

Neuropa 2.0:
Jobbik, AENM, and the Nationalist Alternative Model to European Integration

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I. Introduction

In the aftermath of the political rearrangement wrought upon Europe by the First World War and the economic turmoil of the Great Depression much of both Eastern and Western Europe turned to radical nationalist political parties. The Fascists in Italy and Spain, the Nazis in Germany, and the Arrow Cross party in Hungary are prime examples of Europe's interwar conversion to extreme Nationalism. Counter intuitively these parties fueled by jingoism and intolerance actually worked together quite well. Mussolini inspired Hitler's early career, Hitler gave military support to Franco, Germany and Italy formed the core of the Axis powers in Europe, Hungary was one of many signatures to the revised Anti-Comintern Pact. International fascism was an almost chummy affair until the outbreak of the Second World War.

By 1945 fascism, Nazism, and extreme nationalism had been shown to be morally and intellectually bankrupt movements. In Western Europe liberal corporate capitalism and democracy prevailed while in Eastern Europe the Red Army enforced communist forms of government. In 1989 this communist form of totalitarianism also collapsed, leaving capitalism and liberalism as the last ideologies standing, ideologies which were almost universally embraced. Eastern Europe quickly signed up to become part of the European Union and engage in the great work of European integration that their Western counterparts had been blazing in their absences. Europe was whole again and all signs pointed to a long lasting form of liberal integration.

In the minds of the world's science fiction authors, alternative historians, and practitioners of the counter-factual the alternative possibilities of World War II have held special sway. In Philip K. Dick's Hugo Award winning novel *The Man in the High Castle* Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany have divided the world between them.¹ Robert Harris takes a more realistic and intriguing look at the political possibilities an Axis victory would have opened up in his bestseller *Fatherland*. Harris's novel presents the reader with a vision of Europe as run by an alliance of fascist governments loosely joined together in an alternative universe version of the European Union, with Nazi Germany at its center.² This New Europe, or Neuropa, was the political system dreamed of fascist governments of the early 20th century that never came to be.

In this paper I outline my ongoing research into today's neo-fascist parties in Europe, and attempt to trace the evolution of their political ideas over the past four to five years. In the end I argue they have moved from empty Eurosceptic rhetoric to the development of an alternative model to European integration, the blueprint for a Neuropa 2.0. To show this development I analyze that interaction between three current trends affecting European Politics; the electoral success of Jobbik and other far right parties, increased cooperation between far right parties in different EU member states, and the development of an increasingly cohesive anti-EU platform.

II. Jobbik and the Return of the Right

The collapse of Lehman Brothers in late 2008 caused an economic tsunami that affected first the U.S. housing market, then the entire U.S. economy, and by 2009 most of the world. The failure of confidence in U.S. banking in particular put the debt market of Europe under increased pressure. Europe was ill equipped to deal with this pressure at the onset of the crisis. Long-term

¹ Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (Boston: Gregg Press, 1979).

² Robert Harris, *Fatherland* (New York, NY: Random House, 1992).

structural debt that was serviceable before the crisis became un-repayable and already high unemployment skyrocketed to levels that fueled social unrest.

While the debate in the mainstream body politic of Europe is centered on the austerity vs. growth, the far right political parties in Europe have exploited the Eurozone crisis by claiming that it is a validation of their long-standing Eurosceptic opinions. Since 2008 far right political parties have seen a surge in mainstream popularity that is unprecedented in recent times. This electoral success combined with increased media attention has emboldened the far right, and also altered their political message.

Since the economic crisis began previously fringe political parties have been able to reposition themselves closer to the mainstream of European politics. None of these parties have scored anything close to a majority or managed to form a coalition government. What they have been able to do is secure a seat at the table in both the national parliaments of their home countries as well as in the European Parliament. This electoral success alone lends some legitimacy to their cause. More importantly they have been able to skew the entire political dialogue to the right. Center right parties have increasingly turned to anti-immigration rhetoric in an attempt to co-opt the angst tapped into by far right groups. The best example of this can be seen in Hungarian politics and the meteoric rise of the Jobbik party.

Jobbik official formed as a political party in October 2003 out of a conservative student group known as *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, or the Movement for a Better Hungary. Jobbik put forward its first candidates for national office in the 2006 Hungarian parliamentary elections. The party ran on a three-way alliance ticket with two other parties including the Hungarian Truth and Life Party, or MIEP. The alliance received 2.2% of the vote, less than half

of the 5% threshold needed to secure any seats in the Hungarian parliament. In 2007 the leaders of *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* called for the creation of a separate group known as *Magyar Gárda Kulturális Egyesület*, or the Cultural Association of the Hungarian Guard. Magyar Garda has acted as the paramilitary wing of the Jobbik political movement ever since. At the same time Jobbik broke its alliance with all other Hungarian political parties. Jobbik blamed the 2006 electoral defeat on the poor performance of its alliance partner the MIEP. The creation of a paramilitary wing and the refusal to work with other parties proved to be a winning strategy that reinvigorated the movement. In 2008 Jobbik hit 7% at the ballot box while running without a coalition partner. For the first time the party had reached the 5% threshold that guaranteed them representation in national politics.³

The 2009 elections for the European Parliament saw Jobbik earn 15% of the vote and send three MEPs to represent Hungary in the European Union. This is an astonishing accomplishment when one considers that not only did Jobbik more than double its share of the electorate in less than twelve months, it also came close to surpassing the ruling Socialist party's 17% of the vote.⁴ Add to that the fact that Jobbik was able to send three representatives to the European Union on a party platform that openly called for the EU to be dissolved.

III. The Alliance of European National Movements

The Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) was formed on October 24th, 2009 in Budapest, Hungary at the 6th party congress of *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*. Five political parties from five separate nations formed the original line up: Jobbik from Hungary,

³ "A Short Summary about Jobbik", The Movement for a Better Hungary, http://www.jobbik.com/about_jobbik/3207.html

⁴ "Results by Country (2009)", European Parliament, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-\(2009\).html?tab=16](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-(2009).html?tab=16)

National Front from France, National Front from Belgium, National Democrats from Sweden, and Tricolour-Flame from Italy.⁵ The British National Party issued a statement supporting the organization. AENM declared its intention to file as a Political Party on the European level (Europarty) in order to receive funding from the European Union. The deadline to file for such was November 1st, 2009 causing AENM to lose out on any EU funding for 2010.⁶ Two weeks later the BNP officially joined the alliance adding their two MEPs Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons to the lineup. Griffin touted the new attitude toward other nationalist parties in Europe, “You can be a nationalist without being confrontational. Nationalism is about peace and co-operation, not about aggression”.⁷

The Common Declaration of the Alliance of European National Movements has nine points:

1. The creation of a Europe of free, independent and equal nations in the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states, refraining from taking decisions on matters properly taken by states themselves.
2. The rejection of any attempt to create a centralist European Super State.
3. The promotion of the freedom, dignity and equal rights of every citizen, and opposition to all forms of totalitarianism.
4. The primacy of direct votes by the people or their elected representatives over any administrative or bureaucratic body.
5. The effective protection of Europe against new threats, such as terrorism and religious, political, economic, or financial imperialism.
6. A peaceful and humane settlement of immigration problems through, among other measures, international cooperation aiming at development and self sufficiency of third world countries.
7. Strong policies in favor of families aiming at solving the demographic deficit in Europe and promoting traditional values throughout society.
8. The preservation of the diversity of Europe that results from the variety of our identities, traditions, languages and indigenous cultures.

⁵ “European Nationalist Parties Form Alliance”, EUtimes.net, October 29th, 2009.
www.eutimes.net/2009/10/european-nationalist-parties-form-alliance/

⁶ Leigh Phillips, “Far-right alliance fails to get EU parliament cash” EU Observer, December 11, 2009.
<http://euobserver.com/843/28982>

⁷ Geoff Meade, “Griffin announces alliance of EU nationalist parties” The Independent UK, November 12, 2009.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/griffin-announces-alliance-of-eu-nationalist-parties-1819266.html>

9. A common fight of the European peoples against social dumping and the destructive effects of globalization.⁸

The EU Parliament formally recognizes two levels of European wide political organizations. The first is a political party at the European level, often referred to as a Europarty. The main benefit of forming a Europarty is access to campaign funds provided by the EU Parliament. The second level is a political grouping in the EU Parliament. In order to form a political grouping in the EU Parliament an organization must have 25 or more MEPs who represent at least seven EU member states.⁹

2012 has been yet another breakthrough year for the AENM. After failing to receive funding from the European Parliament in 2010 and 2011 the AENM was formally recognized in 2012. On February 13, 2012 the senior management of the European Parliament allocated €289,266 for the AENM for fiscal year 2012. The first goal set out by the group was met after two years. MEPs from across Europe were upset that EU funding would be given to openly anti-EU political parties with a history of racist and xenophobic ideologies.¹⁰ According to AENM calls to tighten the regulations around Europarty funding in the wake of their electoral and organizational success highlight the undemocratic nature of EU institutions.

Today in the EU Parliament there are twenty-seven members described as Non-Inscrits, meaning they do not belong to any of the seven political groups of the EU Parliament. Of these eight are members of the AENM. Three of the MEPs are members of Jobbik; Béla Kovács, Krisztina Morvai, and Csanád Szegedi. An additional three MEPs come from National Front

⁸ Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau, editors, *The Extreme Right in Europe: Current Trends and Perspectives* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011).

⁹ "Political Parties at the European Level" European Parliament.
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00264f77f5/Grants-to-political-parties-and-foundations.html>

¹⁰ Simon Taylor, "MEPs want to stop EU funds reaching far-right parties" European Voice, March 4, 2012.
<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/meps-want-to-stop-eu-funds-reaching-far-right-parties/74049.aspx>

(France); Bruno Gollnisch, Marine Le Pen, and Jean-Marie Le Pen. The British National Party holds two seats, one held by BNP leader Nick Griffin, the other by Andrew Brons.

The most obvious predecessor to AENM is EuroNat, the political organization founded by former French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the 2004-2009 term of the European Parliament EuroNat could also claim eight members, seven from National Front (France) and one from Tricolour Flame. EuroNat never had much organizational success on the level AENM has achieved and was essentially a vanity project on behalf of the elder Le Pen. EuroNat was nothing more than an extension of National Front (France), whereas AENM's core membership is three strong parties working in cooperation. This cooperation between parties and long term organizational success is what sets AENM apart from previous far-right nationalist groups, and may contribute to further success.

IV. The Nationalist Alternative Model to European Integration

In my analysis of the interaction between member parties of the AENM I have developed a conceptual framework I call the Nationalist Alternative Model to European Integration (NAMEI). Simply stated this theory suggests that the AENM or future successor organizations of the AENM represent an evolution in the political philosophy of European nationalist political parties. This evolution is a function of the clash between the Eurosceptic ideologies of nationalist parties and the bureaucratic structure of European Union institutions. In order to effect change on the European Union nationalist parties are forced to interact with the Bureaucratic structures of the EU, most importantly the European Parliament.

The pressures and the realities of holding office often act as a moderating force on political parties. This was the theory by which many elite and middle class members of German society embraced the election of the Nazis in 1933. In that most famous instance the predicted moderation failed to materialize. Today's far-right parties operate not in a power vacuum but in a highly regulated multilayered power structure. In addition to electoral gains these parties have seen an increase in media exposure. Jobbik, an extremely young and dynamic party has constantly been shaping its media image, projecting youth and energy while trying to counteract perceptions of racism in the Western media. Jobbik runs its official web presence in four languages Hungarian, English, German, and Russian. Marine Le Pen in France has been working to improve the image of the National Front since the transfer of power from her father Jean-Marie Le Pen. BNP has also seen a change in leadership to a young, dynamic, and tech savvy group. The ascent of party leader Nick Griffin brought with it a flurry of blogs, social media, and television appearances.

Characteristic of the working arrangement between these parties the individual parties on the national level maintain a high media profile while AENM itself is an unknown factor. Press releases about AENM conferences are released through the PR offices of National Front, BNP, and Jobbik. Almost no scholarly work has yet been published on AENM leading to a dearth of sources. Just one example, a search of the EU Observer yields 28 articles on Jobbik and exactly one on the AENM. Part of the blame may rest with a media that tends to dismiss right wing political thought as simplistic and unworthy of analysis.¹¹ I

¹¹ "How Europe's Media treat the far right", BBC News. October 22, 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8320492.stm>

would argue that AENM is actually a highly sophisticated group who are reshaping nationalist politics in Europe in bold new ways.

The Nationalist Alternative Model to European Integration involves a separation between internal national dialogue and international image. All racist and xenophobic elements must be downplayed to the international community, while being exploited at home to bring in votes when necessary. Secondly, no party infighting is to be allowed on the European level. Nationalist parties from states bordering Hungary have conflicting goals with Jobbik, and so they are purposely excluded from the Alliance. Third, electoral success is rewarded with leadership positions within the alliance. Fourth, information and political strategies are shared between member parties; the success of all nationalist parties is seen as shared success because it represents progress toward the goal of hijacking and destroying the EU from within.¹² Fifth, the institutions of the EU should be used against it. EU funding should be secured and used to fund a cohesive anti-EU platform that is targeted at the financial crisis and loss of sovereignty, and lacking in the empty Eurosceptic rhetoric of previous generations. And finally, all national decisions should be made by home governments, but cooperation in Pan-European matters should continue, with or without the EU as the guiding structure. If the EU can be abolished the AENM would prefer it, but the alternative is to truncate the EU into a confederation without the Eurozone which could coordinate immigration policy and economics in ways favorable to AENM and nationalist ideology.

¹² “European Nationalists Must be ready to Compete on Continent-wide Lists” British National Party. <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/european-nationalists-must-be-ready-compete-continent-wide-lists>

V. 2014: Promise and Peril

The possible collapse of any of the three major parties in the AENM, or any infighting between those three parties represents the main threat to the success of the AENM and the further development of the Nationalist Alternative Model to European Integration. The biggest risk lies with Jobbik and the domestic political situation in Hungary. The ruling Fidesz party won a majority share of the vote in the parliamentary elections in 2010 large enough to amend the Hungarian constitution at will. Proposed changes to the Hungarian national parliament may decrease Jobbik's political influence after the 2014 elections. This may or may not affect the party's ability to successfully stand for office to the European Parliament. 2014 may also bring a political realignment in British domestic politics as Scots go to the polls to weight the issue of independence from the Union. The outcome could affect the dynamic of British politics in unpredictable ways, including an alteration to the political alignment in which Nick Griffin's British Nationalist Party must stand for office. France and Le Pen's National Front face no such drastic structural change in the foreseeable future.

If able to weather these potential storms the future looks bright for AENM. They will receive another round of funding for calendar year 2013 which can be used to fund the campaign for the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. The Alliance has expanded to ten parties with the addition of *Partido Nacional Renovador* from Portugal, the *Movimiento Social Republicano* from Spain, the Freedom Party (VP) from Finland, and Svoboda from

Ukraine.¹³ Svoboda is the most interesting addition as Ukraine is not an EU member state, showing that while the AENM works within the system they are also playing by their own rules and have a vision of Europe which operates outside EU confines, and can act as an alternative to them.

While Jobbik and BNP both posted record gains in the 2009, National Front (France) and Tricolour Flame performed worse than they did in 2004. In the previous session of the European Parliament National Front held seven seats while Tricolour Flame held one. Assuming Jobbik and BNP can hold the seats they have and National Front and Tricolour Flame reclaim their lost seats AENM would be over half way to the 25 MEPs from seven member states needed to form a political group in the European parliament. Many other nationalist parties exist in Europe that have the potential to gain seats in 2014, most intriguingly Golden Dawn in Greece.

VI. Conclusion

Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary, has been the most successful far-right party in terms of election results and increased media profile. With the creation of the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements (AENM) in 2009 Jobbik assumed leadership role amongst far right political parties in Europe. AENM set out and achieved the formation of a political party at the European level. This shows that European nationalist and far right parties have begun to move beyond the empty rhetoric of classic Euroscepticism.

¹³ Geoff Meade, "Alliance of European National Movements Expands to 9 Parties" British National Party. December 11th 2009. <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/alliance-european-national-movements-expands-9-parties>

As an effect of the increased political responsibility of holding office, greater media attention, and cooperation with other nationalist parties, the far right is beginning to develop and articulate a more comprehensive foreign policy agenda. Pan-European cooperation between nationalist parties and the development of shared goals and agendas may form the basis of a far right alternative model to the EU.

Some challenges face AENM and its member parties going forward. Many opportunities for growth also exist in the form of elections in 2014 and the possible addition of more member parties. Bad news for the Euro is good news anti-EU nationalists and the stream of bad news surrounding the current crisis may continue up until the 2014 election. As the mainstream parties debate expanded integration they may overlook the fact that the nationalist are at their gates, better organized than ever before and with a blueprint of Europe in hand. It is not a blueprint of Europe as it is now, but of the new Europe they imagine. By working together it is the Europe they wish to make real.

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