

UKIP – Still a Third Party in a Two-Party System?

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Introduction

In accordance with the book's title I will try to elaborate to what degree the UK Independence Party has turned into a serious contender of Britain's two major parties, the Labour and the Conservative party, and whether this development poses an actual or potential future challenge to the duopolistic nature of British politics. Since a single book chapter is hardly sufficient to address all facets of party system changes,¹ I will rely on the conceptual thoughts of Harmel/Janda (1994), Caramani (2004; 2005) and Meguid (2007), who outline the most important differences on three functional and organisational dimensions between established *Volksparteien* or catch-all parties and parties that consciously limit their electoral appeal to specific segments of the population and claim a somehow lesser political role than leading the national government. Although the authors use different terms to describe these major and minor parties, they share the common understanding that the critical differentiation between party types lies in whether they have a "nationalized" political outlook (in other words, whether they raise a claim to lead the national government) or not.

Harmel/Janda (1994: 268-271) argue that parties' internal structures reflect the primary goals they want to achieve and therefore vary between different parties. While mainstream catch-all parties generally pursue office or vote-seeking goals (which strongly correspond in majoritarian voting systems), small or new parties tend to prioritize alternative objectives because of their limited electoral appeal. Externally, as discussed by Daniele Caramani (2005: 319-320), "nationalized" parties want to appeal to as many voters as possible, thereby focussing their policies and strategic behaviour not on specific social groups or territorial regions, but the electorate as a whole, using the median voter as a focal point to guide their actions. Meguid (2007: 3-4; 24-27) finally distinguishes so-called "niche parties" from mainstream parties by looking at the number of issue dimensions a party is campaigning on and the public's reception of these political questions. Hence, functional differences between party types ought to be reflected on the intra-organisational, electoral, and issue dimension.

¹ It should, however, be noted that academic research about UKIP is quite manageable. The most comprehensive accounts on the party (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015; Ford/Goodwin 2014a) have been written just over the last three years, and the majority of scholarly articles originated only after the 2009 EP election. Since this is also the period of almost all relevant progress achieved by UKIP on the national level of politics, I will focus most of my attention on the developments since 2009.

Beginning with the issue dimension, niche or single-issue parties should focus almost all their political work on a single issue or a specific policy position and try to channel public attention towards it. Accordingly, it is possible to identify several processes that indicate an increasing “nationalization” in programmatic terms. When niche parties make their first political appearance the issue they represent typically exhibits fairly low salience, otherwise the established parties would have already tried to occupy it. Although the issue has low salience for the majority of the population, a certain segment of voters feels very strongly about it and hence is ready to lend its support to the new party. At this point the party tries to increase the problem’s salience in order to win new adherents (Lynch et al. 2012: 735). To what extent this endeavour is successful gives a first impression on how nationally relevant the party has become (Meguid 2007: 15-16; 37-38). If the issue’s salience enjoys a permanent increase, perhaps even turns into one of the most pressing political questions in the eyes of the public, the niche party has already succeeded in becoming a nation-wide relevant player, while still remaining anchored in a single policy dimension (Ibid: 280).

A second independent process is the development of issue ownership. While high salience of a party’s core issue might give it greater publicity and opportunity to present its policies on the problem, this does not automatically provide it with additional electoral support. The party also has to persuade voters that it is aptly skilled and can “deliver” on the issue in question (Ibid: 26-27). In the beginning this is seldom the case, with the majority of the population typically ascribing the strongest competences to the established parties, even if these parties do not pay significant attention to the specific question. Normally, it takes some time for the niche party to establish broad recognition of its competences (Ibid: 100-101). A critical juncture here is snatching the issue ownership from the established parties, meaning the niche party is able to overtake them in the public’s perception of problem-solving competence. Empirically, the differentiation between whether we talk about a valence or position issue is more or less inconsequential (Ibid: 26, FN 10), because in the first case we simply have to look at which party is considered to be the “best” on the issue, while the second case can be measured by looking at how many people support the policies suggested by the niche party.

The third and clearest indicator of becoming a broad issue-based party is replicating the two aforementioned developments for additional issues. Practically, this is often done by linking other political problems with one’s core issue, for example by ascribing increasing crime levels to growing immigration (and thereby “solving” both by limiting the second). In summary, looking at the development of UKIP’s core issue’s salience, its issue ownership and the potential transfer of these developments on other political questions should give us viable insight into the party’s programmatic “nationalization”.

On the electoral dimension, three aspects reveal how much a party has become “functionalised” in terms of Caramani, meaning that it tries to appeal to the electorate as whole and therefore poses a non-isolated electoral challenge to state-wide parties. The first two aspects can be derived directly from Caramani’s (2005: 298-299) research on the “nationalization of politics”. The territorial “coverage” of a party (the number of electoral districts in which it fields candidates) gives us an impression about how much a party tries to appeal to the whole electorate in the geographical sense, irrespective of its potential success (Ibid). Niche parties and new parties in general only have comparatively scarce resources at their disposal and normally tend to focus them on the very few geographical regions with the highest chances of success. This decision-making is further accelerated by the fact that in the UK every candidate has to pay a £500 deposit to get on the ballot, with the deposit only being reimbursed if he or she gathers at least five per cent of the constituency’s vote. Accordingly, just fielding candidates in all 650 seats would already pose an immense financial challenge to new parties. A geographic expansion should therefore only take place once the party has consolidated its finances and is able to reach out to some non-core voters.

The second aspect is what Caramani (2004: 33-38) terms “homogeneity of support”, describing how even or uneven a party’s support is spread across the different electoral districts. In general, non-nationalized parties tend to exhibit a fairly high degree of homogeneity, because they only contest constituencies in which they already hold a strong support base (Ibid: 120-121). But once parties extend their coverage, heterogeneity should also increase, because the newly contested regions normally provide lower levels of support than core areas. Only once a party has completely transformed into a “nationalized” party will homogeneity return to a higher level, because its appeal is now strong enough to include major segments of swing voters, which in turn obscures geographically concentrated pockets of core support (Ibid: 231-232).

Caramani’s conceptualization is, however, incomplete, because he does not pay enough attention to the divide between electoral and parliamentary success. While in proportional voting systems electoral success generally equals parliamentary success, both can obviously differ in majoritarian voting systems and thereby mitigate the parliamentary impact of electoral “success” (Harmel/Janda 1994: 268-270). Depending on the interaction between coverage and homogeneity a parliamentary successful regional party can pose a much higher threat to established parties than an electorally far more successful “nationalized” party that fails to achieve significant parliamentary representation. In some cases it is even possible that a strong electoral performance (combined with weak parliamentary returns) of a non-nationalized party cements the duopoly of the established parties. The classical example of such an effect is the emergence of the British Social Democratic party (SDP) in the 1980s, which

made it even more unlikely to break the Tories' parliamentary dominance, while the Social Democrats simultaneously failed to replace Labour as their main contender (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 222-225). Therefore, I will look closer at the margins in seats in which UKIP came second in order to estimate its potential of future parliamentary success as a third indicator (Johnston et al. 2016: 6-7).

The third dimension of interest is the internal structure and organisational development of parties. As Harmel/Janda (1994) argue in their seminal work on party organisation change, parties follow different functional and organisational logics depending on which goals they prioritize. Newly founded parties, at least initially, tend to prefer policy advocacy or internal democracy over traditional power-focused goals because of their limited electoral prospects (Abedi/Lundberg 2009: 72). Accordingly, once their electoral success increases they have to reflect this development in a growing professionalization of party cadres and internal decision-making processes, otherwise they might risk their long term electoral survival by being unable to adequately address changing demands resulting from greater political influence (Ibid: 72-74). This aspect of UKIP's development has clearly drawn the least scholarly attention so far. Abedi/Lundberg (2009) tried to address this issue in 2009, which leaves out the major changes in the electoral environment that have taken place since UKIP's breakthrough in the 2009 European Parliament (EP) election. Goodwin and Milazzo (2015) provide some additional insight into the professionalization of UKIP's electoral campaigning but largely ignore the party's formal decision-making mechanisms. Since there is so little research into this problem and the fact that Abedi and Lundberg's sequence-based analytical approach is not a viable option with the party leadership question unsolved, I will look into two proxies suggested by Harmel and Janda (1994: 264) to give an empirical impression of UKIP's internal development.

The first aspect will be the internal fragmentation between the different factions, and the second one will be the 2016 leadership succession. The underlying assumption is that an extending reach in terms of issues, members, and voters also leads to a greater diversity of opinions about the "right" policies and strategic decisions within a party. Especially the generational divide between the veterans, who endured and supported the party during the hard years in the "wilderness", and the new acolytes, who are often more interested in short term returns (whatever they might be), bears the potential of destructive splits, if the old guard refuses to share its power or step aside in wake of growing (or declining) success (Ibid: 266-267). Accordingly, new parties have to develop impersonal ways of bipartisan conflict management and an institutionalized balance of power between its different ideological factions to prevent damaging power struggles when faced with external shocks. How successful this

process of professionalization has been should especially be reflected in the way power is handed over from one leader to another.

The Programmatic Dimension

I will begin my analysis by looking at UKIP's programmatic development and its public reception. The party clearly started as a prototypical single-issue party, campaigning only on the question of Britain's EU membership in the 1990s (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 20-31). Even though it managed to strongly increase the public's resonance with its demand for a British withdrawal, the highly volatile salience of the issue remained a problem. As Goodwin/Milazzo (2015: 30) show, overall salience has slightly increased since the late 1990s, but the high volatility of the EU issue ensured that UKIP was unable to mobilise larger voter segments on this policy during general elections, while it was sufficient for success during EP elections. Accordingly, the party had to come up with at least another, more salient issue to ensure a general election breakthrough, which it finally achieved in 2015.

Looking at the public's reception of UKIP's policies in 2015 presented by Goodwin and Milazzo (2015: 220), we can get a clear impression of how far the party has managed to move away from its single-issue status. While over 80 per cent of the respondents claimed to know at least "something" about its policies on Europe and immigration, the numbers for all other issues were the exact opposite. In May 2014 around 65 per cent admitted not knowing anything about the party's policies on the economy, health, education, defence, and crime. Tellingly, until January 2015 these numbers grew even worse, with slightly more people claiming they did not know anything about UKIP's defence, economic, and education policy. It only managed to improve public knowledge (over ten per cent fall in "don't know anything") on its health care proposals.² It is, however, interesting that the party seems to have refrained from (at least a concerted effort in) trying to link the issues of immigration and crime, which is an often employed tactic of continental populist right-wing parties.³ These numbers indicate that only on the question of immigration

² The change probably stems from Farage's proposed ban on HIV positive immigrants receiving treatment in the UK, rather than from an increase in knowledge about the party's health care plans in general. The proposal was not only strongly condemned by the other parties and several public figures, but was also highly polarizing, with half of the population both supporting the ban itself and Farage for raising the problem, thereby creating immense media attention and publicity for an issue rarely associated with UKIP (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 240-243).

³ This might be a result of the differences in UKIP support motives. As Ford/Goodwin (2014a: 194; 203) point out, populist right party supporters are primarily motivated by concerns about immigration and then link other issues they think are closely related, like the EU or crime, with it. UKIP supporters are different in this regard, because they are

does UKIP exhibit strong enough public awareness of its policies to potentially mobilize significant additional voter support. Yet, before 2010 immigration had been a safe Conservative issue, with the Tories enjoying very high ownership with over 40 per cent of the public naming them as the most competent party and with at least a healthy 20 point lead over Labour (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 31; Dennison/Goodwin 2015: 180). This lead completely collapsed after David Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010, falling to only slightly above 20 per cent, with UKIP overtaking the Tories as the most competent party in late 2014. This development was mirrored by the issue's salience, which increased from about 35 per cent to around 50 per cent in the meantime, even surpassing the economy as the most important issue facing Britain (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 30; Dennison/Goodwin 2015: 173-174). The numbers clearly illustrate that UKIP has managed to establish a second core issue in immigration within less than five years, scoring a historic increase in issue ownership and profiting from a comparable surge in public concern about it, but has failed to make an impact in any other policy area (Lynch et al. 2012: 751-753; Dennison/Goodwin 2015: 176-178).⁴ While moving from the EU to immigration might not look like a huge step in terms of programmatic faltering or diversity, one has to keep in mind how difficult it was for the party not to directly link all its proposals to the EU membership question (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 37-42; 63-64).

Yet, these polling questions about different policy areas disregard an important point of appeal that is often associated with UKIP, its strong anti-establishment populism (Ibid: 191-200). Because being "anti-establishment" is neither a true competence nor an issue position, it makes it sometimes difficult to coherently incorporate it into an issue analysis. This is, however, only a superficial problem, taking into account the political essence of anti-establishment populism. Its essence lies in the belief that the political output of the system is controlled by some "elites" or "special interests", who are either directly or indirectly able to rig the process of policy-making in their favour and thereby disable the implementation of the "people's will" (Mudde 2004: 546-547; 558-559). Anti-establishment criticism therefore centres on the mismatch between what is perceived as the original intent of the constitutional order ("government of the people, by the people, for the people") and its real world operation. Accordingly, populist individuals pay close attention to constitutional questions

primarily concerned about EU membership, not immigration, which is more difficult to link directly with some typical right-wing issues, like crime.

⁴ Yet, issue polling has to be treated with some caution, because the numbers, especially for issues' salience, tend to strongly fluctuate between different polling institutions and question wording. In addition, almost all issue ownership polls did not even include UKIP as an answer, but only the option "other party", at least until 2013.

(because its breakdown is seen as the root of all political evils) and hold strong anti-status quo positions on them.

There is a growing body of research that tries to link various aspects of UKIP's anti-status quo message (Wyn Jones et al. 2012; Wyn Jones et al. 2013; Mycock/Hayton 2014; Hayton 2016; Jeffery et al. 2016). This research suggests that its supporters' disgust for the EU and the established parties are not isolated anti-elite resentments, but parts of a broader renunciation of the political status quo. As Wyn Jones et al. (2013: 33-39) discuss, UKIP supporters connect different constitutional questions, holding coherent anti-status quo positions on most of them. Accordingly, they not only denounce the EU, but also tend to criticize the (perceived) excessive influence of the Scottish government on English politics, thinking that England shoulders a disproportionate share of the UK's financial burdens, and demanding a distinct recognition of English interests in the legislative process. Even more worrisome, Wyn Jones et al. (2013: 9-10; 2012: 9-12) also show that this is accompanied by a more general shift in English public opinion, comparable to the development of the immigration issue. Since the early 2000s the number of English people thinking that Scotland gets more than its fair (financial) share has more than doubled from 21 to 52 per cent. The demand for a ban of Scottish MPs to vote on "English" laws, publicly known as "English votes on English laws" (EVEL), has grown even stronger, the number of people strongly agreeing rising from 18 to 55 per cent. Likewise, a large majority of the English people trusts neither the government nor the established parties to work in the interest of England, but a growing number sees UKIP as the party that best serves these interests (Wyn Jones et al. 2013: 34-37). This indicates that devolution and EU membership are increasingly perceived as different sides of the same coin, both allegedly pushing the disenfranchisement of the English people.

The constitutional dimension also holds significant potential for UKIP's future messaging because of the similarities between the handling of the English Question and immigration by the major parties.⁵ First, Labour and the Conservatives are unable to provide more than lip service to the demands of the English people (or more precisely, the segment that demands an answer to this question; Mycock/Hayton 2014: 257-262). Labour simply cannot write off the support and seats it gathers (or has gathered) in the Celtic periphery and is therefore unable to agree to any meaningful change that would reduce the non-English MP's influence on legislation. Like with immigration, party elites hope to defuse the issue by remaining silent or attacking the Tories on their allegedly "divisive" spinning of the problem. The Conservatives, on the other hand, are mostly

⁵ In addition, Lauren McLaren (2013; 2012) shows that distrust in the political class and the political system at large is closely related to both general concerns about immigration and a negative perception of government policy on immigration.

hindered by their commitment to Unionism. On immigration, Tory elites around David Cameron had no real interest in significantly clamping down on immigration numbers for its aversive economic effects and knew that it was almost impossible anyway because of the country's international commitments. Accordingly, they retracted to draconic language combined with symbolic measures that had virtually no effect on overall immigration numbers (Partos/Bale 2015: 179-181). In the same way Cameron boasted to see to the introduction of EVEL after the Scottish independence referendum by naming its (once) most vocal proponent, William Hague, to devise an equivalent reform proposal. However, Hague's draft adopted the weakest (and perhaps most technocratic) option, which simply tempered with the parliamentary legislation process without banning non-English MPs from any vote in the Commons at all (Jeffery 2015: 276-277; Jeffery et al. 2016: 336-337). Second, since UKIP supporters already link the various constitutional questions, it should take only a small step for the party to relocate its anti-establishment message on devolution. Third, even though both major parties seem to hope to sit out the English Question, it will not go away. As long as the SNP remains in power in Holyrood or holds a significant amount of seats in Westminster, it will continue to push for a second independence referendum or at least for further transfers of power to the devolved parliaments. With the end of the UK's EU membership devolution might become the dominant constitutional question (Wyn Jones et al. 2013: 12), especially because the Conservative party's leadership can no longer try to channel anti-establishment grievances on political institutions outside the UK, like they have excessively done under David Cameron.

The Electoral Dimension

In this section I will first give a brief overview of the academic state of the art concerning UKIP's electoral base. After that I will examine the coverage, homogeneity, and victory margin indicators discussed before in order to determine how much the party has become a serious electoral contender.

Looking at the relationship between UKIP and the British electorate we can identify two competing scholarly interpretations revolving around the problem described as "niche party threat"⁶ by Meguid (2007: 96). While I cannot give a detailed analysis of the accuracy of the debate's different arguments, it has some implications for the regional distribution of UKIP support, which I will discuss later in this section, and the party's strategic outlook, which will be further elaborated in the next section. The first side is represented by Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin (Ford/Good-

⁶ Meguid (2007: 95-103) argues that mainstream parties are electorally endangered to different levels by single-issue parties and therefore will and have to use different response strategies.

win/Cutts 2012; Ford/Goodwin 2014a; Ford/Goodwin 2014b; Dennison/Goodwin 2015; Ford/Goodwin 2016; also supported by Bogdanor 2016), who argue that UKIP has shifted its electoral base from disappointed Eurosceptic Thatcherites to the so-called “left behinds”, mainly older, white working class men with low income and education levels, most of whom were traditional Labour supporters but deserted the party during its centrist turn under New Labour (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 145-177). Ford and Goodwin were challenged by Geoffrey Evans and Jon Mellon (Evans/Mellon 2016; Mellon/Evans 2016; and arguing in the same direction Lynch et al. 2012) in a Parliamentary Affairs debate, refuting their claim that UKIP is turning into a working class party, instead characterising it as a mainly “petty bourgeois” party. According to them, inadequacies in the British measurement of social classes lead to an exaggeration of working class support, because many of UKIP’s self-identified “working class” voters are actually self-employed, an occupational status much closer aligned with the Conservative than the Labour party (Evans/Mellon 2016: 468; Lynch et al. 2012: 748-753). Accordingly, they argue (and this is the debate’s main fault line) that UKIP disproportionately draws electoral support from the Conservative, rather than the Labour party. Ford and Goodwin responded by claiming that “left behind” voters had first turned to the Tories in the 2000s and then towards UKIP, leading them to the conclusion that UKIP has and can continue to prey on dissatisfied working class voters, who have not yet abandoned Labour (Ford/Goodwin 2016: 486-490). Evans and Mellon interpret the aforementioned development quite differently, arguing that these former Labour voters hold political views that are naturally closer to the Conservative party and fairly incompatible with today’s middle class Labour elites. Thus, socially conservative Labour supporters should have already deserted the party, leaving only meagre potential for UKIP to make additional gains. Instead, Evans and Mellon conclude that UKIP easily pulled away former Labour voters from the Tories (because of their low commitment to the party) and would continue to prey on the Tories due to the ideological overlap with its right (Mellon/Evans 2016: 494-497).

Table 1 gives an overview of the regional distribution of UKIP’s general election results since 2001.⁷ Starting with the coverage indicator it easily confirms the characteristics of a nationalized party. In 1992, only a few weeks after the “Anti-Federalist League” (UKIP’s initial name) had been founded, it fielded just 17 candidates; at the next election in 1997 the

⁷ I have excluded the data for 1992 and 1997, because of its limited usefulness and potentially misleading character. In 1992, 17 candidates just scored an average of 0.5 per cent in the constituencies they contested. In 1997, James Goldsmith’s Referendum Party also campaigned on the issue of an EU membership referendum, but with much larger resources. Accordingly, the party not only garnered considerably larger support than UKIP did in 1992, 1997 and 2001, but also skimmed much of its potential voters.

number had already reached 194 (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 22; 30). In 2001 it quickly expanded, and in 2015 UKIP was the only party beside the Conservatives to run candidates in every region of the UK. Looking a bit closer at the regional distribution we can see that the party initially concentrated its efforts on the southern and eastern regions of England (excluding London). In 2005 it expanded into the Midlands and the North West, but withdrew from Yorkshire and the Humber. During the last two elections it finally pushed into the non-English parts of the Kingdom and the Labour dominated Yorkshire and North Eastern regions.

Turning to the second indicator of homogeneity, we can see that before 2015 the party had a slight edge in the southern regions, even though it was surprisingly small. Accordingly, UKIP never managed to exceed its national results in any region by more than one per cent (until 2015), except in the South West in 2005. Also, the Midlands, Yorkshire, and the North East generally returned vote shares higher or only slightly lower than the national average. The only regions that scored well below the national average were the non-English ones, London, and, before 2010, the North West. The picture changed in 2015 when the party ran in virtually all constituencies and conducted its first professional election campaign. Its strongest performance shifted from the south to the traditional Labour strongholds of the north, with the North East and Yorkshire taking the lead, closely followed by the battleground regions of the Midlands. The biggest surprise was obviously the South West, which had been the region of UKIP's strongest support, but fell short in 2015. In summary, UKIP has clearly reached the point of "nationalization" with significant and fairly homogenous support in the whole country, except in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2015 (Mellon/Evans 2016: 497-498; Curtice 2015: 34). However, in most regions the standard deviation exceeded a third of the party's overall vote share which indicates relatively large differences in support within the respective regions. In general, it is preferable for a niche party to obtain such high standard deviations unless its average vote share approaches the average vote share necessary to win seats, because this way the party is closer to winning at least a few constituencies (while losing the rest decisively), rather than losing all constituencies by a slightly smaller, but homogenous overall margin (Johnston et al. 2001: 32-40). Accordingly, it is rather bad news for UKIP that it scored fairly small standard deviations in its previously and currently strongest regions of the South West and North East.

As I have argued before, this indicates that the homogeneity indicator can be misleading in analysing majoritarian voting systems because it only measures the electoral reach of a party but pays no attention to its parliamentary impact. Therefore, I will now examine UKIP's chances of winning additional seats in the House of Commons (HoC) in future elections. This analysis will be based on the 2015 election results only, because UKIP's previous results were too weak to give a reliable impression of its electoral potential.

Table 1: UKIP general election results by region (2001-2015)⁸

	2001			2005			2010			2015		
	Avg VS	Contested seats	SD	Avg VS	Contested seats	SD	Avg VS	Contested seats	SD	Avg VS	Contested seats	SD
London	1.47	44	0.73	1.87	58	0.91	2.12	60	0.95	8.23	73	5.89
East	2.34	53	0.9	3.35	52	1.23	4.41	56	1.41	16.44	58	6.32
South East	2.5	83	1.1	3.15	83	1.23	4.25	82	2.03	14.81	84	5.16
South West	2.55	49	1.2	3.84	50	1.85	4.52	55	1.64	13.7	55	3.55
East Midlands	2.09	22	0.62	3.2	36	1.67	3.41	44	1.5	15.85	46	4.47
West Midlands	2.26	46	0.9	3.28	59	1.59	4.19	57	1.9	15.79	59	4.29
Yorkshire and The Humber	2.29	48	1.15	2.93	28	1.2	3.79	42	1.68	16.5	54	5.88
North East	2.1	11	0.53	2.62	12	1.01	3.3	24	1.11	16.96	29	4.02
North West	1.91	33	0.54	2.38	65	1	3.38	70	1.12	13.78	75	4.81
Wales	1.44	25	0.41	1.89	31	0.72	2.42	40	0.56	13.78	40	3.45
Scotland	0.82	9	0.43	1.03	22	0.43	1.52	28	1.08	2.3	41	0.68
Northern Ireland										4.89	10	2.8
United Kingdom	2.15	423	1.01	2.81	496	1.46	3.54	558	1.73	13.34	624	6.22

Sources: Author's calculations using the results of the Norris Constituency Database and Rallings/Thrasher 2015 results for the Electoral Commission.

⁸ The average vote share (Avg VS, in %) and standard deviation (SD) results only include seats in which the party fielded candidates and are not weighted by the number of valid votes in the individual constituencies.

The first rather obvious observation is that even under the favourable conditions of the 2015 election the party failed to materialize any parliamentary gains. In wake of the EP election and the three quite successful by-elections in Rochester and Strood, Clacton, and Heywood and Middleton in 2014, UKIP created a target list, initially consisting of 30 constituencies, later narrowed down to ten seats, which received almost all the available manpower and financial resources it had at its disposal (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 182-183). Even though this coordinated targeting represented a major step towards campaign professionalization, the party's campaign manager, Chris Bruni-Lowe, and the head of candidates, David Soutter, criticized the list multiple times for being only partly based on chances of winning and objective criteria. A number of seats were simply unwinnable due to unfavourable demographics, gigantic margins of the incumbent, the de facto non-existence of local party chapters, or the gross incompetence of the chosen candidates. Instead, patronage and the rewarding of party loyalists had played a major role in composing the list (Ibid: 187-198).

Based on polling numbers in the final weeks before the election, UKIP was assumed to win up to five or six seats. In the worst case scenario only Douglas Carswell⁹ and party leader Nigel Farage would manage to win their constituencies (Ibid: 234-236; 254-261). However, the actual results turned out to be even worse than anticipated. Carswell successfully defended Clacton but lost over 15 per cent of the vote share compared to the 2014 by-election, while Conservative contender Giles Watling almost doubled his number of votes. Mark Reckless' vote share fell by over ten per cent compared to the by-election a half year ago, and he lost decisively against Conservative Kelly Tolhurst by an almost 14 per cent margin. But, as Goodwin/Milazzo (2015: 168-174; 191) point out, defending his seat in a general election had always been a long shot and it was probably the wrong decision to put it on the target list. Rochester and Strood's demographics were highly unfavourable; Reckless was a weak campaigner and fiercely denounced as an opportunistic traitor by his former Conservative colleagues. Nigel Farage came fairly close in winning South Thanet but ultimately lost by a larger than anticipated margin of 2.800 votes. His defeat can be mostly attributed to poor planning and over-confidence. Early constituency polling had indicated a large winning margin for Farage and, being the figure head of UKIP, he was sent to other battleground areas for most of the long campaign. Only a few weeks before the election new polls indicated a closing margin, with some even

⁹ In August and September 2014, the two Tory MPs for Clacton and Rochester and Strood, Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless, defected to UKIP, giving the party two seats to defend in the 2015 election. However, in March and April 2017 both men underlined the dubious reputation of their loyalty and political allegiance by quitting their UKIP membership.

showing a Conservative victory. Even though the party quickly adjusted Farage's schedule and funnelled additional resources into the local campaign, they met far better organised campaigns by Labour and the Tories that easily offset UKIP's late efforts (Ibid: 252-261). In summary, the party had failed although it put up everything it had because of its continued lack of a comparable level of campaign professionalism which the other parties had built up thanks to decades of experience.

Table 2: UKIP's top ten constituency results in 2015

Constituency	Region	Valid Votes	Turnout	UKIP Vote	UKIP Vote Share	Conservative Vote	Conservative Vote Share	Labour Vote	Labour Vote Share
Rother Valley	YH	47,019	63.3	13,204	28.08	10,945	23.28	20,501	43.6
Dagenham and Rainham	GL	43,050	62.28	12,850	29.85	10,492	24.37	17,830	41.42
Rotherham	YH	37,823	59.38	11,414	30.18	4,656	12.31	19,860	52.51
Rochester and Strood	SE	52,516	68.1	16,009	30.48	23,142	44.07	10,396	19.8
Castle Point	E	45,450	66.67	14,178	31.19	23,112	50.85	6,283	13.82
Thurrock	E	49,564	63.9	15,718	31.71	16,692	33.68	16,156	32.6
Heywood and Middleton	NW	48,538	60.68	15,627	32.2	9,268	19.09	20,926	43.11
South Thanet	SE	49,401	69.61	16,026	32.44	18,838	38.13	11,740	23.76
Boston and Skegness	EM	43,339	64.62	14,645	33.79	18,981	43.8	7,142	16.48
Clacton	E	44,207	64.13	19,642	44.43	16,205	36.66	6,364	14.4

Source: Rallings/Thrasher's 2015 results for the Electoral Commission.

Extending the look at the party's potential (to actually win HoC seats) in the rest of the country, the picture turns even grimmer. Taking into account that the lowest vote share necessary to win a seat in Great Britain in 2015 was 31 per cent (achieved by Southport's LibDem MP John Pugh),

we can see in Table 2 that UKIP crossed this critical threshold in only six constituencies. However, in only two of them was its margin on the winning candidate less than ten per cent (South Thanet and Thurrock). As I have discussed before, South Thanet was the party's number one target seat and exhibited very good conditions for a UKIP victory. It was contested by its leader, located in a region the party had been practically targeting for years, had relatively favourable demographics, and early polling indicated a stunning UKIP victory. In the end, despite all these advantages, the party failed to overcome the incumbent Conservative and proved completely unable to replicate this favourable climate in 2017. Thurrock, on the other hand was a special case, ending up as a three-way super-marginal between Labour, UKIP and the Conservatives. This is rather bad for UKIP, because it means that both major parties have thrown and will again throw the kitchen sink at it in order to win. Even more alarming, UKIP failed to significantly penetrate the support of either of them, which remained rock solid with the Tories losing less than 200 votes and Labour just 600 compared to 2010.

In the rest of the country UKIP finished second in 122 constituencies, in 80 behind the Tories and in 44 behind Labour (Johnston/Pattie/Manley 2016, 7). Even though this is an impressive number, a closer look at these contests reveals how little potential for electoral success there is. It is instructive to compare the competition situation in these seats with those in which another third party, the LibDems, finished second. The mean difference between the first and second-placed party was 18.6 per cent in seats won by the Conservatives with the Liberals as main contender and 11.6 per cent in contests won by the Labour party. For seats with UKIP in second place the respective differences were far larger, 34.8 per cent for the Tories winning and 33.2 per cent for contests won by Labour. In this respect UKIP fared even worse than the Green party, which achieved at least a 29.2 per cent shortfall in the five seats it was placed second behind Labour (Ibid.).

These numbers clearly show that from a parliamentary perspective UKIP does not and will not pose a threat to the two-party system in the near future. Even if it manages to channel all its efforts and resources into the very few seats where it holds a strong enough support base, it would take another major vote swing (at least half the one of 2015) to win just a handful of seats. In addition, UKIP would also have to rely on favourable vote splits between Labour and the Conservatives. In some cases, like Rotherham, the vote split is so disadvantageous that even a better than 30 per cent result is not remotely enough to eventually wrest the seat from the major parties. One last point lies in the electoral uncertainty the party has to deal with and which led to many of its 2015 defeats. UKIP has neither the resources nor the necessary data or experience to reliably identify target seats they can really win. Goodwin/Milazzo (2015: 183-206) meticulously illustrate how difficult it is for a new party to generate

sufficient a priori knowledge about whether the potential swing vote in a specific constituency is large enough to actually win it without the use of highly expensive constituency polling or decades-long experience in targeted canvassing. Since UKIP can hardly counter this actively in the short term, it will remain a major problem in upcoming elections.

The Organisational Dimension

In this section I will first try to illuminate ideological patterns of UKIP's membership and then give a more detailed discussion of its two 2016 leadership elections.

As I have already pointed out, there is almost no academic research on UKIP's internal structure and its ideological factionalization. However, the party's members and leading figures can be roughly classified along at least two political cleavages. Both of these cleavages have implications about the party's strategic outlook and its policy positions. The most important cleavage is probably the liberal-authoritarian divide,¹⁰ which is to some degree interlinked with the attitude towards the party's long term leader, Nigel Farage, and the strategic political direction enforced by him. On the liberal end are those like former UKIP MP Douglas Carswell, who emphasize comparatively liberal social positions, focusing, for example, on the enhancement of direct democracy and generally opposing the party's increasingly vitriolic language and political polarization. Some of these members are highly critical about Farage's aggressive populism and xenophobic spinning of the immigration question,¹¹ instead emphasising a more positive political outlook. On the other extreme are those who loathe the Westminster "establishment", resent the political status quo, support tough social conservatism (sometimes up to open racism and discrimination against minorities), and sympathize with a strong, authoritarian leadership style.

The second dividing line lies in economic outlook. Most of UKIP's first generation libertarians also backed free market economics, lowering taxes, a further privatization of the NHS, and a general roll-back of the welfare state. On the other end of the spectrum are those often described as "red" UKIPers, who tend to see economic globalization and the neoliberal policies of the 1990s and 2000s as the roots of Great Britain's perceived decline and therefore favour additional state intervention in order to protect the nation's economic and social interests. The strategic dimension

¹⁰ In order to avoid confusion, I will use the terms "liberal" and "authoritarian" to delineate the positioning on social cleavage and "right" and "left" on economic cleavage. Combinations of these terms are used to describe the positioning on a corresponding two-dimensional matrix of both cleavages.

¹¹ Leading figures like Patrick O'Flynn and Suzanne Evans claim that their critique is not directly aimed at Farage, but rather at certain people around him like Kassam, who allegedly guided him into an increasingly radical direction (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 297).

of this conflict lies in its implication on which social group should be regarded as the party's "natural" ally and targeted in future elections (see also Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 25). Those on the right look towards UKIP's historic strongholds in the south and east of England and want to capitalize on the specific situation of electoral competition in these regions. With the meltdown of the LibDems in 2015 and the structural weakness of Labour support, UKIP established itself as a viable contender to the Conservative party in some of these constituencies (Ibid: 200). Red UKIPers see its electoral future in the disillusionment of significant parts of the traditional white working class with the Labour party. Accordingly, they want to expand into Labour's heartlands in the north of England by addressing its economic decline, pushing policies to protect industrial jobs, wages, and the welfare state against "foreign" competition or exploitation. As reflected in the debate between Ford/Goodwin and Evans/Mellon, this does not mean that the camps necessarily appeal to socio-demographically different constituencies. Both focus on economically declining and socially deprived constituencies with high levels of older, white males with low income and education levels, but the difference lies in the occupational background of these people.¹² Libertarian and right-wing UKIPers generally focus on members of the petty bourgeoisie, especially the self-employed, small employees and artisans, as argued by Evans/Mellon. Authoritarian and left-wing UKIPers, on the other hand, want to expand the party's support in the traditional industrial working class, as argued by Ford and Goodwin.

Historically, UKIP was founded and initially dominated by its libertarian right, at least until Farage's second leadership of 2010. As a result of continuous infighting, many of its formerly influential liberals were pushed to the margins or left the party. Further, Robert Kilroy-Silk's high profile campaign and Farage's later turn towards populism strengthened the influx of red UKIPers especially when the party made its first breakthrough in the Midlands and northern regions of England during the 2004 EP election (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 52-53). The party's ideological make-up additionally diversified with Cameron's election as Tory leader in 2005. His attempts to move the party closer to the centre ground on social issues (and non-economic ones in general), like same-sex marriage, the environment, and poverty, alienated certain segments of the Thatcherite right (Ibid: 21-22). Many of these Conservatives were also dissatisfied with Cameron failing to win a majority in 2010 and not delivering an EU membership referendum and increasingly resented his alleged leniency towards the LibDem's policy demands (Norton 2015: 481-488). While in UKIP's early days members' positioning on both cleavages tended to overlap (resulting in a libertarian-right and an authoritarian-

¹² In general, however, these sociodemographic indicators tend to be more pronounced in northern than southern constituencies.

left), those new Tory defectors' political leanings were quite different. While they shared a liberal economic outlook with UKIP's old guard, their attitudes on social issues were often strongly conservative, a mix radically incarnated in the person of Farage's former personal advisor and now Breitbart UK editor Raheem Kassam. In summary, the party's ideological composition has significantly diversified over the last years, leading to increasing tensions over its future direction and a weakened position of its liberal right-wing old guard.

In order to conclude this section I am going to give a more detailed discussion of the two leadership elections of 2016. This has two reasons. First, the definite resignation of Nigel Farage marked a watershed and perhaps the most critical point in UKIP's history. Farage led the party for almost nine out of its fifteen years of existence and left his mark on its public image more than any other member. Second, the party has been rattled by warring factions for several years, but most of its early conflicts were more or less exclusively about individual persons rather than policies or strategic decisions (Abedi/Lundberg 2009: 78-80). The result of the EU membership referendum, however, poses an existential question to the party. With its original goal to be fulfilled in the near future, it has to find a new political purpose and, electorally even more important, a new major issue to campaign on (Ford/Goodwin 2014a: 287). Accordingly, the leadership elections should not only have critical implications about the party's future direction but also indicate whether it has managed to professionalize its internal conflict management and how much today's disputes are focussed on policies, rather than personalities.¹³

After Farage's resignation on 4 July five candidates stepped forward: Phillip Broughton, Lisa Duffy, Bill Etheridge, Diane James, and Elizabeth Jones.¹⁴ This list reflected the ideological divisions only slightly, reflecting rather personal conflicts within the party. A large number of expected contenders either declined or were prevented from running. Deputy leader Paul Nuttall, who was widely regarded as a promising compromise candidate, preventively refused to run. Douglas Carswell, prominent liberal and vocal Farage critic, was ineligible due to not being a party member for more than two years, as was Raheem Kassam. In addition, two other frontrunners were disqualified by UKIP's National Executive Committee (NEC). Immigration spokesman Steven Woolfe was widely regarded as Farage's heir-in-waiting but was only allowed to participate after being cleared of doubts about his membership status. Nonetheless, he

¹³ Matthew Goodwin, *Ukip Should Elect Paul Nuttall, or it Risks Collapse*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/03/ukip-elect-paul-nuttall-brexite-inequality>, [21.12.2016].

¹⁴ Michael Wilkinson, *Ukip Leadership Election: Who Are the Candidates to Replace Nigel Farage?* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/ukip-leadership-election-who-are-the-candidates/>, [21.12.2016].

did not manage to get on the ballot after he submitted his application 17 minutes late. Woolfe challenged the decision to exclude him, but the NEC dismissed his objections in a decision described by some of its members as politically motivated.¹⁵ Before that, Suzanne Evans, the 2015 interim leader and vocal Farage critic, had been banned from the election due to her suspended membership.

Of the remaining candidates, Broughton and Jones were considered to be low profile fringe candidates. Duffy, Etheridge and James, on the other hand, somehow received at least concerted support from the party's different factions. Lisa Duffy was strongly supported by the anti-Farage wing and several prominent liberals. Etheridge and his deputy candidate Mike Hookem were closer to populist and anti-establishment members. Diane James effectively became the candidate of Farage loyalists after Woolfe's exclusion. Concluding a series of public hustings, James was declared winner with 46.2 per cent of the vote on 16 September, with Duffy finishing second at 25.1 per cent.¹⁶

The first election, however, ended in a disaster when James resigned just 18 days after the election (she also quit the party two months later). James claimed that she had not received the necessary support of MEPs and party officials for her reform plans and therefore felt unable to lead UKIP.¹⁷ As a result, Farage remained interim leader and the party had to re-run the whole election. None of the first round's candidates decided to stand again, and initially, only Woolfe, Kassam and Peter Whittle stepped forward.

Accordingly, Woolfe was considered to be the front-runner, but his candidacy would again overshadow the election. On 6 October he collapsed in the European Parliament and had to be hospitalized. It emerged that he had been harshly criticized during a meeting with UKIP MEPs for interview remarks about a potential defection to the Conservative party. Tensions escalated and he left the meeting together with Mike Hookem to settle the issue personally. What happened next remains disputed, but in the end Woolfe was critically injured, potentially during a brawl between the two men. While he claimed that Hookem had attacked him, the former commando engineer indicated that Woolfe had

¹⁵ BBC Homepage, UKIP Leadership: Steven Woolfe Excluded from Race, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36962266>, [21.12.2016].

¹⁶ Jon Stone, Ukip Leadership Result: Diane James Named New Leader of Party, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ukip-leadership-result-diane-james-leader-nigel-farage-uk-independence-party-a7311231.html>, [21.12.2016].

¹⁷ Michael Wilkinson, Diane James Quits as Ukip Leader After Just 18 Days as Nigel Farage Rules Out a Comeback, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/04/diane-james-quits-as-ukip-leader-after-just-18-days-as-successor/>, [21.12.2016].

tried to fake the assault, hurting himself in the process.¹⁸ After harsh criticism by some high profile party members Woolfe decided to pull the plug and resigned from the party on 18 October, returning their favour by calling UKIP “ungovernable”.¹⁹ With him out of the picture several new candidates stepped forward.²⁰ As a result of the chaotic situation, parts of the party elite pressed Paul Nuttall to reconsider, as he was seen as the only person left who commanded sufficient support among members and enough authority to unite the different factions. With Nuttall and Suzanne Evans separately announcing their leadership bids the field began to narrow.²¹ But again the situation became complicated when major UKIP donor Arron Banks decided not to back Nuttall. He supported Raheem Kassam instead, who was particularly unacceptable for Farage critics because of his polarizing authoritarian leanings and his strong influence on Farage’s populist turn (Goodwin/Milazzo 2015: 204). However, on 31 October Kassam withdrew, citing too small chances of winning. Banks again dashed the hopes of forging a compromise by announcing that he would withdraw his financial support from the party.²² In the end only Evans, Nuttall, and John Rees-Evans (another pro-Farage fringe candidate) remained in the race, with Nuttall winning an overwhelming mandate with 62.6 per cent of the vote on 28 November (Evans received 19.3 and Rees-Evans 18.1 per cent).²³

The succession to Farage illustrated that neither success nor growing experience had a positive impact on the structural deficits often experienced by right-wing populist parties. The elections proved that one of UKIP’s major obstacles to lasting success remains the party itself. Its warring factions have been mainly held together by the strong electoral results until 2017, the prospects of the 2016 EU membership referendum, and Farage’s popularity with most rank and file members and certain segments of the population. Even though many of the disastrous events of

¹⁸ Jennifer Rankin/Peter Walker, Steven Woolfe Collapse: Ukip’s Mike Hookem Calls Clash ‘Handbags at Dawn’, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/07/steven-woolfe-collapse-ukips-mike-hookem-calls-clash-handbags-at-dawn>, [21.12.2016].

¹⁹ BBC Homepage, Steven Woolfe: I’m Resigning from UKIP, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-37682833>, [21.12.2016].

²⁰ A YouGov Poll of UKIP members (https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/kdyxlfbd4m/InternalResults_161014_UKIPMembers_W_StevenWoolfe.pdf, [21.12.2016]) shows that no candidate, apart from Woolfe, commanded more than fringe support (but the poll did not include the names of Kassam and Nuttall), with even Evans receiving only a meagre ten per cent.

²¹ BBC Homepage, UKIP Leadership: The Contenders to Succeed Diane James, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-37567690>, [21.12.2016].

²² Matthew Weaver, Nigel Farage Could Lead Ukip Again, Donor Arron Banks Suggests, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/nov/02/nigel-farage-could-lead-ukip-again-donor-arron-banks-suggests>, [21.12.2016].

²³ UKIP Homepage, Paul Nuttall Is New UKIP Leader: The Future Is Bright, Let Us Unite, http://www.ukip.org/nuttall_leader, [21.12.2016].

2017 were beyond Nuttall's control, his short leadership (he resigned on 9 April) was marked by ill-conceived and questionable decisions which furthered the collapse of these pillars. His huge mandate and the public welcoming of his election by prominent liberals²⁴ should have helped him to ease the considerable grievances resulting from the party's toxic mix of personalities, but his poor handling of public appearances and the decision to further step-up the party's anti-Islamic rhetoric drew quick and strong internal criticism.

Concluding Remarks

The analysed indicators offered a mixed bag of results for UKIP. On all three dimensions we could find positive developments and sustaining difficulties to overcome both the general problems of a new party and the specific challenges of Britain's duopolistic political system. While UKIP managed to somehow broaden its political message, the majority of the electorate remains unaware of its proposals on most issues. In electoral terms the party was able to carve out a core electorate that will probably continue to support it in future elections, with parts of its support being far "harder" than that of the last insurgent party, the SDP. However, the odds of beating the electoral system's mechanisms remain marginal and the party continues to lack the necessary experience to "outcampaign" the established parties. On the intra-organisational level Nigel Farage was able to turn it from a sect of diehard Eurosceptics into the fifth largest party of the Kingdom, but political dissent continues to be carried out by personalized infighting. While the election of Paul Nuttall showed that common ground can be found, the NEC's role in the leadership elections also reveals that UKIP's old guard is neither primarily acting in the best interest of the party nor ready to relinquish its power.

The final judgement about UKIP's impact on the two-party system leads back to a far more fundamental and much older question about British electoral politics and behaviour. This central question is about whether party system and electoral change should be assessed by looking at the development of individual electoral preferences or by taking a systemic perspective in analysing party competition changes. The controversy was sparked in 2005 with Patrick Dunleavy (2005: 503-504; 507; 531) strongly condemning a large number of political scientists and psephologists in the UK for consistently ignoring how much individual voting behaviour and individual electoral preferences had changed over

²⁴ Nuttall's personal political convictions are quite contrary to the liberal right, as he is a vocal proponent of the "Northern Strategy" and advocates conservative and authoritarian social policies mixed with working-class focused populism. However, he is also considered to be a trustworthy and honest broker, has distanced himself from some of Farage's excessive remarks and once showed support for a further privatisation of the NHS.

the last thirty years, instead focussing on the effects of the technical mechanics of the voting system that insured the two major parties' continuing political domination. According to Dunleavy, scientists thereby deliberately or undeliberately reinforced a narrative set by party elites to serve their own interests in limiting electoral competition as far as possible (Ibid: 503-504; 529-530). The final answer to our initial question therefore somehow rests on the decision about which of these two analytical perspectives is to be given more credit. From Dunleavy's individualistic perspective, UKIP has already broken the duopoly of Labour and the Conservatives by surviving over ten years in the "wilderness" and managing (at least for some time) to mobilise a significant segment of the electorate that had mostly deserted the two major parties years ago. From the 'orthodox' systemic perspective, UKIP's influence might have slightly increased over the last fifteen years but remains far away from what the LibDems and the SDP have achieved and even farther away from eventually breaking the duopolistic nature of British politics.

Postscript

While most colleagues will agree that Theresa May's gamble to hold a snap election in June 2017 was one of the biggest political blunders in recent British history, it was, however, a shrewd move in one aspect. The early election proved devastating for UKIP, potentially even lethal, with mostly the Tories benefiting from its decline. But how could a party that scored around at least 13 per cent in the polls at the time of the writing of this chapter (in January 2017) collapse so quickly?

The first problem was the incomprehensible, almost absurd, development of the public perception of immigration that had become UKIP's second plank of support. After 2015 the Tories slowly managed to regain their lost credibility, which strongly accelerated after Theresa May became Prime Minister, irrespective of the fact that, as Home Secretary, she had been directly responsible for the UK's immigration policy since 2010. At the time of the 2017 election the Tories had restored their competence lead, while UKIP had fallen into obscurity, even though neither the immigration numbers nor the government team overseeing it had changed.

A second, internal problem became obvious in April 2017, when party chairman Paul Oakden revealed that major donor Alan Bown had to financially rescue UKIP in late 2016. Expenditures for the 2014 EU parliamentary election, the 2015 general election and the 2016 EU referendum (plus investigations into the misuse of EU parliament funding) had bled the party dry and left it in a perilous financial situation. In addition, as some had expected, its two former MPs, Mark Reckless and Douglas Carswell, effectively betrayed UKIP after their main concern (the UK leaving the EU) had been satisfied and called for the party to disband.

As a result UKIP headed for disaster, beginning with the local elections in May that saw it lose all the seats it was defending. When entering the general election campaign it was practically on death watch. The decision to contest almost 250 fewer seats than in 2015 has to be interpreted as a financial decision with UKIP being both unable to spare adequate investments and not capable of losing hundreds of deposits nationwide. The informal pact struck with individual Conservative MPs and the unilateral withdrawal in favour of “hard Brexit” MPs allowed the party to publically save face, but indicated how desperate the situation was. In the end, UKIP scored an abysmal result of less than two per cent of the vote and Paul Nuttall decided to resign as party leader after less than a half year.

As discussed in my chapter UKIP had entered the year 2017 facing multiple critical turning points. The fact that almost every one of these decision points took a negative turn (often in the worst possible way) has left the party in the worst shape for years. Accordingly, the chapter’s initial question seems rather one of the past than the present with the party barely fighting for its survival in the current leadership election.

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