

The British National Party and Transnational Extreme Nationalism: A Case Study in Hubris

Dr Paul Jackson, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Northampton

Transnational exchanges, of varying types, have become ever more important to what we might call loosely the extreme right in Europe.¹ This is a complex political arena, and resists easy categorisation into neat boxes such as ‘populist’, ‘fascist’, ‘neo-Nazi’ and so forth.² Such related terms, used heavily by media too, have been given much scrutiny by academic analysis in recent years, and what results from this discourse are lessons pointing to the need to avoid overly schematic frameworks that try to explain the entire nature of a complex phenomenon. The ‘extremes’ of the political right is a very plural, ‘messy’ political space. Always, we should consider a plurality of ‘extreme rights’, each grounded in national and local traditions, yet also responding to some generic characteristics – such as scapegoating minorities and migrants, criticising the political mainstream, and revelling in the idea that an authentic national community has become the victim of multicultural political agendas – that give them a similar type of identity. This is important to recognise when assessing the relationships that develop between any one party, and others that might fall into this fuzzy environment, whether on a national or international basis too. The extremes of the political right in various European countries have also long held the ideal of developing a sense of international cooperation, and even comradely union – a trend we can even see among the interwar fascist groupings to a degree. Nevertheless this is not always an easy task. Barriers of national and ideological difference often exist here exist. Moreover, promoting transnational exchanges does not always lead to growth and development of the individual political parties that pursue them; indeed they can also help reveal underlying sympathies to more extreme agendas that are trying to be smoothed over.

The theme of a failing transnational agenda being developed by an extreme right party is the subject of this essay, which focuses on twin trends found in the British National Party during the period it tried to consolidate elected representation in the European Parliament: the growth of transnational activity and the decline of its electoral support base. The former was not directly causal of the later, but was certainly indicative of deeper failures by Nick Griffin’s BNP to seize a unique opportunity to emerge as a constant presence in British electoral politics. Following success in European elections of

2009, the BNP was poised to develop transnational linkages that, potentially, would allow it to mature. Yet between 2009 and 2014 we see the opposite happen. Its breakthrough into European politics provoked concern in Britain too, and much discussion as to why 943,598 people had chosen to vote for a party rooted in a neo-Nazi past.³ This result gave the party two MEP, though one, Andrew Brons, left the BNP in 2012. Yet by the time of the next round of European elections, in 2014, the BNP had withered, and overall the party secured just 179,694 votes. Its UK base of councillors had declined too, from over 50 in 2009, to only two in 2014, while the party's internal dynamics were also in the process of unravelling. In January 2014, its then leader and remaining MEP, Nick Griffin, was declared bankrupt.⁴ After his failure to get re-elected, he initially took on a new role of President of the party, yet his continued presence soon sparked a coup within the organisation, and he was ousted altogether by the beginning of October 2014. All this was quite a fall from grace when compared to Griffin's position in 2009. Potentially, he could have developed his role, and the profile of the BNP, into an aggressive, populist political movement. Instead, this is a role now being fulfilled in British politics by the United Kingdom Independence Party, a movement rooted in a radicalised variant of Thatcherism's combination of popular patriotism and economic liberalism.⁵ This notably contrasts with the BNP's core ideology of neo-Nazism and clear ethno-nationalist agenda.⁶

Despite its various traumas between 2009 and 2014, we can also see, especially via its online presence, that the BNP genuinely sought to cultivate a credible profile in this time. Via online media, it sought to project this image to BNP activists, as well as more casual supporters and followers of the party, too. As a part of its wider attempts to capitalise on its 2009 performance, during the period until 2014 we can note that the BNP become active in a range of transnational encounters, including developing an association with the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements, the somewhat mercurial parliamentary grouping led by Hungary's Jobbik. Moreover, Griffin and the BNP became noted, vocal defenders of European extreme right parties such as Golden Dawn, an organisation regularly credited in British public discourse as being neo-Nazi. Both abroad and in the UK, parties including Marine Le Pen's Front National and Nigel Farage's UKIP have advanced their cause by presenting themselves as a moderated form of anti-establishment patriotism. Contrastingly, through its international associations, the BNP's more unguarded commitment supportive of the extremes of the European right

became an emblematic example of its wider failure to capitalise on a unique window of opportunity.

Failure here seems obvious to highlight with hindsight. Nevertheless, during the time we are looking at, between 2009 and 2014, the BNP would regularly talk up its relationships with groupings abroad, especially via its website. What follows will focus on this resource; a record of the BNP's recent history of transnational exchanges, used as a way for the party to present its activities abroad in a good light. Of course, we should not take at face value the information we find on such a source, and a degree of scepticism is always required when assessing the validity of impressions and opinions conveyed, as well as some basic facts found on the site too. However, it is precisely because the BNP's website is so prone to developing the party's own, impressionistic perspective on such matters that makes it such a valuable resource for qualitative analysis.⁷ Though far from an objective viewpoint, the discourse presented on BNP websites develops the party's own, subjective awareness of its activities. What emerges is certainly a picture of hubris, but also one set within a desire to develop a transnational approach, and also a specific attempt to identify with eastern European nationalist political movements, in Hungary, in Poland, in Ukraine, and in Russia, as well as the Greek extreme right too.

At the centre of this project from 2009 was the creation of the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements. This was referenced in a wide range of BNP material relating to its activities in Europe, and so lay at the heart of claims towards the party's new, transnational role after 2009. The Alliance of European Nationalist Movements was itself founded following the European elections of 2009 where the BNP broke through at a European level. Griffin enjoyed presenting himself as a founding member of the AENM and, despite his ejection from the BNP, is still at the time of writing listed as Vice-President of the movement on its website.⁸ Griffin launched the new group in November 2009. Hailing it as a new alliance bringing together French and Hungarian activists in particular, he sat at its launch alongside MEPs from both the Front National and Jobbik, such as Jean Marie Le Pen, Bruno Gollnisch and Balczó Zoltan.⁹ The BNP's website has often reported on its progress too, linking the role of the AENM to various issues, including developing the party's strategy for successfully contesting the 2014 European elections.

To give an example here, a BNP website news story from 2013 reported that 'it is with great pleasure that we can officially tell you that the Alliance of European National Movements (AENM), and the linked Identities and Traditions Foundation, has today

secured funding for 2013.¹⁰ Linked to this news story, we also find Griffin talking on a BNPTV video from the same time, speaking about how the political left had long been supported by the EU, while praising the AENM's ability to secure around €500,000, which would even help it establish a dedicated Identities and Traditions Foundation. Steeped in a language of victimhood, Griffin explained how this funding would ultimately help encourage white working class people of the type the party was trying to connect with register to vote, and stressed that this demographic was the most excluded in modern Britain. The discussion was set in a typical class war structure too, and so was specifically directed at opposing liberal elites promoting multiculturalism across Europe, including in the UK. Griffin went on to develop the transnational theme in other ways too. He set out the idea that institutions now receiving EU funding as a result of his activities were part of a new type of politics designed to tackle the historical, and on-going, influence of Communism and Marxism, especially in Eastern Europe where its impact was most strongly felt in the last century. The horrors of Communism are forgotten, he stressed, and went on to decry how a new generation is being taught the lessons of the history of fascism, but is not being taught the more important lesson of the impact of Communist totalitarianism on Europe. Such statements typified Griffin's new identification with nationalist politics in Eastern Europe too, a notable theme throughout this period under analysis.¹¹

We see the impact of the Alliance of European National Movements being talked up in other ways, before this point, too, especially from 2012. For example, various reports from July 2012 praised the gathering of politicians linked to the AENM from across Europe, which was held at a hotel in Cheshire on 24 July 2012. Griffin's role in particular was given heavy praise, successfully bringing European nationalists to the UK to develop a new political agenda. The BNP's website stressed the conference represented 'a sea-change in the direction of European politics', and continued that 'the inauguration of this group has been led by our very own Nick Griffin MEP'. From such statements, we get a strong sense of how Griffin identified himself with, and placed himself at the heart of, the BNP's new, transnational project. The description of the event's significance also underscored the point that nationalists were not anti-European, but merely anti-EU. The movement needed to encourage new converts to the cause, and stressed: 'we will all endeavour to awaken our fellow country men and women from their brainwashed hypnotic slumber, which holds them in an electoral trance'. To help in this 'awakening', lessons needed to be learned from new partners in the European

parliament. In particular, Jobbik was heralded as an exemplar, with statements such as the following:

In particular, the Hungarian ‘Jobbik Party – A Movement for a Better Hungary’ has shown a remarkable level of success. Since the party’s inception, just nine years ago, it has grown phenomenally, to become Hungary’s second largest party, with many members in their National Assembly, and 43 MEP’s. We look forward to replicating this in Britain.¹²

It is worth stressing that the figure for Jobbik MEP’s is wildly inaccurate, though it is unclear if this is a typo or a more purposeful error. This identification of Jobbik also underscores the role this party has played in the BNP’s discourse promoting links with the extreme right in former Eastern Bloc countries.

Elsewhere, the BNP’s website included some of the main speeches from the event, including Nick Griffin’s keynote address. This had an overtly ethno-nationalist tone, as he talked up specifically the ‘positive’ role that both former Eastern Bloc countries and former Soviet Republics now played in the wider demographic makeup of Europe. These countries were, for Griffin, ‘a reservoir of our kind, and our culture and our identity’. He praised those ‘building the alliance’ across Europe, and went on to describe this specifically as an alliance against civic nationalism, immigration, and global capitalism.¹³ Evoking the sense of a pan-European alliance, another of these videos uploaded to the BNP website was the address by the President of the Alliance of the European Nationalists Movements, and an MEP from France’s Front National, Bruno Gollnisch. He too evoked the theme of setting a new political agenda across Europe.¹⁴ Other videos embedded in BNP webpages reporting the event included further voices from European parties. The Spanish Freedom Party delegate Manuel Quesada talked up the place of Spanish nationalism in the growing movement; Jobbik’s Georgina Bernath highlighted the ability of her party to develop the youth vote; Mark Abraham of Sweden’s National Democrats commented critically on nationalists who just focused on Islam, and were pro-Israel; and Valerio Cignetti of Fiamma Tricolore talked of the role of the alliance to develop a strategy for the 2014 elections, and bring together like-minded activists across Europe. Nick Griffin also talked on these videos of the need to develop a new base in the years between 2012 and 2014, ready for the next electoral

cycle. Clearly, this last issue was both a central ambition for Griffin, and also a notable failure of his strategy to develop the party's role following May 2014.¹⁵

As we explore further claims made on the BNP's website during this period between 2012 and 2014, we can see further stages of the strategy that ultimately failed to produce the electoral fillip that Griffin and others prophesied in 2012. In 2013, we find more of the party's energies directed to developing the role of the AENM, and using this as part of the electoral strategy for 2014, but these were far from convincing. To give an example, at the end of August 2013, the BNP held what it billed the first annual 'BNP/AENM Village Green Weekend'. This was sold as a family friendly event,¹⁶ though here there was only a limited sense of any impact from European figures, and this did not repeat the gathering of European politicians held in 2012. The BNP's own presentation of the event showed little in the way of a newfound, deep interest in the party's European partners either. In a YouTube film giving an overview of the event for party activists, a report that focused on the views of BNP members in attendance, we find little reference to Europe at all. Although one woman, who stated she had a Hungarian husband, cooked British sausages in a Hungarian goulash on camera, little else in the comments to camera pointed to a significant turn to a Europhile identity among core BNP followers.¹⁷ Other reporting of the event on the BNP's website similarly suggested there was little meaningful evocation of the BNP as part of a pan-European nationalist movement. Despite the event's billing as part of the AENM's formal role in developing the party, the weekend was very much in the vein of previous BNP events for the national patriotic community.

Other developments do suggest that a sense of transnational interchange did develop though, at least among the more active within the party. For example, we see several BNP webpages from October 2013 report on the adventures of a party councillor, and son in law of Nick Griffin, Angus Matthys, who went on a funded training event run by Jobbik in Hungary. Again, this training was presented as only now being made possible by the AENM, and Matthys stressed the value in attending the event as follows: 'We now more than ever need to work together and share ideas and good tactics, which is why this Alliance funded experiment by Jobbik sounded so interesting, and why I jumped at the opportunity to partake.' He went on to detail how a talk by Jobbik leader, and MEP, Gabor Vona, was inspirational, and how he came to learn a great deal from the event about the Hungarian approach to extreme right politics. Matthys concluded that the BNP was in advance of Jobbik in terms of 'our presence and

perseverance', though Jobbik was ahead of the British party in terms of sheer numbers of supporters and activists. Moreover, Jobbik was to be congratulated on its ability to appeal to young people, which he saw as a key lesson to take back to the BNP.¹⁸ He also uploaded a short interview with Laszlo Sipos from Jobbik, which allowed BNP activists to hear from a Hungarian voice talking in English. This interview again stressed the way Jobbik championed themes of national pride, and successfully engaged with Hungary's youth.¹⁹

As Griffin developed such links between the party, the AENM, and Hungary in particular, we also see him champion other extreme right groups in Europe, as part of his engagement with the wider nationalist community outside of the UK. One key group here is, of course, Golden Dawn, a party that did not gain MEPs until 2014. This is a party that the British press have regularly identified as neo-Nazi and fascist, a viewpoint deemed to be received wisdom by much of the wider population in the UK too. Few politicians would choose to champion the movement as a way to develop public support. So for Griffin's BNP, backing a high profile, demonized – though ideologically cognate – party like Golden Dawn would always be a challenge. Moreover, the attempt to do so by Griffin can be seen as placing ideological identification with a fellow extreme nationalist organisation ahead of the more pragmatic judgment of making the BNP appear electable once more in 2014.

To give some examples of how this identification with Golden Dawn was developed, we find on the BNP website a variety of stories trying to encourage a re-appraisal of the Greek extreme right party. This included a survey from January 2013 titled 'Golden Dawn – dangerous extremists or long-overdue national revival? Make up your own mind!'. This sort of presentation typified the BNP's more general discussion on Golden Dawn. In some ways, though, we do not see quite the same level of clear identification with Golden Dawn as we do with Jobbik. Nevertheless, the tone of the article was clearly defensive, set within the conceit of giving BNP website readers the facts: 'to give you the chance to study the phenomenon for yourself and make up your own mind'. The piece stressed that golden Dawn MPs were a credit to their country because they sacrificed the bulk of their monthly salary to help the Greek people, continuing:

Golden Dawn strengthens the unemployed, the sick, the poor, the big families with programs that ease the burden ... While other parties keep those fat pay-

cheques for themselves, or give money to a God-forsaken illegal immigrant society, the Golden Dawn chooses to stand in solidarity with the poor Greeks, and offer as much as possible to ensure their well-being through these tough times.

Ostensibly a neutral discussion, the article also talked positively about the way the movement developed an Employment Office too, commending the fact that this organisation made it its business to ensure that Greek employers found work for Greek citizens, and did not give scarce work to migrants. We also see a gender theme emerge here too, again praising the role played by Golden Dawn's attempt to target state assistance only to Greek women:

The Front organizes events to cover the needs of the Greek women, such as breast cancer awareness seminars, ideological conversations regarding Women's duty and place in society and free self-defense lessons (the rapes have increased astronomically due to the immigrant invasion, and it is a well known fact in Greece, that only male Muslims are coming here, with the female ones being extremely rare...) This is available to Greek women only.

All in all, then, the report was of limited value in giving a detailed, rounded picture of Golden Dawn. Instead, it was clearly set within a tenor of answering the question posed in its title in favour of seeing Golden Dawn, styling it as a legitimate, national revival movement.²⁰

The year 2013 saw other developments where the BNP presented its solidarity with Golden Dawn in a public manner too. Some of these developments again give us a sense of some of the ways the party pursued its transnational activities. In September 2013, Golden Dawn's leader was arrested in relation to the stabbing of Pavlos Fyssas, a 34-year-old musician. This provoked the BNP to release a press statement in support of the Greek extreme nationalist party, though notably expressing with little in the way of sympathy for the murdered victim. Again underscoring the transnational approach to developing his politics, Nick Griffin released this statement jointly with Michal Lewandowski, described as connected to 'National Revival of Poland's Foreign Committee'. Lewandowski's joint participation seems to be explained as he happened to

be speaking at a BNP event being held at the time.²¹ Public support for the Greek extreme right continued into the crucial election year of 2014 too, leading to publicity opportunities for Griffin, who was able to raise his profile in the British national consciousness as a consequence. Yet while identifying with Golden Dawn certainly helped Griffin gain some much needed press coverage, this was also a discourse that painted him as delusional and extreme in the mainstream press. All this was quite a contrast to his profile ahead of the 2009 general election, where he was more successful in styling himself and his party as a radical alternative to a seemingly corrupt British political elite.²²

The BNP's support for Golden Dawn and Jobbik were often blurred together in British media reports on the party, both seen as examples of the party's intransigence, and sympathies for the extremes of far right politics. To give an example of these factors coming together, in January 2014 Griffin was once more an, albeit minor, feature of the mainstream press debates on the British far right, thanks to these transnational linkages. At this point, Griffin publically travelled to Athens to show support for Golden Dawn. While the press coverage suggested a developing relationship between Greek and British Nazi-sympathisers, at the same time we also see a trip by leader of Jobbik, Gabor Vona to the UK. Vona was allowed entry to the UK, though public pressure from anti-fascist groups to deny him entry led to Jobbik being framed as a party contrasting with British values of moderation and tolerance.²³ Vona's visit was high profile yet is also reflected poorly on the new sense of cooperation to be found between the BNP and Jobbik. For its part, the BNP ended any speculation of a direct meeting between Jobbik and the BNP a few days before Vona's arrival, highlighting that Vona visit was specifically to address Hungarians in the UK, not other political parties that were part of the Alliance of European National Movements.²⁴ As the *Independent* witheringly described the BNP's transnational agenda, focused on Greek and Hungarian parties:

Mr Griffin had been invited to Greece by Golden Dawn – which many regard as neo-Nazi. He said he planned to forge an alliance of as many as five far-right parties after May's European parliamentary elections ... As well as Golden Dawn, whose leader is in prison awaiting trial on charges associated with the fatal stabbing of an anti-racism activist, Mr Griffin highlighted Hungary's Jobbik as another party he could do business with. Jobbik has long been accused of being a

racist party.

The withering report, typical of many, also quoted Griffin directly, again in a manner that clearly showed him at best wildly optimistic regarding his party's prospects in the looming elections: 'To an extent I am [taking the lead] but Jobbik is very seriously involved as well. Jobbik tends to work with people in Central and Eastern Europe whereas I tend to do Western and Southern Europe – it's a joint effort'.²⁵

A final issue developing in the period immediately before the 2014 elections was the political crisis in Ukraine. Again, Griffin decided to involve himself publically with events unfolding there. Eschewing the complexity of the situation, in this instance we see Griffin's BNP present the civil unrest, and eventual political revolution, as a simplistic, ideological battle between good and evil. It also reveals the way the party could quickly drop support for organisations previously given praise, in order to fit the complexities of a crisis into a simple ideological agenda. In 2012, Ukraine held elections in which Svoboda gained new support, and so provided an inspirational story for the BNP. As a report from the time called 'Nationalist Victory in Ukraine' stressed:

The Alliance of European Nationalist Movements' Ukrainian partner, the All-Ukrainian Union, or Svoboda, scored a significant result in that country's recent local elections, scoring over 30 percent of the vote in a number of areas.

It went on to suggest the result was achieved despite attempts to manipulate the ballot box, and that potentially Svoboda could have achieved an even better result. 'It is a credit to Svoboda that even in the face of such underhandedness, the party still managed to achieve a great result', concluded the BNP's Chris Beverly.²⁶ So once again, we see the role of the AENM developed in the BNP's discourse on transnational links, and Svoboda clearly talked about as a partner party. Indeed, although not a party able to engage in European Union politics directly, Svoboda were offered observer status in the AENM. Before the crisis began to unfold at the end of 2013, other BNP materials also conveyed this theme, and even regarded the development of Putin's dominance in Russia, and Svoboda's form of extreme right activism in Ukraine, as somewhat akin. Both Putin and Svoboda offered inspirational messages for the party. As one report on the BNP's website from the summer of 2013 put this theme:

In the run-up to the 2014 EU/local elections we need to promote our high-quality candidates ... Moderate nationalism has been a success in Russia, where Putin has taken the country from a condition of economic chaos in 1999 to the 6th largest economy in the world ... Other nationalist parties (eg., Svoboda in the Ukraine) have dramatically increased their vote and influence by moving towards moderate nationalism.

‘By following this route’ the piece also concluded, ‘we will also be in a good position to pick up disillusioned UKiP supporters when they discover the true nature of Farage’s “alternative”’.²⁷ As with other parties, such as Jobbik, there were lessons were to be learned from parties such as Svoboda.

This positive messaging changed, firstly following growing tensions between Jobbik and Svoboda in the spring of 2013, augmented following the outbreak of conflict between Ukraine and Russia, leading to a more antagonistic outlook towards Svoboda. For Griffin, the praiseworthy figure in this crisis in Ukraine was Vladimir Putin, while the demon of the unfolding drama were those in Ukraine calling for the country to develop closer ties with the European Union, which included Svoboda. Yet even before this point, Svoboda had found itself expelled from the AENM by its Treasurer, Jobbik’s Béla Kovács, due to its ‘anti-Hungarian’ sentiments.²⁸ For Griffin and the BNP, this put any sympathies with a fellow nationalist grouping in Ukraine under some pressure, and so we see transnational unity with Svoboda with placed second to developing the overarching, ideological affinity with Putin’s Russia and support for Jobbik. This example, then, underscores themes of opportunism, and instability, in the dynamics of such transnational linkages. The ability to pick and choose the groups across Europe to identify with, use them to evoke a sense of a common cause, and then later drop such support when this no longer fits the wider narrative, is also a notable component of the BNP’s discourse on transnational activism.

To conclude, then, we can take a number of observations from this survey of British National Party webpages and their reporting of the development of the party’s international linkages – though this is a discussion that has only scratched the surface of this theme. Firstly, we can see a growing willingness to identify with European issues

within the BNP party hierarchy. Secondly, we can identify a significant investment in efforts to develop transnational linkages, in particular seen as a central part of a strategy for growth and development, and one that would reap rewards in the 2014 European elections. Finally, in reality, we can note there was a failure to capitalise on any potential benefits this strategy might bring. Griffin failed to ignite the imagination of either the wider party base, or those more casually attracted to the BNP. We can take these points in turn.

To begin with the theme of willingness to identify with European partners – though clearly not with the structures of the European Union itself – we can see that becoming an MEP would inevitably create an environment where ideologues such as Griffin were likely to encounter figures who would share their ethno-nationalist sympathies to varying degrees. The linkages with groups like Jobbik and the Front National are clearly within this vein, and one would also assume that the links developing between the BNP and Golden Dawn would have been more significant if it too had secured MEPs in the 2009 elections. Moreover, while it is unsurprising to find Griffin talking positively about an ethnic idea of European nationalism in his speech at the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements event held in 2012, what is perhaps most interesting here is the manner in which he specifically discussed the theme of an ethnic identification with parts of Europe such as Russia and the former Eastern Bloc, which he felt had not been so dramatically affected by the impact of migration when compared to western Europe. Indeed for Griffin, the ethno-nationalist movements found in Eastern Europe, such as Jobbik, has an authenticity to them that was lacking in many western European nationalist groups, especially those that focused primarily on Islamophobia. Not all parties in the western European far right thought in this way. If we compare the failing BNP with rising Front National, we see that the links between the two as part of the AENM did not suggest that both parties were pursuing the same strategy in this period. Links between the BNP and the Front National were developed primarily with older figures within the movement, such as Bruno Gollnisch and Jean Marie Le Pen. More recently, Marine Le Pen has somewhat successfully moved the Front National away from its extremist profile, and even criticized Jobbik for being extremist, while reigning in the enthusiasm for such parties found in figures such as Gollnisch. This sort of disassociation with Eastern European ethno-nationalism does contrast in terms of both tenor and impact with Griffin's unabashed approach to defending the extremist agenda of a party such as Jobbik, and even Golden Dawn.

Moving to the second point, at least at a level of leadership, we can see that developing the role of the AENM was more than mere talk too. There was an attempt to bring the wider support base of the BNP into a relationship with the activities of the AENM. On its website, ahead of elections in 2014 the BNP talked up the idea that a nexus was developing between the BNP, Jobbik and elements within the Front National, which sought to develop closer links with other nationalists too. This article has included comment on how this led to linkages developing with nationalist groups in Poland, Sweden, Spain and Ukraine, as well as sympathy at least for Putin's Russia. The wider party was invited to participate in a new era of political engagement on the European as well as the national level, though there appears to be limited evidence of significant 'buy in' from the grass roots of the movement. While the adventures of party figures such as Griffin, and activists close to the heart of the party, such as Angus Matthys, do reveal a level of genuine transnational exchange, at a grass roots level we see limited evidence of support for all of this. Of course, to a degree this is a question of proving a negative, but even when we look at material designed to connect the activities of the AENM with the party base, such as the BNP/AENM Village Green Weekend, there is little here to suggest a strong identification with alliances on a European level.

This brings us to the final point: efforts at developing a transnational agenda do not necessarily end well for extreme right politics. In the case of Nick Griffin's BNP, at least, they certainly contributed to the failure of the party in 2014, though were far from the only reason for its collapse at this time. Nevertheless, we can place the inability to make political capital from the opportunity to develop transnational linkages as a part of various missed opportunities, and crises of leadership and confidence, experienced by the BNP throughout the 2009 to 2014 period. This failure to develop a winning electoral profile precipitated a wider collapse within the party, which ended with the expulsion of the man at the heart of this story of transnational adventures, Nick Griffin. Whether the party's new leader, Adam Walker, is able to salvage anything from this wreckage is an open question. Extreme right political groups are often re-inventing themselves, and returning from seemingly impossible situations. Time will tell if there is any potential for the BNP to revive its international linkages, and turn these to its advantage.

¹ The turn to thinking about transnational activity has been developed in the following recent publications: Roger Griffin, *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Edward Arnold, 1998); Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin and Brian Jenkins eds., *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational* (London: Routledge, 2012) and Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin

and Brian Jenkins eds., *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2012); Paul Jackson and Anton Shekhovtsov eds., *The Post-War Anglo-American Far Right: A Special Relationship of Hate*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

² Recent analyses examining this issue include: Elizabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Paul Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008); Leonard Weinberg, *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Cas Mudde *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³ A typical report here was Michael White of the *Guardian*, whose blog on the breakthrough can be read here: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2009/jun/08/european-elections-bnp-gordon-brown>

⁴ For more on Griffin's bankruptcy, see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25590155>

⁵ Matthew Goodwin and Robert Ford, *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2014.)

⁶ Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

⁷ The analysis on British National Party web spaces is limited, though for more details on its attitudes to online media see: Chris Atton, 'Far-right media on the internet: culture, discourse, power', *New Media and Society* 8/4 (2006), pp. 573 – 87.

⁸ See: http://aemn.info/?page_id=46 (accessed 25/11/2014).

⁹ See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8356284.stm> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁰ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/alliance-funding-2013-nationalist-victory> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹¹ See: <http://bnptv.org.uk/2013/03/a-nationalist-victory/> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹² See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/historic-meeting-'alliance-european-nationalist-movements'> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹³ See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRRIm8hYfBo> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁴ See: <http://bnptv.org.uk/2012/10/protecting-identities/> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁵ These videos are also embedded on the following page:

<http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/historic-meeting-'alliance-european-nationalist-movements'> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁶ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/nationalist-village-green-date-your-diary> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁷ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/bnp-aemn-village-green-weekend> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁸ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/youth-leadership-training-weekend-hungary> (accessed 25/11/2014).

¹⁹ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/youth-and-national-pride-video> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²⁰ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/golden-dawn-dangerous-extremists-or-long-overdue-national-revival-make-your-own-mind> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²¹ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/breaking-news-golden-dawn-arrest-bnp-statement> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²² For more on the breakthrough of the BNP in 2009, see: Matthew Goodwin, *New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party* (London: Routledge, 2011).

²³ A typical example of news reporting conveying criticism of Vona's politics included:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25866467> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²⁴ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/jobik-london-visit>

²⁵ See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/just-what-greece-didnt-need-bnp-leader-nick-griffin-seeks-golden-dawn-alliance-9052662.html> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²⁶ See: <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/nationalist-victory-ukraine> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²⁷ See: <http://bnp.org.uk/news/national/towards-mainstream-british-nationalism> (accessed 25/11/2014).

²⁸ For more here, see: Anton Shekhovtsov, 'The old and new European friends of Ukraine's far-right Svoboda party', *Searchlight* (September 2013) available at: <http://searchlightmagazine.com/archive/the-old-and-new-european-friends-of-ukraine%E2%80%99s-far-right-svoboda-party> (accessed 25/11/2014).