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Interpreting UKIP's "earthquake" in British politics: UK television news coverage of the 2009 and 2014 EU election campaigns

At UKIP's party conference in 2013, its leader Nigel Farage delivered a rousing speech ahead of the European Parliamentary elections in May 2014. He suggested UKIP would 'come first in those European elections and cause an earthquake in British politics'¹. Eight months later, these ambitions were fulfilled when UKIP gained the most MEPs – 24 – and won the popular vote with a share of 26.77%. UKIP's successful anti-EU stance was shared by other right-wing and euro-sceptical parties across Europe; the right-wing Danish People's Party and the French National Front, for example, received the largest share of votes in their respective countries.

The popularity of anti-EU right wing parties, of course, was not a complete surprise to the political establishment. Ahead of the 2014 EU election, for example, Ofcom – who regulate UK commercial media – ruled that broadcasters must consider UKIP a 'major party' in campaign coverage. This effectively elevated UKIP to a similar status as the UK's three mainstream political parties – the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats – for when broadcasters' interpret the 'due impartiality' of election coverage. Although UKIP beat Labour to second place in the 2009 EU elections, the party was not granted 'major party' status during that campaign. But after a strong performance in the 2013 local elections and then consistently polling head of the Liberal Democrats, by 2014 UKIP had built up enough popular support to convince Ofcom they should be considered a 'major party'.

In this article we explore television coverage of the EU elections during the 2009 and 2014 campaigns, interpreting the comparative volume and nature of coverage three weeks before election day. Amid suggestions that UKIP received too much coverage during the 2014 EU elections², we take a particular interest in how the party was reported, the

appearances of its leader Nigel Farage, and how far their policy agenda shaped television news coverage.

The study has three overall research questions:

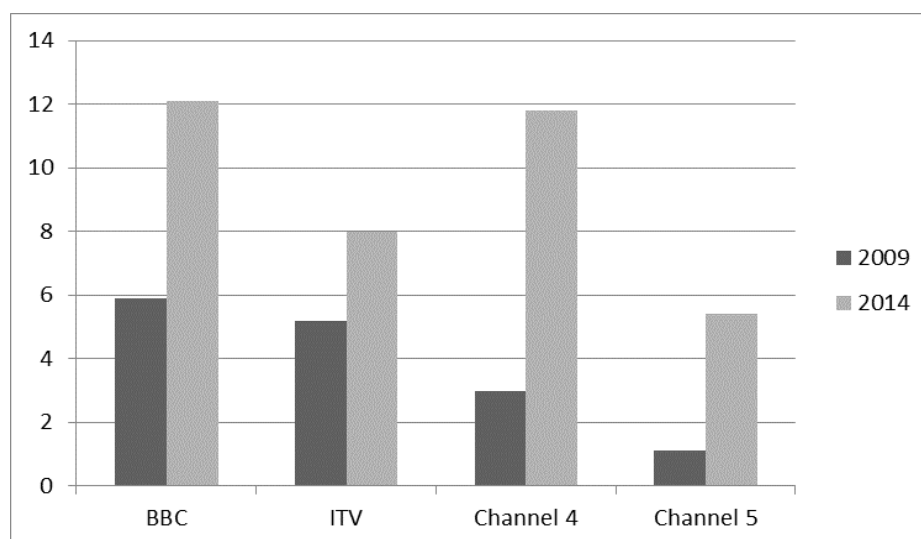
1. To what extent were the 2009 and 2014 EU election campaigns reported in UK television news?
2. How balanced was coverage of competing parties and leaders during the 2009 and 2014 EU election campaigns on UK television news? Was there, for example, a particular focus on UKIP leader Nigel Farage during the 2014 EU campaign?
3. What issues – whether campaign or policy-related – shaped UK television news coverage during the 2009 and 2014 election campaigns? Did one party's agenda dominate coverage?

In order to systematically examine coverage of the 2009 and 2014 EU election campaigns in the UK, we conducted a content analysis of evening television news. This included the bulletins on three commercial public service broadcasters – Channel 5 (5pm), ITV (6.30pm) and Channel 4 (7pm). The evening bulletins on the public service broadcaster – the BBC – were also examined.³ In 2009⁴ this sample period covered May 11 - June 3 and in 2014 April 28 - May 21 (excluding weekends). We monitored a total of 1566 stories during both election campaigns, amounting to 65 hours 41 minutes, but more closely examined election-related stories, which were then broken down into news items (n for 2009 = 59, n for 2014 = 117). These refer to different television news conventions, such as an item presented by the anchor, a reporter's edited package, live two-way or studio discussion⁵.

Enhanced campaign visibility

Political scientists assign different elections ‘first’ and ‘second-order status’⁶. The ‘first’ status represents Presidential or general elections because citizens perceive them as holding the greatest significance. By contrast, local and EU elections – the objects of our focus – can be labelled ‘second-order’ because since citizens perceive them to hold less significance. The campaign visibility of the EU election campaigns, in other words, would not be reasonably expected to match that of a ‘first-order’ election. A useful measure to consider the relative proportion of election news is the comparison of the volume of coverage versus the previous campaign period. Figure 1 shows the proportion of election stories in 2009 and 2014 as a proportion of the entire news agenda three weeks prior to election day.

Figure 1: The proportion of coverage during the 2009 and 2014 EU and local elections in UK television bulletins (by percentage of total news time)



While the proportion of election news on ITV increased by more than half from 2009 to 2014, the BBC’s reporting doubled, while Channel 4 and 5 enhanced coverage by four and fivefold respectively. In short, UK television news coverage of the EU campaign increased substantially – to different degrees – from 2009 to 2014. Given the collective shift in editorial interest towards the EU election across all UK broadcasters, what explains the

campaign's greater visibility? For instance, while coverage might have increased from 2009 to 2014, the turnout in the EU election – approximately a third of the UK population – remained static. Needless to say, no single factor can account for the rise. However, understanding the wider context of both campaigns does offer some insight. In 2009, for example, the campaign took place alongside the MPs' expenses scandal, and political journalists were preoccupied with the latest revelations and voter reactions to them.

Indeed, our study found the wider news agenda of 2009 was notably different to that of 2014. Across the 2009 bulletins, coverage of non-policy political stories (primarily relating to MPs' expenses) dominated news agendas, with the exception of Channel 5. In 2014, there was a more familiar range of stories which typically appear outside of election time such as crime, business, foreign affairs and health. Moreover, while general political stories continued to feature in coverage during the 2014 EU campaign, election news was reported to a greater extent, with the exception of ITV. Put another way, in 2014, EU election news superseded routine political reporting involving MPs and Westminster. Perhaps the most striking finding concerned Channel 5 – traditionally associated with the lightest news agenda – and its editorial commitment to the EU election. In 2009, it did not report the MPs' expenses scandal to the same degree as its commercial rivals (14.5%, versus between 31.6 and 41.5% on the other bulletins). In 2014, however, Channel 5's coverage of the EU election rose almost fivefold (from 1.1% to 5.4%). In summary, while MPs' expenses dominated political reporting during the 2009 EU elections, the more 'routine' news agenda during the 2014 campaign meant the EU elections gained far more 'air time' on early evening bulletins.

Since news about politics competes with other topics - crime, business, health, foreign affairs and so on – different campaigns and issues overlap. In both 2009 and 2014, coverage of elections was not always clear cut, and sometimes stories were mixed in their scope (covering not just European Parliamentary elections, but perhaps also local council elections

and indeed a forthcoming by-election for the UK Parliament). Clearly, more election news in 2014 meant more references to different elections. However, while there was a continued emphasis on EU elections above local elections, we found significant references to a by-election and the general election in 2015 (26.8% of all references in 2014 up from 14.9% in 2009). References to the general election reflect the significance of ‘first-order’ elections, shaping both EU and local campaigns. In particular, the Newark by-election on June 5 2014 – triggered by the resignation of Patrick Mercer MP – became pivotal in assessing whether UKIP’s popular support could be transferred to Westminster politics more generally. As news about the by-election broke, UKIP leader Nigel Farage dominated the headlines amid widespread speculation about whether he would stand and challenge an established Conservative seat. The journalistic excitement was exemplified on Channel 4 on 29 April, when its political correspondent Michael Crick engaged in a live two-way exchange:

This could be one of the biggest by-elections in my political adult career ...the constituency of Newark faces a by-election...the prospect is maybe of Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader, fighting that by-election ... it’s the kind of place that UKIP might do well although the Conservatives have a 16,000 majority but if UKIP was to put up Nigel Farage, all the pressure would be on UKIP – would he win - and all the pressure would be on the Conservatives...maybe I’m fantasising too much here but that’s the possibility – certainly it’s going to be a fascinating contest...

Notwithstanding such expectations, the following day Farage decided not to stand. Rather than killing the story, however, the spotlight on UKIP shone even brighter as the contest was personalized further by focussing on the party leader’s credibility. This – combined with a stronger journalistic excitement about the general election superseding the European campaign – resulted in numerous journalists questioning Farage’s political judgement and leadership:

Your enemies will say this is a Gordon Brown-style situation - you [Nigel Farage] looked down the barrel of it, you had the opportunity, you toyed with it and then you bottled it... (ITV’s Tom Bradby interviewing Nigel Farage, 30/4/14).

Cigarette in one hand, pint in the other, Nigel Farage famously loves a fight but today he decided to avoid one by not running in the Newark by-election... even as they breathed a sigh of relief, his critics accused him of bottling out. His response? Too much distraction from the European election campaign... (Channel 4's Anchor Matt Frei in his opening introduction, 30/4/14).

Amid the possible UKIP “earthquake” within British politics and the 2015 general election, there appears more than a hint of disappointment among journalists eager to report the implications Farage might have on the wider political establishment.

The verbal and visual representation of party actors

The enhanced presence of UKIP and its leader Nigel Farage in television news coverage from 2009 and 2014 was reinforced in our examination of sound bites and, in particular, image bites. Whereas sound bites reveal how long political actors are heard speaking on screen for a continuous period, image bites measure the total time political actors appear on screen without necessarily being heard. Compared to 2009, political parties and politicians were far more vocal in shaping election news in 2014. On Channel 4, air time granted to politician voices radically increased – from just 97 seconds in 2009 to 1740 seconds in 2014. Likewise Channel 5 dramatically enhanced the time spent sourcing politicians’ views from only 16 seconds in 2009 to 300 seconds in 2014. The volume of campaign coverage was much less in 2009, in part at least explaining why political voices were far less audible.

By contrast, in 2014 politicians had far more time to convey their views in UK television news coverage, most notably UKIP and its leader Nigel Farage. Whereas UKIP secured just 15 seconds airtime in 2009, during the 2014 campaign on ITV and Channel 4 bulletins their party candidates collectively amounted to more coverage than the other parties. This was most strikingly the case on Channel 4, where the extended hour-long format facilitated lengthy interviews with UKIP representatives including Neil Hamilton and Winston Mackenzie. However repeated appearances rather than lengthy interviews explain

UKIP's dominance on Channel 4 and ITV. On Channel 4, for example, UKIP sound bites featured in eight different news items - higher than Labour (5), Conservative (4), Liberal Democrats (3) or the Green Party (2). On ITV, UKIP appeared in 4 items – the same as the Conservative Party – but higher than the Liberal Democrats (3), Labour (2) and the Greens (1).

A closer examination of sound bites revealed the pre-eminence of party leaders. Table 1 shows that the leaders of the main political parties represented a considerable share of their party's overall coverage, with the brackets indicating the time given to non-party leader actors.

Table 1: Time (in seconds) of leaders' political sound bites during the 2009 and 2014 EU elections in UK television news bulletins (amount of seconds for other party candidates in brackets)

	2009				2014			
	BBC	ITV	Ch4	Ch5	BBC	ITV	Ch4	Ch5
Cameron	29 (17)	(22)	(22)	/	112 (17)	86 (10)	283 (31)	130
Brown/ Miliband*	50	(37)	17 (36)	3 (13)	46 (9)	64	348 (18)	71
Clegg	28	(8)	(22)	/	109 (39)	107	150	83
Farage	/	15	/	/	94	104 (19)	249 (390)	16
Griffin	43	22	/	/	/	/	/	/
Lucas/ Bennett*	/	13	/	/	/	(29)	(92)	

(* the leadership of Labour and Green parties changed between 2009 and 2014 elections).

Indeed, the three mainstream leaders occupied an overwhelming proportion of their party's sound bites, with relatively little time coverage given to MEP candidates. Perhaps surprisingly, however, most air time was granted to UKIP politicians, notably on Channel 4 – (6 different candidates, in total, compared to 3 Conservative and Labour party members, 2 Green and 1 Liberal Democrat representative). Contrary to claims that Nigel Farage dominated campaign coverage, it was Clegg, Cameron and Miliband – on different bulletins – that had more air time in sound bites (admittedly by a close margin e.g. just 3 seconds on ITV).

However, there was a more apparent bias in image bites of parties and its leaders during the 2014 campaign. Table 2 indicates the time spent on different party image bites on UK television news during the 2009 and 2014 campaigns. Of course, the UK's 'due impartiality' guidelines for broadcasters do not extend to regulating the images of politicians in the same way they do for sound bites. Unsurprisingly, then, there was a greater disparity in the amount of time different parties and leaders featured in image bites compared to sound bites. In 2009, while Labour and the Liberal Democrats appeared most on the BBC, Conservative image bites were on a par with the Greens (19 and 12 seconds respectively). Images of BNP candidates, meanwhile, were not far behind the major parties on the BBC or Channel 4 during the 2009 campaign.

In 2014 it was the major parties – as was the case with sound bites – that appeared most within image bites. Most striking, however, were the appearances of UKIP. While the proportion of air time granted to UKIP image bites was close to the more established parties on BBC and Channel 5 bulletins, on ITV and Channel 4 they were easily on-screen the most (especially Channel 4). Indeed, on both bulletins, UKIP image bites featured in the most news items (6 on ITV and 11 on Channel 4). Isolating image bites of party leaders – and comparing the difference to all candidates – once again shows their presence and influence on coverage is magnified (see Table 2).

Table 2: Time (in seconds) spent on leaders' image bites during the 2009 and 2014 EU elections in UK television news bulletins (the amount of seconds for other party candidates are in brackets)

	2009				2014			
	BBC	ITV	Ch4	Ch5	BBC	ITV	Ch4	Ch5
Conservatives	11 (8)	10 (6)	(34)		59 (14)	61 (6)	41 (35)	31 (6)
Labour	35 (59)	/	41 (28)	34 (24)	28 (7)	51 (8)	55 (33)	42
Liberal Democrats	93 (6)	12	11 (30)		76	52 (8)	26	51
UKIP	/	12	(3)		68	77 (23)	107 (107)	30
BNP	20 (69)	(10)	(57)		14	/	/	
Greens	(14)		(26)		11 (6)	(13)	19 (7)	

There was less emphasis on the party leaders in the 2009 campaign. For example, while the BNP appeared in 2009, it was not the image of Nick Griffin that most represented the party. By contrast, in 2014 party leaders were the most significant actors. Once again, it was difficult to avoid the focus on Nigel Farage - the most dominant leader on ITV and Channel 4 and a close second on the BBC. Further still, and scrutinising image bites involving Farage more closely, the UKIP leader appeared in more distinctive backdrops compared to his counterparts. For example, most party leaders were shown speaking at campaign events such as press conferences or staged walkabouts in factories and other industrial locations. Farage, however, appeared more informally. Most strikingly, on several occasions Farage was shown having lunch, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes in or around a public house. This relaxed and somewhat casual portrayal of Farage – less apparent in image bites of other leaders – was further reinforced by appearances against other informal backdrops; talking and texting on a bus, chatting to journalists whilst campaigning, sharing a picnic table with ITV's political editor and casually greeting voters outside a café.

Setting the campaign and policy agenda

Finally, our study asked who set the campaign agendas in the 2009 and 2014 elections. The analysis is developed by examining coverage generally – beyond just the differences between broadcasters – in order to focus on the broader agenda of election news conveyed by evening bulletins. We assessed whether one party dominated a news story, such as during a party campaign launch or when an interview with a party leader. In 2009, no single party dominated the election news cycle to the same extent that was evident in 2014. Because of the focus in 2009 on MPs' expenses scandal, a large majority of items did *not* centre on party policy but were associated with the scandal and how it impacted on party politics, the nature of campaigning how people were likely to vote and so on.

In 2014, by contrast, it was UKIP that stood out, dominating more than double the news items focussed on Labour and Conservative Parties, nearly three times more than the Liberal Democrats and six times more than the Greens. The greater journalistic interest in the 2014 campaign was reflected by the types of news items featuring UKIP. In 2009, for example, coverage was primarily related to pre-edited material, including anchors presenting news or reporters developing edited packages. There was very little journalistic commentary in the form of two-ways for example – just 5 items in total – with no single party dominating. In 2014 there were 17 live items, including 4 studio discussions and 13 two-ways. Indeed, 6 of these two-ways centred on UKIP including interpreting their positive poll ratings, discussing offensive remarks by an MEP candidate, considering whether Farage would stand in the by-election and when he was hit by an egg whilst campaigning. In short, journalists were preoccupied by UKIP.

But how can UKIP's dominance in the 2014 campaign be interpreted? Does it reflect a UKIP bias among broadcasters, or were journalists challenging rather than reinforcing UKIP's messages? In coverage of UKIP, Nigel Farage's leadership and personality were subject to considerable scrutiny, along with internal funding of UKIP and their possible influence at the forthcoming general election. Figure 2 shows the policy issues addressed by different bulletins combined, both in terms of the main themes of different news items and the mentions of specific areas within a news item.

Figure 2: Number of policies acting as the main theme of news items or mentions within news items during television news coverage of the EU campaign

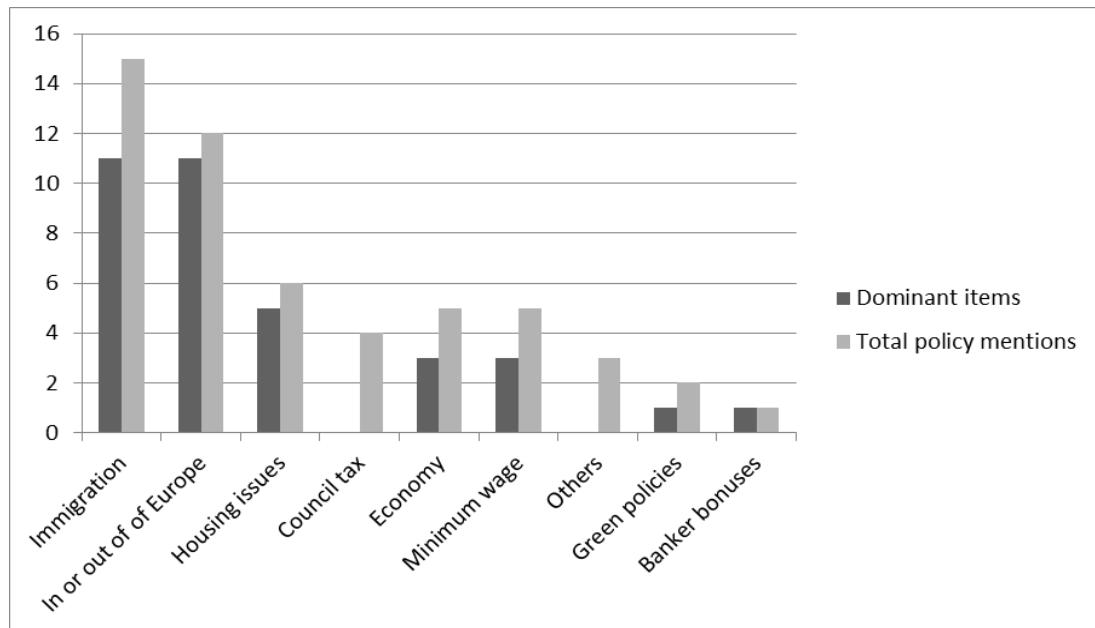


Figure 2 is striking in that the dominant issues were ‘immigration’ and ‘being in or out of Europe’ - both policies central to UKIP’s political identity. In other words, the overall focus on UKIP established in our study appears to be reflected in the limited range of policies addressed by broadcasters. Moreover, being in or out of Europe was not even an option for voters at the 2014 European election (it is offered in a 2017 referendum by a future Conservative government at Westminster). More pertinently, of the four major parties only UKIP want to unequivocally *withdraw* from the EU.

As broadcasters focussed on the parties’ policy agendas, there was only limited time spent on examining the EU’s activities or competencies. The BBC, for example, produced two edited packages that interpreted the EU’s powers from a human interest perspective. One edited package filmed in Oxfordshire explained how EU rules affect everyday life in the UK, such as regulating food and safety standards (07/05/14), whilst another featured students on a field trip at the European Parliament learning about how the political institution operates (21/05/14). Both items appeared to be aimed at enhancing viewers’ understanding of the

EU's powers and were rare instances of the campaign being reported from a non-party political prism.

The UKIP factor and the media's fascination with Nigel Farage

Our systematic review of television news during the EU elections revealed some striking findings. First, the volume of coverage in 2014 was three times greater than in 2009, with all broadcasters covering it more extensively. Second, although we found little to support any clear party political bias in sound bites, in image bites UKIP and Nigel Farage appeared more than other parties and their leaders. Third, while UKIP dominated coverage more than any other party, much of this coverage featured the robust questioning of their candidates, and in particular of Farage's leadership capabilities. When specific policy items were isolated, two core UKIP positions stood out - being in or out of Europe and restricting immigration. Put simply, while Farage and UKIP might have been closely scrutinized, journalistic debates were defined and contested according to the party's ideological terrain.

More generally, our comparative study of the 2009 and 2014 campaigns developed some broader insights about the distinctive nature of second-order elections. In 2009, for example, coverage of the EU election was barely visible on commercial broadcasters. Instead, news about the MPs' expenses scandal overshadowed the campaign. While the scale of this political scandal was clearly atypical, it reveals how ongoing events in Westminster (first-order elections) can significantly influence the volume of coverage towards second-order elections. In a 24-hour news cycle during the 2014 EU campaign, there was widespread speculation that Nigel Farage would participate in the Newark by-election and potentially enhance UKIP's chances of influencing the 2015 general election. In short, to understand the news value of second-order elections, it would appear necessary to consider the national concerns of first-order politics and the wider implications for future elections.

Previous research examining media coverage of EU elections has suggested national priorities shape coverage, such as hostility towards European political institutions or the supply of news produced by public service broadcasters⁷. But while Eurosceptic attitudes and public service broadcasting did appear to influence the extent and nature of election coverage in this study, in our view the ‘UKIP factor’ and the influence of its leader were also decisive in enhancing the visibility and agenda of the 2014 campaign.

We begin with the ‘UKIP factor’. The party’s (first-order) electoral fortunes arguably influenced their enhanced campaign coverage in 2014. In 2009, for example, the BNP caused a commotion about the relative degree of coverage they received during the campaign, perhaps due to their extreme far right-wing agenda. However, while the BNP perhaps received a disproportionate focus compared to other parties (a million votes and two MEPs), UKIP came second in the poll to the Conservative Party, gaining over 2 million votes and returning 13 MEPs. At the time, however, UKIP were not widely viewed as a threat to the two-party system (e.g. the dominance of the Conservative and Labour Party) that has long-defined mainstream British politics. In 2014, however, the ‘earthquake’ within British politics predicted by Farage in 2013 – and alluded to at the beginning of this article – was distinctly possible, not just in ‘winning’ the popular EU election vote but in persuading large numbers of Conservative voters to switch to UKIP in the 2015 general election. This proposition and the fact that UKIP, on average, polled about 15% of the national vote in 2014 (well ahead of the Liberal Democrats) led to Ofcom’s decision to grant them “major party” status in March 2014. Our content analysis revealed that the BBC – although not regulated by Ofcom – shared this perspective and broadly covered UKIP to the same degree as other broadcasters.

Of course, whether UKIP should have received a ‘major party’ status by broadcasters is debatable. The Greens, for example, have a sitting MP and, on average, polled around 5% of the national vote in 2014 (only 3% behind the Liberal Democrats), beat the Liberal

Democrats into fourth place, had 3 MEPs elected and achieved an 8% share of the national vote in the 2014 EU election. Despite such advances, they have retained 'minor' status. Since UKIP's right-wing views are supported by many UK national newspapers and the Green Party typically receives limited and sometimes hostile coverage, perhaps the party's wider media exposure helps raise their profile and popularity. In doing so, broadcast regulators are pressured to consider them a 'major party' – a decision that was replicated during the 2015 general election campaign.

However one accounts for UKIP's popularity, the party's political capital put them under the media spotlight in the 2014 campaign and thrust its leader Nigel Farage into the limelight. In our view, the UKIP leader's populist appeal and campaigning style may help explain the party's visual dominance and agenda-setting power. The striking image of Farage on television news – beer in one hand, cigarette in the other – was distinctive from the other leaders, playing to the party's anti-politics appeal and to the news values of evening bulletins. As a leader, Farage displays many of the characteristics associated with political populism – being an authority figure over the party, a media savvy strident communicator and performer – but he also excites journalists and delivers a fresh narrative to the routine world of two-party politics.

While reporting the 'new-kid-on-the-political-block' understandably appeals to Westminster journalists, there were clear ideological consequences. UKIP's core messages dominated the policy agenda on UK television news, but largely related to policies controlled by Westminster. As Ford and Goodwin describe it⁸, "UKIP's main policy goals – withdrawal from the EU, sharp cuts to immigration and radical changes to education, taxation and regulation – can only be achieved through legislation in the Westminster Parliament". In other words, much of the 2014 EU election agenda was defined by what future UK national governments could achieve. Of course, voting for UKIP might send the EU a message about

voter attitudes towards its institutions. Given the broader rise of anti-EU MEPs elected in 2014, it could even slow down the pace of further European integration. But since television news bulletins strive to impartially cover election campaigns, it could be they helped raise the Richter scale of UKIP's "earthquake" – despite subjecting Farage to some hostile questioning – by focussing so heavily on their policy agenda. After all, although UKIP won the largest share of the vote in the European elections (26.77%), the next most popular four parties all support continued EU membership⁹ and represent a far greater share of the vote (62.41%).

Of course, broadcasters may have considered it editorially legitimate to follow UKIP's agenda because the Conservative Party has agreed to an 'in or out' EU referendum in 2017 whilst the Labour Party is struggling to defend its immigration policy. But constructing party political balance on these terms arguably distorts the bigger electoral picture. From a voter's perspective, following an agenda largely dominated by Westminster politics (such as whether Farage would stand in the by-election), limits their knowledge and understanding of the policy areas within which the EU can legislate. While broadcasters might argue a majority of UK voters want to leave the EU and that it is important to reflect this perspective, they might also reflect on opinion polls that consistently reveal citizens remain ill-informed about the role and responsibilities of European political institutions. Rather than being caught up in the excitement of UKIP's electoral fortunes, an alternative approach for broadcasters could have been to address a broader range of campaign issues and to focus on the institutional powers of the EU.

Notes

¹ Chorley, M. (2013) 'UKIP will cause an earthquake in British politics': Nigel Farage predicts party will win EU elections before gaining first ever MPs', Daily Mail, 20 September. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2426619/UKIP-cause-earthquake-British-politics-Nigel-Farage-predicts-party-win-EU-elections-gaining-MPs.html> (accessed 21 August 2014).

² Reynolds, J. and Sweney, M. (2014) BBC receives almost 1,200 complaints over Ukip election coverage, *The Guardian*, 30 May. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/may/30/bbc-complaints-ukip-election-coverage-bias>

³ Due to the availability of BBC footage in our archive, we examined the BBC's 10pm bulletin in 2009 and the 6pm bulletin in 2014. While we acknowledge there are editorial differences between the early and late evening

bulletins – with the latter often seen as more highbrow – we can still assess the editorial priorities of the BBC compared to the more commercially driven channels.

⁴ Due to some technical issues, the following bulletins were excluded from the sample in 2009: 25 May on BBC, June 3 on Channel 5.

⁵ All variables were subject to an inter-coder reliability test, which showed a high level of agreement.

⁶ Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980) 'Nine second-order national elections – a conceptual framework for the analysis of European Election results', *European Journal of Political Research*, 8, 3-44

⁷ Cushion, S. (2012) *The Democratic Value of News: Why public service media matter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

⁸ Ford, R. and Goodwin, M. (2014). *Revolt On The Right: Explaining Support For The Radical Right in Britain* (London: Routledge).

⁹ While many Conservative MPs want to leave the EU, it remains official Conservative Party to remain in the EU subject to renegotiating existing treaties.