

Getting out the right-wing extremist vote: extreme right party support and campaign effects at a recent British general election

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Despite strong evidence in the wider study of electoral behaviour that party campaigning can have important effects on performance, and a large pan-European literature on populist radical right and extreme right campaigns, we know very little about the impact of the latter on electoral performance. Drawing on a range of innovative campaign-related data at the aggregate and individual level, we examine the electoral impact of the British National Party (BNP) at the 2010 British general election. Our analysis reveals that whereas the extreme right polled strongest in working class manufacturing areas, support for the extreme right was significantly higher in areas where it ran intensive local campaigns, recruited larger numbers of members, has achieved local electoral success, and where local politics has historically been dominated by the centre-left. However, we find little evidence that the extreme right has benefited electorally in areas where the English Defence League social movement had previously demonstrated. Our aggregate level findings are also confirmed at the individual level after controlling for a battery of established attitudinal predictors of extreme right voting. Those contacted by the BNP campaign were significantly more likely to vote for the party, while campaigning by all other political parties was ineffective in reducing the probability of voting BNP.

Keywords: far right party; general election; campaign effects

Introduction

What is the electoral impact of campaigning by populist radical and extreme right-wing parties? In the study of electoral behaviour and party politics, it is now widely accepted that campaigns can have important effects on electoral performance (Denver and Hands, 1997; Cutts, 2006; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2009; Pattie and Johnston, 2009). This literature provides evidence that the more a party delivers its message to particular types of voters in particular types of areas, the greater its prospect of electoral support (Pattie and Johnston, 2009; Johnston and Pattie, 2011). With the decline of partisanship, increased volatility and hesitancy

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of voters, and the growing professionalization of parties, local campaigning, both before and during the official election campaign now plays a vital role in determining election outcomes, particularly in close contests (Johnston *et al.*, 2011, 2012).¹

This emphasis on campaigning effects, however, has not transferred to the study of populist radical and extreme right-wing parties. Despite a large and pan-European literature on the factors that encourage support for these types of parties (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007), the impact of their campaigns on electoral outcomes remains under-researched.² Though several studies underscore the role of party agency, arguing that organization, activists, and ideological formulas assume important roles in explaining electoral performance (Kitschelt, 1995; Carter, 2005; Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; De Lange, 2011), there remains a striking absence of research on the actual electoral impact of campaigning.³ Clearly, this lack of research owes much to the difficulties associated with gathering reliable data on the internal resources and campaigning efforts of such parties. Membership, activism, spending, and targeting data are not easily acquired. Yet as several studies demonstrate, investigating these internal arenas is not strictly beyond the reach of political scientists (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; Biggs and Knauss, 2011; Goodwin, 2011).

In this study, we analyse electoral data at both the aggregate and individual level to investigate the electoral impact of a major campaign by an extreme right-wing party. The British general election in 2010 marked a crucial watershed in the development of the British National Party (BNP), which entered the election hoping to build on earlier gains in second-order elections at the local level and to the European Parliament. To examine the electoral impact of the campaign, we utilise innovative data relating to campaign spending, party membership, local electoral success, centre-left dominance over local politics, and previous cycles of extreme right campaigning, as well as panel survey data from the British Election Study (BES) that allows for an examination of party-voter contact during the campaign, namely individual exposure to extreme right party broadcasts, telephone and face-to-face canvassing, and party ‘knock-up’.⁴ To take account of factors that were more specific to the actual election, we also test for the impact of

¹ The ‘official’ or ‘short campaign’ is 3 to 4 weeks between the election being called and polling day. At the 2010 election, legal restrictions on campaign spending also covered the so-called ‘long campaign’ (the last 4 months before the election is called) as well as the short campaign.

² This emphasis on the populist radical right and extreme right-wing acknowledges the variation within this loose party family, and the recent contributions of Mudde (2007) and Carter (2005) to this debate. Our focus is on the British case, and so through the remainder of the article we refer mainly to the extreme right (Goodwin, 2011).

³ There is, however, a rapidly growing literature on the ‘supply-side’ of radical right party support, such as the ideological appeals of these parties, their internal organization, and membership (Mudde, 2007). However, less attention has focused on the actual impact of radical right party campaigns.

⁴ The ‘knock-up’ is a generic term to cover the activities of parties on polling day. This often takes the form of door-knocking, telephoning, or leafleting party identifiers to remind them to vote.

parliamentary candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds, demonstrations by the anti-Islam English Defence League (EDL), and a parliamentary expenses scandal that took place the year prior to the contest, all of which might be expected to benefit an extreme right party offering a combination of xenophobic, anti-Muslim, and anti-establishment positions.

Overall, our results are consistent with previous findings on the contextual drivers of support for the extreme right: the BNP performed strongest in working class areas that are more dependent than others on the declining manufacturing sector and are characterized by low average education levels. Yet beyond these 'standard' measures we also find that support for the extreme right was significantly higher in areas where the party campaigned: the BNP polled stronger in areas where it had more members, had previously achieved *local* success, and where local politics had been dominated by the centre-left Labour Party since the early 1970s. At the individual level, respondents who were contacted by the BNP were significantly more likely to vote for the party even after controlling for established attitudinal predictors of extreme right support and other parties' campaigning. Though campaign effects are often ignored in the wider literature, our findings reveal how campaigning can have a significant and positive electoral impact on support for the extreme right, and even in a case that is traditionally associated with electoral failure.

Explaining extreme right support: where's the campaign?

The wider literature on populist radical and extreme right-wing support often draws on one of three relatively distinct theoretical approaches. According to an older and less persuasive sociological account, electoral support for these parties is interpreted mainly as a response to socio-structural change, mainly through the decline of heavy industries and the manufacturing sector, and the onset of a global post-industrial economy. Such changes, it is argued, render economically deprived, working class urban areas that once relied heavily on manufacturing increasingly receptive to campaigns that pledge to halt or reverse these changes, and 'punish' mainstream elites who are held responsible (Betz, 1994; Kriesi *et al.*, 2006). Past aggregate and multi-level research in Britain is generally supportive, suggesting that right-wing extremist parties poll strongest in urban and deprived working class districts, where average education levels are low and there are large numbers of skilled workers and ageing populations (Bowyer, 2008; Ford and Goodwin, 2010; Cutts *et al.*, 2011).

At the same time, however, existing research also demonstrates that once attitudinal or ideological considerations are introduced the sociological model emerges as only a poor predictor of support for the populist radical and extreme right. In short, while necessary these sociological considerations can only take us so far in explaining electoral support for these types of parties (Norris, 2005; Van der Brug *et al.*, 2005). The emphasis on attitudinal drivers of support, though in

particular xenophobic public hostility toward immigration, has led several studies to focus on a second alternative theoretical approach that is rooted in group conflict theories (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1983). Seen from this perspective, extreme right party support will be strongest in areas where there are larger than average numbers of immigrants and/or members of settled minority groups, with such groups triggering feelings of actual or perceived ‘threat’ among residents, whether in regard to scarce economic resources (i.e. jobs, social housing, etc.) or more symbolic concerns over threats to values, national identity, and ways of life (Ivarsflaten, 2005; McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Rink *et al.*, 2009; Goodwin, 2010). More recent studies have built on these findings to demonstrate the crucial importance of disaggregating immigrant and minority groups; support for the extreme right in countries such as Belgium and Britain is significantly and positively associated with the presence of large Muslim communities, a relationship that does not appear to hold in regard to non-Muslim groups (Coffé *et al.*, 2007; Bowyer, 2008; Ford and Goodwin, 2010).

However, the above approaches tend to portray the electorates of the populist radical and extreme right as largely passive, with voters either switching to these parties in response to the effects of destabilizing socio-economic change, or to the arrival of highly salient issues, such as immigration or Islam. Like parties more generally, those on the extreme right-wing may assume an active role in attempting to ‘get out the vote’ at elections. Yet while the question of ‘how’ these parties seek to mobilize support has received attention (Kitschelt, 1995; Mudde, 2007; Zaslove, 2008), the subsequent question of whether these campaigns have a demonstrable impact on electoral performance is largely ignored. This lack of research is striking given that there are good reasons to expect that campaigns can have important effects. In the wider literature on party politics, the proposition that campaigns can have a clear and significant impact on support is now the ‘accepted truth’, with numerous studies demonstrating how – with all things equal – the harder a party campaigns the greater its share of the vote (Denver and Hands, 1997; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2009; Pattie and Johnston, 2009). Furthermore, broader trends such as the declining importance of party identification, the growing professionalization of parties, and the increased hesitancy and tendency of voters to make choices closer to elections underscore the potential for local campaigning to exert a significant impact on electoral performance (Cutts, 2006; Fisher *et al.*, 2012). To examine the validity of these divergent approaches, and investigate the electoral impact of extreme right party campaigning, we now turn to explore the context of the 2010 British general election.

Electoral context: the BNP and the 2010 general election

While the extreme right in Britain is associated with failure, over the period 2001–2010 the BNP achieved a series of advances in second-order elections to local, devolved, and European public office. As part of a ‘ladder strategy’ the

party had prioritized local implantation and activism as important prerequisites to achieving parliamentary representation. From 2005, the party sought to bolster rates of activism among members by implementing a ‘voting membership scheme’ (modelled on a scheme developed by the Sweden Democrats), which provided various incentives for activism and financial donations (Goodwin, 2011). As membership of the BNP approached 14,000, electoral support for the party was concentrated most heavily in the North West, Yorkshire, Midlands and South East regions of England, and in areas where local politics had long been dominated by the centre-left Labour Party (Ford and Goodwin, 2010).

At the 2010 general election, the party sought to build on these gains by securing either elected representation in Westminster or second place finishes in its two target seats of Barking in outer-east London, and Stoke Central in the Midlands. Fielding a record 338 candidates, the party aimed to secure a larger share of the national vote than the radical right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP), and emerge as the fourth largest party in British politics. From the outset, however, the BNP campaign was undermined by internal problems that included television footage of a BNP councillor brawling in the streets with Asian youths, allegations that a party official had made death threats to BNP Chairman Nick Griffin, the temporary closure of the BNP website by a disgruntled activist, and factionalism in local branches in Bradford, Kirklees, and Stoke-on-Trent. Most of these problems stemmed from wider discontent among the grassroots that was triggered by changes to the BNP’s ethnically defined ‘whites-only’ membership, the employment of a business consultant to help ‘professionalize’ the party’s internal operations, and allegations that Nick Griffin was politically incompetent following an appearance on the popular television programme, *Question Time*.

Aside from internal problems, the BNP campaign also met strong opposition in the core seat of Barking from Labour and anti-fascist activists. The latter ‘Hope Not Hate’ network claimed to recruit ~142,000 supporters and 20,000 regular online campaigners to support a highly visible and active campaign against the BNP (Lowles, 2010). This focused on mobilizing groups traditionally under-represented among the extreme right electorate, such as employing less aggressive and more positive anti-BNP themes to rally women and minority ethnic voters. Though difficult to assess, typical of this activity was one ‘day of action’ that claimed to mobilize over 500 volunteers to distribute over 90,000 newspapers across Barking, Dagenham, and Havering (while on polling day it was claimed that over 150 volunteers mobilized 6000 non-BNP voters in key areas). This anti-BNP activity was evident in national media, such as the tabloid *Mirror* newspaper that ran a story entitled ‘five reasons not to vote BNP’.

Yet beyond Barking, the wider issue agenda of the 2010 general election remained favourable for the extreme right (Ford, 2010). Since 2001, increased British public concern over immigration, rising ethnic diversity, and dissatisfaction with the three major parties enlarged electoral potential for anti-immigrant and populist parties. As several studies highlighted, anti-immigrant sentiment,

anxiety over settled Muslims, and the increased importance of security-related issues had altered the broader issue agenda in British politics (McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Clarke *et al.*, 2009; Voas and Ling, 2010). This remained evident during the 2010 campaign, where the issue of immigration was the second most important issue for voters, dominated one of the televised leadership debates, and attracted further attention when incumbent Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown described a Labour voter who had raised concerns about immigration as a ‘bigot’.⁵

On the supply-side, the BNP sought to take advantage of ‘Bigotgate’ by distributing a tailored newspaper in its target seats of Barking and Stoke Central, as well as parts of Barnsley, Leicestershire, and Manchester. More broadly, the BNP campaign sought to mobilize support by emphasizing traditional extreme right themes: an immediate halt to further immigration; the deportation of illegal immigrants; and the enactment of a voluntary repatriation scheme, whereby ‘immigrants and their descendants are afforded the opportunity to return to their lands of ethnic origin, assisted by generous financial incentives both for individuals and for the countries in question’ (BNP, 2010: 20).

In contrast to previous campaigns, stronger emphasis was placed on mobilizing anti-Muslim sentiment by devoting an entire section of the manifesto to ‘confronting the Islamic colonisation of Britain’ (BNP, 2010: 5). BNP policies included a ban on the burka, ritual slaughter, the building of further mosques, and immigration from Muslim countries. They also advocated the immediate deportation of radical Islamist preachers, their supporters, and ‘any other members of their community who object to these reasonable security measures’ (BNP, 2010: 5; see also Copsey, 2012). While the shift toward anti-Muslim sentiment was partly a reflection of the broader issue agenda, it also marked a continuation of the BNP’s transition away from crude biological racism toward the ethno-pluralist doctrine (Goodwin, 2010). Yet the BNP was not the only organization attempting to mobilize anti-Muslim prejudice. Since June 2009, the EDL had been staging confrontational demonstrations against militant Islamism, and attempting to mobilize opposition to the perceived threat from Islam, though not in the electoral arena. Indeed, one online survey suggests that the BNP is the favoured political party among EDL sympathisers (Demos, 2011).

Data and measurement: capturing campaign effects

To examine the electoral impact of campaigning on extreme right party support, we employ a range of aggregate and individual-level data. Table 1 reports summary statistics for all the variables used in the analysis. Our party campaign data are derived from several sources. First, at least since the 1980s political scientists have demonstrated that the more a political party spends on a campaign relative to its

⁵ On the salience of immigration during the 2010 general election campaign see the Ipsos-MORI Issues Index: <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2010).

Table 1. Variable definitions and descriptive statistics

Variable	Definition	Mean	SD
BNP (2010) vote share	BNP (2010) vote share	3.90	2.91
Urban deprived	Factor 1: urban deprived areas	0.00	1.00
Working class manufacturing	Factor 2: working class manufacturing areas	0.00	1.00
Retired	% Retired population	13.70	2.90
Total migration	% Total migration from outside the United Kingdom	12.18	3.39
Log Black	% Black (Log)	-0.27	0.67
Log Muslim	% Muslim (Log)	-0.03	0.66
Log non-Muslim Asian	% Non-Muslim Asian (log)	-0.06	0.50
North	1 if seat is in the North, 0 otherwise	0.20	0.40
Yorkshire and Humber	1 if seat is in Yorks and Humber, 0 otherwise	0.10	0.30
Midlands	1 if seat is in Midlands, 0 otherwise	0.20	0.40
London	1 if seat is in London, 0 otherwise	0.14	0.34
Far Right legacy 1970s	1 if the party won support in the constituency during the 1970s, 0 otherwise	0.08	0.28
Far Right branches 1980s	1 if party had a branch in the constituency during the 1980s, 0 otherwise	0.21	0.41
BNP success locally	1 if party had local success during the Griffin era, 0 otherwise.	0.08	0.27
Labour controlled council since 1973	1 if Labour had controlled the local council since 1973, 0 otherwise.	0.32	0.47
Log BNP membership	Number of BNP members in the constituency	1.28	0.25
Conservative Party spending	% spending by the Conservatives during the 'short' campaign period	68.98	28.46
Labour Party spending	% spending by Labour during the 'short' campaign period	49.20	32.50
Lib Dem Party spending	% spending by the Lib Dems during the 'short' campaign period	37.57	33.63
BNP Party spending	% spending by the BNP during the 'short' campaign period	2.48	5.33
UKIP Party spending	% spending by UKIP during the 'short' campaign period	8.49	13.19
EDL rally	1 if an EDL rally took place in the constituency, 0 otherwise	0.07	0.26
Asian candidate	1 if an Asian candidate stood in the constituency, 0 otherwise	0.14	0.35
Black candidate	1 if a Black candidate stood in the constituency, 0 otherwise	0.04	0.19
Expenses scandal MP retired	1 if an MP retired because of the expenses scandal, 0 otherwise.	0.07	0.26
Expenses scandal: MP stands in seat	1 if an MP involved in the expenses scandal and stood again in 2010, 0 otherwise	0.14	0.35
UKIP 2010 vote share	% UKIP vote share in 2010	3.35	2.02
UKIP candidate	1 if a UKIP candidate stood, 0 otherwise	0.98	0.14
BNP (2005) vote share	% BNP vote share in 2005	0.90	1.98

BNP = British National Party; UKIP = UK Independence Party; EDL = English Defence League.

opponents, the stronger its electoral performance (Johnston and Pattie, 1995, 2008, 2011; Pattie and Johnston, 2009). As a surrogate measure of campaign effort, and when measured against individual-level data and other self-reported measures of party campaign activity, spending data have an established record of reliability, largely universal coverage, and validity. As in other studies that utilize spending data, we express the amount spent in each constituency as a percentage of the maximum possible amount allowed. Spending data from the 'official' or 'short' campaign are also utilized. These data reveal that at the 2010 general election the BNP devoted a total of £159,388 to the short campaign, and hence was unable to compete financially with the three main parties or more affluent minor parties such as UKIP. Over the entire campaign, the average BNP candidate spent only £750, compared with an average spend of £1278 per UKIP candidate, and £1839 per Green Party candidate (Johnston and Pattie, 2011).

Our second measure of underlying campaign effects is the extent of local electoral success by the extreme right prior to the 2010 campaign. Some scholars argue that implantation at the local level is important in determining whether or not populist radical and extreme right parties can sustain electoral success. Mudde (2007), for example, contends: 'Undoubtedly, the most important factor to decide whether or not a party fails or succeeds in persisting electorally is party organization and local implantation'. Gaining local office may enhance prospects of a wider breakthrough by raising the party's profile, promoting an image of electoral credibility, and fostering relations with voters. Local elected representation might also improve the prospect of wider success ensuring that basic electoral duties and party-voter contact is undertaken. Indeed, it is for these reasons that the BNP prioritized securing local council seats as a prerequisite to electoral success at the national level. While there is some evidence to suggest that the BNP has advanced in areas where it has established a local presence [Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT), 2004; Borisjuk *et al.*, 2007], the precise impact of this local success remains largely unknown. Therefore, we hypothesize that local electoral success, which we measure as the BNP winning at least one local council seat in the constituency since 2005, will have a significant positive effect on the party's performance at the 2010 general election.

Our third measure examines the impact of membership on electoral performance. It is plausible to expect that where a party has larger clusters of members it is more visible at the local level, has stronger infrastructures, and higher rates of activism (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992; Whiteley and Seyd, 1994). Clearly endogeneity may be inherent in this relationship given that members may be contributing to success while success might also attract new members. Separating out this dynamic is difficult given that it is conceivable that both effects may be operating. Our measure of BNP membership is adjusted to take account of the fact that the BNP operated a 'whites-only' membership until a change of policy in 2010. Here we use the list of BNP members that was leaked onto the Internet in 2008 by disaffected activists, and which has been confirmed as genuine by the party leadership. The leaked document

contains over 10,000 names and addresses, and includes postcodes that allow individual members to be matched to parliamentary constituencies. The inclusion of BNP membership, together with party spending and prior local election success, provides a thorough measure of local campaign effects at the aggregate level.

A fourth measure included relates to 'legacy effects', and the question of whether support for the extreme right at the 2010 election is positively related to previous cycles of extreme right party activism in earlier decades. Two variables are included: the first takes account of where support for the BNP's main predecessor in the 1970s, the National Front, was spatially concentrated; and the second draws on a coding of party literature to take account of where BNP branches were spatially concentrated during the 1980s.⁶

However, while the above measures provide important and innovative insights into the impact of campaigning on extreme right support, they are at best surrogate measures. Therefore, to complement our approach and establish whether campaign effects are significant after taking account of attitudinal variables, we utilize BES panel survey data that provides information on party-voter contact during the campaign. Individual exposure to BNP election broadcasts, telephone and door-to-door canvassing, and party 'knock-up' are utilized. Even though such data have the advantage of measuring the direct link between campaign exposure and voter behaviour, it is reliant on respondents making accurate and conscious recollections of such exposure. If this assumption is not met and voters are affected by campaigns without attributing that as such, then the impact of campaigns may be underestimated. If campaigns have an effect on only a small number of voters in selected areas, national survey methods are more unlikely to successfully detect the impact. Hence, we complement our evidence from survey data with evidence provided by aggregate data. Therefore, a significant finding at both individual and aggregate level would reveal the importance of examining campaign effects when explaining support for populist radical and extreme right parties.

To address our core question, we first investigate the impact of the BNP campaign on its support by analysing a range of aggregate-level data that are collected from several sources. The campaign data outlined above are combined with 2001 census data for the newly redistricted constituencies in England. Specifically, socio-economic variables are derived from the census. Given that collinearity between these variables was found, a principal components analysis (PCA) was run and two factors were extracted that describe the characteristics of the parliamentary constituencies.⁷ Factor 1 captures the urban character of the area and the level of

⁶ BNP branches were identified by coding copies of the *British Nationalist* newspaper, which include a section entitled 'contact your local branch'. It is extremely unlikely that all branches were regularly active, but given that the party provides potential recruits with the address of a mailing box this suggests a level of organization in the local arena.

⁷ The eight socio-economic variables included in the PCA were as follows: % Renting council housing, % Overcrowding, % Population Density, % Owner Occupation, % Semi Routine and Routine Manual Class, % No Qualifications, % Manufacturing, and % Unemployment. Two Components were

deprivation, whereas Factor 2 reflects the class structure and education levels in areas that depend on the manufacturing sector. Also included is the percentage share of the constituency population that are retired and a measure to take account of migration patterns from outside the United Kingdom. Electors may also vote for the extreme right in response to perceived economic and/or cultural threats posed by ethnic out-groups, and immigration more generally (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; Tolsma *et al.*, 2008). Yet following recent research, we undertake a more nuanced examination of this relationship by disaggregating minority groups and including measures of the percentage of the constituency population, that is, Muslim, non-Muslim Asian, and Black (Bowyer, 2008; Ford and Goodwin, 2010). Recent studies also reveal a significant northward shift in the geographical concentration of BNP support (Ford and Goodwin, 2010; Cutts *et al.*, 2011). To take account of these regional variations in BNP support, our models include six regional dummies.

To take account of local political context we include a measure of local Labour Party hegemony: local authorities where Labour has held majority-rule since the re-organization of local councils in the early 1970s. Our analysis also includes a number of additional predictors that were largely specific to the 2010 general election. First, we measure the impact of the presence of a minority Black or Asian parliamentary candidate, which might enhance subjective perceptions of threat among local electorates and consequently increase support for the extreme right. We account of this possibility by including ethnic candidate selection for each mainstream party in the analysis. Second, we take account of whether the BNP reaped any electoral rewards from EDL rallies in those seats where the EDL held rallies over the period June 2009–May 2010. Third, recent research suggests that UKIP and the BNP draw from similar constituency bases of support (John and Margetts, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2012). This suggests that the presence of UKIP support or the decision of the party to field a candidate where the BNP stands would have an impact on BNP support, particularly given that UKIP is seen as being more politically skilful in how it presents contentious policy issues and has the greater credibility to appeal to a wider electorate (John and Margetts, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2012). Finally, we take account of a parliamentary expenses scandal that dominated media headlines for at least 18 months before the election, and affected each of the three mainstream parties. It appears plausible, therefore, that minor parties such as the BNP benefited from a subsequent rise in anti-establishment sentiment. Here we include two variables: one takes account of constituencies where MPs decided not to seek re-election but claimed moderate or excessive expenses; and the other includes constituencies where the incumbent MP did stand again and had made moderate or excessive expenses claims.

extracted (Component 1 = 45.99% of variance while Component 2 = 36.30% of variance) with eigenvalues above 1.

Modelling BNP support

One of the problems in measuring BNP support in the 2010 general election is that this measure is based solely on the number of votes received by a BNP candidate and, therefore, is only observed in those parliamentary constituencies where a BNP candidate is on the ballot. In this case, the dependent variable is censored, making a standard Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression inappropriate. A number of scholars have applied a Tobit regression to address the data censoring problem (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Jesuit and Mahler, 2004; Bowyer, 2008) given that it is particularly useful where a dependent variable has the value of zero for some part of the population and is roughly continuously distributed over positive values (Wooldridge, 2002; Cameron and Trivedi, 2005). In the Tobit regression model, the dependent variable is a continuous latent variable, with BNP support in the 2010 general election only observed if y^* is greater than the specified threshold (0 in our case to reflect those constituencies where the BNP did not stand and, therefore, got no votes; Long, 1997; Wooldridge, 2002; Bowyer, 2008).⁸ Of course, if these constituencies where the BNP either did not stand or received no votes were omitted from the model, then we would be introducing selection bias into our analysis (Golder, 2003; Cameron and Trivedi, 2005). Using the same set of variables, the Tobit regression, therefore, estimates both the probability that the value of the dependent variable is greater than the threshold (in our case 0) and the expected value in those cases where it is observed. Put simply, it estimates the probability that the BNP fields a candidate in a constituency and its percentage 2010 vote share in those constituencies that it did stand. Here, like numerous scholars in the extreme right party (ERP) literature, we adopt this Tobit I estimation technique (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Golder, 2003; Swank and Betz, 2003; Jesuit and Mahler, 2004; Bowyer, 2008).⁹

⁸ The use of Tobit regression models when the observed values of the dependent variable are positive has been contested (Sigelman and Zeng, 1999). Of course, no party in an election can get below zero. However, like other scholars in the literature (see Bowyer, 2008), we conceptualise the latent dependent variable y^* along a continuum from $-\infty$ to ∞ in which case the Tobit I regression is clearly the most suitable model.

⁹ Coffé *et al.* (2007) have argued that the Tobit I estimation should be treated with caution and instead advocate the Tobit II (Heckit) estimator, which estimates a selection equation (whether an ERP participated in an election or not) and an outcome equation (ERP vote shares received where they actually stood and obtained votes). Part of their argument is that the selection mechanism is ignored in the Tobit I estimation. This is only partially correct given that it is entirely possible to use the Tobit I estimation to calculate the marginal effects of x_i on the probability of observing a zero outcome $P(y_i = 0)$ (Greene, 2003). These are provided in the supplementary material online. Moreover, it is also possible to use the Tobit I estimation to calculate the marginal effect of the predictor variables x_i on the observed dependent variable y_i . In our model, there is also no conceptual expectation that the predictors included in the analysis should have an effect on the BNP's standing in a constituency but not on the party's vote share or vice versa. Finally, there is evidence that the more parsimonious Tobit I estimation produces similar and in some cases better results than double hurdle or Tobit II models (Long, 1997). Of course, the Tobit I do assume that the errors are homoscedastic and normally distributed, which can be problematic in certain circumstances. Yet, given the evidence, we felt that the Tobit I estimation is better suited to answer our key research questions.

The extreme right campaign: did it matter?

In political and media debate, the 2010 general election was largely framed as a disaster for the extreme right. In the aftermath of the election, it was revealed that the BNP had more than doubled its number of votes to over 564,000 and increased its share of the total vote to 1.9%. However, despite the overall increase in support the party failed to achieve a noticeable breakthrough in its target seats. In Barking, the BNP finished third with 14.8% of the vote.¹⁰ It is important to note, however, that in 126 constituencies that were also contested by the BNP at the previous general election in 2005, the party improved its share of the vote by an average of 1.9%. Furthermore, BNP candidates met or surpassed the 5% threshold that is required to retain financial deposits in 73 seats, compared with seven saved deposits at the general election in 2001. BNP candidates polled over 10% in three seats and 8% or over in a further nine seats.

But to what extent did campaigning by the extreme right have an electoral impact? Utilizing the aggregate data that are outlined above, we first examine the factors that shaped BNP support at the 2010 general election and detail the types of areas where the extreme right polled most strongly, and relative to its performance at the previous general election in 2005. The first multivariate Tobit regression model examines the underlying pattern of support for the BNP in the 2010 general election (Table 2) while the second model incorporates prior BNP support in 2005 (Table 3).¹¹ In both tables, the first column includes the Tobit beta coefficients that are related to the latent dependent variable (BNP support in 2010) and their respective standard errors. These show the effect of change in a given predictor variable (x) on the expected value of the latent variables, holding all other predictor variables (x) constant. So in terms of the latent variable, y^* , these Tobit betas can be interpreted in just the same way as the betas from a standard OLS regression model. Yet while it is common practice in the ERP literature to report and discuss these Tobit coefficients (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Golder, 2003; Bowyer, 2008) – and we report these for brevity and comparability purposes – they are not entirely useful because the dependent variable is unobserved. Alternatively, by reporting other forms of marginal effects at the means of the independent variables, it is possible to measure the substantive significance of these coefficients and more intuitively determine the linear relationship between our predictor variables and BNP vote share in the 2010 general election. In the second column, we therefore report the marginal effects for the conditional expectation of y , given that y is positive (greater than zero) and the unconditional expected value of the observed dependent variable

¹⁰ In local elections held on the same day, the party lost all 12 councillors on Barking and Dagenham council while its total number of councillors nationally slumped from over 50 to 28.

¹¹ Both models indicated reasonable fits (pseudo R^2 of 0.23) while the introduction of prior BNP vote share did lead to an improvement in the model as indicated by the reduction in log likelihood.

Table 2. Tobit model and marginal effects of BNP (2010) General Election support in England

Variables	2010 only (Y*)		Marginal effects	
	β	SE	$E(y x, y>0)$	$E(y/x)$
			dy/dx	dy/dx
Constant	-4.00**	(1.49)	-	-
Socio-economic predictors				
F1: urban deprived areas	-0.28	(0.24)	-0.15	-0.21
F2: working class manufacturing areas	1.59**	(0.22)	0.86**	1.20**
% Retired	0.07	(0.06)	0.04	0.05
% Migration from outside United Kingdom	0.02	(0.05)	0.01	0.02
Log Black	-0.13	(0.45)	-0.07	-0.10
Log Muslim	0.65**	(0.32)	0.35**	0.49**
Log non-Muslim Asian	-0.67	(0.42)	-0.36	-0.50
Region (Base = SW/SE/Eastern)				
North	-0.46	(0.39)	-0.24	-0.33
Yorkshire and Humberside	0.81*	(0.43)	0.47*	0.65*
Midlands	-0.25	(0.34)	-0.13	-0.19
London	1.95**	(0.53)	1.25**	1.65**
Historical legacy				
Far Right legacy 1970s	0.26	(0.37)	0.15	0.20
Far Right branches 1980s	0.02	(0.29)	0.01	0.01
Local election success				
BNP local success under Griffin	0.82**	(0.41)	0.48*	0.66*
Labour-held Council since 1973	0.70**	(0.28)	0.39**	0.54**
Grassroots membership				
Log BNP membership	2.88**	(0.49)	1.56**	2.18**
2010 Election-specific factors				
English Defence League rally	0.05	(0.45)	0.02	0.03
Asian candidate standing	-0.07	(0.31)	-0.04	-0.05
Black candidate standing	-0.06	(0.61)	-0.03	-0.04
Expenses scandal: MP not standing	0.32	(0.39)	0.18	0.25
Moderate/excessive claims by sitting MP	0.06	(0.30)	0.03	0.05
UKIP 2010 vote share	-0.37**	(0.07)	-0.20**	-0.28**
UKIP 2010 candidate standing	1.90**	(0.74)	0.81**	1.13**
2010 Party campaign effort				
BNP Party spending	0.20**	(0.02)	0.11**	0.15**
UKIP Party spending	0.00	(0.01)	0.00	0.00
Conservative Party spending	-0.01*	(0.00)	-0.01**	-0.01**
Labour Party spending	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.00	-0.00
Liberal Democrat Party spending	-0.01**	(0.00)	-0.01**	-0.01**
Pseudo R ²	0.23		0.23	
Log likelihood	-798.97		-798.97	
Total N (constituencies)	533		533	
Left-censored observations at BNP10VS ≤ 0	217		217	
Uncensored observations	306		306	

BNP = British National Party; UKIP = UK Independence Party.

Notes: We only model England because we don't have membership and legacy variables in Wales and Scotland. It was decided to create two factors from eight socio-economic variables. No qualification was included here because this was 0.84** correlated with semi-routine and routine occupations (working class).

** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.10$.

Table 3. Tobit model and marginal effects of BNP (2010) General Election support in England accounting for BNP prior support

Variables	With BNP (2005)			
	With BNP (2005)		E(y x, y>0)	
	β (Y*)	SE	dy/dx	E(y/x)
Constant	-4.01**	(1.46)	-	-
Socio-economic predictors				
F1: urban deprived areas	-0.25	(0.23)	-0.14	-0.19
F2: working class manufacturing areas	1.47**	(0.22)	0.81**	1.12**
% Retired	0.07	(0.06)	0.04	0.06
% Migration from outside United Kingdom	0.03	(0.05)	0.01	0.02
Log Black	-0.02	(0.44)	-0.01	-0.01
Log Muslim	0.33	(0.35)	0.18	0.25
Log Non-Muslim Asian	-0.56	(0.41)	-0.31	-0.43
Region (Base = SW/SE/Eastern)				
North	-0.42	(0.38)	-0.22	0.31
Yorkshire and Humberside	0.71*	(0.43)	0.42*	0.57
Midlands	-0.25	(0.33)	0.13	-0.19
London	1.78**	(0.53)	1.14**	1.50
Historical legacy				
Far Right legacy 1970s	0.23	(0.36)	0.13	0.18
Far Right branches 1980s	-0.02	(0.29)	-0.01	-0.01
Local election success				
BNP local success under Griffin	0.35	(0.44)	0.20	0.28
Labour-held Council since 1973	0.63**	(0.28)	0.35**	0.49**
Grassroots membership				
Log BNP membership	2.73**	(0.48)	1.49**	2.09**
2010 Election-specific factors				
English Defence League rally	0.16	(0.45)	0.09	0.12
Asian candidate standing	-0.08	(0.30)	-0.05	-0.06
Black candidate standing	-0.09	(0.60)	-0.05	-0.06
Expenses scandal: MP not standing	0.30	(0.38)	0.17	0.24
Moderate/excessive claims by sitting MP	0.13	(0.30)	0.07	0.10
UKIP 2010 vote share	-0.39**	(0.07)	-0.21**	-0.29**
UKIP 2010 candidate standing	2.00**	(0.72)	0.85**	1.19**
2010 Party campaign effort				
BNP Party spending	0.18**	(0.02)	0.10**	0.14**
UKIP Party spending	0.00	(0.01)	0.00	0.00
Conservative Party spending	-0.01*	(0.00)	-0.01**	-0.01**
Labour Party spending	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.00	-0.00
Liberal Democrat Party spending	-0.01**	(0.00)	-0.01**	-0.01**
Prior BNP support				
BNP (2005) vote share	0.19**	(0.07)	0.10**	0.14**
Pseudo R ²	0.23		0.23	
Log likelihood	-795.75		-795.75	
Total N (constituencies)	533		533	
Left-censored observations at BNP10VS ≤ 0	217		217	
Uncensored observations	306		306	

BNP = British National Party; UKIP = UK Independence Party.

Notes: We only model England because we don't have membership and legacy variables in Wales and Scotland. It was decided to create two factors from eight socio-economic variables. No qualification was included here because this was 0.84** correlated with semi-routine and routine occupations (working class).

** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.10$.

(the probability that y is positive times the expected value of y given that y is indeed positive).¹²

Table 2 reports the first set of Tobit estimations.¹³ Consistent with our hypotheses, the extreme right polled strongest in working class areas that are more dependent than others on a weakened manufacturing sector, and have large numbers of residents who lack educational qualifications. The party also performed better in those constituencies where there are larger Muslim communities, although this effect does lose its significance once we introduce the prior BNP vote in 2005. Moreover, the BNP improved its vote share in London – where its leader Nick Griffin contested the constituency of Barking and attracted considerable publicity – and also the Yorkshire and Humber region, where the party has been especially active at the local level since 2001 (Goodwin, 2011). Yet after controlling for these demand-side factors, and also factors that are specific to the 2010 general election, the findings underscore how party activism and campaigning had a positive electoral impact on BNP support. The marginal effects conditional on being uncensored indicate that a 1% increase in BNP campaigning (party spending) results in a 0.11% increase in BNP support. Opposition campaigning, particularly the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, did harm BNP support, although the reported marginal effects suggest that they had a largely negligible impact.

The Tobit regression results also suggest that prior local electoral success had a significant and positive impact on BNP support at the general election.¹⁴ In seats where the extreme right party had previously enjoyed success at local level, it polled stronger. While establishing local credibility is an important task for minor

¹² While there is no consensus on which marginal effects you should report, there is scholarly recognition that focusing on the latent variable is not particularly useful and that reporting these two marginal effects is generally recommended (Wooldridge, 2002; Greene, 2003). Given this evidence and for comparability purposes, we report both these marginal effects in the tables. One possible alternative is the McDonald and Moffit (1980) decomposition of the marginal effects. The total change in y^* can be decomposed into two parts: (1) the effect on the expectation of fully observed values and (2) the effect on the probability of being fully observed. These marginal effects depend on individual characteristics (x_i) and can only be estimated for specific types or as average effects in the sample population (Wooldridge, 2002). Given our research interest is the underlying linear relationship of the whole population on BNP support, we decided not to compute these marginal effects.

¹³ Initially, we ran OLS regression and Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) models to examine the impact of local campaign effects on BNP support after controlling other predictors. Similar variables were significant as reported in the Tobit estimations, although there was some limited evidence that the EDL rallies had an influence after controlling for BNP prior vote in the OLS regressions. Because the SUR compared the BNP's (and other parties') performance against Labour, a number of the findings were different. However, both the OLS and SUR models of BNP performance in 2010 found strong evidence that the BNP performed better where it ran intensive campaigns, had lots of members, and achieved prior local election success. These models are available on request.

¹⁴ As noted in the summary statistics, those seats where the BNP achieved local election success and/or where Labour dominated control of the local council since 1973 are coded as binary variables. In terms of the interpretation of the marginal effects, a dummy variable is calculated as the discrete change in the expected value of the dependent variable as the dummy variable changes from 0 to 1.

parties generally, our results indicate that the BNP's strategy of community-based activism has played an important role in the party's ability to gain support.

There is also substantial evidence that the BNP performed stronger in constituencies where the party had larger clusters of members. The marginal effects conditional on being uncensored indicate that a 1% increase in party membership results in a 1.6% increase in BNP support. Membership acts as a proxy for activism but it is undoubtedly intertwined with local electoral success. The presence of large numbers of members (particularly in Labour-held seats) is likely to encourage higher rates of activism that, in turn, improve the prospects of local success and strengthen general election campaigns. Electoral breakthroughs at the local level are also likely to attract media publicity, foster an image of credibility and attract new recruits. While both effects appear to be operating in a 'virtuous circle', it is evident that local activism boosts local representation, which in turn heightens electoral profile and legitimacy. Therefore, it appears that in 2010 the BNP reaped electoral dividends where the extreme right party established an image of local credibility. Reflecting BNP activism in Labour strongholds, the party also improved its vote in seats where Labour has dominated power at the local level since 1973. In contrast, we find no evidence that the party performed stronger in areas where the extreme right had previously been electorally active in the 1970s and 1980s. Where UKIP stood a candidate, BNP support increased, although, as expected, BNP support did decline in those constituencies where UKIP polled strongly. Where UKIP was strong the BNP struggled to make headway suggesting that voters perceived the former as a more credible party to support than the BNP (John and Margetts, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2012).

Consistent with the findings above, even after taking account of the party's prior vote, similar campaigning effects are observed. The Tobit beta estimates and the other marginal effects are reported in Table 3 and remain largely similar. Where the party campaigned more intensely it reaped electoral rewards, while the party seemingly gained a boost in support in those seats with high numbers of members and those constituencies where Labour has dominated power at the local level since 1973. Once the prior BNP vote is controlled for, support for the party in 2010 did not significantly increase in areas where the extreme right had achieved local election success or in areas where the EDL had staged street-based protests and rallies in opposition to perceived threats from Islam and settled Muslim communities. Other 2010 general election-specific factors such as whether the candidate was Asian or Black, or where incumbent MPs either stood down or fought on despite excessive expenses claims also failed to have a significant impact on BNP support. The demand side remained important. Even after controlling for prior support, the reported marginal effects – conditional on being uncensored and unconditional on the expected value of the observed dependent variable – both indicate that the relationship between those living in working class manufacturing areas and BNP support is not only significant but very strong.

Modelling the extreme right vote at the individual level

The Tobit regression models presented above suggest that campaigning by the extreme right had a significant and positive electoral impact on its overall performance. Yet while these findings are informative, they remain constrained by a lack of individual-level data. The importance of encompassing individual-level data is underscored by the observation that it is possible to gauge the effects of campaigns by examining how this activity is perceived by individual voters. Also, past research has demonstrated how support for populist radical and extreme right-wing parties is driven strongly by voters' instrumental motives and/or their ideological affinity with the policies and ideas on offer (Van der Brug *et al.*, 2005; Cutts *et al.*, 2011). For these reasons, we supplement aggregate-level data with an examination at the individual level.

How important are campaigning effects once we control for a battery of attitudinal predictors on extreme right party support? To address this question we utilize data from the post-election campaign panel of the 2010 BES. Party campaigning is measured by aggregating respondents' responses to viewing a party election broadcast, being canvassed, receiving direct mail and being contacted by e-mail, text message, social networking sites, and 'knocking-up' on polling day.¹⁵ These were evaluated and included separately for all four parties. In addition, we also test for the influence of attitudinal motivations on support for the extreme right. First, we measure anti-establishment sentiment that was heightened by an outbreak of a parliamentary expenses scandal in 2009 by assessing respondents' perceptions of trust in politicians. Following the wider literature, we might expect that citizens who are more distrustful of politicians are more likely to support the extreme right. Second, given the BNP's programmatic emphasis on it, we include Euroscepticism that is measured by opposition to closer co-operation with the European Union (Hobolt *et al.*, 2009). Third, we examine whether feelings of economic insecurity as a result of the financial crisis motivated citizens to vote for the BNP (Citrin *et al.*, 1997). Fourth, we measure concern over the core extreme right issue of immigration as those who perceived this to be the most important issue facing the country (Van der Brug *et al.*, 2000, 2005; Rydgren, 2008; Cutts *et al.*, 2011). Unfortunately, there were no explicit measures of anti-immigrant sentiment in the campaign panel of the BES. Finally, we also take account of public attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan, opposition to which was a prominent BNP policy at the election, and so we expect those who disapprove of the war to be more liable to support the extreme right.

¹⁵ This is a summary scale based on the number of times respondents were exposed to the different campaign activities derived separately for each party. In terms of the raw statistics, around 9% of the unweighted BES Campaign panel sample was contacted by the BNP: 97% stated they were contacted by leaflets, 4% by e-mail, 5% by doorstep canvassing or contact in the street, roughly 13% of those questioned saw the party election broadcast, and <1% were contacted in other ways (facebook, texting, etc.). The importance of leafleting validates our use of party spending at the aggregate level because expenditure on leaflets contributes a large proportion of the spending figures provided (see Johnston and Pattie, 1995, 2008).

Table 4. Binomial Logit of BNP voting in the 2010 General Election in England

Variables	Voting BNP	
	β	Odds
Constant	-5.54**	-
Attitudes		
Immigration most important issue	1.62**	5.04
Closer cooperation with the European Union	-0.56**	0.57
Trust politicians	-0.23**	0.79
Financial crisis	-0.08	0.93
War in Afghanistan	0.02	1.02
Campaign contact		
BNP Mobilisation Index	0.21**	1.24
Conservative Mobilisation Index	-0.04	0.96
Labour Mobilisation Index	0.06	1.06
Lib Dem Mobilisation Index	-0.13	0.88
UKIP Mobilisation Index	-0.02	0.98
Socio-economic controls		
Male	0.83**	2.30
Unskilled manual	0.46	1.58
Wald χ^2	189.21**	
McFadden Pseudo R^2	0.19	
Log likelihood	-398.670	
N	6409	

BNP = British National Party; UKIP = UK Independence Party; BES = British Election Study.

Source: 2010 BES Campaign Post-Election Panel.

Notes: Weighted data using post-election weight. Robust clustered standard errors (182 clusters). Binomial logit analysis of voting for the BNP vs. voting for all other parties.

**P-value 0.05.

Table 4 shows the logistic regression of the BNP vote in 2010. A large number of variables perform as expected, with coefficients statistically significant and correctly signed. Our findings provide further evidence that concern over immigration is a key driver of support for the BNP: respondents who ranked immigration as the most important issue facing the country were five times more likely to support the extreme right, than other parties. However, political dissatisfaction and Euroscepticism were also important drivers of support: extreme right voters were far less likely to trust politicians while respondents who supported European integration had a lower probability of supporting the party. In contrast, economic security as a result of the financial crisis, and disapproval with the war in Afghanistan were insignificant. However, these results also underscore the crucial importance of the campaign: even after controlling for these individual attitudinal predictors, the BNP campaign still mattered.

Respondents who said they were contacted by the BNP were 1.2 times more likely to vote for the party. While the BNP campaign had a positive and significant impact on the party's vote, campaigning by all other political parties appears to be ineffective in reducing the probability of voting BNP.

Discussion and conclusions

Despite the fact that campaigning is integral to elections and their outcomes, the literature on populist radical and extreme right-wing parties reveals little about the electoral impact of campaigning by these types of parties. Albeit restricted to one case, our analysis nonetheless provides evidence that local campaigns run by the extreme right can have significant and positive electoral effects, and even in a case that is traditionally associated with electoral failure. By utilizing a combination of innovative data, we find that support for an extreme right party at the 2010 British general election was significantly higher in areas that were targeted by its campaigns: where the party ran intensive local campaigns, recruited larger clusters of members, had a history of success at local elections, and where local politics were historically dominated by the centre-left, support for the extreme right at a general election was significantly higher. There is also little evidence that the BNP benefited electorally in areas that had been targeted by the streets-based EDL social movement, suggesting that different forms of right-wing extremist politics may not be benefiting from each other in symbiotic fashion. More broadly, and consistent with past research, we find that electoral support for the extreme right is strongest within working class areas that are more dependent than others on the manufacturing sector and are characterized by low average education levels.

These findings provide evidence that, like other types of parties, where those on the extreme right-wing target their resources, build local electoral support and nurture their memberships they are able to increase their electoral dividends. Even in a case like the BNP, a party that has failed to mobilize a broad and stable coalition of voters, by investing in local campaigning and targeting particular types of areas the party significantly improved its electoral performance. Our aggregate level findings are confirmed at the individual level after controlling for a battery of established attitudinal predictors of extreme right voting. Those contacted by the BNP were significantly more likely to vote for the party, while campaigning by all other political parties was ineffective in reducing the probability of voting BNP.

Interestingly, however, and despite this positive electoral impact on support, in the aftermath of the election the BNP's failure to achieve a visible breakthrough fuelled internal factionalism. This culminated in an (unsuccessful) leadership challenge and led many key organizers to abandon the BNP, switch allegiance to the English Democrats, or establish new organizations such as British Freedom. In the aftermath of the BNP's failure to achieve a wider national breakthrough at

the 2010 general election, and following the party's decade-long experimentation with a vote-seeking strategy, the extreme right milieu in Britain has become increasingly fragmented, with much attention now focusing instead on the non-electoral social movement, the EDL.

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Supplementary materials

For supplementary materials referred to in this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1017/S1755773912000288>

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