuing my step-by-step dissection of table 1.2, table 3.3 illustrates where the BNP scores on these features compared to the expected scores of the theoretically defined groups of PRR and ER parties.

Table 3.3: Anti-establishment, anti-systemic and populist features and the BNP.

Feature	PRR	ER	*BNP*
Anti-establishment	X	X	*X*
Anti-systemic		X	
Populist	X		*X*

As we see from table 3.3 the BNP continues to share common ground with the PRR group, while it scores differently from the ER on to features.

3.1.4: Party organisation and party activities of the BNP – professional or militant?

As you will recall from the theory section, the populist radical right are expected to behave very much like a modern, professionalised party organisation whereas the extreme right and neo-fascists keep off that path and are prone to more militant and/or violent behaviour and rhetoric.

From the first three sections of chapter two and then section 2.2.3, we can see that there has been an evolution in the party organisation and the nature of the party activities of the BNP since its formation in 1982 to present date. In the early years under inaugural leader John Tyndall, the party was very much a continuation of the National Front of the 1970s with heavy focus on street marches and close links with the skinhead community. Violent behaviour and militant rhetoric was not uncommon in these days. Tyndall's philosophy was very much that of an anti-party organisation.

Nick Griffin has a very different approach and from around the turn of the millennium the idea has been to gain an image as a respectable, legitimate party with a "clean" outlook and close ties to local communities. The party's "activist handbook" (2011d) gives a range of very specific guidelines and instructions in that direction, and the party's constitution (2011b) bans members from participating in groups and activities associated with violent behaviour (e.g. the English Defence League).

In section 2.2.3 I described how the BNP is organised and the party statues indicates a strong desire to operate and be recognised as a respectable and legitimate party. While the party wishes to be different from the established parties in terms of policies, it wishes to emulate them in terms of party organisation and election strategies. So it seems apparent that the BNP has indeed changed the way it is organised and how it operates, from the street marches of the early 1980s to a more "smiling men in suits" kind of outlook more fit for the 21st century.

If we compare the BNP to the NDP, using party activities as an example, the differences between the BNP and a prototype extreme right party become clear. The NDP has on several occasions, as official party activities, participated in protests and activities displaying slogans that are openly revisionist towards World War II (Independent 2005). Party leader Udo Voigt has been depicted addressing a party rally while standing in front of a banner commemorating Nazi leader Rudolf Hess. The party regularly stages marches and some of the participants can be seen wearing military clothing. The party also maintain close links to organisations and splinter cells that are notoriously involved in crime and violence (Der Spiegel 2012).

Bringing table 1.2 back into play, its last two rows are represented in table 3.4. Here, I summarise how the BNP scores in terms of professionalism and violent behaviour, features belonging to the populist radical right and the extreme right respectively.

Table 3.4: Professionalism or violent behaviour? Party organisation and party activities of the BNP

Feature	PRR	ER	*BNP*
Professionalism	X		*X*
Violent behaviour		X	

We can see the pattern continuing where the BNP shares common features with the populist radical right while differing from the extreme right and neo-fascists.

3.2: How should the BNP be categorised? Conclusions

In this section I shall recreate table 1.2 by putting together all the dissected parts presented so far in this chapter. Table 3.5 thus summarises all the arguments presented so far and gives an overall impression of how the BNP compares to the theoretically defined groups of the PRR and the ER.

Table 3.5: Comparing the BNP to the PRR and the ER

Feature	PRR	ER	*BNP*
Xenophobia	X	X	*X*
Racism		X	
Authoritarianism	X	X	*X*
Anti-establishment	X	X	*X*
Anti-systemic		X	
Populism	X		*X*
Professionalism	X		*X*
Violent behaviour		X	

Table 3.5 shows that along these nine significant features, the scores of the BNP correspond perfectly with those of the theoretically defined populist radical right group. At the same time, it differs from the extreme right group at the same places that the PRR were expected to do so. In light of everything that was discussed in the theory section, with the evidence of the material I researched and presented in chapter two and the analysis I have presented in this chapter, there are strong reasons to put the BNP firmly within the populist radical right family.

It is certainly xenophobic and is firmly opposed to the current immigration policies of the UK while at the same time being very eager to distance itself from blunt racism. Hence, I have reason to conclude that nativism, as is defined as a core feature of the PRR, is indeed also a core feature of the BNP.

With its tough-on-crime profile and emphasis on traditional values, the authoritarian credentials of the BNP are clear. Authoritarianism is a core feature of both the PRR and ER, but following the pattern from table 3.5 we can take this as further evidence that the core features of the BNP resembles those of the PRR.

The BNP supports democracy and the ruling principles of the UK constitution. This separates it from the extreme right, despite sharing the anti-establishment notions that are common for both the ER and the PRR. In being anti-establishment but democratic, the BNP tries to play the role of the champion of the "common man" and the protector of "common sense". Thus, we can say that the BNP is, as is the third core feature of the PRR, populists to the core.

At the organisational level, the BNP has gone from being an anti-party focused largely on street marches and rallies as their preferred medium and forum to seeking to replicate the organisation and strategies of the established party. Thus, we can say that the BNP shares the PRR trend of seeking respectability and legitimacy. Compared to the ER, the BNP do not advocate the use of violence nor do they maintain links with violent organisations and splinter cells. In organisation as in ideology and policy, the BNP seem to be more closely related to the PRR family than they are to the ER. This is the conclusion I shall be working off of when I move on to analyse the electoral

performance of the party, repeating the question **"what explains the electoral performance of the BNP?"** which will be the subject of chapter two. However, before I move on, in section 3.3 I will look at the arguments against the BNP being a PRR party and present my answers to them.

3.3: Counter arguments – why the BNP can be seen as being extremist

As I have discussed briefly early on in this study, the most prominent British scholars studying the British National Party maintain that the party belongs in the extreme right/neo-fascist camp, despite the party's best efforts to rid themselves of that image. Seeing the BNP as extremists also seems to be the more common view in British media and in British public opinion. In this section I will revisit the most crucial points of disagreement, and explain why I choose to take a contrary view to what seems to be an accepted fact in the British debate.

3.3.1: Copsey's arguments – wolf in sheep's clothing and the issue of emphasis

As discussed in the theory section Nigel Copsey (2008), perhaps the most prominent authority on the BNP in Britain, has raised the question of whether or not the BNP are "national populists" or "neo-fascist" (these two terms are best understood as equivalent to the two groups of parties I have discussed throughout this study). His conclusion is that, despite attempts to come across as moderate and modernised, the party is still best understood as a member of the extreme right. He presents valid arguments in favour of his view: Firstly, he argues that the party still is an outspoken critic of liberalism (ibid: 162). Then he argues that the BNP still understands the world in racial terms (ibid). Finally, Copsey (ibid: 164) rejects the modernisation of the party as nothing more than for show, on the back of individual quotes from party leader Nick Griffin. I will answer these points thus:

It is true that the BNP are outspoken critics of liberalism, in the sense that they criticise the liberalism of modern values and multiculturalism. They are authoritarian and nativist and as such make no claim to be liberal. They do not, however, criticise the liberalism of the fundamental values of democracy and the political regime of the UK. Hence, the BNP do not stray away from the core features of populist radical right parties.

From researching the two latest election manifestos of the BNP, their party constitution and their website, I can find no evidence that the official policies of the BNP are racist. It may be true that members of the party or indeed members of the party's leadership hold views that can reasonably be interpreted as being racist, but that does not make racism the official policy of the BNP. I have made the methodological choice, which I believe to be the most constructive path, to look only at official party publications and as such only at official party policy. Within that material, I find no evidence of racism. Xenophobia and nativism, yes, but not blunt racism.

To answer the third point, I can mostly repeat what I have just said about official party policy being the most valid source for categorising a political party. The modernisation of the BNP might just be for show – we do not know what the party would do if they were to win a general election and it is likely that we never will – but is it fair to judge a party on anything other than its official policies? It is in official publications that a party presents itself to the voter and it is there it presents its political solutions and ideas to the public. All political parties do political marketing and adjust their message to please voters. Scholars do not tend to categorise modern socialist left parties as communists even if a segment of its members or leadership might have ideas far to the left of what is accepted as within the mainstream. If the official policies of the BNP fit the criteria for being a populist radical right party, that is how it should be categorised. This discussion proves the importance of being explicit about one's theoretic assumptions and one's methodological approaches. Disagreements could stem from a simple issue of emphasis.

3.3.2: The peculiarities of Britain – the issue of context

The political system of Britain is in many ways quite different from the rest of Europe (see Lijphart 1999 and Heidar, Berntzen and Bakke (ed.) 2008). It is heavily focused on two dominating parties with a smaller party standing between these two in the political spectrum. Despite today's Liberal-Conservative coalition, one-party government has been the rule with the Conservative Party and the Labour Party competing for power. Whether it is the electoral system that causes this lack of political pluralism or whether or not both these features are a result of an underlying political culture in which pluralism is comparatively inhospitable, the political system of the UK is very much focused around the centre of the political spectrum. Keeping this tradition in mind, with an eye on the stereotypical Britons as emotionally sober people who are sceptical of the extraordinary, it could be that British perceptions of "new" parties are shaped by cultural predispositions.

Thus, a touch ironically, the BNP could very well be the victims of the culture which they perceive to be eroding and thus are fighting to preserve. Other parties than the three traditionally significant parties are deemed to be odd and unreliable which means that the perception of the BNP in Britain is different from the perception of another PRR party in another country. All this illustrates the importance of agreeing upon international standards within the field comparative politics for what a PRR party is and what an ER party is. Without these, an issue of context quickly arises.

3.3.3: Po-*tay*-toes and po-*tah*-toes – the issue of semantics

While Nigel Copsey very explicitly addresses the difference between the populist radical right and the extreme right, others might not be as conscious about this distinction. Even Matthew Goodwin, another prominent authority on the BNP, in his book *New British Fascism – Rise of the British National Party* (2011) does not pay great attention to this discussion, even if he is obviously aware of the differences between various far-right movements (see ibid: 5-9) and accepts the label of extreme

right for the BNP without much deliberation or mention of the PRR as something different from the ER.

This could indicate that for many, the extreme right and the populist radical right are two of the same. They are someone's po-*tay*-toes to someone else's po-*tah*-toes The term populist radical right is, after all, relatively fresh, and the parties that are now identified as being PRR were for a long time seen as part of a more loosely defined group of far right parties or extreme right parties. Thus, disagreements or different categorisations of the BNP could in some cases stem from an issue of semantics.

There are various reasons for why there are different opinions over the categorisation of the BNP and I am certain others are as sure of their own conclusions as I am of mine. As I move on to the next chapter, though, I shall stick to my guns and treat the BNP as a member of the populist radical right family.

4: Explaining the electoral performance of the BNP

Having established the conclusion that the British National Party belongs in the populist radical right family, other points of interest arise. One of these questions is that of electoral performance. Knowing where the BNP belongs in the landscape of far right parties allows us to compare the party's performance to that of similar parties in other countries and it challenges us to explain why the BNP performs differently from other parties. In placing the BNP in the PRR category we compare it to closely related parties among which a few parties have established a history of considerable electoral success. Thus, the challenge is to explain the party's relative lack of such triumphs.

In the theory section I outlined the variables I intended to use in this analysis and I will take a brief moment to recap here: I will look at two different types of variables. There is one set of variables from the so-called external supply side which deals with the political, institutional and cultural variable in which the party operates and includes the variables 1) party system, 2) political space and 3) relationship with the media. The other set of variables is the internal supply side which deals with the PRR party itself and includes the variables 4) Popularity of the party leader(ship) and 5) Organisational stability. I will analyse the electoral performance of the BNP within the framework of these five explanatory variables through comparison with two more successful PRR parties in a most similar systems design.

The two parties I have selected for comparison, as will be recalled from the section on research design, are the French *Front National* and the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*. I will begin this chapter with a brief overview of the respective electoral history of both the BNP and of the two candidates for comparison before I move on to systematically analyse all five variables. By assessing these separate variables in a joint analytical framework my aim is to determine their relative explanatory value and thus explain the electoral performance of the BNP.

4.1: The dependent variable – electoral performance

The dependent variable in my analysis is electoral performance. Before I go any further, it should be further specified. A political party may participate in a number of different types of elections ranging from the local level to the European level. For parties as well as for voters, these elections are of different importance. Hermann Schmitt (2005) has categorised elections with the terms first- and second order elections. In the latter category we find both local and European elections, i.e. council elections and elections for the European Parliament. The BNP has historically done reasonably well in both of these. First order elections, on the other hand, are first and foremost constituted by elections to national parliaments. These are first order in the sense that they are seen by voters as the more significant, as the national institutions are perceived to be where the policies primarily affecting their welfare are decided. Second order elections are, in the minds of voters, reduced to arenas for protest and forums for voicing discontent with the current government (ibid).

If second order elections are less politically salient it should follow from this that we focus on first order elections in order to analyse the electoral performance of a party, and more specifically elections for national parliament. Looking at performance in second order elections might be interesting in its own right but in the context of this analysis it might be misleading. If we were to look at second order elections we might be led to believe that the BNP are quite successful indeed, overlooking the fact that they are yet to win representation in a first order election.

Having established the emphasis on national elections, I must specify further in terms of how to measure the variable. What constitutes success? Initially, winning representation seems like a reasonable benchmark but that could quickly reduce my entire analysis to a discussion of electoral systems. Also, it would hardly be reasonable to say that winning one seat out of a few hundred is much more successful that winning two seats. Success is often a relative term, and with that in mind I must make use of a measurement that is easily comparable. Thus, I find that share of votes is the most valid measurement of a party's popularity among voters and the best measure of relative success. While success is relative, election results for individual parties can be

notoriously unstable. Therefore it seems unfair simply to look at performance in the latest national election for each party. We need a bigger picture which means I will have to include previous elections as well. In determining how long to go back I must concede the need to be rather arbitrary, however looking at average support (in share of votes) for the previous four national elections including the most recent one seems sufficient.

I will not be so arbitrary as to determine a certain threshold for what I deem to be "successful". Thus, the possible values on the dependent variable cannot be dichotomised as "success" and "no success". Rather, I will look at differences meaning that the variation on this variable that is the foundation of this analysis all together should simply be found in significant differences in electoral performance (in share of votes) in national elections. In the following, I will present three separate tables that each illustrates the electoral performance of the BNP, FN and VB respectively.

Table 4.1: Electoral performance of the BNP

Year	Share of votes
1997	0.1 %
2001	0.2 %
2005	0.7 %
2010	1.9 %
Mean	0,7 %

Source: Tetteh (2009: 3-4) and BBC 2010

Table 4.2: Electoral performance of the FN

Year	Share of votes
1993	12,7 %
1997	15,2 %
2002	11,3 %
2007	4,3 %
Mean	10,9 %

Source: Shields 2007: 319, Election Resources (2007)

Table 4.3: Electoral performance of the VB

Year	Share of votes
1999 (Vlaams Blok)	9,9 %
2003 (Vlaams Blok)	11,7 %
2007	12,0 %
2010	7,8 %
Mean	10,4 %

Source: European Election Database 2012b

As we can see from these three tables, the differences in performance are quite distinct. Both the FN and the VB have an average share of votes for the previous four elections that is more than ten percentage points higher than the average share of votes for the BNP. That the FN and the VB perform so similarly means that we do not have to explain variation between these two but rather focus on the difference between them and the BNP. We cannot explain why the difference is exactly as big as it is but in the following I will propose explanations for why there is a significant difference at all. Why is the BNP less successful than the FN and the VB?

4.2: Explanatory variables – the external supply side

4.2.1: Party systems

I outlined in the theory section that multiparty systems, as a general rule, are more hospitable habitats for "new" or "fringe" parties such as the populist radical right family. In this section I will take a look at the respective party systems of the UK, France and Belgium and look for differences that might explain differences in electoral performance. Recall from the methodology section that I dichotomised this variable with possible values being a) two (and a half) party system and b) multiparty system.

As has already been accounted for, the British party system is that of a two-and-a-half party system with two dominant parties and one smaller party counting as significant parties in Parliament. The British party system has even given name to the prototype of party systems coined by Arend Lijphart (1999) as the *Westminster Model*. Despite the recent inclusion of the smaller Liberal Democratic Party in the Conservative-led coalition government, the UK very much belongs in the first category of my dichotomy.

While French politics is dominated by two major parties, the centre-left *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and the centre-right *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP),

leading two blocks in the French parliament (Berntzen 2008: 246), traditionally there is still ample room for smaller parties. Despite a recent trend towards increased importance of the two biggest parties, France arguably belongs in the prototype Lijphart (1999) described as the *consensus model* to contrast the Westminster model and, in my dichotomy, France is best described as a multiparty system.

If France is a moderate multi party system, Belgium is a prime example of party political pluralism. Even accounting for the bilingual complexity of Belgian politics, the number of relevant parties in the Belgian parliament is relatively high (Heidar 2008a: 182-183). The Belgian party system can therefore, without much deliberation, be placed in the multiparty category of my dichotomy. Table 4.3 summarises the party system habitats of the BNP, FN and VB.

Table 4.4: Party system habitats of the BNP, FN and VB

Party	Two (and a half) party system	Multiparty system
British National Party	X	
Front National		X
Vlaams Belang		X

4.2.2: Political space

In the theory section I emphasised the nature of the established right-of-centre party and the level of competition on the far-right as potentially important factors in explaining the electoral performance of populist radical right parties. This was illustrated in figure 1.1. In this section will investigate where each of my three objects belong in figure 1.1 by looking at both the established parties of the UK, France and Belgium respectively and the level of right-wing competition in all three countries.

The established right-of-centre party in Britain is the Conservative Party, conventionally known as the Tories. During the leadership of Margaret Thatcher (1975-1990) the party moved further to the right of the political spectrum, advocating positions that can be described as both radical, populist and authoritarian (see Heidar 2008b and Gamble 1988: 183). The Conservative Party under Thatcher's leadership attacked the political establishment of Britain from within using anti-government rhetoric while taking "tough on crime" positions, being very sceptical of the EU and promoting patriotism. While current leader and Prime Minister David Cameron navigated slightly towards the centre in regaining power from the *New Labour* regime of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, the Conservative Party of the last few decades must be described as traditionally right wing and traditionalist.

On the far right, the BNP are not alone in challenging the right flank of the established parties. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) is a right wing party that shares some common ground with the populist radical right family but is first and foremost an anti-EU party. In 2010 General Election the party won 3,1 per cent of the votes and 2,2 per cent of the votes in 2005 (BBC 2010, BBC 2005). This indicates an unfavourable level of right wing competition for the BNP. Figure 4.1 replicates figure 1.1 and illustrates the favourability of the BNP's political space:

Nature of the established right-of-centre party

	Liberal-centrist	**Traditional right**
Yes		BNP
No		

Right-wing competition (label to the left of the table)

Figure 4.1: Favourability of party competition conditions for the BNP

Recall from figure 1.1 that the combination of a traditional right-of-centre party and the existence of right-wing competition creates the least favourable conditions for a populist radical right party in terms of political space. The political space available to the BNP thus seems to be very narrow and is unfavourable in terms of the party achieving electoral success.

In France, the main established party of the centre-right is the party of President Nicolas Sarkozy, the previously mentioned UMP. Despite Sarkozy's recent pandering to far-right voters on immigration policy (Lorenz 2009: 225) the centre-right in France has since been relatively liberal and centre-leaning since the 1970s (Bell 2000: 49). The socialist president of the 1980s, Francois Mitterrand, grew increasingly unpopular which made him navigate towards the centre of the political spectrum. With the PS wrestling with the centre-right, under then leader Jacques Chirac, over the centre ground over, among other things, immigration policy a convergence between left and right (Shields 2007: 205) left the established parties vulnerable to attack on the right flank. Although there have been splits within the FN, no other party of the far right has managed to consistently provide significant competition to the right of the established parties. In sum, this means that the FN for a long time has had ample political space

from which it could attract voters without considerable contest. Figure 4.2 shows the favourability of the party's political space.

Nature of the established right-of-centre party

	Liberal-centrist	**Traditional right**
Yes		
No	FN	

Right-wing competition (label to the left of the table rows)

Figure 4.2: Favourability of party competition conditions for the FN

From figure 4.2, compared to the theoretic assumptions of figure 1.1 the party competition conditions for the FN must be said to be very favourable. It has traditionally gained from a relatively liberal and centrist established right-of-centre party and has faced little competition on the right wing.

The Belgian incarnation of the populist radical right, Vlaams Belang, operates under slightly different circumstances. The bilingual nature of Belgian politics (see Heidar 2008a) and society means that the VB only competes for Flemish votes but by the same token only competes with other Flemish parties. This means little other than that the VB exists largely in a party system within a party system and doesn't make much of a difference for my analysis. In the Flemish half of Belgium, the main centre-right party has been the Christian Democratic *Christen-Democratic en Vlaams* (CD&V). As many of the Christian Democratic parties of continental Europe, the CD&V has epitomised the sort of centre-orientated, moderate pragmatism one might expect from this particular party family (Heidar 2008a: 181). In the 2010 election, however, the CD&V were overtaken by their previous allies in the *Nieuw-Vlaamse*

Alliante (New Flemish Allience, N-VA) as the leading party of the Flemish centre-right. As far as the political space of the populist radical right goes, however, this shift of power on the centre-right should make a great difference as the N-VA continues the tradition among the established parties of Belgium to promote relatively moderate and liberal views immigration policy et cetera and to strongly oppose the views of the VB (ibid).

The only other (slightly) significant far-right player in Belgian party politics is the Walloon *Front National Belge* (FNb), which closely resembles its French namesakes (Heidar 2008a: 181). As I have just mentioned, however, the FNb and the VB are not in direct competition with each other because of the bilingual nature of Belgian society. Therefore, the VB does not have any direct far-right competition. The favourability of party competition conditions for the VB is illustrated in figure 4.3.

Nature of the established right-of-centre party

		Liberal-centrist	**Traditional right**
Right-wing competition	**Yes**		
	No	VB	

Figure 4.3: Favourability of party competition conditions for the VB

From figure 4.3, compared to the theoretic assumptions of figure 1.1, we can say that the VB benefits very favourable party competition conditions and enjoys a fairly wide political space in which to operate.

Comparing figure 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 we can see that the British National Party belongs in the top right square while the Front National and Vlaams Belang are placed in the bottom left. This means that the BNP suffer from operating under the *least* favourable party competition conditions for a populist radical right party while the two other parties in this comparison operate under the *most* favourable of conditions. Table 4.5 summarises this section:

Table 4.5: The political space of the BNP, FN and VB by favourability of party competition conditions

Party	Least favourable	Neutral	Most favourable
BNP	X		
FN			X
VB			X

4.2.3: The media

In the methodology section I proposed an operationalisation of the theoretic variable of the media that included a set of possible relationships between the media and the populist radical right party. In table 1.3 I arranged these possible relationships by their theoretically assumed favourability for such parties. Recall that the most favourable situation for the PRR is when (certain segments of) the media are sensationalist and negative towards immigration and at the same time are positive or at least not unequivocally negative towards the PRR party. The opposite situation isn't necessarily altogether bad for the PRR party as it fits with the narrative of "liberal elites" versus "the common man". The worst case scenario for a PRR party was assumed to be when the media are *both* negative towards immigration *and* unequivocally negative towards the PRR party: the logic here is one where the media acknowledge that immigration is a salient political issue but ridicule the PRR party as a participant in the debate In this section I will look at how the three parties in my study compare to these theoretic assumptions.

These assumptions are based on an unpublished study (Michelsen 2011) I conducted on the relationship between the BNP and the British tabloid, right wing press. From researching the online archives of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, two right-wing British newspapers, from the four weeks leading up to the UK General Election of May 2010, I looked at the newspapers' respective coverage of both immigration and of the BNP. The conclusions I were able to draw from this material is that while the British right-wing media frequently communicate views on immigration policy that are not altogether different from the views of the BNP, their coverage of the BNP is one of de-legitimisation and of staunch opposition to the party. This means that the relationship between the UK media landscape and the BNP is one that is most unfavourable for a populist radical right party. Table 4.6 compliments table 1.3 and illustrates the relationship between the UK media and the BNP.

Table 4.6: Relationship between the media and the BNP, compared to possible relationships by assumed favourability for PRR electoral success

	Sensationalist media that is negative towards immigration	Media gives the PRR party unequivocally negative coverage
Most favourable	X	
Neutral		X
Least favourable	X	X
Actual relationship between the media and the BNP	*X*	*X*

Due to issues of resources I have not been able to study the French and Belgian media coverage with the same level of detail as I have done with the British case. I rely therefore mostly on second-hand literature as I move along. I begin with the French case. French journalists are generally quite left-leaning (*The Economist* 2012) and the more dominant media outlets in France have tended to give the FN a wide berth (Mudde 2007: 251). The right-wing tabloids of Britain fail to find their equivalent among French daily newspapers, and among the weekly newspapers the right wing ones are relatively small in circulation and seem to be rather supportive of the FN and the far right. As a general impression, the French media landscape seem to lack large actors of far-right daily newspapers while it is generally opposed to the FN. Considering this, the most accurate description of the relationship between the FN and

the French media seems to be more closely resembling the "neutral" position of table 1.3. This is illustrated in table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Relationship between the media and the FN, compared to possible relationships by assumed favourability for PRR electoral success

	Sensationalist media that is negative towards immigration	Media gives the PRR party unequivocally negative coverage
Most favourable	X	
Neutral		X
Least favourable	X	X
Actual relationship between the media and the FN		*X*

The Belgian, or rather the Flemish media landscape seems rather similar to that of France. All of the main daily newspapers are orientated towards the centre-left and the centre-right and again the relatively highly circulated right-wing tabloids of Britain fail to find their Flemish counterparts. As has been the case with the FN, Belgian newspapers tend to sideline the VB much in the same way as the established political parties do (Mudde 2007: 253). Based on this limited insight into the Flemish media landscape, the VB seem to be in a similar position to the FN in terms of relationship

with the media and would be best described resembling the theoretically assumed "neutral" position of table 1.3. This is illustrated in table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Relationship between the media and the VB, compared to possible relationships by assumed favourability for PRR electoral success

	Sensationalist media that is negative towards immigration	Media gives the PRR party unequivocally negative coverage
Most favourable	X	
Neutral		X
Least favourable	X	X
Actual relationship between the media and the VB		*X*

To summarise, there seems to be a notable difference between the BNP on one side and the FN and the VB on the other, in terms of their relationship with the media. The British media landscape includes segments of right-wing tabloid journalism that while certainly putting the most salient issues of PRR ideology on the agenda at the same time demonises the PRR party. This destroys an important part of the BNP's anti-establishment narrative, as they cannot fully paint the picture of the media as part of the "liberal elites" antagonist. As French and Flemish newspapers tend to editorialise towards the political centre, the FN and the VB are more able to convincingly sell their

narrative to anti-establishment voters. However, in their efforts to de-legitimise the PRR, we cannot say that the French and Flemish media has been a friend to the FN and the VB either. The BNP has an unfavourable relationship with the media while the FN and VB are in a more neutral position.

4.3: Explanatory variables – internal supply side

4.3.1: Leadership popularity

I explained in the theory section how charismatic leaders can bring forth electoral breakthroughs and success for the populist radical right party. I later operationalised this variable to be a relative measure of leadership popularity compared to popularity of the party. Leaders that are more popular than their party's share of the votes would bring success to their parties and vice versa.

Finding these data has proved tougher than you might expect. The main statistical institutes of the UK do not include leaders of other parties than the three biggest parties in their leadership popularity surveys. It is therefore impossible to find data on the personal popularity of Nick Griffin for comparison with the share of votes for the BNP. However, there are a few proxies I can use to provide at least some insight into the public appeal of Griffin. The BNP leader has received a higher percentage of the votes in the constituencies in which he has contested elections, than the party has received nationwide (see Bryn 2007: 88, Electoral Commission 2005 and the BBC 2010). Although Griffin obviously cherry picks constituencies with high levels of support for his party, the BNP tend to lose a significant number of votes after Griffin has left a constituency. One of the rare occasions on which Nick Griffin and the BNP were invited into the national limelight, a 2009 invitation to the popular debate programme *Question Time* on the BBC, YouGov (2009) conducted a poll immediately after the programme had aired. Respondents were asked, among other

questions, whether or not they would consider voting for the BNP after Griffin's television appearance. As much as 22 per cent said they would, which is considerably higher than the share of voters who eventually did vote for the party in the General Election of the following year. These proximate data, at the very least, indicates that Nick Griffin does have a certain appeal to potential PRR voters in the UK and that he is, albeit slightly, more popular than the party he represents.

The Front National is now lead by Marine Le Pen, daughter of former leader and "father" of the party, Jean-Marie Le Pen. It is worth while mapping out the popularity of both, as Mr. Le Pen has been the party leader through most of the party's rise to significance. Researching the popularity of French party leaders relative to their respective parties' popularity is refreshingly straight-forward thanks to France being a republic and hence has presidential elections. Presidential elections are more or less the ultimate opinion polls on party leaders and provide reliable, valid and accurate insight to the popularity of individual politicians. The older Le Pen consistently received a slightly higher share of the votes in presidential elections than his party did in legislative elections, culminating in his 2002 triumph over PS candidate Lionel Jospin to make it to the second round of the presidential elections where he eventually lost to Jacques Chirac. Marine Le Pen ran for president for the first time in 2012, where she won 17,9 per cent of the votes (Conseil Constitutionnel 2012) which was significantly higher than the just over 4 per cent the FN had polled in the legislative elections of 2010. Judging by these data, we can safely say that both Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen have helped draw support to the FN.

The current leader of Vlaams Belang is Bruno Valkeniers (since 2008), however Frank Vanhecke is perhaps the most influential figure in the party's history as leader of the then *Vlaams Blok* and of the VB since its formation in 2004. It has proved difficult to find any reliable data on the popularity of both Valkeniers and Vanhecker and even proxy data are scarce. To say anything worthwhile on the popularity of the VB leadership and whether or not it influences the electoral success of the party, I have had to rely on the conclusions of other writers. Once more I choose to trust the authority of Cas Mudde (2007: 276) as he emphasises the important role of Vanhecker

in attracting support to the VB. Although I have not been able to research any data myself, I will lean on this conclusion and say that there at least is reason to believe that the VB leadership play a role in the party's electoral success.

Summarised, then, we can see that all three of these parties have relatively popular leaders. Jean-Marie Le Pen probably personifies the popular and charismatic far-right leader, but both Nick Griffin and the VB leadership seem to have a certain level of popular appeal also. It should be noted that it is likely more difficult for Nick Griffin to build a relationship with the public than it is for PRR leaders in other countries, as British politics is so focused on the three main parties. Therefore, it seems plausible that the popularity of the leader (non-relative to his or her party's share of the vote), as the popularity of the party itself, is greatly influenced by the external supply-side variables I have already discussed.

4.3.2: Organisational stability

I have operationalised this variable as the party's ability to contest elections consistently, measured by the ability to field candidates in a significant proportion of constituencies from election to election. There is a difference between the UK and France on one side, with their one-member constituencies, and Belgium's proportional representation system on the other (Heidar 2008a, 2008b and Berntzen 2008). This means that it is easier for the VB to field candidates (party lists) in the same constituencies consistently, as there are simply fewer constituencies to field candidates in. Nonetheless, we are merely looking at relative consistency and these differences will be taken into account when comparing the three parties.

Looking at the same four elections as I looked at when mapping the electoral performance of the party, the impression of the BNP's ability to field candidates is one of growth. Despite a small decrease in candidates fielded from 1997 to 2001, the number of seats contested by the BNP has increased significantly from 1997 (54) to 2010 (339). This leads to the conclusion that, in this period, the party organisation of the BNP experienced stability and growth.

Finding reliable data on the exact number of seats contested by Front National in different legislative elections has proved to be difficult. Therefore I shall again have to rely on proximate data. By looking behind the party's electoral success, we can investigate its share of support on a regional level. If we find that the party achieves a consistent level of support in various regions, it would at least indicate an ability to consistently field candidates in a high level of constituencies. Data from the first round of the legislative elections from 1993-2007 (European Election Database 2012c) show exactly that level of stability, with the exception of the party's overall failure in the 2007 election. While the exact data are not available, proximate data and the general level of success for the party indicates a healthy level of stability in the FN party organisation.

Looking at Vlaams Belang, it only makes sense to look at the Flemish districts of Belgium when we research the party's ability to consistently contest elections. The VB would never contemplate contesting elections in the Walloon half of the country, nor would it win any Francophone votes. In Flanders (and the bilingual capital of Belgium, Brussels) the party has fielded lists, and performed well, in all electoral districts in all of the four elections I included in the dependent variable of this study (European Election Database 2012b). It should be noted that in 1999 and 2003 the party ran as *Vlaams Blok*, but it was essentially the same party organisation that today is Vlaams Belang. This indicates that the organisational stability of the VB has been high, as would be expected with the level of success the party has achieved.

4.4: Framing the most similar systems design – the demand side

The variables I have chosen to emphasise in this analysis, as you will recall from the theory section, were selected because I believed they has potential explanatory value in terms of explaining the electoral performance of a populist radical right party in Western Europe. That does not mean that other variables, found on the demand side, aren't relevant when looking at a theoretic universe of said type of parties. In investigating the five variables I initially included, I found variation on the external supply side but little variation on the internal supply side. As this analysis follows the logic of a most similar systems design, I must necessarily include the remaining variables that are relevant but were not expected to offer much in terms of variation and hence expected to have no explanatory value.

As I discussed in the theory section, different processes of modernisation can be said to be necessary conditions for a populist radical right party to achieve electoral success. We can split these into three different variables, one being level of (non-Western) immigration (which speaks to the nativist core feature of PRR parties) and the others being unemployment and political distrust (which speaks to the populist core feature of PRR parties).

In terms of immigration, the three countries have quite similar levels of immigrants in their respective populations. In Belgium, roughly 10 per cent of the population are estimated to be of non-European descent (Non-profit Data 2010). The figure is roughly the same for France (INSEE 2010) and for the UK (Office for National Statistics 2007). As we can see, there is no significant variation between the three countries when it comes to the level of non-Western immigration.

Slight variations can be found in unemployment levels between the three countries, however these variations are probably not large enough to be significant. France consistently has the highest level of unemployment of the three, ranging between 11 and 8 per cent in the period from 1996 to 2007 (Trading Economics 2012a), while British unemployment ranged from 4,5 to 8,5 per cent between 1997 and 2010 (Trading Economics 2012b). Belgian unemployment rates are wedged in

between the two, ranging from 6 to 9 per cent between 1999 and 2010 (Trading Economics 2012c). The reason I have for not considering these slight variations as significant is that unemployment levels in all three countries are comparatively low and consistently under the European Union average between 1993 and 2010 (European Commission 2004: 37, Index Mundi 2012). In a regional and global perspective, unemployment rates in the UK, France and Belgium are relatively similar.

When it comes to political distrust, a study by Ola Listhaug and Kristen Ringdal (2007) examined political trust in Europe, based on the 2004 European Social Survey. In their analysis Belgium, France and the UK all score towards the middle of the spectrum both in terms of trust in politicians and trust in political parties. While the data do not cover the entire period covered by the dependent variable, they do cover a period that is relatively representative for the average electoral success of all the three parties in my analysis. These data indicate similarities, rather than differences, between the three countries, when it comes to political trust.

On the back of this brief discussion, we can assume that there is very little variation between the respective countries of the BNP, FN and VB on the relevant demand side variables. In my most similar system design, they are similar enough to be given the same score on these three variables.

4.5: Explaining the electoral performance of the BNP – conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have compared the British National Party to the French Front National and the Belgian Vlaams Belang in an effort to explain the former's electoral performance and relative lack of success. In examining five variables where variation might be expected, supplemented by three variables where variation was unlikely, I have sought to identify variables that might have explanatory value in terms of explaining electoral performance.

On the internal supply side variables of leadership and organisation, I found no significant variation between the BNP, FN and VB. As expected, the same was the

case for the demand side variables of immigration levels, unemployment rates and political distrust in the three parties' respective home countries. More variation was found on all the three external supply side variables of party system, political space and media relations. On the dependent variable, electoral performance, there is a wide gap between the BNP on the one side and the two other parties on the other. Similarities and differences are illustrated in table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Similarities and differences between the BNP, FN and VB

Variable	*BNP* (*UK*)	FN (France)	VB (Belgium)
Non-Western immigration (% of population)	*App. 10 per cent*	App. 10 per cent	App. 10 per cent
Unemployment rates	*Below EU average*	Below EU average	Below EU average
Political distrust	*App. EU average*	App. EU average	App. EU average
Party system	*Two-and-a-half*	Multiparty	Multiparty
Political space	*Unfavourable conditions*	Favourable conditions	Favourable conditions
Media relations	*Unfavourable*	Neutral	Neutral
Leadership popularity	*Higher than own party*	Higher than own party	Higher than own party
Organisation	*Stable*	Stable	Stable
Electoral performance	*Unsuccessful*	Successful	Successful

This overview shows a perfect correspondence between the values of the FN and the VB, while there is variation between the two and the BNP on certain variables. In table 4.10 I will simplify table 4.9 by combining the FN and the VB into one unit and call

that the reference category. I will simplify further by dichotomising all of the variables in to X (reference) and Y (deviation from X). This should make it easier to identify variation and to isolate the variables that provide explanatory value.

Table 4.10: Finding variables with explanatory value

Variable	*BNP* (UK)	Reference cat. (FN+VB)
Non-Western immigration (% of population)	X	X
Unemployment rates	X	X
Political distrust	X	X
Party system	Y	X
Political space	Y	X
Media relations	Y	X
Leadership popularity	X	X
Organisation	X	X
Electoral performance	Y	X

What table 4.10 tells us is that the variation between the BNP on the one side and the FN and VB on the other on the dependent variable of electoral performance, is most likely explained by variation on the independent variables of party system, political space and media relations. In other words, since these variables all belong to the external supply side, the BNP's lack of success is probably best explained by certain features of British culture and the British political system rather than by features of the

party itself or by socio-economic features of the UK. Britain's two-and-a-half party system is inherently inhospitable territory for new and smaller parties outside of the party political establishment. This is not only a challenge for the BNP but for other small parties in the UK as well. Most other countries in Western Europe have multiparty systems which naturally provide more favourable conditions for populist radical right parties.

Some might argue that we could just stop the analysis there and explain the BNP's lack of success entirely with the British party system. While this variable certainly must be said to play a significant role it is important to remember that the biggest difference between the BNP and the reference category (FN and VB) in terms of electoral success is not in the number of representatives in the national legislature (both the BNP and the FN have none) but in share of votes (see section 4.1). The role of the British Conservative Party must not be underestimated. Margaret Thatcher's anti-establishment, authoritarian policies and her rhetoric of patriotism, a line that continued to be followed by the Tories long after her resignation as party leader, effectively closed the ideological and political space in which a PRR party would normally find most of its voters. In contrast to continental centre-right parties, the Conservative Party has been a significant hinder for populist radical right success in the UK. The existence of another, similarly sized party to the right of the political establishment also works against electoral success for the BNP. The UKIP, without being a *bona fide* PRR party, attracts a lot of euro-sceptic voters that are dissatisfied with the Conservative Party, voters that might otherwise have chosen the BNP as their preferred form of protest. The reference category does not have the same challenge of right-wing competition to overcome.

While significant segments of the British media can be described as right-wing tabloids, and thus frequently put PRR core issues on the agenda, the BNP receives unequivocally negative coverage. Following the assumption that opposition the so-called liberal elites, which includes the media, is a vital part of the populist narrative of PRR parties, this is an unfavourable situation for the BNP as they cannot credibly claim that the liberal elites do not take the (perceived) struggles of the so-called

common man seriously. With the relatively more liberal media landscape of France and Belgium, the reference category parties are more able to convincingly stick to their narrative.

5: Conclusions

At the very beginning of this study I posed two questions: How should the British National Party be categorised within the European far right? And, what explain the electoral performance of the BNP? I asked these questions because although it has received more and more attention from the British public, not enough in terms of academic research has been written about the party yet and certainly not enough in terms of comparative analysis. This study was triggered by a wish to broaden the knowledge we have about an emerging party in British politics but also by a wish to contribute in the wider scholarly debate on how to explain the electoral performance of far right parties.

In approaching these two questions, standing on the shoulders of giants, I have relied on the theoretic work of prominent authorities on European far right politics, particularly Cas Mudde (2007). Using the frameworks for categorisation and explanation of electoral success already established, I took a closer look at the ideology, policies and organisational structure of the BNP and the socio-economic, cultural and political features of its British habitat. Wondering whether the party belongs in the populist radical right or the extreme right family, I compared it to the respective prototype parties of the French *Front National* and the German *NDP*. Concluding that the BNP belongs in the PRR family, I compared it both to the FN and to the Belgian incarnation of the PRR *Vlaams Belang* in order to explain why the BNP has achieved relatively little in terms of success in national elections.

I reached the conclusion that the BNP belongs with the PRR family on the basis of finding very clear indicators of the core features of the PRR, which are *nativism, authoritarianism* and *populism.* At the same time, I found little evidence of the defining characteristics of the extreme right such as anti-democratic ideology and policies, or violent behaviour and blunt racism.

The BNP's lack of electoral success is probably best explained by so-called *external supply side* variables. The British two-and-a-half party system is inherently inhospitable to smaller parties; the nature of the Conservative Party and competition from UKIP narrows the political space of the BNP considerably; and the right-wing tabloid press in Britain helps ruin the party's anti-establishment narrative by being strongly opposed to e.g. immigration while at the same time being staunch opponents of the BNP.

In an important caveat, I should make it clear that my analysis does not provide definitive proof of the respective importance of each one of these variables. To even begin to talk about definitive proof, I would have to include a far greater number of parties in my analysis than what was possible here. With a larger N, using a slightly different research design such as the *comparative configuration model* suggested by Charles Ragin (2000), more could probably be said about each variable's explanatory value and I could probably have been more definitive in my conclusions. This study was based on certain theoretic assumptions, and although my analysis strengthens these assumptions, there is room for further research on the topic. My analysis indicates a great significance for external supply side variables but it says very little about which of these variables, if any, is *the* most important factor in explaining electoral performances of PRR parties.

It is difficult to predict the future, especially the future of a small party in the UK. Not achieving the electoral breakthrough it had hoped for might lead the BNP to give up hope and to disappear from the horizon. But there is potential for populist radical right success in Britain, whether it be achieved by the BNP or another party. As my comparison with the *Front National* and the *Vlaams Belang* has showed, the demand for a populist radical right alternative isn't necessarily any smaller in the UK than it is elsewhere. Considering the role that the relatively right-wing Conservative Party has played in keeping the BNP out of Parliament, the Tories' coalition with the Liberal Democrats and its navigation towards the centre of the political spectrum might open the political space for a PRR party to win voters from.

The conclusions drawn from my analysis are far from definitive, but I do believe that my categorisation of the BNP as a PRR party would inspire further debate on the subject of where the party belongs in the landscape of European far-right parties and that the principle of applying a pre-defined theoretical framework of categorisation will play a larger role in that. I also believe that my emphasis on the external supply side in explaining the electoral performance of the BNP is a valuable contribution to a debate that is far from settled.

Compared to the old establishment of political parties, populist radical right parties are a new breed but everything indicates that, as a party family, they are here to stay and will be part of European politics for many years to come. More work is required before we fully understand these former outsiders. Regardless of what the future brings for the BNP, we need to know more about the far right in Britain. I look forward to the next contribution.

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