**Online Appendix for “Disaffected but efficacious:**

**Why people join populist radical right parties”**

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**Appendix A – Regional vote share of BJP, League and SD**

*Table A1.*BJP vote share in Gujarat (stronghold) and Maharashtra (battleground) in the last five general elections prior to the data collection.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Gujarat** | **Maharashtra** |
| *1999* | 52.9 | 21.2 |
| *2004* | 47.4 | 22.6 |
| *2009* | 46.5 | 18.2 |
| *2014* | 59.1 | 27.3 |
| *2019* | 62.2 | 27.8 |

**Source:** Election Commission of India.

*Table A2.*League vote share in Veneto (stronghold) and Tuscany (battleground) in the last five general elections prior to the data collection.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Veneto** | **Tuscany** |
| *2001* | 10.4 | 0.6 |
| *2006* | 11.0 | 1.1 |
| *2008* | 26.8 | 2.0 |
| *2013* | 10.4 | 0.7 |
| *2018* | 31.8 | 17.4 |

**Source:** Minister of Internal Affairs.

*Table A3.*SD vote share in Skåne (stronghold) and Stockholm county (battleground) in the last five general elections prior to the data collection.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Skåne** | **Stockholm** |
| *2002* | n.a | n.a |
| *2006* | 6.0 | 1.9 |
| *2010* | 10.0 | 4.2 |
| *2014* | 19.3 | 9.7 |
| *2018* | 25.7 | 15.2 |

**Source:** Swedish Election Authority.

**Appendix B – Interview process**

In light of recent calls for striking ‘a more meaningful balance between the interview *output* and the interview *process’* (Ellinas 2021, 2, emphasis original), in this Appendix I describe in detail the interview process of my study. Since the sampling strategy has already been discussed in the main text, here I focus on the following three phases: gaining access, conducting the interviews, and building rapport.

**Gaining access**

Given the difficulties of interviewing a ‘hard-to-reach population’ such as PRR grassroots members (Ellinas 2021), and the further obstacles posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to rely on the PPR parties themselves in order to locate their grassroots members and invite them to participate in my project, in line with other research conducted on these political actors (Klandermans & Mayer 2006; Goodwin 2011; Stockemer 2014; Albertazzi & McDonnell 2015). In the case of the League and the SD, I first approached and interviewed two high-ranking officials for a related study on PRR grassroots membership. Sometime after conducting these initial ‘ice-breaking’ elite interviews, I re-contacted these two officials and explained to them that, as part of my research, I was also interested in interviewing grassroots members in order to understand why people become members of political parties, and the activities they engage in as party members. Moreover, I indicated that I wanted to talk with members from the regions listed in Table 2 in the main text. The two officials put me in contact with some lower-rank intermediaries from those regions, who helped me recruit participants for the project. In the case of the BJP, I relied instead on a personal contact of an academic colleague in Delhi. The contact is a well-known volunteer of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organisation, in Maharashtra. As the RSS and BJP organisations are closely intertwined, this person had great access to BJP grassroots members all over the state. Rather than introducing me to further intermediaries, he himself helped me recruit participants both in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

This recruitment approach has its limitations, in that party officials could handpick the members interested in participating, and share only the contact details of those whom they consider suitable, making the sample unrepresentative of the PRR grassroots population. Following the literature mentioned above, as well as scholarly work on the interview method (Rubin & Rubin 1995; Bleich & Pekkanen 2013), I addressed this potential pitfall in three ways. First, I sought variation among the members in terms of their gender, age, and geographical region, to ensure I would gain a broad range of perspectives and experiences (see Klandermans & Mayer 2006, 55-56; Goodwin 2011, 185). Second, I adopted snowball sampling in order to both expand my sampling frame beyond the members suggested by party officials, and to access under-represented categories of members such as young people and women (Bleich & Pekkanen 2013, 90-91). Third, I stopped conducting interviews only when I reached a point of saturation across the different categories of members (men/women, young/older, from party stronghold/battleground) (ibid, 90-91), i.e. only when I was not gaining any new relevant information from my interviewees (Rubin & Rubin 1995, 73). Overall, thanks to these decisions, I am confident that I obtained a high-quality sample of interviewees, and not one of members merely conveying the party line. This was also evident in how members were outspoken about some of the issues they faced in their own parties, such as the presence of opportunists (in the BJP and the League) and extremists (in the SD) among the grassroots; disillusionment and/or disagreements with the local party leadership (across all three parties) and, less often, the national one (primarily in the League); disagreement with specific party policies and/or decisions (in the BJP and the League); disputes among party members, usually due to candidatures (primarily in the League); and the difficulties faced by women in navigating such men-dominated environments (across all three parties).

**Conducting the interviews**

To uncover the triggers and motivations for joining PRR parties, I decided to employ semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews can be viewed as a ‘collaborative process’ (Fisher Smith et al. 2021, 202) between interviewer and participants, since they allow both actors to shape the conversation. As such, they permit a certain degree of flexibility which ‘keeps the results fresh and interesting […] and lets you explore research arenas that were unanticipated’ (Rubin & Rubin 1995, 45). This kind of interview format was also beneficial to building rapport with the interviewees (see below), so that these could feel I was not trying to impose my research agenda onto our conversation, but instead that I was carefully listening to what they had to say (Ellinas 2021). As already mentioned in the main text, while the interviews with League and SD grassroots members were conducted by me in Italian and English, those with BJP grassroots members were conducted in Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and English with the support of either a Gujarati or a Marathi native speaker translator (both women), who were physically with me throughout the whole interviewing process. At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself and explained what the interview was going to be about. Since studies on PRR and extreme right actors, especially at the grassroots level, have documented how securing informed consent using an academic form at the start of the interview can intimidate participants and undermine rapport (Ashe 2021), and given the difficulties of obtaining written consent when conducting phone or online interviews (Deakin & Wakefield 2014), this was asked verbally. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and asked whether I could record our phone call or online meeting, which was permitted by all 82 participants.

**Building rapport**

Building rapport involved different strategies depending on the nationality of the interviewees and on whether interviews were conducted by phone or online. Almost all the interviews based in Italy were by phone. In the absence of any visual cue, I knew that by emphasising my northern Italian accent I would reduce the ‘social distance’ (Damhuis & de Jonge 2022) between me and my interlocutors, since the north of Italy is a traditional stronghold of the League. By contrast, most of the interviews with people based in India and Sweden were online. During these online interviews the task of building a rapport was made easier by the possibility of using video – which was always taken by the participants, even though in a handful of cases, where the internet connection was too weak, we had to switch to audio only. Furthermore, when interviewing BJP and SD grassroots members, the ‘social distance’ was made less meaningful, since I did not share their nationality and was thus an ‘outsider’ who could ask comprehensive questions and elicit detailed responses (Tinker & Armstrong 2008).

The latter point is related to what can be considered perhaps as the biggest challenge for any social scientist working with far-right actors: overcoming the likely ‘political distance’ (Damhuis & de Jonge 2022). This can become especially difficult when it comes to xenophobic or sexist comments made by the interviewees. At the same time, I agree with Rubin & Rubin (1995, 99) that ‘if you can’t refrain from expressing disapproval on certain topics, you should probably not be doing these interviews’. Here the distinction between sympathy and empathy is crucial, and has been highlighted by several scholars in the field (e.g. Klandermans & Mayer 2006; Ramalingam 2021). In the words of Damhuis & de Jonge (2022, 8, emphasis added), ‘where showing *sympathy* for worldviews you fundamentally disagree with may be impossible, developing *empathy* for your interviewees allows you to gain insights into their worldviews without subscribing to them’. This task was somewhat facilitated by the focus of my broader research project, that is about the reasons why these individuals join PRR parties, the reasons for their sustained commitment, and the kind of activities they undertake as party members, rather than being about their ideology or policy preferences (see Klandermans & Mayer 2006, 63). While the political beliefs of the respondents emerged during the first part of the interviews, they were then accompanied by more general considerations about being a party member. Overall, I believe I was able to build rapport with most of the participants. This was also evident in the following months, in which grassroots members were very helpful whenever I needed assistance with other phases of my data collection.

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**Appendix C – Sample of interviewees**

*Table C1*.List of 82 PRR grassroots members interviewed for the study.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **N°** | **Gender** | **Age** | **Region** | **Year of joining** | **Interview date** | **Interview mode** | **Interview language** |
| ***Bharatiya Janata Party*** | | | | | | | |
| 1 | M | 36 | Maharashtra | 2013 | 21/02/21 | Skype | Marathi |
| 2 | M | 37 | Maharashtra | 2011 | 23/02/21 | Zoom | Marathi |
| 3 | M | 43 | Maharashtra | 1992 | 23/02/21 | Zoom | Marathi |
| 4 | F | 63 | Maharashtra | 2021 | 24/02/21 | WhatsApp | Marathi |
| 5 | M | 54 | Maharashtra | 2005 | 24/02/21 | WhatsApp | Marathi |
| 6 | F | 50 | Maharashtra | 1992 | 26/02/21 | Zoom | Marathi |
| 7 | F | 60 | Maharashtra | 1990 | 26/02/21 | Skype | Marathi |
| 8 | M | 25 | Maharashtra | 2014 | 28/02/21 | Zoom | Marathi |
| 9 | M | 54 | Maharashtra | 1989 | 28/02/21 | Zoom | Marathi |
| 10 | M | 52 | Maharashtra | 2005 | 28/02/21 | Zoom | English |
| 11 | F | 52 | Maharashtra | 2014 | 28/02/21 | Zoom | English |
| 12 | M | 41 | Maharashtra | 2009 | 28/02/21 | Skype | Hindi |
| 13 | F | 37 | Maharashtra | 2002 | 07/03/21 | Skype | Marathi |
| 14 | M | 59 | Gujarat | 2008 | 05/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 15 | M | 52 | Gujarat | 1987 | 05/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 16 | F | 37 | Gujarat | 2009 | 06/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 17 | F | 55 | Gujarat | 1996 | 06/04/21 | Zoom | English |
| 18 | F | 60 | Gujarat | 1995 | 07/04/21 | Zoom | English |
| 19 | M | 58 | Gujarat | 1992 | 07/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 20 | F | 60 | Gujarat | 1998 | 13/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 21 | M | 22 | Gujarat | 2014 | 14/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 22 | F | 52 | Gujarat | 2014 | 14/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 23 | M | 33 | Gujarat | 2009 | 15/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 24 | M | 32 | Gujarat | 2012 | 15/04/21 | Zoom | Gujarati |
| 25 | M | 45 | Maharashtra | 1990 | 18/04/21 | Zoom | Hindi |
| 26 | F | 26 | Maharashtra | 2020 | 29/04/21 | Skype | Hindi |
| ***League*** | | | | | | | |
| 27 | F | 23 | Veneto | 2019 | 19/01/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 28 | M | 23 | Veneto | 2018 | 23/01/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 29 | M | 23 | Veneto | 2018 | 28/01/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 30 | M | 30 | Veneto | 2019 | 01/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 31 | M | 22 | Veneto | 2018 | 04/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 32 | F | 37 | Veneto | 2011 | 15/02/21 | Skype | Italian |
| 33 | M | 49 | Veneto | 1993 | 15/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 34 | F | 48 | Veneto | 2018 | 17/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 35 | M | 43 | Veneto | 2014 | 17/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 36 | F | 19 | Veneto | 2019 | 17/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 37 | F | 22 | Tuscany | 2019 | 22/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 38 | M | 24 | Tuscany | 2016 | 22/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 39 | F | 25 | Tuscany | 2020 | 25/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 40 | F | 26 | Tuscany | 2020 | 26/02/21 | Zoom | Italian |
| 41 | M | 24 | Tuscany | 2019 | 29/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 42 | M | 67 | Veneto | 1992 | 29/02/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 43 | M | 20 | Tuscany | 2019 | 04/03/21 | Zoom | Italian |
| 44 | F | 53 | Tuscany | 2019 | 04/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 45 | F | 65 | Veneto | 2009 | 09/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 46 | M | 29 | Tuscany | 2018 | 09/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 47 | F | 49 | Tuscany | 2016 | 14/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 48 | M | 65 | Tuscany | 2017 | 17/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 49 | F | 51 | Veneto | 2018 | 18/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 50 | M | 70 | Tuscany | 2017 | 23/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 51 | F | 44 | Veneto | 2017 | 29/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| 52 | F | 44 | Tuscany | 2018 | 30/03/21 | WhatsApp | Italian |
| ***Sweden Democrats*** | | | | | | | |
| 53 | M | 53 | Stockholm | 2010 | 23/04/21 | Zoom | English |
| 54 | F | 39 | Stockholm | 2018 | 04/05/21 | Skype | English |
| 55 | M | 65 | Skåne | 2006 | 01/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 56 | M | 60 | Skåne | 2017 | 01/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 57 | M | 52 | Skåne | 2014 | 02/06/21 | Skype | English |
| 58 | M | 58 | Skåne | 2016 | 03/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 59 | M | 57 | Skåne | 2015 | 03/06/21 | Skype | English |
| 60 | F | 49 | Skåne | 2018 | 06/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 61 | M | 54 | Skåne | 2009 | 07/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 62 | M | 49 | Skåne | 2015 | 07/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 63 | F | 36 | Skåne | 2015 | 07/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 64 | M | 77 | Skåne | 2014 | 08/06/21 | Skype | English |
| 65 | M | 54 | Skåne | 2014 | 09/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 66 | M | 51 | Skåne | 2006 | 09/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 67 | F | 58 | Skåne | 2016 | 09/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 68 | M | 49 | Skåne | 2014 | 10/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 69 | F | 18 | Skåne | 2018 | 14/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 70 | F | 58 | Skåne | 2017 | 14/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 71 | M | 82 | Skåne | 2001 | 15/06/21 | Skype | English |
| 72 | M | 26 | Skåne | 2014 | 17/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 73 | F | 55 | Skåne | 2011 | 21/06/21 | Zoom | English |
| 74 | M | 33 | Stockholm | 2015 | 13/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 75 | M | 59 | Stockholm | 2012 | 14/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 76 | M | 41 | Stockholm | 2013 | 14/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 77 | M | 30 | Stockholm | 2016 | 14/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 78 | M | 50 | Stockholm | 2008 | 15/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 79 | M | 25 | Stockholm | 2014 | 18/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 80 | F | 31 | Stockholm | 2017 | 28/10/21 | Zoom | English |
| 81 | F | 31 | Stockholm | 2019 | 03/11/21 | Zoom | English |
| 82 | F | 55 | Stockholm | 2014 | 24/01/22 | Zoom | English |

**Appendix D – Interview scheme**

**Biographical data**

* Name
* Age
* City of residence

1. Could you tell me how you become a party member of the [name of the party]?

* For how long have you been a party member of the [name of the party]?
* Were you politically active before?
* Are there any other organisations you are a member of?

2. Has your family ever been involved in politics?

* Were any of your family members in the [name of the party] when you joined?

3. Have your friends ever been involved in politics?

* Were any of your friends in the [name of the party] when you joined?

4. Was there any particular event that made you join the [name of the party]?

5. (a) Did someone from the party approach you or (b) did you approach the party?

(a) Who approached you?

(b) How did that happen?

6. Why did you decide to join the party?

* What is it that you really liked about the [name of the party] that made you join?
* Were there any other reasons why you joined or was that the only one?

**Appendix E – Recurrence of themes**

In the table below, I report the amount of interviews which featured the three themes I identified as prominent in the process of joining PRR parties.

*Table E1*. Number of themes, by interviews.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **N° themes** | **N° interviews** |
| *3* | 50 (61%) |
| *2* | 24 (29%) |
| *1* | 3 (4%) |
| *0* | 5 (6%) |

**Note:** The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole numbers.

As the table shows, about two-thirds of the interviewees reported all the three themes in their accounts of why they joined, and 90% of the sample reported two themes or more. Those few who only reported one theme, or none, joined primarily because of their family socialisation (their families had long been involved in the PRR party), or due to the influence of a friend who recruited them.