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Abedi, A. and Lundberg, T.C. (2009) *Doomed to failure? UKIP and the organisational challenges facing right-wing populist anti-political establishment parties*. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62 (1). pp. 72-87. ISSN 0031-2290

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/41367>

Deposited on: 22 October 2010

Doomed to Failure? UKIP and the Organisational Challenges Facing Right-Wing Populist Anti-Political Establishment Parties

This is a pre-copy editing, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in *Parliamentary Affairs* following peer review. The definitive publisher-authenticated version ('Doomed to Failure? UKIP and the Organisational Challenges Facing Right-Wing Populist Anti-Political Establishment Parties', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62(1): 72-87, January 2009) is available online at <http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/62/1/72.abstract>.

Amir Abedi
Department of Political Science
Western Washington University
516 High Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-9082
U.S.A.
+1-360-650-4143
amir.abedi@wwu.edu

Thomas Carl Lundberg
School of Social and Political Sciences
Adam Smith Building
40 Bute Gardens
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8RT
Scotland
0141-330 5144
Thomas.Lundberg@glasgow.ac.uk

Abstract: Using the UK Independence Party (UKIP), we examine the effects of sudden electoral success on an Anti-Political Establishment (APE) party. The pressures of aspiring to government necessitate organisational structures resembling those of mainstream parties, while this aspiration challenges APE parties because they differ not just in terms of their policy profiles, but also in their more 'unorthodox' organisational make-up, inextricably linked to their electoral appeal. Robert Kilroy-Silk wanted to emphasise office-seeking goals while most members wanted the party to remain true to its APE status and not sacrifice its populist nature. This inevitably resulted in internal party conflict.

Introduction

Using the case of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), a minor political party in the British party system, this article examines the effects of sudden electoral success on the organisational structures and long-term survival of a type of party that can be characterised as a right-wing populist Anti-Political Establishment (APE) party. On the one hand, the pressures of aspiring to or being in government pushes groups like this towards organisational structures resembling those of the mainstream parties. On the other hand, the shift to government aspiration represents severe challenges for APE parties because they tend to differ from their mainstream competitors not just in terms of their policy profiles, but also with regard to their more ‘unorthodox’ organisational make-up, which is in turn inextricably linked to their populist self-understanding and electoral appeal. A closer examination of organisational peculiarities and specific challenges reveals that groups failing to adapt their structures are more likely to be unsuccessful in the attempt to establish themselves as viable and (potentially) governing parties.¹

Very little academic attention has been paid to UKIP, despite the fact that it achieved its biggest electoral success in the 2004 European Parliament election, winning over 16% of the British vote and electing 12 of its candidates (UKIP also elected two of its candidates to the London Assembly in 2004, although the candidates later defected to former television presenter Robert Kilroy-Silk’s ‘Veritas’, and by the end of 2005 renamed themselves ‘One London’). UKIP’s European Parliament performance would appear to move it out of the ranks of ‘minor parties’, but we believe UKIP should still be considered a minor party due to its failure at the 2005 Westminster election, where the party won 2.2% of the vote and no seats, plus its poor performance at Scottish Parliament

(less than one per cent of the vote in 2007) and National Assembly for Wales (four per cent of the vote in 2007) elections. Indeed, UKIP has never seen any of its candidates elected as Members of Parliament (MPs) at Westminster,² nor have any of its candidates been elected to the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly, despite the use of proportional electoral systems there.

In spite of this minor party status, as well as the media circus resulting from the party's leadership turmoil, UKIP is worthy of academic study. UKIP often condemns the European Union (EU) as a corrupt, elitist organisation and argues that the Conservative Party's position on the EU differs little from that of the other main British parties. While the Conservatives appear lukewarm and perhaps ambivalent towards the EU, UKIP appeals to Eurosceptic voters with a clear-cut policy: British withdrawal from the EU altogether. The selection of a high-profile candidate, Kilroy-Silk, to help promote this message may have helped UKIP achieve great electoral success in the 2004 European Parliament election, but the fallout resulting from his departure from the party was not helpful to UKIP's public image. We argue that because UKIP's leadership selection process favours intraparty democracy, the process simply could not adapt to the circumstances of sudden electoral success and the rise of a charismatic television personality, with an ambitious agenda for the party, as a potential leader. UKIP requires a one member/one vote election for its leaders, and members have a great deal of influence over the party's policies. The appearance of an outspoken celebrity who wanted to challenge the Conservative Party's claim to being the natural choice for Eurosceptic voters was too much for UKIP to handle.

One might claim that UKIP's success had a lot to do with the fact that European Parliament elections are very much second-order elections³ conducted under proportional rules, and that such circumstances invite an anti-EU protest; it is highly unlikely that UKIP will ever be in the position to govern with (presumably) the Conservatives at Westminster, thanks to the single-member plurality system used for British parliamentary elections. We argue that in addition to these electoral barriers to UKIP's potential for success, there are significant organisational factors that doom the party to failure. There is an inherent contradiction between wanting to be a populist APE party, organised in a 'grassroots' democratic way, and wanting to achieve significant electoral success at some point. While other UK parties have begun to adopt practices like one member/one vote for party leader, UKIP has among the most highly developed intraparty democratic procedures. Thus, UKIP is 'doomed to fail' as long as it is unable, or unwilling, to deal with this contradiction.

A party's organisational structure evolves over time, and the position of important events in a party's life cycle has major implications for how well the party organisation can handle such events. In the case of UKIP after its European Parliament success, there was a 'timing problem' – Kilroy-Silk arrived too early in UKIP's life cycle. A chronicler of UKIP's experiences, Mark Daniel, alludes to the party's desire to maintain its peculiar organisational form, rather than focus on vote-maximisation and office-seeking goals, arguing 'that such problems – the reconciliation of pure democratic principle with the desire to construct a structured political party which could function among professional rivals, the desperate need for funding, the casting about for kindred spirits and allies, the attempt to remain idealistic while winning and holding temporal power, the desire for

stable leaders, coupled with an aspiration to popular leadership – are inevitable at the birth of any political party founded upon conviction and by amateurs in the modern world'.⁴ We will explore Daniel's argument in a systematic and theoretical way in this article.

UKIP as an Anti-Political Establishment Party

A party can be classified as an APE party if it fulfils all of the following criteria:⁵

- A party that challenges the status quo in terms of major policy issues and political system issues.
- A party that perceives itself as a challenger to the parties that make up the political establishment.
- A party that asserts that there exists a fundamental divide between the political establishment and the people. It thereby implies that all establishment parties, be they in government or in opposition, are essentially the same.

The last criterion in particular captures a central element in most definitions of populism.⁶ As Canovan has pointed out populist movements on both the right and left of the political spectrum assert that 'the people' have been excluded from power by 'corrupt politicians and an unrepresentative elite' who without fail disregard the interests and opinions of ordinary voters.⁷ Thus, populist APE parties, in contrast to, for example, communist or fascist APE parties, generally emphasize the need for the party to be organized in a grassroots democratic way. Moreover, they demand that the electorate be more directly involved in decision-making, through the introduction of direct democracy into the political process.

UKIP certainly challenges the status quo, particularly on one major policy issue: British membership of the EU. While not the only British political party that advocates EU withdrawal – the extreme-right British National Party (BNP) also espouses this policy – even the Eurosceptic Conservative Party does not go so far as to call for leaving the organisation. UKIP’s party constitution⁸ states at the outset, in Article 2, that ‘to withdraw the UK from the European Union’, in order that the UK ‘shall again be governed by laws made to suit its own needs by its own Parliament, which must be directly and solely accountable to the electorate of the UK’ is its ‘principal aim’.

In addition to challenging a major policy issue, UKIP’s advocacy of EU withdrawal would bring about a significant change in the British political system. Most contemporary accounts of the British constitution recognise that the traditional ‘Westminster model’ of democracy, in which power is highly concentrated at the centre (justified by ‘parliamentary sovereignty’), was altered fundamentally when Britain joined what was then called the European Economic Community in 1973; together with the subsequent devolution of power to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, Britain experiences what is now called ‘multilevel governance’, in which power is much more dispersed, despite what politicians might claim.⁹ While even most textbooks on British politics now describe how EU membership and UK territorial devolution of power undermine parliamentary sovereignty, and that multilevel governance is a reality, UKIP seems to want to turn the clock back. In addition to advocating EU withdrawal, UKIP, in recent election manifestos,¹⁰ calls for abolition of the Welsh Assembly and the replacement of the 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament with the 59 ‘underemployed’ Scottish (Westminster) MPs. Other changes the party seeks include ‘English days’ in

Parliament in which only English MPs will be able to debate bills that apply only to England, the scrapping of all English regional assemblies, and the repeal of the Human Rights Act. Therefore, UKIP stands firmly against the status quo on major policy issues that have significant implications for the British political system as a whole.

In addition to this challenge to the system, UKIP seems to relish its role as a challenger to the established political parties in Britain. The current leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage, invoked this status for his party upon assuming the leadership in September 2006. ‘We’re going to be a party fighting on a broad range of domestic policies and together if we’re united and disciplined we will become the real voice of opposition in British politics’, Farage said, adding that ‘David Cameron clearly has decided to abandon Conservatism’.¹¹ The Conservatives, for their part, have referred to UKIP as a collection of ‘cranks and gadflies’,¹² trying to marginalise the upstart party. Even Conservatives sympathetic to UKIP’s call for EU withdrawal, such as the MP Philip Davies, argue that the party would be better off as a pressure group and question why UKIP has tried to ‘rebrand’ itself as a party interested in more than just a single issue.¹³ In 2006, relations between the two right-wing parties reached a new low when Conservative leader David Cameron told the listeners of a radio phone-in show that UKIP was full of ‘fruitcakes and loonies – and closet racists mostly’, a comment that elicited the threat of a libel suit from Farage.¹⁴

UKIP constantly invokes populist appeals to show how it stands up for ‘the people’s’ interests while the other parties support the same old status quo. For example, UKIP’s 2005 UK election manifesto and 2007 Scottish and Welsh election manifestos all called for a strengthening of local democracy, as well as referendums at both the local

and UK level where there is support (displayed by means of petition signatures). This populist policy is at odds with the traditional Westminster model that concentrates power in the hands of the Cabinet, yet is consistent with UKIP's anti-politician message. Populism also reveals itself in comments from UKIP members, particularly when they claim that the main parties are essentially the same. UKIP leader Farage claimed that 'on the big issues of the day you cannot put a cigarette paper between the three major parties' and that while some people 'may place us as being right of centre, I would place us as being in the centre of public opinion'.¹⁵ The previous leader, Roger Knapman, wrote in his introduction to UKIP's 2005 general election manifesto that members of his party do not see themselves as politicians; they 'are people from all backgrounds who feel deeply what the majority of British people feel – that it is not right to have our country run by institutions across the Channel' and that a 'vote for any other party will be a wasted vote – it will merely continue our subservience to Brussels'. The manifesto later describes the EU as 'undemocratic, corrupt, and unreformable'. Statements like these imply a division between UKIP, which represents 'average' British people, and the 'professional' politicians of the major parties who have allowed, and continue to allow, Britain to be run by a corrupt foreign organisation.

While some observers might want to categorise UKIP as a party of the extreme right, we reject this classification. There are many different scholarly definitions of what characterises parties of the extreme right, with no agreement on one precise definition.¹⁶ Cas Mudde's search through the relevant literature revealed these five common characteristics among the majority of the scholarship: 'nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, and the strong state'.¹⁷ In another review of the literature on the extreme

right, Roger Eatwell points to a similar list of characteristics that ‘figure most prominently in academic definitions...hostility to democracy; racism; support for the strong state; and nationalism’.¹⁸ Some definitions of the extreme right get entangled with definitions of other right-wing parties, such as right-wing populist parties,¹⁹ but as pointed out earlier, we consider populist parties to be a distinct subtype of the APE party. The classification of UKIP as an APE party should help to clarify how the party fits into the British party system.

Organisation and Life Cycles

Because of their outsider status and declared opposition to the mainstream parties, APE parties can be expected to focus on policy-seeking, intraparty democracy-seeking and vote-seeking goals.²⁰ As long as their anti-establishment stances have electoral appeal, these parties are not likely to sacrifice their anti-establishment objectives. Thus, why would APE parties change their priorities in the first place? A shift in primary goals could be triggered, gradually or abruptly, by internal factors or external stimuli. Harmel and Janda’s ‘discrete change’ approach²¹ suggests that change may be induced by the replacement of a party’s leadership or dominant faction alone, but that external shocks usually have a stronger and more direct impact. The objective sought by a party determines the kinds of external stimuli that will be most conducive to change. For a vote-seeking party this may be a string of disappointing election results.²² While shifts in the nature of the party system or instances of poor electoral performance are particularly important for most parties, a new APE party’s change of primary goals is more likely to

be induced by an unexpectedly *successful* electoral performance that gives it a pivotal role. Under such circumstances, office-seeking goals may eventually come to the fore.

While external shocks often lead parties to reassess their primary goals, this change, in turn, encourages them to undertake organisational reforms. The role and interdependence of external stimuli and internal factors in explaining such reforms has been substantiated both for right-wing populist and for green APE parties.²³ But why should office-seeking APE parties be expected to change in the direction of *conformity* with their mainstream competitors? After all, parties tend to be conservative with regard to their structures, and APE parties do not just display opposition to the policy and issue positions of the political establishment, but also a distinct organisational make-up, which tends to be part and parcel of their very anti-establishment platforms, to correspond to the expectations of their members and supporters, and hence to be in line with their policy-seeking, intraparty democracy-seeking and vote-seeking goals. As long as APE parties are not office-seeking, but capitalise on anti-party sentiment in attracting and binding voters, they can thus be expected to retain their characteristic ‘movement’ character and to resist pressures to adapt.²⁴

An answer to the question raised here is suggested by the ‘life-cycle’ approach. Building on Michels²⁵ and Stein,²⁶ its proponents argue that there is a nexus between a party’s stage of development and its primary goals, on the one hand, and specific leadership tasks and organisational requirements, on the other.²⁷ Change occurs gradually as parties move through three stages of development, and the nature and timing of organisational reforms is a function of an ‘individual party’s age and/or growth pattern’.²⁸ Each of the phases that a party goes through on its way to maturation not only

requires specific leadership abilities, strategic orientations and capacity, but also appropriate organisational resources. As their structures develop, parties shed their initial 'movement' character, formulate a broader and long-term political agenda, and enter a path of institutionalisation.

At the first stage, which stretches from a party's formation to the election of its first couple of representatives, it must develop and communicate its identity and message, and secure a constituency. An APE party will be particularly eager to achieve these objectives by distinguishing itself from its competitors. Policy-seeking and intraparty democracy-seeking goals are likely to be prioritised. The greater opportunities for meaningful involvement that any new party, especially an APE party, tends to afford may attract members and supporters as much as its issue positions. 'Novice ideologues' with high levels of ideological commitment and loyalty to the leadership, but little or no office-holding experience are likely to play an important role.²⁹

Their distinctive organisational structures make APE parties more open and attractive to this kind of members and conversely, these groups will initially have a strong incentive not to question their 'unorthodox' features or to deter 'novice ideologues'. Especially where they are founded and guided through the first phase of their existence by a charismatic leader with the requisite creative abilities and rhetorical qualities, a differentiated and effective organisation will not be greatly missed. Instead, the leader will draw on his/her personal authority and a small cadre of activists in order to compensate for the lack of established rules and procedures.³⁰ The typical dearth of members that are experienced and 'presentable' enough to fill responsible intraparty positions or to run as candidates exacerbates the tendency of right-wing populist APE

party leaders to manage their formations in a hierarchical fashion, only supported by a small inner circle that monopolises key positions. More often than not, party decision-making bodies are nonexistent or subordinate, and there is little role differentiation.³¹

In short, the maximum visibility and freedom of action enjoyed by the leader can be conducive to a new party's development and success at this stage. In the case of UKIP, the founder and first leader (1993-7), Alan Sked, exercised a significant amount of personal control over his party. In 1992, in order to oppose the Maastricht Treaty, Sked founded the Anti-Federalist League and decided to contest a number of seats in that year's general election. While all of the League's candidates fared rather poorly in the election, Sked, who himself had run against Chris Patten, managed to gain some media attention.³² In 1993, together with a few supporters, he launched the United Kingdom Independence Party, which unlike the Anti-Federalist League was to be a full-fledged political party.³³ Daniel argues that Sked drafted a constitution that gave 'undue security to the leader'.³⁴ He points out that such power in the hands of a leader had its drawbacks because Sked 'was an inspirational leader and a brilliant man, but he refused to believe that anyone had skills other than his own or that, if they had, they might be of value. He could not delegate. Everything was always about Alan, and all decisions must be referred to him. He was certainly no administrator, and, as soon as this was pointed out he flew into a fury'.³⁵

At the second stage in a party's life cycle, vote-seeking goals come to the fore, and a party's soaring number of rank-and-file members, parliamentary representatives and office-holders creates new challenges. It can no longer be run as a one-man (or one-woman) show, responsibilities have to be delegated, and routinised mechanisms of

conflict resolution and consensus building have to be established in order to deal with increased levels of intraparty factionalism. More effective campaign management is required, too, in order to make electoral success more durable. All these challenges require activists with more political experience and administrative skills than the ‘novice ideologues’. In short, this second phase is likely to be characterised by major organisational reforms. In order to ensure their successful implementation, the party leadership has to become less personalised, giving up some control. If the original leader does not possess the organisational skills and strategic foresight necessary to steer the party through the second (or any other) developmental stage, a change in the party’s leadership might occur; leadership change can either facilitate a party’s move to the next phase or, if it is associated with vicious infighting, tear it apart and ultimately lead to its demise.

Right-wing populist APE parties are faced with a particular dilemma in this regard – they highlight themes of grassroots democracy and popular sovereignty. These themes play an important role in attracting and binding members and supporters. At the same time, the success of these parties strongly depends on the personality and skills of their leaders. Thus, democracy-seeking goals are much more part of their populist rhetoric than of their actual behaviour. There is no obvious way out of the tension between populist stances and a highly centralised organisational reality. This is likely to create disappointment and massive internal strife.

As UKIP gained members in the mid-1990s, the party began to restructure itself in a more democratic way,³⁶ but these changes were accompanied by significant infighting until a measure of stability emerged early in the next decade. Sked, who resigned the

leadership in July 1997, was seen as ‘a “control-freak” who lost control but could not acknowledge it’ by Daniel,³⁷ who recounts Sked’s troubles with competition from Sir James Goldsmith’s Referendum Party, an attempted BNP infiltration, and sniping from other senior party members.³⁸ The new leader, Michael Holmes, was also seen by party colleagues as an egotistical control freak who feared any threats to his position.³⁹ He lost the confidence of the party’s National Executive Committee (NEC) soon after the party won three seats in the 1999 European Parliament election; he and the entire NEC resigned.⁴⁰ Eventually, however, UKIP entered a period of stability under new leaders, and in 2004 the party claimed nearly 20,000 members.⁴¹ Membership figures remained fairly stable, with UKIP reporting to the Electoral Commission that it had about 16,700 members in June 2007.⁴²

Finally, the third stage sets in when the party’s attention shifts to office-seeking goals, and its government aspiration is noticed and taken seriously by others. At that point it must put emphasis on establishing and solidifying its reputation as a potential party of government, and hence will have to tone down its criticism of competitors. Relationships with other parties must be developed and cultivated. Erratic leadership behaviour or unresolved internal conflict is no longer tolerable because it jeopardises attempts to secure credibility. A leader now has to have the abilities of a ‘moderator and stabiliser’,⁴³ administrative and human-relations skills, and a much greater degree of strategic capacity in order to master a nested, or two-level, game: an internal game with rank-and-file members and middle-level activists, and an external one with other (established) parties.⁴⁴ In order to achieve these objectives, existing organisational

structures must be fine-tuned, and the requirements of successful government participation are likely to necessitate centralisation.

Yet the ‘popular movement’ character of right-wing populist APE parties tends to be more pronounced and more crucial to their electoral appeal than is the case for right-wing extremist APE parties. Institutionalisation is therefore a major challenge for right-wing populist APE parties, especially office-seeking ones. The populist aspects of these parties enable them to be credible opposition forces and to make electoral gains. As soon as they prioritise office-seeking goals, however, these strengths are likely to turn into disadvantages, and the failure to solve organisational problems jeopardises long-term survival. Moreover, while they greatly depend on their leader's skills, the leader him/herself is, in many cases, a political neophyte and hence inexperienced in the business of managing a party. Stabilising the party and making it fit for government participation requires the leader to give up some of his/her power, to delegate responsibilities, and to accept some factionalism.⁴⁵

Various organisational dimensions are implied in the life-cycle heuristic: the degree of territorial and functional differentiation, and of (de)centralisation in internal decision-making; forms of leadership and its selection; the existence and nature of procedures and norms that regulate the relationship between the leadership, middle-level activists and rank-and-file members; the existence and nature of links with social movements; etc. Institutionalisation can thus be defined as a process of organisational change whereby a party acquires a degree of autonomy and clearly demarcated boundaries. Other features include a proper balance of internal coherence and differentiation, with a firmly established division of labour among party members and

bodies; clearly defined rules that regulate access to intraparty positions and guide the behaviour of members; procedures of rule enforcement; and mechanisms that enable organisational adaptation and learning.⁴⁶

Robert Kilroy-Silk and UKIP's Life Cycle 'Mismatch'

Empirically, life-cycle stages, primary goals, organisational resources and structures may or may not coincide, but a party's successful institutionalisation and long-term survival appear to be strongly dependent on such a 'match'. Hence even APE parties should be expected to change their structures in the direction of conformity when they start prioritising office-seeking goals – parties that fail to adapt in this way are unlikely to develop the strategic capacity needed to become part of the political establishment, and to ensure their long-term survival. Yet this very organisational adaptation is likely to be a huge and often insurmountable challenge for APE parties. Success is by no means guaranteed, and efforts to change structures may precipitate the demise of this party type both where they fail and where they are implemented too quickly, or lead too far. The scope of change necessary to meet systemic pressures and the requirements of eventual government participation is much greater for these groups than the pressures faced by their mainstream competitors precisely because their 'movement' character, peculiar leadership style and 'unorthodox' organisational make-up are interwoven with their core message. A change in this dimension represents no less than a shift away from their very *raison d'être*. The reassessment of primary goals and organisational reforms following it are very likely to open up a large credibility gap, sparking factional conflict.

Unlike their mainstream competitors, office-seeking APE parties face the dilemma of maintaining their radical opposition identity and challenger appeal while at the same time transforming their structures in order to enhance the effectiveness of their parliamentary and governmental work. These reforms can be expected to drive a wedge between supporters, rank-and-file members and middle-level activists who are mainly ideologically motivated and want to preserve their party's challenger status and those – usually the inner circle – who favour an office-seeking strategy. An ambitious office-seeking strategy is exactly what Kilroy-Silk wanted UKIP to pursue in the wake of the spectacular 2004 European Parliament election result, both for the party and for himself personally.

Robert Kilroy-Silk, a former Labour MP and television personality who had just been sacked by the BBC for making anti-Arab remarks, was a consistent opponent of the European Community/Union.⁴⁷ This determined man seemed to be a perfect fit for UKIP given his fight against political correctness and the political establishment. The two quickly found common ground and Kilroy-Silk was placed at the top of the party's list in the East Midlands.⁴⁸ Due to his celebrity status and higher name recognition, Kilroy-Silk soon became the face of UKIP's European Parliament election campaign. The election was a triumph for the party. It gained 16.1% of the votes and emerged as the third largest party ahead of the Liberal Democrats and just ten points behind the Conservatives. Kilroy-Silk felt that this provided the party with a perfect opening to adopt a more ambitious strategy. He sought to take on the Conservatives, a party that should be 'killed', in his words; however, such a killing was not what UKIP wanted.⁴⁹ The party would not target Eurosceptic MPs, and Kilroy-Silk's announcement to the contrary

alienated Paul Sykes, a major donor who later withdrew support for UKIP because of Kilroy-Silk's comments.⁵⁰

Kilroy-Silk's personal ambition was to replace Knapman as leader. In a television interview, Kilroy-Silk told David Frost that 'everybody tells me they want...the current leader to accept the inevitable and to stand down...during the last June elections, the current leader told me and others that he would step down after the election – but then of course he got a massive election result and...now he's changed his mind'.⁵¹ From the life-cycle perspective, this turn of events reveals a mismatch between a party that was still in the second stage of its life cycle and a quasi-leader who behaved like it was already in the third stage, due to its sudden electoral success. Furthermore, UKIP's highly democratic organisational structure required that party members vote upon any change in leadership in a one member/one vote postal ballot. Knapman, responding to Kilroy-Silk's televised claim, pointed out to friends that such an arrangement would be unconstitutional: 'Not only would I not make any such agreement, but I could not!'.⁵² The leader later announced in a radio interview that 'there could be no straight handover' due to the party's constitutional requirements, and that Kilroy-Silk 'must start to think about being a team player'.⁵³ Kilroy-Silk resigned the party whip shortly afterwards and formed his own party, Veritas.

While mainstream parties can draw on an organisational continuity that implies 'some capitulation to the requirements of competition and pluralism',⁵⁴ APE parties often do not have effective intraparty decision-making bodies and procedures. Hence they can easily be torn apart by internal conflict. Furthermore, membership dues are important resources for newer and smaller parties, and government aspirations may attract a great

number of new members expecting policy rewards or party and public offices for themselves. Yet a quickly growing number of members may be a double-edged sword for APE parties because they are likely to attract more ‘novice ideologues’ than persons with the required political skills, and hence to exacerbate the described internal conflict, which will often take the form of a rift between ‘ideologues’ and ‘careerists’, or between the leadership and rank-and-file members.

These dangers are likely to be compounded if office-seeking goals are envisaged at the early stages of an APE party’s development, when its degree of institutionalisation is still low, or when the stages of development occur simultaneously. While mainstream parties can adapt to environmental change in a gradual fashion precisely because they ‘have been around for a while’, such a sequential and evolutionary path is generally not available to APE parties that decide to embark on an office-seeking strategy when they get the unexpected chance to join a government. Instead, they usually have to adapt rather quickly, which puts additional stress on their leadership and makes failure more likely. Evidence gathered by Harmel and Svåsand not only supports the argument that different stages in an APE party’s life cycle require a leadership with different, task-appropriate skill sets. It also shows that these parties are more likely to fail in achieving institutionalisation and securing long-term survival if they have major electoral success and become potential governing parties too quickly after their foundation, at a moment of organisational immaturity. Inadequate leadership skills and misguided strategic orientations may result in turmoil and the premature demise of new formations under those circumstances.⁵⁵ Thus, sustainable organisational change is more likely to occur in

those office-seeking APE parties that have reached the final stage of their development before they decide to make government participation their main goal.

Kilroy-Silk's failure to become party leader and his subsequent departure consequently may ultimately turn out to be a blessing for UKIP. As a result of the party's return to an emphasis on policy and intraparty democracy-seeking goals, a match between UKIP's organisational structure and its life-cycle stage is once again in evidence. While this will not necessarily help the party in electoral terms, it will enable UKIP to establish itself as a fairly stable minor party in the British party system. There is also still the possibility that UKIP may eventually move into the third stage of party development assuming that it has sufficient time gradually to make the necessary organisational changes.

Where does UKIP stand now? Despite its attempts to build upon its 2004 European Parliament electoral success, the party has failed to attract significant support. Not wishing to be seen as a single-issue party, UKIP has broadened out its policy agenda, concentrating heavily on immigration (where it seeks a major reduction), the economy (calling for less regulation, lower taxes, and 'freer' trade policies), and devolution of power (which it opposes). This approach, in theory, should help the party, since recent opinion polling indicates that Europe, as a single issue, is only seen as the most important, or another important, issue facing Britain by four per cent of those surveyed.⁵⁶ Immigration and race relations, on the other hand, are rated as important by 43% of those polled by Ipsos MORI in late 2007, ahead of crime (at 41%) with the highest level of support. On voting intentions, the same poll found that Europe was a very important issue

in the next general election to only 11% of those surveyed, while crime was at the top (56%), ahead of health care (47%) and immigration (46%).

Perhaps because mainstream parties have policies on these issues, and because both Labour and the Conservatives have rather Eurosceptic positions (with only the Liberal Democrats being consistently pro-EU), UKIP does not fare well in recent polling. Both Ipsos MORI and ICM polling in September and October 2007 found that UKIP had the support of one per cent of those surveyed, behind the Greens. UKIP has also experienced trouble in attracting donations, with support down to £184,122 in 2007 from £271,807 in 2006, according to the party's financial statement filed with the Electoral Commission,⁵⁷ which also indicates that the party's total income dropped from £676,952 in 2005 to £435,827 in 2006. Perhaps most importantly, however, on the crucial issue of whether Britain should remain in the EU, 56% of those polled by ICM in October 2007 said Britain should stay, while 38% said Britain should leave.⁵⁸ While the number supporting withdrawal is considerable, the majority of British people appear to disagree with UKIP's most important policy. If a party is identified very strongly with one major issue, and most people disagree with its position on this issue, then it is clearly going to be difficult for the party to gain a major following.

Conclusion

In choosing UKIP for this article, we hope not only to have contributed to the scholarly study of minor parties by looking at how UKIP's organisational structure offers the party opportunities (and dangers), but by classifying UKIP as an APE party, rather than an

extreme right or single-issue party, we also hope we have enhanced the conventional understanding of the British party system.

Shortly after its spectacular success in the 2004 European Parliament election, UKIP faced a crucial challenge to its status as a populist APE party: a celebrity with great ambitions for the party (and himself) appeared too early in UKIP's life cycle. The party rejected not only his supposed entitlement to the leadership (which could not be granted by anyone but the party's membership in a postal ballot), but also his claims that UKIP could 'kill' the Conservatives because of UKIP's position on the EU. The party seemed to view itself as having enough of a 'movement' character to resist the temptation to take on Conservative candidates at large, rather than just those individuals who were perceived as 'weak' on Europe. Rather than becoming a replacement for the Conservatives, UKIP chose to remain true to its APE status and not sacrifice its populist nature.

UKIP's decision to refrain from taking on the Conservatives wholeheartedly reflects its position in the second stage of its life cycle. Being at this stage means that UKIP retains some characteristics of a popular movement and, as such, is less of a direct electoral threat to the Conservatives. UKIP can function almost like a pressure group, however, and possibly have some impact on Conservative Party policy. Furthermore, the presence of UKIP could act as something of a safety valve for the Conservatives: a place for disaffected party members (and possibly even politicians) to go. In this sense, the two parties are not necessarily enemies and can exist almost symbiotically.

Daniel's historical narrative on UKIP points out the many problems facing a 'party founded upon conviction and by amateurs in the modern world'.⁵⁹ We have tried

to elaborate upon these points in a systematic and theoretical way in this article, explaining UKIP's fundamental problems arising from its peculiar form of organisation and the implications of its stage in the life cycle, rather than relying on the standard criticism of the party as hobbled by its electoral context. Obviously the party's over-reliance upon a position that is not shared by the majority of British people does not help its chances, and UKIP's place at the bottom of current opinion polling does not bode well for its future. The electoral context, however, could change, particularly as the 2009 European Parliament election approaches. We argue that until the party reaches the appropriate stage in its life cycle, UKIP will find it impossible to take full advantage of any good electoral fortune that might come its way.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, and the Department of Political Science, Western Washington University, for conference attendance funding, as well as Colin Copus, Kevin Adamson, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments.

¹ This article draws from arguments developed in A. Abedi and S. Schneider, 'Adapt, or Die! Organizational Change in Office-Seeking Anti-Political Establishment Parties', paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004.

² In April 2008, UKIP gained its first MP after Bob Spink defected from the Conservative Party. For more information, see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7360118.stm.

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⁵ A. Abedi, *Anti-Political Establishment Parties: A comparative analysis*, Routledge, 2004, p. 12.

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