

# One step further to the right

## *Right-wing extremism in Greece and the rise of Golden Dawn*

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The Golden Dawn isn't a story that began last year. The "men and women in the black shirts" were always near you, they lived among you, for many years. Some of you wouldn't take them seriously, some of you were comforted in your bourgeois dream, but we said that our time would come, our age still hasn't begun, because we aren't the quiet birds of peacetime, we are birds of the storm and the hurricane. The storm came and the hurricane came and with them we came – we, the "men and women in the black shirts". In these pages, you will read part of our story...

– Golden Dawn International Newsroom, 2014.

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Loans make people slaves.

– Menander, Greek philosopher, 341/2–290 B.C.

[T]he pessimism of indignation [...] Here the claim is made to judge history, to divest it of its fatality, to discover responsibility behind it, guilty men in it. For this is the rub, one needs guilty men. The underprivileged, the decadents of all kinds [...] need victims [...] To this end, they need an appearance of justice, [...] some sort of scapegoat. This scapegoat can be God [...] or the social order, or education and training, or the Jews, or the nobility, or those who have turned out well in any way. In short, the pessimism of indignation invents responsibility in order to create a *pleasant* feeling for itself – revenge – ‘Sweeter than honey’ old Homer called it.

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, New York: Vintage, 1967:201–2.



# Abstract

This thesis examines the rise of the extreme right party Golden Dawn in Greece. The main argument is that it is necessary to understand the developments of the modern Greek state, from independence and throughout the financial crisis, to understand that there is a general tendency in Greece to lean towards the far right in times of crisis. Recent developments in Greece should therefore not be seen as a unique phenomenon, but rather as a confirmation of the importance of *nationalism*, the effects of *populism*, and also the heritage of *fascism* in contemporary Greece. The first part of this thesis therefore looks at the history of Greece from 1821 to 1990 before moving on to a larger discussion on developments from the 1990s. Particular attention will be given to the period from the financial crisis of 2008 up until this day (early May 2014).

This thesis also looks at the concepts of *nationalism*, *fascism* and *populism*, and how they are crucial both in defining the concept of the *extreme right* and for understanding extreme right-wing parties.

**Key words:** *fascism, Golden Dawn, Greece, nationalism, populism, right-wing extremism, the extreme right, the far right, the financial crisis.*





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In memory of Stratis Alexidis. I never got to tell you that it was our conversation that early evening in Mytilini that inspired me to write this thesis. I regret that we never got to know each other as well as I would have liked.

Any faults or errors in this thesis are entirely my own.

Thermi, Lesvos, 16.04.2014

Blindern, Oslo, 15.05.2014

Birgitta Lim Ersland



# Abbreviations

ANEL	Independent Greeks ( <i>Anexártitoi Éllines</i> )
EAM	National Liberation Front ( <i>Ethnikó Apeleftherotikó Métopo</i> )
EDES	National Republican Hellenic League ( <i>Ethnikós Dimokratikós Ellinikós Síndesmos</i> )
ELAS	Greek People’s Liberation Army ( <i>Ellinikós Laikós Apeleftherotikós Stratós</i> )
EPEK	National Progressive Centre Union ( <i>Ethnikí Proodeftikí Enosis Kéntru</i> )
EPEN	National Political Union ( <i>Kómma ton Proofeftikon</i> )
DIMAR	Democratic Left ( <i>Dimokratikí Aristerá</i> )
KKE	The Greek Communist Party ( <i>Kommunistikó Kómma Elládas</i> )
LAOS	Popular Orthodox Rally ( <i>Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós</i> )
ND	New Democracy ( <i>Neá Dimokratía</i> )
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement ( <i>Panellínio Sosialistikó Kínima</i> )
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left ( <i>Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás - Enotikó Koinonikó Métopo</i> )
XA	Golden Dawn ( <i>Chrysí Avgí</i> )
EMU	European Monetary Union
EU	European Union, as well as its predecessor the European Community
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MTFS	Medium Term Fiscal Strategy 2013-2016
MYPLACE	Memory, Youth, Political Legacy And Civic Engagement. A collaborative large-scale project funded by the European Commission.
HRW	Human Rights Watch



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# 1 Introduction

This thesis looks at the rise of the extreme right-wing party People's Association – Golden Dawn (Greek: Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος – Χρυσή Αυγή, XA<sup>1</sup>) in Greece. Towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Europe was struck by a financial crisis. In many countries the crisis led to social riots, instability and a sudden rise in mistrust of government and leading politicians. Even if it is the cradle of democracy, modern-day Greece has a long history of both authoritarian dictatorship and corruption. In the years since the crisis struck there has been an increase in discrimination and street violence, as well as a visibly larger support for parties at the far right of the political spectrum. The increase in racially motivated violence in the wake of a financial crisis can be seen in other European countries as well, such as Hungary today and Germany in the early 20th century. Even so, few have yet to look at the direct link between economic decline and the rise of extreme right-wing movements.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their more extreme neo-Nazi viewpoints, more people seem to think that XA provides an alternative to the other political parties. Nevertheless, the party's involvement in criminal activities, violence and the murder of anti-fascist rapper and activist Pavlos Fyssas has led the Greek government to consider banning the party.<sup>3</sup> This led to a mass arrest of prominent Golden Dawn members, including the party leader Nikolaos 'Nikos' Michaloliakos in October 2013.<sup>4</sup> As of May 2014, the party is still under investigation and Michaloliakos is still under arrest. Even so, XA has received support from members of other neo-Nazi parties in Europe, including

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<sup>1</sup> I will be using Golden Dawn and the abbreviation XA interchangeably when referring to the Greek party.

<sup>2</sup> An exception is Alan de Bromhead, Barry Eichengreen & Kevin O'Rourke, "Political Extremism in the 1920s and 1930s: Do German Lessons Generalize?", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 73, nr. 2 (2012): 371-406.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Helena Smith, "Greece moves to ban far-right Golden Dawn party", *The Guardian*, 18.09.2013

<sup>4</sup> Helena Smith, "Golden Dawn leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos arrested", *The Guardian*, 28.09.2013

Svenskarnas parti in Sweden and Danskernes Parti in Denmark, as well as from the leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin.<sup>5</sup> Despite allegations of violence and criminal behaviour the party is surprisingly stable in the opinion polls, and in one of the latest polls from the beginning of April 2014, the party had 9.9 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

Modern Greek history is built upon deep political cleavages, and the right side has dominated Greek politics for most of the 20th century. The scope of my thesis therefore stretches beyond just the time of Golden Dawn. The development in Greece is not, I dare say, a unique phenomenon. Rather I argue that one can trace this and similar events back in history. To understand recent developments I have therefore gone as far back as to 1821, the year when modern Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire. It is my belief that political culture combined with economic downturn is the best explanation for the rise of the far right in Greece. In that way the financial crisis may be seen solely as the precipitating cause for the recent political developments in Greece. Even so, other possibly contributing factors, such as increased European integration through membership in the EU, and also factors directly related to Golden Dawn like ideology, rhetoric and the motivation of their voters, will also be accounted for.

At the time of writing, the financial crisis has to some extent been declared over, with the re-entrance of Greece on the international stock market in early April 2014. However, the aftermath of the crisis is yet to be seen, and the effects are yet to be analysed. The intention of this study is not to provide solutions, yet I hope it can provide some insights and, at best, some explanations for the rise of support for the extreme right in Greece.

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance *Expo*, 'Svenska nynazister i protester med Gyllene gryning', *Expo*, 04.02.2014; Danskernes parti, 'Danskernes Parti besøgte Gyldent Daggry', 05.02.2014.

<sup>6</sup> Opinion poll done by MRB for real.gr, 14.04.2014, [www.3comma14.gr/pi/view\\_survey.php?id=21469](http://www.3comma14.gr/pi/view_survey.php?id=21469) [23.04.2014].



## **Research question**

When I decided to write my thesis on the rise of Golden Dawn, I did so with the presumption that the financial crisis was the main contributing factor to the party's increased support. My tentative research question was therefore the following:

*What can explain the rise of the extreme right-wing party Golden Dawn in Greece?*

Despite this, I knew that I had to take other factors into account before drawing such an inference, and there was also a question of how big of a factor the financial crisis actually was? To find an answer I would have to include other explanatory variables. When looking into other factors beside the financial crisis that could explain the increase in support of Golden Dawn the past years, I soon realised that the research question was unfathomable. I would have to narrow it down, lest it become too big a task for the limited time, and space, that I had been given. I therefore identified three factors, or explanatory variables, to look into. As a result I ended up with the following research question:

*In light of the recent financial crisis, how do modern Greek history and political tradition, party ideology, and European integration through membership in the European Union affect the rise of the extreme right party Golden Dawn?*

Though still unfathomable, it is now narrowed down to the three main factors that I presume are most important, namely history and political traditions, party ideology, and lastly, the effects of European integration through the European Union and membership in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

# Background

## **A short introduction to the history of Greece, 1821–2014**

The modern history of Greece usually starts with the Greek War of Independence that lasted from 1821 to 1829, including the recognition of Greece as an independent nation in 1823. The period following the 1820s was highly unstable and also saw the creation of a Greek identity that had been almost non-existent prior to the independence. Nationalism grew strong and there was a wish to find a link between ancient and modern Greece, emphasising the time of Alexander the Great.

After a period shifting between monarchy and republic, the Second Hellenic Republic was proclaimed in 1924 as an attempt to restore stability. In the period that followed Greece experienced a series of failed coups and small wars until, once again, monarchy was restored as the Kingdom of Greece under George II in 1935. Less than a year later, in August 1936, General Ioannis Metaxas staged a coup and declared martial law. This was the start of a period of right-wing dictatorship that lasted until Nazi-Germany's invasion in 1941. Once more the nation was thrown into instability, and the end of the Second World War was followed by a civil war between the government and the communists of the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) that lasted from 1947 to 1951.

The period after 1951 was characterised by American influence. The Western allies were terrified of losing control over Greece because of her strategic position during the Cold War and therefore helped prop up a weak state structure. This lasted until the famous colonels' coup of 1967. This was the start of a military dictatorship that lasted until the Third Hellenic Republic was established in 1974.

After 1974, a two-party system dominated by the centre-right party New Democracy (ND) and the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) influenced

Greek politics. After the fall of the colonels' regime, the far right played a minor role in Greek politics until the establishment of the populist party LAOS (Popular Orthodox Rally) in 2000. LAOS represented a new generation within Greek politics and was an alternative even further to the right for those who were not happy with the majority rule of ND and PASOK. The period also saw the establishment of Golden Dawn.

### **Golden Dawn and the situation in Greece today**

Its current leader, Nikos Michaloliakos, founded Golden Dawn in 1980. Starting off as a magazine, the party increased its involvement in politics from the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> In the elections of 2009 Golden Dawn obtained 0.29 per cent of the vote, i.e., less than 20,000 people voted for them. In the election in May 2012, however, they had suddenly grown to 6.97 per cent, or 441,018 votes, a development that caused some alarm in the media.<sup>8</sup>

Both Human Rights Watch (2012) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (2013) have reported an increase in xenophobic or racially motivated violence in Greece.<sup>9</sup> Along the same lines, Alexandra Koronaïou and Alexandros Sakellariou refer to the 'urban myths' about XA helping the general population with the difficulties they face in everyday activities.<sup>10</sup> Koronaïou and Sakellariou also refer to the establishment of a Greek blood bank, as one of XA's first initiatives after the election in 2012:

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<sup>7</sup> John S. Koliopoulos & Thanos M. Veremis, *Modern Greece. A History since 1821*, Malden, MA, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Antonis A. Ellinas, 'The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece', in *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2013); See also William Wheeler, 'Europe's New Fascists', *The New York Times*, 17.11.2012; Rachel Donadio & Dimitris Bounias, 'Hard Times Lift Greece's Anti-Immigrant Fringe', *The New York Times*, 12.04.2012; Associated Press, 'Golden Dawn: leader of far-right party lashes out at Greece's "traitors"', *The Guardian*, 06.05.2012.

<sup>9</sup> See HRW, *Hate on the streets: Xenophobic violence in Greece*, Human Rights Watch, 2012; See also Flyktninghjelpen [Norwegian Refugee Council, *Flyktningregnskapet. Alt om mennesker på flykt verden over*, Flyktninghjelpen, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Koronaïou & Alexandros Sakellariou, 'Reflections on "Golden Dawn", community organizing and nationalist solidarity: helping (only) Greeks', in *Community Development Journal*, vol. 48, no. 2(2013).

This took place at the end of June 2012, and the initiative was taken by the ‘Green (i.e. ecological) Wing’ of the organization. The first announcement ends with the phrase: ‘Donate blood – Save a Greek Soul’, while in another poster we read: ‘Blood bank and bank for platelets, only for Greeks, who need our help’, with the phrase ‘only for Greeks’ being underlined with the blue national colour.<sup>11</sup>

This illustrates how the XA define Greeks through blood and underlines their idea of the importance of keeping the Greek blood pure. The blood bank can be seen as a response to the massive inflow of immigrants the past decades, thereby creating a feeling of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, where providing health care and employment for ‘them’ (the immigrants) creates a problem for ‘us’ (the Greeks), or puts ‘us’ at the back of the line.<sup>12</sup> Playing on this, XA ‘[...] present themselves as the substitute for an inadequate welfare state and the only political party that cares for the Greek people and its communal needs’.<sup>13</sup> Arguably, this is a clear parallel to the rise of NSDAP in Germany between 1929 and 1933.

Unlike many other political parties in Greece, the Golden Dawn is at once both a movement and a party, and I will therefore refer to it as both. Even so, to *support* Golden Dawn is not the same as to *vote* for it. In that way, electoral results might give an idea of the electoral basis of the party, but not of how many will actually take to the streets in support of the movement. I therefore believe that it can at times be useful to distinguish between the two. I will get back to this in Chapters 6 and 7.

## Methodology

My presumption is that the recent financial crisis is the main reason for the increase in support for the right-wing extremists in Greece. Through a study of Greek history in the 20th and 21st centuries I wish to answer why the extreme right have seen an increase of support in the recent years of the financial crisis, and to see whether this is

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 333.

<sup>12</sup> For more on ‘us vs. them’ see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, London/New York: Pluto Press, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Koronaiou & Sakellariou 2013:334.

a general tendency based on historical tradition or a new development. As a result, my approach will be both descriptive and analytical, and I will have to rely heavily on secondary sources.

### **A historian's perspective**

This thesis is written as a part of the history track of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Oslo. History in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has for a long time been greatly influenced by political science theories and also, though some may disagree, vice versa. Not unlike how a political scientist may see how an event fits a selected theory, the historian's role is to see how specific events may differ from what is expected. In my opinion, one can look at history in linear terms, as a long line that stretches from the past to the present. The role of the historian is to highlight or explain the events that differ from the expected linear 'path'. Examples of such 'irregularities' are major events or particular people of major importance that all in their own way have participated to the creation of history, be it Alexander the Great, the French revolution or the Second World War. This thesis can therefore to some extent be called cross-disciplinary. Even so, though I am greatly inspired by political science theory, I am first and foremost a historian. The same goes for this thesis.

In contrast to the idea that the great events and great men create history, some have claimed that it is the historians themselves that create it. According to Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier '... historians do not discover a past as much as they create it; they choose the events and people they think constitute the past, and they decide what about them is important to know'.<sup>14</sup> In that way, one could say that history does not exist until it is written. This leads to the question of the biasedness of the historian. A historian should always strive to be objective in her interpretation, but like all other researchers she may be influenced by the time of writing as well as by distance in time and geography. In other words, one needs to understand both the time under study as well as the time of the historian to understand how it may affect the interpretation, and

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<sup>14</sup> Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources. An Introduction to Historical Methods*, Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2001:1.

so a historian should always seek to describe history *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, or as it really was.<sup>15</sup>

## Research design

My research design will take the form of a typical single-case study. According to John Gerring a ‘case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)’.<sup>16</sup> I have chosen to do a single case study, focusing only on Greece, as opposed to a comparative study involving one or several other countries. This is first and foremost because I believe that the visibly increased support for an extreme right party such as Golden Dawn, over a period of just a few years, is interesting enough in itself to be worthy of a proper study, but also, arguably, because in-depth knowledge of a single case can be better than fleeting knowledge of a number of cases, since this can provide better grounds for generalisation at a later stage.

My research question implies a causal relationship between both historical and more recent developments in Greece and the rise of the extreme right. Describing and identifying such a causal relationship requires a study of the processes behind it. Jack Goldstone has emphasised the role of process tracing in explaining macro-historical phenomena:

To identify the process, one must perform the difficult cognitive feat of figuring out *which* aspects of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with *which simple principles* of the many that may be at work, would have *combined* to generate the observed sequence of events.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Leopold von Ranke, ‘Preface: Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494-1514’, in Fritz Stern (ed.) *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, New York: Vintage Books, 1973:57.

<sup>16</sup> John Gerring, *Case Study Research. Principles and Practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007:20.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander L. George & Andrew Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*, Cambridge/London: Mass/MIT, 2005.

For the purpose of explaining my hypothesis, I will mainly make use of the method of process tracing for my analysis. In that way it may be more of an analytical explanation. This variety of process tracing ‘converts a historical narrative into an *analytical* causal explanation couched in explicit theoretical forms’.<sup>18</sup> A problem regarding this type of process tracing is that the explanation may be deliberately selective, and so only focus on aspects that are seen as particularly important. Process tracing and historical explanation are closely related methods, and this is a typical form of bias that may occur in historical explanation.

### **Bias in historical explanation**

According to McCullagh, there are four common ways in which historical writing can be biased.<sup>19</sup> However, all of these may occur accidentally in historical explanation and it should therefore not be called biased unless they occur because the historian *wants* the outcome she has produced. *First*, a historian might sometimes misinterpret evidence. Say you are writing about a significant event, claiming it occurred, when in fact you are choosing to ignore all the evidence stating otherwise. *Second*, being selective when choosing which sources or narratives to use may lead to an unbalanced, or even unfair, interpretation of the past. Such a one-sided interpretation may for instance highlight people’s virtues and ignore their vices. The *third* is when a description of the past implies facts that are known to be false. McCullagh uses the example of a Marxist that might describe a revolution as a class struggle, even though there were no classes involved. The *fourth* is when one provides a causal explanation of a historical event without mentioning all the important causes. The reader may then get a misleading impression of the process that led to the event.

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<sup>18</sup> George & Bennett 2005:211, emphasis in original.

<sup>19</sup> C. Behan McCullagh, “Bias in historical description, interpretation, and explanation”, in *History and Theory*, vol. 39, no. 1(2000).

## **Challenges regarding the use of secondary literature**

Because of language barriers I will primarily make use of secondary sources, such as previous historical works on modern Greece, newspaper articles and academic papers. The phenomenon of right-wing extremism often comes in ‘waves’, and during and after these ‘waves’ there is an increase in the number of published articles and research projects. In other words, there are therefore periods with more information than others. There are also examples of some parties or extreme right phenomena having been studied more than others. One of the reasons for this is language. As Müller-Rommel has noted:

Studying small parties obviously encounters some unique problems especially when it comes to gathering information for a cross-national analysis. In most cases there are clearly language problems. Although it is relatively easy to collect information on party programmes, manifestos and party statutes, it is notably more difficult to read these brochures since (in most cases) they have not been translated to English or another international language.<sup>20</sup>

Using secondary literature leads to questions of biasedness, since such literature has been interpreted by someone else and is not presented in a neutral way, but rather according to the wishes of the author. The best way of dealing with such bias is by using several different interpretations; here this pertains to different authors, and also different newspapers. The official website of the party is in Greek, I will therefore make use of the official website of XA Ameriki, the local branch of Golden Dawn in the United States, as well as the website known as the Golden Dawn International Newsroom. Keeping in mind that these websites have been created for a more international audience than the original, they still provide useful English translations of official documents. The availability of this type of information is important for analysing how XA define themselves to an external as well as an internal audience. After all, it is not my intention to solely present the Greek view, but rather try to look at recent developments in an outsider’s perspective. International newspaper articles

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<sup>20</sup> Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, ‘Small parties in comparative perspective: the state of the art’, in Ferdinand Müller-Rommel and Geoffrey Pridham (eds.), *Small Parties in Western Europe. Comparative and National Perspectives*, London: Sage, 1991:2.



are therefore essential in this regard. As for XA's ideological positions, there are three main documents that present the ideology of XA. The first is the official ideological document *Ιδεολογία* (ideology), a pamphlet of about 16 pages that frequently quotes Michaloliakos. The second is a political programme, *πολιτικές θέσεις* (political positions). And the third is *the Manifesto of Golden Dawn*, also known as *Ταυτότητα* (identity).<sup>21</sup> All can be found on the official website of Golden Dawn as well as the website of XA Ameriki and the International Newsroom, and the last can also be found in the appendix. It should also be noted that only the second and the last are available in English.

There are a number of both Greek and international authors who have written about the history of modern Greece. For my own account of the years from 1821 to 2014 I will mainly make use of the works of David S. Close, Richard Clogg and of John S. Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis. These four authors are the most frequently cited when it comes to accounts of Greek history in the designated period. From the late 2000s and up until today I will also make use of international newspaper articles as well as academic papers. Whilst I am aware that the media is rarely unbiased, I still believe that I have been able to analyse the available material as objectively as possible. Throughout my thesis, I have explicitly expressed my concerns whenever I have been in doubt of an interpretation.

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<sup>21</sup> The whole manifesto can be found in the appendix. The English translation has been proofread by Nina Biering Alexidis, with the note mentioned in footnote 229.

## **The following chapters**

In the next chapter I will provide a thorough discussion of theories on the rise of the extreme right, the purpose of which will be to create a theoretical framework for further analysis of Golden Dawn. I will then move on to the main part of the thesis, starting with Chapter 3, *1821–1949: Shaping Modern Greece*. Here I will give a brief overview of the history of Greece since independence in 1821, especially focusing on political developments. Chapter 4 is a continuation of Chapter 3, now focusing on the years between 1949 and 1990. The main focus is still political developments, but particular attention will be given to foreign affairs, and especially European integration after the end of the civil war. In Chapter 5, *1990–2014: The Financial Crisis*, I will look at more contemporary issues. I will here provide a thorough account of the developments in Greece during the financial crisis, again focusing on politics, but also on public response. Chapter 6, *People’s Association – Golden Dawn*, will briefly look at the history of Golden Dawn from its establishment and up until today. Specific attention will be paid to ideology, symbolism and organisation. Moving on to the last chapter in the main part of this thesis, Chapter 7, *The Appeal of the Extreme Right*, will sum up some of the arguments made in the previous chapters. I will also discuss how my case fits the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. The thesis ends with a conclusion in Chapter 8.

## **2 Theoretical framework: Extremism from the margins to the mainstream**

Extreme right parties are commonly described as nationalist, populist, against the ruling system or against specific parties, and often, but not always, fascist.<sup>22</sup> For something to be extreme, it needs to tip the scale as far away from the centre, and from what is considered ‘moderate’, as possible.<sup>23</sup> It can therefore be seen as an anomaly. On the political scale one can slide and be extreme both to the left and to the right, the only resemblance being the distance from the ‘safe’ centre. For a party to be categorised as extreme right, it therefore needs to be as far to the right as possible. Nothing can exceed the extreme.

The main theoretical framework is based on theories of the rise of the extreme right, supported by relevant concepts like fascism, nationalism and populism. If one is to fully understand a phenomenon, such a discussion may be useful for further categorisation of the phenomenon under study, in this case the role of XA and how the party fits the concepts that I have already mentioned. Categorisation helps isolate the phenomenon and makes it easier to determine what approach to use for further studies. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to create a framework for my later analysis on the rise of right-wing extremism in Greece, and of Golden Dawn in particular. It should be noted that opposed to the concepts of nationalism, populism and fascism, there are no commonly accepted definitions of the extreme right.

### **Supporting concepts**

There is a vast amount of research done on the concepts of nationalism, fascism and populism, and it is not my intention to review it all. Instead I wish to give a brief

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<sup>22</sup> Ian McLean & Alistair McMillan, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003:189.

<sup>23</sup> Uwe Backes, ‘Meaning and Forms of Political Extremism in Past and Present’, in *Central European Political Studies Review*, vol. IX, no. 4(2012).

overview of the concepts, narrowing them down to simple definitions applicable in my theoretical framework. The concepts will be discussed in chronological order, starting with the oldest concept, that of nationalism. I have chosen to do my discussion in chronological order because I believe it highlights the importance of the concepts, as well as the fact that they are products not only of the time in which they originated, but also of each other. And so, as we will see, the concept of fascism is greatly influenced by nationalism, just as the concept of populism is influenced by both fascism and nationalism.

## **Nationalism**

The concept of nationalism is relatively new, and the most common meanings were developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nationalism may refer to feelings of patriotism in the form of strong bonds towards the constitutions of one's nation, including language, culture, history, and shared ancestry (ethnicity), to mention some. This definition is at once both subjective and objective. It is subjective in its reference to feelings of belonging, and objective in reference to the concrete factors that one may have in common, such as language, culture, and so on. In that way it is inspired by Joseph Stalin, who said that

[a] nation is an historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture<sup>24</sup>

However, it is also inspired by Benedict Anderson, who in his book *Imagined Communities* defined the nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'<sup>25</sup> But most of all, it is inspired by Anthony D. Smith, who in his book *Nationalism* has tried to summarise all the previous usages of the term nationalism in the following five main points:

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Stalin [1973], quoted in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*. Cambridge/Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001:11.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London/New York: Verso, 2006[1983]:6.

- 1) a process of formation, or growth, of nations
- 2) a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation
- 3) a language and symbolism of the nation
- 4) a social and political movement on behalf of the nation
- 5) a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular<sup>26</sup>

The first point highlights nationalism as a process and should be directly linked with the term 'nation'. According to Benedict Anderson the 'nation' is an imagined political community.<sup>27</sup> It is imagined because those who define themselves as members of a nation 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'<sup>28</sup> In other words there is an idea of a unity, something that they all have in common and that holds them together within the borders of the same community. The borders imply that the nation is limited, and beyond the boundaries of this imagined community one can find other nations.

This leads us to Smith's second point, for the nation is also imagined as a 'community', referring to deep-felt emotions of belonging. It is this imagined horizontal comradeship that makes it possible for so many of its members to willingly die for their nation. This process or growth of nations should not only be seen as a product of history, but also as a product of modern developments. In short, Anderson argues that these imagined communities are ideologically constructed through what he calls 'print capitalism', referring to the development of the printing press which made it possible to spread information to a much larger part of the population.

Smith remarks that is important to distinguish between the second point and the following three. Though they can be closely related, *a national sentiment or*

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<sup>26</sup> Smith 2001:5–6.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson 2006[1983].

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

*consciousness of belonging* can exist without ideology, symbolism and a political movement. The term nationalism should therefore be understood here as referring to the last three points, and I will therefore consider them together.

Many have written about the importance of language and symbolism in creating unity.<sup>29</sup> In strong forms of nationalism, all of those who do not belong are considered anomalous and may be shunned. In a nation it is usually in the interest of the ruling party to have support from a more or less unified people. If there is no obvious foundation for creating unity, this can be artificially created through the use of symbols. Some have argued that politics cannot be purely instrumental, but must involve symbols that have the power of creating loyalty and a feeling of belonging.<sup>30</sup> The typical nation-state would therefore draw on similarities or known symbols, such as the national flag, to create a form of unity. Previous studies have shown that nationalism frequently draws on religion and myth when creating symbols. Bruce Kapferer, for one, has done a study of violence and nationalism in Sri Lanka and Australia.<sup>31</sup> His study shows that in these two cases, nationalism functioned to instil passions and profound emotions in those who followed it. This can also be seen in modern Greece, where Golden Dawn has made use of the old Minoan symbol of the Meandros as the party emblem. According to Eriksen, '[t]he use of presumedly [*sic*] typical ethnic symbols in nationalism is intended to stimulate reflection on one's own cultural distinctiveness and thereby create a feeling of nationhood.'<sup>32</sup> I will get back to this in Chapter 3, as well as in Chapter 6 on Golden Dawn.

In Chapter 3, I write that Greece in the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the need for the building of both nation and nationality. Nation building was a common phenomenon throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and though many found it difficult to define exactly what it was, the idea behind it was simple: to create unity. In modern Greece, nationalism has been

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<sup>29</sup> Smith 2001; Eriksen 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Eriksen 2010:121.

<sup>31</sup> Referred to in Eriksen 2010:129.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 124.

used to build the nation-state, but it has also been used to emphasise the creation of a national identity, i.e., a Greek nationality. However, the creation of such unity has also led to an increase in xenophobia, or fear of the unknown, and a frequent report of shunning of those who are not considered ‘Greek’. The question, then, is *to whom* exactly does this unity apply? When it comes to language, symbols and even national ideology, all three can be used to promote the ‘well-being’ of the nation. According to Smith the goals to a nation’s well-being are national autonomy, national unity and national identity.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Greece, one could claim that neither of these existed beyond the creation of the modern Greek state. As I will later come to argue, it was therefore necessary to go back to the ‘roots’ of the Greek people, building a connection between ancient Greece and the prospects of a new nation independent of the Ottoman Empire. This understanding of nationalism is essential if one wishes to understand the developments in Greece between 1821 and today.

## **Fascism**

Defining fascism is difficult, since most fascist movements have elements that are unique, or at least differ from other similar movements. Finding a definition that can be considered omnibus, is therefore not without difficulties. Originally used as a word of salutation by Benito Mussolini in the early 1920s, fascism has come to describe authoritarian movements, and especially the Italian fascist movement of Mussolini and the Nazism of Adolf Hitler. In the case of Golden Dawn, media have to a larger extent come to use the term neo-Nazi in their description of the party, referring to their strong nationalistic tendencies and, many would point out, similarities to the German Nazism.<sup>34</sup> This is despite the fact that Golden Dawn does not consider itself to be a neo-Nazi party.

What, then, does fascism consist of? In *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, Payne offers a typological description of Fascism based on:

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<sup>33</sup> Smith 2001:9.

<sup>34</sup> Associated Press, ‘Golden Dawn: leader of far-right party lashes out at Greece’s “traitors”’, *The Guardian*, 06.05.2012.

- A. The Fascist Negations
- B. Ideology and Goals
- C. Style and Organisation.<sup>35</sup>

This description is helpful when distinguishing between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ fascism. In the introduction to *The Extreme Right*, Aurel Braun indicates that though fascism traditionally was seen as the most serious threat to democracy, the radical rightist parties are the ones that mostly hold this threat today. Thereby he creates a distinction between fascism and radical right parties, claiming that the latter only share a superficial resemblance to the old fascist regimes.<sup>36</sup> Some have claimed that there has been a move away from defining generic fascism as a style or organisational structure, and towards a larger focus on the ideological core of fascism.<sup>37</sup> This suggests that fascism could be divided between an old and a new version. The question, then, is when did the concept of fascism change? A useful division is done between ‘old’ inter-war fascism and the ‘new’ post-war fascism, with the Second World War as the peak of the ‘old’ fascism.

### **The nature of fascism**

Payne should be complemented with Roger Griffin. In his work, *The Nature of Fascism*, Griffin seeks to create a general definition of fascism that may fit and include all elements of fascist movements throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> The premises for Griffin’s discussion were that fascism could not be given an absolute definition

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<sup>35</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980:7; See also Stanley Payne, ‘The Concept of Fascism’, in Stein Uglevik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet & Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.), *Who were the Fascists. Social Roots of Europea Fascism*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980.

<sup>36</sup> Aurel Braun, ‘Introduction’, Aurel Braun & Stephen Scheinberg (eds.) *The Extreme Right. Freedom and Security at Risk*, Oxford/Colorado: Westview Press, 1997:2.

<sup>37</sup> Roger Griffin, ‘Fascism’s new faces (and new facelessness) in the “post-fascist” epoch’, in Roger Griffin, Werner Loh and Andreas Umland (eds.), *Fascism Past and Present, West and East*, Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 1994[1991]:44; Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-45*, Oxon: Routledge, 2005[1995]:5.



because it was an ideal type. Griffin therefore wished to ‘identify a common core of fascist phenomena which can be treated as its definitional minimum’, to ‘clarify how fascism relates to a number of other social scientific terms’, to ‘complement [...] what has been established by existing historical scholarship about the dynamics of particular movements and regimes which it identifies as members of the family of generic fascisms’, and lastly to ‘represent an advance on existing ideal types in terms of succinctness and manageability’, all for the purpose of establishing a generic definition of fascism.<sup>39</sup> There are ten a priori features of fascism as a political ideology that could be used as a starting point for further research. Somewhat simplified, these ten features will be summed up below.

Fascism is driven by an ideology that is all-consuming and visible not only in their politics, but also in their speeches, songs, symbols and writings (i). It is an omnipresent worldview, often with a utopian revolutionary aspect (ii), even though only a fantasy, or a ‘travesty’, as Griffin puts it, of this utopia will ever be realised (iii). Outsiders will interpret the fascist thought as propaganda, but supporters will see it as an outlet for idealism and self-sacrifice (iv). The fascists will try to rationalise their worldview by appealing to historical, religious or scientific ‘facts’, though in truth it will mainly be driven by irrationality and mythical assumptions (v). Commitment may be displayed on varying levels of both emotional intensity and active support, and so too the motivation for joining (vi, viii). The fascist ideas may be expressed both in a sophisticated and a simpler manner, and many of its supporters may have individual interpretations of the goals of the movement (vii). It is not possible to reduce the fascist ideology and movement to the ideology of a single individual ideologue or a leader; rather it is a response to historical as well as contemporary surroundings (ix). Lastly, generic fascism is ‘definable ideal-typically in terms of a cluster of values and goals common to all its various permutations, in

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<sup>39</sup> Griffin 1994[1991]:12-13.

other words its ideological core' (x).<sup>40</sup> Taking this into account, Griffin ended up with the following definition:

Fascism is a genus of *political ideology* whose mythic core in its various permutations is a *palingenetic* form of *populist ultra-nationalism*.<sup>41</sup>

The mythic core of fascism as political ideology is essential. 'Mythic' here refer to 'the inspirational, revolutionary power which an ideology can exert whatever its apparent rationality or practicality.'<sup>42</sup> In other words, the mythic core is the basis of the ideology as such, and may also be one of the main gathering forces of the movement. The revolutionary power should be seen together with what Griffin characterises as 'palingenetic'. Palingenetic is most often translated as 'rebirth', but should not necessarily be interpreted as 'backwards-looking', i.e., as the rebirth of something old. Rather, it should simply be seen as something new, after a period of decadence. This could be a new order, a new society, or even the birth of 'a new man'. In other words, palingenetic may refer to the emphasis on the rebirth of the national spirit, culture and society, and it should therefore be linked with nationalism, as will be discussed below. It is worth noting that *The Manifesto of Golden Dawn* frequently speaks of the creation of a new world order and specifically of the birth of a new type of man (see Chapter 6).

As for populist ultra-nationalism, Griffin divides the concept into two. By defining each part separately he emphasises that 'populist' should be understood as 'a generic term for political forces which, even if led by small elite cadres or self-appointed "vanguards", in practice or in principle [...] depend on "people power" as the basis of their legitimacy.'<sup>43</sup> 'Ultra-nationalism', on the other hand, refers to 'forms of nationalism which "go beyond", and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 26, my emphases.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 36-37.

institutions or with the tradition of Enlightenment humanism which underpins them.<sup>44</sup> It is only combined that the two can be used as a fascist minimum in a generic definition.

### **A. The fascist negations**

Going back to Payne, his first point could also be referred to as ‘what fascism is not’. The negations that are listed by Payne are anti-liberalism, anti-communism and anti-conservatism, but the list could easily have been expanded to include other negations. Many scholars have focused on fascism as an anti-phenomenon, referring to what it opposes rather than what it consists of. Payne, as we have seen, is no exception. Griffin, on the other hand, disagrees with this. Fascism should not only be characterised through its ‘anti-’ dimension, but rather one needed to identify an ideological core applicable to a generic definition, as stated above.

### **B. Ideology and goals**

Payne’s second point is a bit more complex than the first. Fascist movements seek the creation of a new nationalist authoritarian state. They seek the organisation of a new kind of ‘regulated, multiclass, integrated national economic structure, whether called national corporatist, national socialist, or national syndicalist’.<sup>45</sup> They are revolutionary, meaning that they seek a radical change in the nation’s relationship with other powers. However, they also seek to realise ‘a new form of modern, self-determined, secular culture.’<sup>46</sup> Griffin too seems to emphasise revolution in particular as one of the primary objectives of a fascist regime. As an example, Griffin, in a short analysis, called the regime of Metaxas (1936–41) ‘fascism from above’, referring to how Metaxas embarked on a campaign to persuade the Greeks that they formed a ‘blood community’.<sup>47</sup> As other nationalist movements in Greece, he spoke of the connection between ancient and modern Greece, and wished to create the Third

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> Payne 1980:7.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> Griffin 1994[1991]:122.

Hellenic Civilisation. However, since the revolutionary ideas and ideals of Metaxas were never put into reality through any sort of social revolution Griffin characterises the regime solely as a para-fascist dictatorship.<sup>48</sup> Even so, it should be mentioned that Griffin solely speaks of the *regime*. Whether or not the movement and ideology of Metaxas could also be categorised as ‘para-fascist’, is not for this thesis to analyse, but the distinction should be remembered during my later account of XA as a movement (Chapters 6 and 7).

### **C. Style and organisation**

As for the third point, fascism emphasises the use of aesthetic structure, symbols, political choreography, and they also stress romantic and mystical aspects. They attempt mass-mobilisation and emphasise a militant political leadership, with the goal of a mass party militia. The masculine principle and male dominance is of the utmost importance; so is the exaltation of youth. Lastly, the style and organisation is authoritarian and charismatic, with a personal style of command. The ‘mystical aspects’ can be compared with the ‘mythical core’ that governs ideology in Griffin’s definition.

Payne’s typological description is created for the purpose of separating fascist movements from other revolutionary or nationalist movements. Though such a tripartite division may be useful, it is meant merely as an analytical tool, and it can here mostly be related to the ‘old’ inter-war fascism, referred to above. Even so, as we will see in Chapter 6, elements of both A, B and C can still be found in more modern movements with visibly fascist inspirations, such as Golden Dawn.

### **Fascism and Nazism**

The term fascism still holds strong connotations to the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler, and similar authoritarian nationalist movements today are mostly categorised as belonging to ‘the radical right’. The most profound difference between

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

the old fascists and the new radical right is the willingness of the latter to be categorised at the right end of the political spectrum. As Payne has noted in a later work, the number of neo-fascist and right radical or authoritarian groups has increased over the last decades, and there are several different kinds of neo-fascists that can be identified.<sup>49</sup> It is common that such neo-fascists present themselves as ‘national revolutionaries’, and there are some who advocate more extreme forms of National Socialism, including a tendency toward ‘social racism’ (in the case of Nazism); as I will argue later, this is also a prominent feature in the ideology of Golden Dawn.

Both ‘fascism’ and ‘Nazism’ has been used to describe extreme right movements – so too in the case of Golden Dawn. In the words of Eugen Weber the main difference between the two can be found in that whilst ‘Fascism is pragmatically activist, National Socialism is theoretically motivated or, at least, expressed.’<sup>50</sup> By this he refers to the two ideologies’ use of power through parties. Whereas the fascist party will use the power pragmatically and piecemeal, simply for its own sake, the national socialist party would use the power to realise an anterior plan inspired by the original doctrine. Once in power, the fascist party will gradually disintegrate, but the national socialist party may increase its influential position in society and become similar to a ‘church’.<sup>51</sup> It is tempting, then, to compare it with generic fascism and say that National Socialism may in fact be the mythical core of fascism. Though both terms may be used separately, it has been common to define National Socialism (or Nazism) as a sub-category of fascism. In that way National Socialism can be seen as a part of fascism, but the opposite is more difficult to defend.

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<sup>49</sup> Payne 2005[1995]:498.

<sup>50</sup> Eugene Weber, ‘Extract from Varieties of Fascism’, Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman (eds.) *Fascism. Critical concepts in political science*, volume I: *The Nature of Fascism*, London/New York: Routledge, 2004:80.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

## Populism

There are two main reasons why the concept of populism is relevant in this thesis. First of all, I believe that XA's effective use of populism might have been a contributing factor to the party's sudden rise in popularity. Second, as we will see, understanding the concept of populism is essential for understanding the concept of the extreme right.

There are two commonly accepted interpretations of the concept of populism. The first is when politics is used to stir people's emotions by offering simplistic solutions. The second is when it is used to 'describe opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the people/voters – and so "buying" their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the "best option".'<sup>52</sup> Populism can be found on both ends of the political spectrum, though it is most often associated with the (radical) right. The concept and phenomenon of populism have often been 'blamed' for the success of more radical right parties. And it can also be seen in connection with the role of the media.<sup>53</sup> Cas Mudde has defined populism as:

[...] an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people.<sup>54</sup>

This definition emphasises a cleavage in society between 'the elite' and 'the people'. Though many have written and agree about this cleavage, the question of what populism *is* still remains to be answered. Is it '...an ideology, a syndrome, a political movement or a political style?'<sup>55</sup> The definition by Mudde above states that it is an ideology, but other definitions have chosen to emphasise the rhetorical function of populism, making it more a political style than an ideology. Margaret Canovan, for

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<sup>52</sup> Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4(2004):542.

<sup>53</sup> Mudde 2004.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 543.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

one, has written that populism can be understood as ‘an appeal to “the people” against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values...’<sup>56</sup> In other words, populism is closely related to the *demos* in democracy. This is also in line with Anthony Painter’s definition of populism as a democratic argument:

It is ‘democratic’ in the sense that it appeals to common conceptions that the rule of the people is a good thing, and it is an ‘argument’ rather than a particular ideology or set of policies.<sup>57</sup>

The people can here be defined in many ways, for it is not my impression that many parties that make use of populist rhetoric agree with the majority on *who* the people consist of. The past years have seen an increase in what has been termed ‘xenophobic populism’, in which the wish to end immigration has been used in populist rhetoric to gain larger support, especially in times of economic crisis.<sup>58</sup>

One of the reasons why it may be difficult to distinguish between National Socialist, fascist and populist movements is because all three share similar elements. Put another way, populism may be used as a political style for fascist movements, and many consider fascism as an umbrella definition for both National Socialist and, I dare say, populist movements. For instance, many theorists have seen populist ultra-nationalism as an important part of the fascist ideology.<sup>59</sup> Distinguishing between the concepts is therefore not the same as isolating them entirely.

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<sup>56</sup> Margaret Canovan, ‘Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy’, in *Political Studies*, XLVII(1999):2; See also Margaret Canovan, ‘Populism for Political Theorists?’, in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 9, no.3(2004).

<sup>57</sup> William Brett, ‘What’s an Elite to Do? The Threat of Populism from Left, Right and Centre’, in *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 84, no. 3(2013):410.

<sup>58</sup> See Aristos Doxiadis & Manos Matsaganis, *National populism and xenophobia in Greece*, Counterpoint, 2012; Brett 2013.

<sup>59</sup> See Griffin 1994[1991]; Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

## The extreme right family:

### The populist radical right vs. the extreme right

#### Klaus von Beyme and the ‘familles spirituelles’

How does one define the members of a party family? Klaus von Beyme speaks of ‘familles spirituelles’ that can be found at the ideological level of the parties. Von Beyme has distinguished nine such ‘spiritual families’:

- (i) Liberal and radical parties
- (ii) Conservative parties
- (iii) Socialist and social democratic parties
- (iv) Christian democratic parties
- (v) Communist parties
- (vi) Agrarian parties
- (vii) Regional and ethnic parties
- (viii) Right-wing extremist parties
- (ix) The ecology movement<sup>60</sup>

This division is done on the basis of two ideological criteria, namely the *name* of the party and the *voters’* perception of the party’s ideological position as well as the party programmes. This creates a guideline for distinguishing between the party families, but not of the individual parties that constitute these families. Furthermore, in the case of right-wing extremist parties, actually placing these parties within the eighth family mentioned above, leads to some problems that need to be addressed. First of all, most right-wing extremist parties deny being extreme, and some even object to being called right-wing. Defining a party’s belonging in the party family on the basis of party name and voters’ perception is therefore close to impossible. Who, then, should be allowed to define and classify? An obvious suggestion is the researchers, but even they seem

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<sup>60</sup> See Cas Mudde. *The ideology of the extreme right*. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2000:2; Klaus von Beyme, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985:3.



to have some trouble agreeing on a name for the party family, referring to it as ‘the radical populist right’, ‘the extreme right’ or just ‘the far right’, to mention some.<sup>61</sup>

Based on the framework of Klaus von Beyme, Anders Widfeldt divides the most common labels of extreme right parties into three groups:<sup>62</sup>

**Group 1:** ‘neo-fascist’

**Group 2:** ‘extreme right’ (and ‘right-wing extremist’), ‘far right’, ‘radical right’

**Group 3:** ‘populist right’, ‘right-wing populist’

Widfeldt also speaks of labels that overlap group 2 and 3. I have chosen to call this group 4:

**Group 4 (2+3):** ‘populist radical right’, ‘radical right-wing populist’

Again we see the reference to the concepts mentioned above, with a higher frequency of the label ‘populist’ and more of an ideological relation to ‘fascism’. To label a party as ‘extreme’ has two primary meanings: Either it means that the party is extreme relative to other parties or that it is extreme relative to the existing political system. The last meaning has a revolutionary aspect to it that is not as common today as it was during the time of the French Revolution, but even so I believe that opposing the existing system is a common feature in modern Greek history even to this day.

### **‘Radicalism’, ‘extremism’ and ‘populism’**

Cas Mudde divides the radical right party family into two, distinguishing between populist radical right and extreme right-wing parties. In *The ideology of the extreme right*, Mudde distinguishes between ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’ by saying that whereas the former is *verfassungswidrig*, meaning that it is opposed to the

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<sup>61</sup> This discussion draws on Mudde 2000; See also Anders Widfeldt, ‘A fourth phase of the extreme right? Nordic immigration-critical parties in a comparative context’ in *NORDEUROPAforum*, ½(2010).

<sup>62</sup> Widfeldt 2010.

constitution, the latter is *verfassungsfeindlich*, or hostile to the constitution.<sup>63</sup> This difference is of the utmost practical importance for the involved political parties since extremist parties are usually extensively watched and can even be banned, whereas radical parties are usually left alone to a greater extent.<sup>64</sup>

Mudde has also noted the more frequent use of the term populism in relation to the extreme right, with variants such as ‘right-wing populism’, ‘radical right-wing populism’, ‘national populism’, ‘new populism’, ‘neo-populism’ and so on.<sup>65</sup> Some of these are already mentioned in the Widfeldt-inspired group 4 above, and the rest could easily be added. According to Mudde, there is not a significant difference between the term populism and the term extreme right. For instance, he has identified two different uses of the term populism in relationship with the term extremism in the literature. In the first it is used to describe the more moderate parties of the extreme right. In the second it is used ‘exclusively to describe a certain political style used by right-wing extremist parties.’<sup>66</sup> The various terms are often used synonymously, and not necessarily with any clear intention. In fact, Mudde himself chooses to use the term ‘populist radical right’ in a later work.<sup>67</sup>

In an attempt to clarify these concepts, Anders Jupskås has contributed to the literature with a similar division of the far right.<sup>68</sup> He distinguishes between the ‘extreme’, ‘radical’ and ‘populist’ right. Common features among the classes of extreme right include anti-democracy, ethnic nationalism, authoritarianism, racism, xenophobia, and what Jupskås has called ‘conspiracy theorists’.<sup>69</sup> It is interesting to note that according to Jupskås, the extreme right does not need to fulfil all of the

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<sup>63</sup> Mudde 2000:12.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> See Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Anders Ravik Jupskås, *Ekstreme Europa. Ideologi, årsaker og konsekvenser*, Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 47; ‘Konspirasjonsteoretikere’ in Norwegian.

above-mentioned features, but they should all be seen in connection with anti-democracy, the most prominent one. In short, the largest difference between the extreme right and the radical right is that the latter is not considered anti-democratic. Neither is it characterised by biological racism.<sup>70</sup> The populist right is similar to the radical right, but the ‘populist’ part, i.e., the appeal to the will or wishes of the people is one of its more dominant features. This division should still only be seen as a guideline for a definition, as each and every movement may differ according to its historical and cultural context.

## **Defining the extreme right**

How do extremists go from the margins to the mainstream? The extreme right can be seen as a phenomenon that comes in ‘waves’, meaning that there are periods when the extreme right parties enjoy a larger degree of support than others. A lot of research has therefore been done trying to establish *why* such parties often see an intermittent increase in their support. Previous studies have shown that there is a link between economic decline and extremism, but that economic decline cannot be the only factor.<sup>71</sup> De Bromhead *et al.* have tried to generalise the growth of political extremism in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. According to them, ‘[e]xplanations for political extremism in this period fall into five broad categories: economic factors, social cleavages, external influences, electoral systems, and institutional/cultural inheritances’.<sup>72</sup> If they have succeeded in generalising the case of Germany beyond the designated time period it should be possible to find elements of all five categories in what is happening in present-day Greece as well (See Chapter 7).

Michi Ebata defines the extreme right by looking at some of its core features. These features include a fundamental expression of hatred or prejudice that is rooted in an

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>71</sup> De Bromhead *et al.* 2012.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

‘ideology of inequality’.<sup>73</sup> This view is especially manifested in forms of xenophobia, racism, homophobia, misogyny and religious intolerance. The hatred may also be directed towards the state. As the author notes:

[...] hatred is far more than just an expressed sentiment; it is a source of action dedicated to expelling the offending outsider from society in order to remake society into its ‘purer historical’ form.<sup>74</sup>

Piero Ignazi gives a simpler definition. He has classified the whole family of extreme right parties according to the following three criteria:

- 1) Placement at the far right of the national political spectrum
- 2) Fascist features in the party ideology
- 3) Negative attitude toward the political system<sup>75</sup>

He then goes on to use these criteria to distinguish between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ extreme right, claiming that whereas the new extreme right is usually selected on the basis of the first and third criteria, the old combine all three. Again we are reminded of Aurel Braun’s above claim that the new radical right only shares a superficial resemblance to the old fascist regimes, and that fascism as it was has ceased to be a serious threat in the Western World.<sup>76</sup> A lot seems to have changed in the nearly two decades that have passed since Braun made his arguments. Today, one does not have to look far to find radical right parties with clear fascist inspirations if not also aspirations.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Michi Ebata, ‘Right –Wing Extremism: In Search of a Definition’, in Aurel Braun & Stephen Scheinberg (eds.) *The Extreme Right. Freedom and Security at Risk*, Oxford/Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

<sup>74</sup> Ebata 1997:14.

<sup>75</sup> Piero Ignazi, ‘The silent counter-revolution. Hypotheses on the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe’, in *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 22, no. 1–2(1992).

<sup>76</sup> Braun 1997; Payne 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Payne 2005[1995].

Defining the extreme may be easy, but distinguishing between the extremities may be more difficult. One of the most common ways of defining the extreme right is through its features. The study of right-wing extremism has differed over the years, and one often hears talk of ‘waves’ of right-wing extremism, as mentioned above. During and right after these ‘waves’ there is an increase in the publications on such issues and parties. In *The ideology of the extreme right*, Cas Mudde has tried to give an overview of previous definitions of the extreme right.<sup>78</sup> Some of these definitions are based on only one single feature, thereby obscuring other important features of their ideology.<sup>79</sup> Others say that right-wing extremism can be defined by a combination of features that constitutes a political ideology.<sup>80</sup> All in all, Mudde found twenty-six different definitions in the literature that includes a total of fifty-eight different features of the extreme right. Only five of these features are mentioned by at least half of the authors, namely: nationalism, xenophobia, racism, anti-democracy and the strong state.<sup>81</sup> In other words, one cannot define the extreme right without taking into account what they reject, such as democracy, human rights or capitalism, to mention a few. I have chosen to call these the negations, inspired by the fascist negations mentioned above.

Terms such as ‘right-wing’, ‘right-wing extremist’ and ‘far right’ have all been used to describe Golden Dawn, and at times it seems that neither researchers nor journalists agree on what exactly, if anything at all, distinguishes these concepts from each other. However, inspired by the known right–left line of politics I choose to place the concepts on the political spectrum in the following way:

Extremists ← Far Left ← Left ← CENTRE → Right → Far Right → Extremists

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<sup>78</sup> Mudde 2000:10.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*; See also Cas Mudde, ‘The single-issue party thesis: Extreme right parties and the immigration issue’, in *West European Politics*, vol. 22, no. 3(1999).

<sup>80</sup> Mudde 2000:10.

<sup>81</sup> Mudde 2000; Cas Mudde, ‘Right-wing extremism analyzed. A comparative analysis of the ideologies of three alleged right-wing extremist parties (NPD, NDP, CP’86)’, in *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 27, no. 2(1995).

There are three things that should be noted about this division. *First of all*, the terms ‘right-wing’/’left wing’ are not left out, but stand instead as subcategories of the ‘Far Left’ and ‘Far Right’. I do not by this suggest that there is not some nuance to the concepts at either of the far ends of the spectrum, in fact it would be possible to create a spectrum within the concepts of the ‘far right’ and the ‘far left’, thereby distinguishing between the ‘least extreme’ and the ‘most extreme’. When I have chosen not to do so, it is solely for the following simple reason: I do not think that it is fruitful to distinguish between extremities, since they have all already gone beyond what is considered ‘normal’. When I refer to something as ‘far right’, I do so with the notion of the ‘far right’ being an ‘umbrella definition’.

*Second*, ‘right’ here does not refer to the traditional ‘right’, but rather to a more populist and radical direction in politics. A more specified version of the spectrum should therefore look more like this, now only concentrating on the right side:

CENTRE → Populist right → Radical right-wing populists → Extreme right

To distinguish between these categories, it might be useful to use other known far right parties. For instance, I would place the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) under the category populist right. FrP is populist in the sense that it frequently uses people’s opinions to create policies that they know will please the majority of their voters. It shares some of the fascist negations, already mentioned, in particular anti-immigration, but it is not anti-system or revolutionary per se. Instead FrP wish to change the system through legitimate means, i.e., by winning the majority vote during elections. It should be noted that though I have chosen to categorise FrP as populist, Piero Ignazi have claimed that FrP belong to the extreme right, arguing that they fit point 1 and 3 in his three-point definition mentioned above.<sup>82</sup> Moving on to the next category, I would place the French Front National within the category of radical right-wing populists, slightly more extreme than FrP. Lastly, compared to the other two and

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<sup>82</sup> See Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

in line with previous definitions, including the three-point-definition by Piero Ignazi, Golden Dawn should be placed within the category of the extreme right.

*Third*, in the introduction I followed Uwe Backes when I said that nothing could exceed the extreme.<sup>83</sup> In this categorisation of right–left politics I have chosen to make one exception, or rather, two, in that I’ve placed extremists at both ends of the spectrum. It is one thing to be extreme; it is another to be an extremist. And so, both radical and extremist parties may be extreme in politics measured by their opinions and their opposition to the ‘centre’. However, the most important difference between the populist right, the radical right-wing populists and the extreme right is that where the former two would rather prefer to change the existing system through the system itself – in other words by taking part in the democracy and gain power through (legitimate) elections – only the latter would be willing to take lives, if necessary, to accomplish their goals.<sup>84</sup>

Far right parties should not only be categorised by their policies and goals, but rather by the measures they are willing to take to achieve them. However, the extremists may also be known for what they are against, similar to Payne’s definition of fascism. As the fascist movements could be defined by the fascist negations, so too could the extremists. And so both fascists and extremists are known to be against the political system; they explicitly criticise democracy and oppose human rights. In that way Golden Dawn should clearly be classified as fascist however, it is also extreme in the sense that they oppose the existing system and are willing to take extreme measures to accomplish their goals. For my approach, I have chosen to focus on the features of *nationalism*, *fascism* and *populism*, as defined above. In my later analysis of the ideology of Golden Dawn (Chapters 6 and 7), those are the features that will guide my discussion.

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<sup>83</sup> Backes 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Jupskås 2012.

## **3 1821–1949: Shaping Modern Greece**

### **1821–1923: The building of nation and nationality**

#### **From independence to the First World War**

The independent state of Greece was established in 1821, with the first constitution proclaimed in 1822. In the period following independence, Greece experienced a series of tumults, often related to the western powers. In 1827 Ioannis Kapodistrias became the first president, but when he was assassinated in 1831, the Convention of London decided to turn Greece into a monarchy and offered the ‘hereditary sovereignty’ of Greece to Otto, the second son of Ludwig I of Bavaria. The new state was built according to western European ideals, and in many ways it was the western powers that ascended the throne when King Otto arrived in his new kingdom in 1833, aged only 17. Britain, Russia and France guaranteed the protection of this new monarchical state.

Close to thirty years later, in 1862, King Otto was forced from his throne, after a revolt supported by the army. King George I, a Danish prince, replaced him a year later. Also at the age of 17, he ascended the throne as King of the Hellenes, and would become the longest-reigning king in the history of the modern Greek state. King George was assassinated by a madman in 1913, and was then replaced by his eldest son, Konstantinos I.

In the early 1900s it became increasingly clear that it was the prime minister that would become the most important political player and not the king – nor later the elected presidents. Even so, the cleavage between the royalists and the republicans would continue to dominate politics for years to come. In 1910, the Cretan Eleftherios



Venizelos, founder of the Liberal Party, became prime minister.<sup>85</sup> The decade that followed would be termed the ‘Venizelist decade’. Venizelos was quickly to be known as a reformist, and during his first few months in office he implemented many minor constitutional changes. Venizelos resigned in 1915, following a disagreement with King Konstantinos I. The king favoured Germany and wished for Greek neutrality in the First World War. Venizelos, on the other hand, feared the loss of the Aegean Islands to the Ottoman Empire. He therefore argued for entering the war on the side of the Triple Entente.<sup>86</sup>

Greek politics was highly unstable at the start of the First World War. Venizelos won the election in June, just a few months after his forced resignation, and returned to power in August, only to be forced to resign again in October. In the year that followed Greece was divided into two. Venizelos travelled to Thessaloniki and established a provisional government of ‘New’ Greece. Meanwhile the royalist government in Athens held the ‘Old’ Greece, and successfully managed to defend the port of Piraeus from an Anglo-French invasion, the result of which ended in a British and French blockade of the ‘Old’ Greece.

### **From the Treaty of Sèvres to the Greek-Turkish War**

The early 20th century witnessed the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. It also saw the end of Greece’s territorial expansion. The end of the First World War was marked with the Conference of Paris in 1919, the result of which was the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. The treaty recognised Greece’s annexation of Thrace and the Aegean Islands, with the exception of the Dodecanese Islands that were under Italian occupation until 1947. The Treaty of San Remo, also from 1920, allowed Greece to exercise sovereign rights over Smyrna (Izmir) for a transition period of five years.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> It is interesting to note that even though Venizelos as a Cretan became prime minister in 1910, Crete was not officially recognised as a part of Greece until 1913.

<sup>86</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:75.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 76; Richard Clogg. *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013:93.

Venizelos had participated at the Conference of Paris in 1919, and there he had spoken for the protection for the Greek populations living in Anatolia. The Treaty of Sèvres, however, was mainly concerned with the protection of the ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire, although Armenia saw its independence, Kurdistan gained autonomy and even Greece saw significant changes to its territory.<sup>88</sup>

The settlement after the First World War and the Treaty of Sèvres was the closest Modern Greece had ever been to fulfilling the *Megali Idea*. This great idea was an irredentist project, seeking to unite all areas of Greek settlement into a single state whose capital would be Constantinople. There were two opposing causes, that of the *heterochthons*, the Greeks outside of the newly independent kingdom, and the *autochthons*, the ‘natives’ that resided within the kingdom. According to Ioannis Kolettis, who first voiced the Megali Idea, all who resided within the areas associated with Greek history or the Greek race were Greeks.<sup>89</sup> During the war the Great Idea created a cleavage in society that would be known as the National Schism, or *Ethnikos Dikhasmos*.<sup>90</sup> This cleavage would come to play a large part in Greek politics in the years that followed.

The military’s gradually increased involvement in politics can be seen in the election of 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1920. Prior to the election, Venizelos wished to expand the electorate to include the Greek populations in the newly controlled areas of Smyrna and Thrace. He also, for the first time, introduced the military vote. In 1919 the Military League had been organised by a group of officers with the purpose of intimidating any opposition against Venizelos, and plans were even made for a military government in the case of a royal victory.<sup>91</sup> King Alexander took over when his father went into exile in 1917, but his death in 1920, following blood poisoning

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<sup>88</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:76.

<sup>89</sup> Clogg 2013:47.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>91</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:87.

caused by a bite from a pet monkey, would once again raise the question of constitutional reform. Venizelos had hoped to win the population over by his achievements in the Treaty of Sèvres, and many, including Venizelos himself, have blamed war weariness for a result that came as a surprise for observers.<sup>92</sup> The election turned into a fight between Venizelos and the royalists, in which the royalists won 246 out of 370 seats in parliament.<sup>93</sup> Venizelos admitted defeat and went into exile, though he would still play a central part in Greek politics for yet another decade. It did not take long after the royalist victory before a rigged plebiscite vote made sure of the return of King Konstantinos I to the throne.

### **From the Treaty of Lausanne to the Second Hellenic Republic**

The leader of the Turkish uprising in the early 1920s was General Mustafa Kemal, also known as Atatürk. The uprising was a response to the landing of Greek troops in Smyrna in 1919. The purpose of this army was to protect the Greek population in the area from Turkish reprisals, but instead it resulted in the killing or wounding of around 350 Turks, stirring Turkish national sentiment.<sup>94</sup> The Greek military soon faced defeat and displayed their willingness to negotiate, but Kemal responded with a massive offensive that resulted in a Greek evacuation of Smyrna and the massacre of close to 30,000 Greek and Armenian Christians.<sup>95</sup>

The Treaty of Lausanne marked the end of the Asia Minor debacle and the Greek-Turkish war of 1922–23. The treaty would come to define the relationship both between the military and the Greek government, and between Greece and the newly independent modern Turkey. However, the treaty is also important if one wishes to understand the building of a Greek nationality in the years that followed, especially because it provided for an exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece. The exchange was done on the basis of religion, and not according to language or culture,

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<sup>92</sup> Clogg 2013:95; Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:87.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Clogg 2013:93.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

creating large groups of Greek-speaking Muslims in Turkey, as well as large groups of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians in Greece. In numbers, the period saw the transfer of approximately 1,100,000 Greeks to the Greek Kingdom, whereas only 380,000 Muslims were transferred to Turkey in return.<sup>96</sup>

The exchange of populations, as well as the many refugees after the war created new challenges for the Greek state. It was now close to an ethnically homogenous state, and its borders contained all of the Greek populations in the Near East, with the exception of the Italian-occupied Dodecanese Islands and Cyprus, which was now a British possession. Yet there was no common nationality and so the cleavage in society, the previously mentioned National Schism, deepened even further. In September 1922 a group of officers friendly to Venizelos launched a coup headed by Colonel Nikolaos Plastiras. And so, shortly before his death, Konstantinos I was yet again ousted from the throne and driven into exile. According to Richard Clogg, the ‘bitterness and chaos of defeat were compounded by the feeling that Greece had been abandoned in her hour of greatest need by traditional friends.’<sup>97</sup> The result was a hunt for scapegoats and eight politicians and soldiers were court-martialled for high treason. Six of them were later executed by a firing squad. The ‘Trial of the Six’ was the torch that again put light to the fire between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists, a feud that would go on throughout the inter-war period.

Many among the refugees and dispossessed populations of Greece were still loyal to Venizelos, and in the referendum of 1924, many of the new inhabitants of Greece voted for the abolition of the monarchy. By then, King George II, the eldest son of Konstantinos I, had already left the country.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 106.

## **1924–1949: Instability, war and military dictatorship**

### **From the Second Hellenic Republic to the ‘Regime of the Fourth of August’**

Though the Second Hellenic Republic was proclaimed after the referendum of 1924, the constitutional changes were not formally instituted until 1927, when a hero of the Balkan wars, Admiral Koundouriotis, was elected president. During the intervening years, General Theodore Pangalos had governed Greece in a military dictatorship. After General Pangalos was overthrown by the military in 1926 new elections were held in which a parliament with representatives of both Venizelists and anti-Venizelists was elected. The new government paved the way for the return of Eleftherios Venizelos who became prime minister in 1928. His time in office was now mostly successful in the field of foreign policy, but he also put into practice an electoral system based on majority, rather than proportional representation. The majority system was effective in alienating smaller parties.

The short dictatorship of General Pangalos had resulted in a threat to go to war with Turkey and an invasion of Bulgaria, but during the 1930s, Greece’s relationship with its neighbours greatly improved. The Balkan Pact of 1934 was a mutual guarantee of the existing frontiers of Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey. Venizelos also managed to establish peace between Turkey and Greece during the Ankara Convention of 1930. Financially, the Great Crash of 1929 did not affect Greece to a more significant degree than many other countries at the time. Even so, the state’s economy was vulnerable due to its dependence on luxury exports such as currants and olive oil, and in 1933 the government was forced to default on its interest payments of foreign loans.<sup>99</sup>

In the election of 1932, Venizelos’ Liberal Party only held on to a marginal lead on the People’s Party. A return to proportional representation resulted in a parliamentary

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<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, 107.

deadlock, and new elections – this time using the majority system – were held a year later. This time the People’s Party and its allies secured a majority over the Venizelists, a result unacceptable for Colonel Plastiras, who as a response tried to force through the will of Venizelos by attempting a coup. The March 1933 coup proved to be a failure and Colonel Plastiras was forced into exile. This was the start of a highly unstable period in Greek politics, and again, the royalists were stirring. Another failed coup in March 1935, this time headed by Venizelist officers and supported by Venizelos himself, resulted in the exile of Venizelos. Martial law was declared and the election was set to June the same year. The Venizelists chose to abstain from the election in protest, and the election therefore resulted in a landslide for the People’s Party, with 65 per cent of the votes resulting in 96 per cent of the seats in Parliament, or 287 out of 300 seats.<sup>100</sup> It should be mentioned that the Communists in this election reached their highest per cent of the votes in the interwar period, with almost 10 per cent, but because of the majority system they did not receive any seats.<sup>101</sup>

The same year Prime Minister Tsaldaris resigned over the question of restoration of the monarchy. The man who replaced him, Lieutenant Georgios Kondylis, immediately abolished the republic and restored King George II to the throne after 12 years in exile. An election was again held in January 1936, under a system of proportional representation, and as in 1932 it resulted in a deadlock between the People’s Party and the Liberal Party. The inconclusive results left the Communists with the balance of power with their hold of 6 per cent of the votes and 15 seats in parliament, whereas the Liberal Party and People’s Party had 141 and 143 seats respectively out of a total of 300 seats.<sup>102</sup>

When the minister of war, General Alexander Papagos, informed the king that the army would not tolerate a government supported by the Communists, the king

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 113; Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:102.

<sup>101</sup> Clogg 2013:113.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 113; Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:103.

responded by immediately replacing him with Ioannis Metaxas. General Metaxas, who soon after would become the prime minister, was the leader of the Freethinker's Party, *Eleftherofrones*, 'an ultra-right-wing party even more marginal in terms of electoral support than the communists.'<sup>103</sup>

The upcoming regime of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August was made possible in 1936, after the king, under the influence of Metaxas, suspended a number of key articles of the constitution. This was the beginning of General Metaxas' dictatorship. In *A Concise History of Greece*, Richard Clogg puts the dictatorship of Metaxas into a broader context, comparing it with other dictatorial regimes at the time. Though described as fascist, it was not as dynamic as German Nazism or Italian Fascism. General Metaxas was not a fan of the political world, and his rule was authoritarian and backward-looking. He was obsessed with a wish for instilling discipline into the Greek population, and inspired by Hitler, he spoke of creating the 'Third Hellenic Civilisation'. Other similarities with other fascist regimes can be seen in the establishment of a National Youth Organisation and the regimes focus on the 'glory days' of ancient Greece, Sparta and Byzantium. It also shared a loathing of its opposition on the far left. Despite this, the regime of Metaxas could be said to be weaker than many other similar regimes. For instance, Metaxas did not physically eliminate his opponents, but instead tried to create a climate of fear and used this to neutralise the opposition.<sup>104</sup> Later movements, like the 4<sup>th</sup> of August Party, have explicitly used Metaxas as a symbol of change and inspiration.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Clogg 2013:115; See also Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:104.

<sup>104</sup> Clogg 2013:115-118; For more on authoritarianism in Greece and the rule of Metaxas see Yannis Androcopoulos, 'The Power Base of Greek Authoritarianism', in Stein Uglevik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet & Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.) *Who were the Fascists. Social Roots of European Fascism*, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980.

<sup>105</sup> 4th of August refers to the date of Metaxas coup d'état in 1936.

## **The Second World War: the ‘long night of barbarism’<sup>106</sup>**

As Europe was entering into the Second World War, Metaxas hoped to keep Greece out of the hostilities. This was increasingly difficult as Britain and Greece made agreements for economic cooperation. In January 1940, both a war trade agreement and a shipping agreement were signed between the two countries. In mid-August of the same year, an Italian submarine torpedoed a Greek cruiser that partook in a pilgrimage celebration of the Virgin Mary. Benito Mussolini wanted to use a war with Greece to demonstrate to Germany that Italy was strong enough to win ‘spectacular victories’.<sup>107</sup> Two months later, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, the Italian Ambassador delivered an ultimatum to Metaxas demanding the right of passage of Italian troops through Greek territory. Metaxas refused, and met full support both in the population and in the Greek government. The Greek army was not prepared for the imminent Italian attack, but miraculously managed to push the Italian army back and into Albanian territory.

Greece now found itself in a strange position. She was neither an ally of Britain nor at war with Germany, yet the short Greek-Italian war was indirectly a part of the World War on European soil. Britain had assured Greece that she would come to her assistance if needed, but when asked for reinforcements a few days before the Italian attack, Britain only said she would do her best. The Greek government wanted a British military presence in Greece to help force Italy out of Albania and so create a stronger foothold in the Balkan border towards Germany. Though Metaxas rejected a British request to station air forces in Thessaloniki, out of fear of provoking Hitler, he assured the British that Greece would help them against the Germans, but only after they had defeated the Italians.

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<sup>106</sup> The ‘long night of barbarism’ was a phrase used by Churchill to describe the years to come in his first broadcast as prime minister during the war, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1940. The whole speech can be found here: [www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/91-be-ye-men-of-valour](http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/91-be-ye-men-of-valour) [24.01.2014].

<sup>107</sup> Clogg 2013:118.



### **Greece under German occupation**

Greece's relationship with Britain posed a threat for Hitler, who wished to secure his Balkan flank, preparing for the invasion of the Soviet Union. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1941, Hitler therefore invaded Greece and rapidly overcame both British and Greek troops. The devastating defeat led to the suicide of Prime Minister Alexandros Koryzis who had taken over after the death of Metaxas in late January. The prime minister who took office after the death of Koryzis, Emmanouil Tsouderos, was a known opponent of the regime of Metaxas.

Hitler's attack on Greece, under the code name 'Maritsa', was a great success, and Athens fell on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. King George II, his government and some Greek forces had then managed to withdraw to the island of Crete, and hoped to join British forces in their defence of the island. Crete was intended as a base for air raids on oil fields in Romania, thereby destroying an important source for German fuel supplies. The defence of the island only lasted a month, and at the end of May, after fierce fighting, Crete fell, and the king and his government withdrew to the Middle East.

Three days before the fall of Athens and without government approval, General Georgios Tsolakoglou had tried to negotiate an armistice with the Germans. After the fall of Crete he was to become the head of a collaborationist government. It did not take long before Greece was under a tripartite German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation.

Financially Greece was not prepared for the increased expenses related to military preparations that were rendered necessary as the war in Europe intensified. The financial burden, which was met with a war lottery, increased taxation, and British loans without specific terms of repayment, would come to dominate and define the Greek economy for years to come.<sup>108</sup> During the tripartite occupation Greece experienced food shortages and massive inflation, and suffering under the harsh

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<sup>108</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:110.

policies of the occupying powers, Greece underwent a devastating famine in the winter of 1941–2, which resulted in the deaths of 100,000 people.<sup>109</sup>

### **Greek resistance**

The Greeks were not, however, without the will to resist. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) was soon to become the leading force in Greek resistance towards the occupying forces. In September 1941, the National Liberation Front (EAM) was established to organise the resistance, and the Greek People’s Liberation Army (ELAS)<sup>110</sup> was established as its military arm. EAM also established National Solidarity, an organisation for relief of victims of the occupation, and a youth movement known as EPON. According to Richard Clogg, the traditional ‘political world’ was unwilling at the time to offer leadership because of a political void that had developed during the dictatorship.<sup>111</sup> The Communists were quick to fill this vacuum. Even so, it is worth noting that the majority of the members of EAM and ELAS were not communists, and non-communist resistance groups, like *Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos* (the National Democratic Hellenic League, EDES), were also established. EAM provided substantial help to the Greek population during the above-mentioned famine of 1941–2.

The quisling government of General Tsolakoglou has been described as the puppet, first of Italy and then of Germany, but the war was soon to turn in favour of the Allies.<sup>112</sup> In April 1943, Ioannis Rallis assumed the office of prime minister, and his establishment of the ‘Security Battalions’, led by Venizelist officers, soon turned into a counterattack against the resistance of EAM–ELAS. Many of the previously leading politicians, as well as Britain, were determined to keep Greece out of the hands of the Communists, and the ‘Security Battalion’ did not only consist of collaborators, but also of those who feared the power of the communists.

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<sup>109</sup> Clogg 2013:121.

<sup>110</sup> ELAS is sometimes also called the National People’s Liberation Army.

<sup>111</sup> Clogg 2013:123.

<sup>112</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:113.

Armed bands of both communists and non-communists had taken to the mountains and started a guerrilla war against the occupying power. Britain wished to coordinate the Greek opposition, but met resistance because of Churchill's support for the return of the king. As should be remembered, the king had supported Britain at the start of the war. The 'National Bands' agreement in July 1943 created a joint general headquarters in which EAM-ELAS enjoyed a majority in numbers. Even so, there did not seem to be much agreement between the guerrilla, the British military and political authorities, the king and the government in exile. The guerrilla wished to stay in control of Greece, and wanted to exercise power over a number of key ministries in the exile government. They also wished that the king would stay in exile until a plebiscite had voted for his return. In October, ELAS attacked the anti-communist organisation EDES on suspicion of collaboration with the occupying powers. The warring resistance groups finally managed to enter a truce in February 1944. EAM then established a Political Committee of National Liberation with the purpose of exercising government over what was considered the free 'Mountain' Greece. This resulted in mutinies of EAM sympathisers in the Greek armed forces that were stationed with the exiled government in Egypt.

As in many of the significant events in the history of modern Greece, it was the Great Powers that came to decide the fate of the nation towards the end of the war. The famous 'percentages agreement' between Stalin and Churchill in October 1944 gave Britain 90 per cent of the say in post-war Greece, in return for Russian predominance in Romania.

### **The Greek Civil War**

Georgios Papandreou was installed as the new prime minister of the exiled government in 1944. As a known Venizelist and anti-communist, he was greatly favoured by the British, and with their support, he took it upon himself to create a government of national unity at a conference in Lebanon. The conference ended in

deadlock because of an under-representation of the communists, who demanded the resignation of Papandreou and the control of key ministries as the price for their participation in the government. In August, however, EAM chose to back down.

The Greece that Papandreou returned to in October 1944 was a Greece marked by years of war and occupation, and can perhaps best be described with the words of Mark Mazower:

A few days after the Germans left, in late 1944, an American OSS agent drove across the Peloponnese, filming whatever he found. In contrast with the waving, jubilant crowds who greeted Allied troops in France, the people he met in Greece seemed tense and exhausted. The clothes hung off their bodies, and many were barefoot. Everywhere he found signs of malnutrition, disease and destruction. [...] Perhaps the eeriest sequence shows a small town in the mountains. [...] A line of women, dressed in black, can be seen moving slowly down a road shaded by cypresses. From the cameraman's notes, we find that this was Kalvryta, in the northern Peloponnese, almost exactly one year after all the men in the town had been shot by Wehrmacht soldiers.<sup>113</sup>

Upon arrival, Papandreou had three main problems. First, he had to find a way to satisfy the left's need for justice for the collaborationists. Second, he had to stabilise an economy starting of decay. And third, he had to demobilise and replace the guerrilla armies with a national army. As has been seen in other nations torn by war, victory requires justice and scapegoats. The Germans were leaving, but the fight between EAM–ELAS and the Security Battalion continued. There are also reports of massacres. Koliopoulos and Veremis writes:

Between September 8 and 15 [1944] wholesale massacres of units accused of collaboration with the Germans took place in the Peloponnese. In Meligala, a village close to Kalamata, EAM-ELAS forces allegedly executed about 1,800 people.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece. The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44*, New Haven/London: Yale Nota Bene/Yale University Press, 1993:xii.

<sup>114</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:114.

At the time, the ELAS forces amounted to some 60,000 men and women, and though under British control, they constituted a significant threat to the new government. Even though an agreement seemed to have been made for demobilisation, the civil war within the resistance had created an atmosphere of suspicion, and ELAS soon feared that Papandreou would not hold his part of the agreement. EAM's nominees soon resigned from the cabinet and organised mass demonstrations that resulted in the loss of fifteen lives.<sup>115</sup> The Battle of Athens ended with British intervention in January 1945. Though ELAS now agreed to disarm, the left-wing terror against political opponents during the years of occupation was not forgotten, and the uproar in December had stirred ultra-right-wingers who were now set on a brutal revenge on the left.

Churchill managed to persuade King George II to stand down in favour of Archbishop Damaskinos, and General Plastiras replaced Papandreou as prime minister, but was soon replaced again by Themistoklis Sophoulis, who announced that the first election since 1936 was to be held the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1946 and followed by a plebiscite. The Greek state was in disorder, and many on the left decided to abstain from the election. This resulted in victory for a right-wing coalition dominated by the People's Party and headed by Konstantinos 'Dino' Tsaldaris with 55 per cent of the popular vote.<sup>116</sup> The right-wing populists and their allies won 206 out of the 354 seats in parliament.<sup>117</sup> The following plebiscite in September 1946 resulted in a 68 per cent vote for the return of the king.<sup>118</sup> The right-wing government stood in opposition to the communists that were driven as guerrillas up into the mountains. In October the communists announced the establishment of the Democratic Army.

In 1947, President Truman wanted to provide Greece with emergency aid through the Truman Doctrine. Britain had by then decided to loosen its grip on Greek politics and

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<sup>115</sup> Clogg 2013:134.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 135.

<sup>117</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:119.

<sup>118</sup> Clogg 2013:135.

instead leave affairs in the hands of the United States. Greece was at the time deeply involved in a civil war between the Democratic Army and the regular army. The KKE was banned in December, but the Democratic Army received significant support from the communist regimes of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, and at the end of 1947 they announced the formation of the Provisional Democratic Government. However, they stood against a national army supported by the United States, and though the Democratic Army managed to effectively recruit new troops in the areas they controlled, it proved not to be enough. In 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Communist Information Bureau (COMINFORM), among other things because of their criticism of Russia's failure to support the fighting Greek communists in the civil war.<sup>119</sup> Despite this show of Yugoslavian support, the Greek communists decided to side with Moscow in the matter. This resulted in the loss of support from Yugoslavia, and in 1949, the Yugoslavian border was completely closed off to the Democratic Army. Eventually, the Army was forced deep into Albania by the US trained regular army, and by the end of 1949; the civil war was officially over.

Many have tried to interpret the intentions of the leaders on both left and right as the nation slid into civil war. The KKE had been in charge for most of the occupation, and it is not unlikely that they had trouble giving that power away upon Prime Minister Papandreou's return in 1944. Initial motives have also been discussed. David Close has highlighted mistrust as the driving force behind KKE's decisions.<sup>120</sup> The Battle of Athens in December 1944 had turned in the communists' disfavour, and resulted in a retaliatory attitude among many right-wing populists. This was also to play a role in the politics of Prime Minister Konstantinos Tsaldaris during the civil war, and also at the end of the war when at least 5,000 guerrillas were executed upon their capture.<sup>121</sup>

It has already been mentioned that during the war, EAM–ELAS recruited heavily both from non-communist and communist sympathisers. Though not directly a

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<sup>119</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:121.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, 116; see also David Close, *Origins of the Greek Civil War*, London: Longman, 1995.

<sup>121</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:125.

continuation of EAM–ELAS, the Democratic Army also recruited people with different motivations. In fact, the majority of the members in 1947 and 1948 were Slav Macedonians, and Yugoslavian archives and papers from the KKE have shown that many within the Democratic Army had nationalist and secessionist ambitions for a separate Macedonian state with Thessaloniki as its capital.<sup>122</sup>

## **Greek nationalism and the *Megali Idea*, 1821-1949**

### **Nationalism and identity**

One of the leading historians in the early days of modern Greece was Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815-91). In his life's work, *History of the Hellenic Nation*, he pointed to the fact that none of the European nations had ever in history been ethnically pure. Instead he argued that despite the Greeks being a young people, and therefore unable to claim a racial continuity, there is a cultural continuity of the Greeks.<sup>123</sup> This was highlighted after the creation of the Greek state and the choice of Athens as the capital of the kingdom in 1834. Though at the time only a dusty village, the village that housed the ruins of the Parthenon was to become a symbol of the kingdom's orientation towards its cultural heritage from the classical era.

The modern Greek identity defined the Greek nation as 'a cultural community embracing all the linguistic groups that the Greeks have incorporated and absorbed in their history.'<sup>124</sup> Even so, one cannot exaggerate the role of the language as a major instrument of acculturation into Greek citizenship. As Koliopoulos and Veremis write, '[t]he role of the modern state with its uniform educational system has been paramount in shaping national identity and national consciousness.'<sup>125</sup> *Katharevousa* (which literally means 'pure'), a more conservative version of Greek resembling the

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.* 121; Clogg 2013.

<sup>123</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:2.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

old Greek, was soon to become the main language at the university of Athens, and was also the taught language in the general education system. *Katharevousa* was created as a compromise between ancient Greek and the spoken *Dimotiki*, or *Demotic Greek*. Modern Greek was transformed through a gradual adaption of more oral and modern terms, into the formal *Katharevousa*. The question of language would be a recurring theme until Andreas Papandreou in 1981 abolished the use of *Katharevousa* entirely. Today it is usually only used by the Greek-Orthodox church.

### **The Megali Idea**

Modern Greece is built upon nationalistic projects, with the perhaps most important one being the *Megali Idea*. The *Megali Idea*, or Great Idea, governed Greek politics throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and were not abandoned until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an expansionist project, the main goal was to incorporate all the areas which historically belonged Greece, going back to Alexander the Great. Benedict Anderson has tried to capture these strong nationalist sentiments in Greece. In his work *Imagined Communities* he writes about how the increase in discovery and conquest led to a revolution in European ideas about language.<sup>126</sup> This ‘lexicographic revolution’ led scholars to search beyond their own borders. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, German, French and English scholars began to make the Greek classics available to a larger public, and stories of the ancient Hellenic civilisation were made increasingly accessible to ‘a small number of young Greek-speaking Christian Intellectuals’ who had studied or travelled ‘beyond the confines of the Ottoman Empire.’<sup>127</sup> One of these men, Adamantios Koraes, also known as the father of *Katharevousa*, says:

For the first time the nation surveys the hideous spectacle of its ignorance and trembles in measuring with the eye the distance separating it from its ancestors’ glorious past. This painful *discovery*, however, does not precipitate the Greeks into despair: We are the

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<sup>126</sup> Anderson 2006[1983].

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 72.



descendants of Greeks, they implicitly told themselves, we must either try to become again worthy of this name, or we must not bear it.<sup>128</sup>

According to Anderson, these young men strived to ‘debarbarise’ the modern Greeks, making them worthy of Socrates and Pericles. The movements resulted in the Greek War of Independence, but it did not end there. The *Megali Idea* has continued to lead to severe tension between Greece and its neighbouring countries up until this day. It may also explain the later tension that occurred regarding the name of Macedonia, when this northern neighbour of Greece became independent upon the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991. I will return to this in Chapter 5.

### **Cleavages in politics**

It is not possible to understand the more recent developments in Greece without understanding the period between 1821 and 1949. The first long century of Greece as an independent state was dominated by war and severe political cleavages. The first cleavage was between royalists and republicans. This went on for several years, with intermittent periods of restoration of the kingdom between dictatorship and republic. This divide officially ended with the final abolition of the monarchy in 1973. The second cleavage was between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists. Even to this day, Eleftherios Venizelos is considered one of the most influential men in modern Greek history. This divide was soon to be supplanted by a third cleavage, between the communists and the military. This cleavage is perhaps one of the best examples of how Greek politics has been dominated by a strong polarisation and contrasting policies. There are two things that highlight this phenomenon. The first is the strong connection between the military and the political right. The second is the increase in the establishment of parties to the left. These two contrast each other in the sense that as one increases, so too does the other.

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

Inspired by the ideals of the French revolution, the 19<sup>th</sup> century had seen the creation of many nation-states and revolutions, and in the years that followed the establishment of the Greek state there was also a significant change in Greek nationalism. As previously mentioned, the building of both the Greek nation and the Greek nationality were key aspects during the period from independence to the civil wars, and the struggle to define who belonged to the Greek state would come to influence the next sixty years as well. As we have seen, the Greek state is built upon nationalist projects, and it is these projects that echo in the developments that followed in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

# 4 1949–1990: European Integration

## 1949–1974: Reconstruction and coup d'état

### Foreign relations and the case of Cyprus

The period after the end of the civil war in 1949 was greatly marked by the American presence. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan had provided Greece with emergency aid since 1947. Economic reconstruction was to be the priority for years to come. Around half of the state's investment expenditure was based on American aid between 1947 and 1957.<sup>129</sup> To counter inflation, the drachma was devalued in 1953; a measure that again made Greece competitive in foreign markets.<sup>130</sup>

To the north, Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria had fallen under communist control. To stop further communist advancement to the south, both Greece and Turkey were admitted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952. Though neither of the countries could be considered 'North Atlantic', the civil war in Greece and the fight between communists and anti-communists may be seen as a part of the Cold War.

The island of Cyprus was also to shape the politics of this period. The case of Cyprus can be seen as a symbol of the difficult relationship between Greece and its neighbour Turkey that persists to this day. The island came under British administration in 1878 and was made part of the crown colonies in 1925. The island's population was mainly Greeks and Turks, with the Greeks making up the majority. The Greek community had for a long time expressed wishes for a reunification with their Greek motherland, but now the Greek Cypriot aspirations became clearer. In 1955 a campaign of civil disobedience was unleashed, backed up by political violence. The Turks countered

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<sup>129</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:130.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*; Clogg 2013:145.

with demands for partition. In 1958, the president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, made it clear that he considered pushing for Cypriot independence instead of unification with mainland Greece. Eventually, a settlement was reached between Greece, Turkey and Britain providing Cyprus with her independence as a republic within the British Commonwealth. Britain was still allowed to keep dominion over two areas, the military bases of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, and both Greece and Turkey were allowed to station a small military presence on the island. But the Cyprus settlement of 1960 proved to be short-lived. Some claimed that the system of power-sharing had granted the Turkish minority too much power. In November 1963 Archbishop Makarios demanded, on behalf of the Greek Cypriots, that this power be reduced. This was rejected by the Turkish government, and at the end of December fierce fighting between the populations on the island made Turkey threaten to intervene. In the end it was the subtle threats of American President Lyndon B. Johnson that put an end to the hostilities.<sup>131</sup> A United Nation peacekeeping force was set in to maintain the peace, and at the time of writing, it still has not left.

### **From reconstruction to revolution**

The post-war period saw an increase in the involvement of different parties in national politics. Martial law was in force between 1947 and 1950, so the first election after the civil war therefore took place in 1950 under a system of proportional representation. This is one of the first elections in which it became clear that it was personalities rather than principles that seemed to count for the voters. As I will later argue, this is both a permanent and a prominent feature of Greek politics even to this day.

Going back to the elections of 1950, parties that identified themselves at the political centre won a significant number of the seats in a parliament of 250. The Liberal Party, led by Sofoklis Venizelos, the second son of Eleftherios Venizelos, won 56 seats; the new National Progressive Centre Union (EPEK), led by Nikolaos Plastiras, won 45 seats; and the Georgios Papandreou Party won 35 seats. The Communists had been

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<sup>131</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:139.

banned since 1947, but were represented through the Democratic Front, which won 18 seats, whereas the populist People's Party, still under the leadership of Konstantinos Tsaldaris, remained the largest party with 62 seats.<sup>132</sup>

The government did not last long and new elections were held a year later. The election of September 1951 saw the debut of two new fractions: the Greek Rally, headed by Marshal Papagos, who had been commander-in-chief at the end of the civil war, and the United Democratic Left, closely associated with the banned KKE. The Greek Rally replaced the People's Party on the right, with a significant proportion of the army vote, but inconclusive results still led to a new centre coalition, to the dismay of the American ambassador, who threatened to reduce American financial aid unless elections were held under a majority system.<sup>133</sup> This was done in the election of November 1952, which resulted in a major victory for the Greek Rally, which secured 247 out of 300 seats with 49 per cent of the vote.<sup>134</sup>

After the death of Marshal Papagos, King Paul, the brother of George II who had succeeded him upon his death in 1947, chose Konstantinos Karamanlis as his successor. Karamanlis changed the Greek Rally into the National Radical Union and held a new election in February 1956. Karamanlis' party won a majority in the parliament, but in the election of 1958 the front organisation of the banned Communist party, United Democratic Left, emerged as the main opposition party. Again the political stage seemed marked by the fight between communists and anti-communists. Some have suggested that this sudden rise in the popular vote for the left was due to problems at the centre.<sup>135</sup> Whether this was the case or not, the centre made sure of their comeback in the election in 1961.

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 128.

<sup>133</sup> Clogg 2013:144.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 144, 289; Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:130.

<sup>135</sup> See Clogg 2013:148.

After the election of 1958, the centre parties had joined forces and created the Centre Union, headed by Georgios Papandreou. Papandreou's coalition succeeded in creating an alternative to the United Democratic Left, and the supporters of the Centre Union ranged from the far right to the far left. In spite of this, Karamanlis and the National Radical Union still came out as the victors of the 1961 elections. Both the Centre Union and the United Democratic Left maintained that the results were manipulated and claimed that people had felt pressured by the army or other forces. Furthermore, they accused the army for having implemented a NATO plan, code-named 'Pericles', and said it was designed to deal with internal security threats and to strengthen the hold of power of the right.<sup>136</sup> Though never proved at the time, the Pericles plan was to become important in the later colonels' coup.<sup>137</sup>

In 1963, Georgios Papandreou managed to secure a narrow victory over Karamanlis, who was struggling after a fallout with the royal house. Karamanlis had in fact resigned and left the country to a caretaker government, and returned only to participate in the elections. Though victorious, Papandreou's suspicion towards the United Democratic Left, who now held the balance of power in government, made him resign. New elections were therefore held in February 1964, this time benefitting Papandreou and the centre, which gained a 53 per cent share of the vote.<sup>138</sup>

Papandreou's time in office was to be short, though, and overshadowed by the troubles on the island of Cyprus and of economic development. He relied heavily on the advice of his son, Andreas, who was more radical than his father.<sup>139</sup> In 1965, Papandreou went to the new king, Konstantinos II, who had ascended the throne after the death of his father, King Paul, in 1964, and asked to be given greater control over the army and the ministry of defence. He was rejected on the grounds that his son was

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>137</sup> Close 2002:109.

<sup>138</sup> Clogg 2013:155.

<sup>139</sup> See Andreas Papandreou, *Democracy at Gunpoint: The Greek Front*, New York/Toronto: Doubleday, 1970.

under investigation, accused of being involved with a conspiratorial group within the army, known as *Aspida*, or Shield. Instead King Konstantinos II sacked the prime minister on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1965. Little did the king know of the consequences of his actions. Tension ran high in the population and supporters of Papandreou took to the streets in massive protests.

In 1966, Papandreou and the leader of the National Radical Union, Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, reached an agreement with the king with the purpose of trying to stabilise the government. They agreed that new elections in May 1967 were the best solution to this political crisis. Richard Clogg describes the tension at the time in the following words: '[T]he continuing political turmoil and uncertainty served to feed the paranoia of the extra-parliamentary right and to create a dangerous climate of disillusionment with politicians among the population at large.'<sup>140</sup> This uncertain and disillusioned climate is perhaps what best explains what happened next.

### **Coup d'état: The military Junta**

Out of fear of a new victory for Papandreou, the military, led by a group of colonels, decided to stop the elections and successfully staged a coup on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1967. The three engineers of the coup were Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos, Nikolaos Makarezos and Stylianos Pattakos. For many years, Papadopoulos' main preoccupation was to ensure that control of the state remained out of the hands of communists. As many officers of the army had lost confidence in the crown, plans were made for a takeover. The conspirators approached the king and asked him to appoint a puppet government, leaving the power in the hands of Papadopoulos. Over the following weeks thousands of people were put under house arrest, jailed or deported to prison islands. Many prominent politicians were also arrested.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Clogg 2013:159.

<sup>141</sup> Close 2002:114.

The regime of the colonels, or just Junta (Greek: Χούντα), as the dictatorship was to be called, was set on revenge. Many have discussed why the Junta wished to take over, and though explanations range from defending ‘the traditional values of “Helleno-Christian civilisation” from the western and secular influences’<sup>142</sup> to displeasure with the result of the civil war<sup>143</sup>, it is clear that the coup was carried out under the pretence of an imminent communist takeover, similar to what had been done under the regime of Metaxas some 30 years earlier. The Junta soon took up the ambitious programme of rejuvenating Greece, creating a utopia where ‘social classes would be abolished and general consensus on vital issues would be arrived at through systematic training in whatever was deemed expedient for the nation.’<sup>144</sup> Their ideology was not unlike that of other far right regimes, and it could perhaps best be described as a sort of self-taught fascism.

The Junta was highly unpopular, and its support base was fragile. In fact, the majority of politicians at both ends of the spectre, with the exception of the extreme right, opposed the regime. Despite this, there was little organised opposition within Greek borders, at least until the regime started to deteriorate in 1973. In March, students occupied the Law Faculty of the University of Athens. Papadopoulos’ response was to dethrone King Konstantinos II, who had lived in exile in Rome, and in his place he proclaimed a presidential parliamentary republic. In the referendum that followed, Papadopoulos, as the only candidate, was elected president for an eight-year term. Again the students took to the streets, and in November they managed to occupy the university institution known as Athens Polytechnic. However, these actions were brutally suppressed by the army, and the occupation ended after two days, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1973, when a tank crashed through the main gate. Possibly as many as 7,000 people were arrested and hundreds were wounded. It has not been possible to ascertain the total number of deaths, but it could be close to 80.<sup>145</sup> His own supporters

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<sup>142</sup> Clogg 2013:160.

<sup>143</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:141.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, 142.

<sup>145</sup> Close 2002:122.



replaced Papadopoulos soon after as Dimitrios Ioannidis assumed leadership, with Lieutenant-General Phaidon Gizikis as president.

In the end, the lack of support and legitimacy of the Ioannidis regime led to the downfall of the Junta, and Konstantinos Karamanlis was brought back to oversee the return to democratic government, assuming the office of prime minister on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1974.

## **1975–1990: The *Metapolitefsi* and two-party politics**

### **Rebuilding democracy**

In Greece, the rebuilding of society after the overthrow of the Junta is referred to as the *Metapolitefsi* (Greek: Μεταπολίτευση), literally meaning ‘regime change’. Many have written about this period and the sudden transformation from military dictatorship to being one of the more stable democracies in Europe at the beginning of the 1980s.<sup>146</sup> As we have seen, the political system in Greece had for a long time been dominated by cleavages between royalists and republicans, Venizelists and anti-Venizelists, and between communists and anti-communists. It was only at the end of the Second World War that one heard talk of the establishment of a political centre as an addition to the traditional left and right. Most of the parties were created out of a will for political or cultural change, and not out of a general ‘need’ in the population. According to Ole Smith, the role of the politician has been that of a messenger between the population and the bureaucracy who should in principle be able to provide for his supporters whether they were in need of a phone or a pension.<sup>147</sup> Personal issues were therefore essential as the Greeks entered the election booths where they usually voted for personalities rather than specific issues, a tendency already noticeable in other elections following the civil war. The system resembled

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<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, 141; See Ole L. Smith, *Fra militærdiktatur til socialisme. Grækenland 1974-1983*, Museum Tusulanums Forlag: København, 1984.

<sup>147</sup> Smith 1984:115.

the old patron-client relationship, where support in the elections obliged a politician to help his elector if asked.

### **New Democracy vs. PASOK**

Konstantinos Karamanlis wanted to legitimise his sudden power as soon as possible, and therefore called for elections in November 1974. Before this election, there were three primary issues that concerned the electorate: establishing a democracy; terminating the dependence on foreign, and of late American, aid in foreign affairs; and greater social justice.<sup>148</sup> There are also two other things that should be noted about this election. First of all, the election featured parties from the full political spectrum. Karamanlis had even used the increasing tolerance in the population after the overthrow of the Junta to remove the ban on the Communist Party. Second, two parties emerged for the election that would play a significant part in Greek politics for the decades to come. The first was Karamanlis' newly established New Democracy (ND), a recreation of the previous National Radical Union. The second was the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), the party of Andreas Papandreu. Not to anyone's surprise, New Democracy gained the majority with 54 per cent, translated into 219 out of 300 seats in Parliament.<sup>149</sup> The following referendum on the future of the monarchy resulted in a close to 70–30 margin in favour of a republic, and in 1975 the Parliament elected Konstantinos Tsatsos as president.<sup>150</sup>

New Democracy was to keep the majority of the popular vote after the parliamentary elections of 1977, though it had decreased from the last election. In 1980, Karamanlis was chosen to succeed Tsatsos as president, thereby leaving the office of prime minister to George Rallis. Karamanlis had for a long time worked to strengthen Greece's bonds with Europe. In 1961, Prime Minister Karamanlis successfully managed to negotiate an association agreement with the European Economic

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<sup>148</sup> Close 2002:152.

<sup>149</sup> Clogg 2013:168.

<sup>150</sup> Close 2002:142; Clogg 2013:169.

Community. Twenty years later, in 1981, Greece became the tenth member of the European Community (EU).

Both organisation and democratisation proved to be important for parties if they were to retain their positions. Papandreou seemed well aware of this, and worked hard to establish a softer line, trying to appeal to voters from the centre and the more radical voters in New Democracy. Promoting the slogan *Allagi* (change), PASOK appealed evenly to both men and women, to both rural and urban areas, and it cut across social classes.<sup>151</sup> ND, on the other hand, had relied too much on Karamanlis, who was unable to carry out the reforms necessary to modernise his party. The leadership of ND was therefore given to George Rallis, but the absence of Karamanlis' charismatic leadership weakened the party. The many years of persecution of the left, and especially of communists, had created a fear of the police, but with the policies of Karamanlis this fear had now gradually started to decrease. The removal of the ban on KKE made the left a more prominent force in Greek politics. In the elections of 1981 PASOK won 172 out of 300 seats, yielding the first socialist government, and Andreas Papandreou became prime minister.

The elections of 1985 were preceded by the end of Karamanlis' period as president in March. It was generally assumed that he would continue for a second term, but despite having previously praised Karamanlis' role as president, Papandreou now went against him as PASOK launched the candidacy of the younger Christos Sartzetakis instead. After three rounds of voting, Sartzetakis finally received the necessary minimum of 180 votes in parliament.<sup>152</sup> PASOK then introduced constitutional amendments that enhanced the powers of the prime minister in relation to those of the president. The parliamentary elections later that year therefore turned into a confrontation between ND and PASOK, but PASOK retained approximately the same

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<sup>151</sup> Clogg 2013:178–180.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

majority as it had in the elections of 1981 with 46 per cent, whereas ND increased its share of the vote by five percentage points, gaining 41 per cent of the vote.<sup>153</sup>

The year of 1989 saw two elections, both ending in a deadlock. The leader of ND was now Konstantinos Mitsotakis, who had made a mark for himself in Greek politics as the rival of Papandreou. Papandreou quickly accused him of being a traitor who, amongst other things, bore a major responsibility for the Junta.<sup>154</sup> The popularity of Papandreou was suddenly falling in the run-up to the elections. Papandreou had health issues and spent some time in hospitals abroad. He also decided to divorce his wife to marry a significantly younger Olympic Airways hostess. As Papandreou came to realise that PASOK would probably decrease its popular vote in the elections, he made sure to introduce a more purely proportional electoral system as one of his last acts in government. The effect of this was seen in the June elections of 1989 where the majority of 44 per cent of the vote only resulted in 144 seats in Parliament for New Democracy, whereas PASOK won 39 per cent and 125 seats. The ‘Alliance of the Left and of Progress’, an alliance between the Communist Party and the Greek Left, gained 13 per cent, and therefore held the balance of power.<sup>155</sup> New elections did not provide a significant change in the results. The inability to come to terms and establish a coalition government made new elections seem inevitable. After long negotiations, an all-party government was formed headed by a non-political figure, Xenophon Zolotas. This ‘ecumenical’ government was to remain in office until new elections could be held in April 1990. In this election ND emerged as the winner with 47 per cent and 150 seats in Parliament, with Konstantinos Mitsotakis becoming prime minister.<sup>156</sup> A month later, Konstantinos Karamanlis was elected president for a second term.

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<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 194.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 196–7.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, 199.

## **Cyprus towards the new millenium**

The 1980s saw significant changes, and a greater Greek presence, in international affairs. In 1983, two years after her accession, Greece took over the presidency of the EU. The 1980s also saw a reduction of the US military presence in Greece. As for Cyprus, the situation had become increasingly tense just as the Junta had started to disintegrate. The Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios demanded the removal of Greek troops from the island after Ioannidis tried to force Makarios to accept Athens as the national centre of Hellenism. Ioannidis responded by launching a coup against the president. This resulted in a Turkish response in the form of an invasion of the northern part of the island in 1974. War was imminent between the two neighbours as both started to mobilise. This became the first crisis in Karamanlis' new term in office. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot assembly unilaterally declared an independent 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'. Though formally only recognised by Turkey, the incident worsened the relationship between Greece and Turkey. The partition of Cyprus had created two independent states, and clashes occurred frequently between Greek and Turkish Cypriots during the 1990s, and the division remains to this day. The Greek part of Cyprus became a member of the EU in 2004.

## **The Greek electoral system**

Before further assessing the developments from 1990 to 2014 a note should be made on the Greek electoral system. Generally it is the sitting majority party that call for elections and also chooses what electoral system should be used. The custom has been to vary between a majority system and a system of proportional representation, usually depending on what would most benefit the incumbent majority. An example of how the electoral law could be used to the governing party's advantage is the election of 1956. Here the electoral law created a system that gave Karamanlis' party the majority in the parliament, even though the opposition received a marginally larger share of the popular vote.

Recently, the most common electoral system used in Greece has been a combination of a majority system and a system of proportional representation. After parliamentary elections, the parties that wish to form a coalition need to hold half of the seats in parliament plus one, or 151 out of 300 seats. The seats are distributed in the following manner: 250 of the seats are distributed on the basis of proportional representation. The last 50 are given to the party that wins the plurality of the votes. This system helps create a system where ‘the winner takes it all’. There is also a 3 per cent threshold for parties to be considered in the race for seats.

The Greek electoral system has long suffered from high levels of corruption, populism and also, as I suggested earlier, clientelism. As the new millennium approached, the fear of the police again became a prominent feature in the population. In 2008, the police shot and killed a 15-year-old boy. The incident and the youth riots that followed not only support the claim that there was a scepticism towards the police as figures of authority, but also the imminent political crisis. There was a call for radical political change, and whether this change was offered from the right or from the left was not a matter of great importance.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> See also Ellinas 2012.

## 5 1990–2014: The Financial Crisis

Greece entered the European Community (EU) in 1981. This was despite the fact that a Commission report from 1976/7 had clearly stated that Greece was absolutely not prepared economically for such a commitment.<sup>158</sup> The decision to grant Greece membership should rather be seen as purely political. The main motivation for the Community to accept Greek accession was to help stabilise and consolidate the emerging democracy after a period of ‘right-wing dictatorship’.<sup>159</sup> The same could be seen in other new member states, such as Spain and Portugal that became members in 1986, and it was also later repeated, though less hastily, in Eastern Europe. Greece had long sought to maintain a stronger bond with the European states. This can perhaps be seen as a withdrawal towards the north and west after a long time under the shadow of the Ottoman Empire to the south and east.

### The question of Macedonia

Greek foreign affairs during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were also marked by the unstable states at the northern border, Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Albania had a large Greek minority in the south. A sudden exodus in 1991 gave rise to fears that the Albanian government was forcing the minority to leave, but at the same time, large groups of Albanians who were not of Greek origin also crossed the border to the south to find work in Greece, most of them illegally. The borders of the Soviet Union had been closed for years, and now Greece also saw a significant increase in immigration of Greek minorities from the former Union. Macedonia also achieved its independence with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and EU members soon opened diplomatic relations with the new state. This was met by fury in Greece, as I briefly noted in chapter 3. Greece refused to accept a name that did not include a reference to

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<sup>158</sup> Béatrice Hibou, ‘Greece and Portugal: Convergent or Divergent Europeanization?’, in Simon Bulmer & Christian Lequesne (eds.) *The Member States of the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005:231.

<sup>159</sup> Michelle Cini & Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán. *European Union Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010:420.

its previous union. The name Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) was therefore decided upon as this separated this newly established republic from the old claim Greece had over the name and geographical area of the historical Macedonia of Alexander the Great. For the same reason, Greece has greatly opposed Macedonian membership in the European Union. The Macedonian demonstrations are also mentioned by Dimitris Psarras as a factor for the increase in support for the far right in the 1990s.<sup>160</sup>

In February 1994, Papandreou announced a blockade of Macedonia. Interpreting this as a breach with the laws of the community, the EU Commission complained to the European Court of Justice. The issue reached its peak in 1995, when the Greek foreign minister refused to attend the ceremony to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, because the Macedonian flag was to be flown alongside the flags of other countries that also lost nationals in the death camp.<sup>161</sup> Relations improved in 1995, and Greece eventually agreed to lift the blockade.

## **New leadership in PASOK**

A split between Prime Minister Mitsotakis and his first foreign minister, Antonis Samaras, over Macedonia in 1992 led to the dismissal of Samaras and the collapse of the short-lived ND government. As a response, Samaras founded his own party, Political Spring, and in the elections of 1993 he received 5 per cent of the vote and thereby secured 10 seats.<sup>162</sup> PASOK, however, was to return as the victor once again, and Papandreou returned to power. Though critical of the austerity measures introduced by the president, Papandreou as prime minister gave his blessing to economic policies to cut the massive Greek debt and gain control over the inflation, all for the purpose of preparing for entrance in the European Monetary Union (EMU).

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<sup>160</sup> Radio Bubble, 'rbnews international show 13 April 2013: The Black Book of Golden Dawn', [interview with Dimitris Psarras], *Radio Bubble*, 13.04.2013.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, 214.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, 213.



Kostis Stephanopoulos replaced Karamanlis as president in 1995 when the latter resigned after five years. Around the same time, Papandreou also resigned due to illness, and Kostas Simitis replaced him both as prime minister and later also as the head of PASOK. He took it upon himself to modernise the party and attempted to wipe out the major accusation of the party being populist. According to Simitis:

Populism transfers the social problem from the plain of ideology to a level that does not disturb the status quo of social relations. The assistance of the state and the benefits derived from it is the sole objective of political struggles in Greece.<sup>163</sup>

Again we are reminded of the previously mentioned patron-client relationship frequently in use in Greek politics. These relationships could be transferred across generations, and were also frequently used by politicians in the socialist PASOK.<sup>164</sup> At the election of 1996, PASOK secured 162 out of 300 seats and ND 108 seats, and there was an upsurge in the popularity of the left-wing parties, which won 15 per cent combined and 30 seats.<sup>165</sup>

Kostas Simitis was to hold office for another two terms, throughout the election of 2000 and up until his resignation in 2004. George Papandreou, the son of Andreas, then succeeded him as the leader of PASOK. The election of 2000 had again given PASOK a clear majority and a comfortable 158 seats. The KKE won 5 per cent of the vote and secured 11 seats, whereas the Coalition of the Left won 3 per cent and 6 seats. New Democracy won 125 seats.<sup>166</sup>

The decade also saw the death of two of the most prominent politicians in the post-war era. Andreas Papandreou died after long-time illness in 1996, at the age of

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<sup>163</sup> Kostas Simitis, quoted in Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:189.

<sup>164</sup> Koliopoulos & Veremis 2010:190.

<sup>165</sup> Clogg 2013:225.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, 233.

seventy-seven, and Konstantinos Karamanlis followed close after, in 1998, at the age of ninety-one.

## **The new millennium**

Not long after the election in 2000, a report from the US State Department ranked Greece as one of the countries in the world with the most anti-American terrorist attacks the preceding year. This was soon followed by the assassination of the British military attaché by the group ‘17 November’, a remnant of the end of the military Junta. This proved to be the last victim of the group, and ‘17 November’ was dismantled two years later and many of its members put on trial. As the Olympic Games were to be held in Athens in 2004, people started questioning Greece’s ability to provide sufficient security for the event.<sup>167</sup> Though preparation for the Olympic Games greatly benefitted the infrastructure of the capital, with the new Eleftherios Venizelos Airport opening in 2001, it also proved to be very costly, reaching the sum of 9 billion euros.<sup>168</sup>

Kostas Karamanlis, the nephew of the popular Konstantinos Karamanlis, now led New Democracy, and in the election of 2004, ND again defeated PASOK with a majority of 45 per cent of the popular vote. PASOK gained 41 per cent.<sup>169</sup> For the election in 2007, there was a slight decrease in the vote for both PASOK and ND, but ND still held the majority. The election also saw the emergence of a new party, *Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos*, or Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), which gained close to 4 per cent and 10 seats.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, 234.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 242.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, 245.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, 248; George Bistis, ‘Golden Dawn or Democratic Sunset: The Rise of the Far Right in Greece’, in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3(2013); Vassiliki Georgiadou, ‘Right-Wing Populism and Extremism: The Rapid Rise of “Golden Dawn” in Crisis-Ridden Greece’, in Ralf Melzer & Sebastian Serafin (eds.) *Right-wing Extremism in Europe. Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: Forum Berlin, 2013.

Greece joined the euro area as the twelfth member on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2001. In the early 1990s, the Maastricht Treaty was discussed and with it the creation of cohesion funds to assist those countries with a GDP lower than 90 per cent of the average for EU countries. This was intended to help states meet the European Monetary Union's convergence criteria<sup>171</sup>, and mainly applied to the new member states, Greece and Portugal.<sup>172</sup> One of the convergence criteria included a demand that the deficit be below 3 per cent. In November 2004, Greece admitted to having lied about its economy in order to be accepted into the euro area, and that Greece's deficit level had not been around 3 per cent since 1999.<sup>173</sup>

Towards the end of the first decade in the new millennium, the fear of the far right again became prominent. The incident with the police shooting of the 15-year-old boy in December 2008 reminded people of the Junta, and at the election of 2009, ND lost 61 seats and fell down to 33 per cent of the vote. PASOK, on the other hand, gained 58 seats with its 44 per cent translating into a total of 160 seats. KKE won 8 per cent, LAOS won 6 per cent, and a new party, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) won 5 per cent and 13 seats.<sup>174</sup> SYRIZA would become a prominent part of politics the following years. Kostas Karamanlis, the leader of ND, saw no other alternative but to step down after this crushing defeat, and was replaced by Antonis Samaras, the old foreign minister, who had left his own party, the right-wing Political Spring<sup>175</sup>, in favour of ND.

The attention was soon to turn towards the global financial crisis of 2008. Greece had been accepted into the euro area in 2001, and the Greek currency, the drachma, was replaced by the euro in 2002. After years of debt and corruption, peaked by the expenses of the Olympics, Greece was headed into recession. Membership in the euro

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<sup>171</sup> All member states of the EU need to meet the 'convergence criteria' before being allowed to enter the EMU and the euro area.

<sup>172</sup> Cini & Borragán, 2010:295, 299.

<sup>173</sup> BBC, 'Greece admits fudging Euro entry', *BBC*, 15.11.2004.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, 249.

<sup>175</sup> It is Richard Clogg that characterises the Political Spring Party as right wing, 2013:225.

area made a devaluation of its currency impossible, and the only solution seemed to be internal devaluation and harsh austerity measures.

## **The financial crisis**

From September 2008 the European financial crisis was a fact. At first, measures were taken by the Greek parliament to support the Greek banking system. Later, severe austerity measures were introduced. As for the rest of the international community, it took its time to respond to the crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not launch the first report on the situation in Greece until the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. Article IV of the report clearly stated that structural reforms and fiscal consolidations could no longer be postponed.<sup>176</sup> Greece was highly vulnerable due to high debt levels and the erosion of competitiveness.

The blossoming crisis also affected the elections. In the parliamentary elections on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2009, PASOK won an absolute majority with 43.92 per cent of the vote, and formed a government with George Papandreou as the new prime minister. This also meant that Kostas Karamanlis of New Democracy was ousted after twelve years as president of the party. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, Prime Minister Papandreou announced the government's intention to reduce the fiscal deficit to 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2013, from an estimated level of 12.7 per cent in November 2009. The prime minister also announced the first round of austerity measures and structural reforms.

In January 2010, the Greek government launched an economic stability programme. The principal objective of this programme would be to reduce the fiscal deficit to 2.8 per cent by 2012. During the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in January 2010, the European Union Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner

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<sup>176</sup> IMF, 'IMF Executive Board Concludes 2009 Article IV Consultation with Greece', PIN no. 09/100, 06.08.2009.

Joaquin Almunia did an interview with Bloomberg TV.<sup>177</sup> In the video he spoke of the need for a fiscal adjustment, and that this was part of a plan A to save Greece. However, he also announced that there was no plan B. Because of the common currency, default was not an option in the euro area.

In February 2010, the Greek government launched a harsh austerity programme, and the EU endorsed it the very next day.<sup>178</sup> At an extraordinary Eurozone summit on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2010, European leaders stated their commitment to support Greece through the crisis. Despite the support from the leaders of the euro area, the Greek finance minister stated in mid-February 2010 that Greece and the Greek economy were sinking like the ‘Titanic’.<sup>179</sup>

In March the government unveiled a 4.8 billion euro austerity programme, but for all it was worth, it did not help Greece increase its credibility in the financial markets. Two days later the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, raised the possibility of ‘ejecting’ countries from the euro area if they did not respect the rules.<sup>180</sup> At the end of March 2010, the leaders of the euro area stated their intention to support Greece in order to safeguard the stability of the euro, and also to supply Greece with emergency funding in case Greece’s access to the financial markets was suspended.<sup>181</sup>

Not until April 2010 did Prime Minister Papandreou see the need to make an official request for financial support.<sup>182</sup> His request was answered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May when the leaders of the euro area and the IMF agreed to provide an emergency loan of 110

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<sup>177</sup> Joaquin Almunia, ‘EU’s Almunia Says “No Plan B” to Plug Greek Deficit’, [Interview], *Bloomberg*, 29.01.2010.

<sup>178</sup> European Commission, ‘Commission assesses Stability Programme of Greece’, IP/10/116, 03.02.2010.

<sup>179</sup> Julia Kollewe, ‘Greece defends “Titanic” efforts to tackle financial crisis’, *The Guardian*, 15.02.2010.

<sup>180</sup> Jack Ewing, ‘Merkel Urges Tougher Rules for Euro Zone’, *The New York Times*, 17.03.2010.

<sup>181</sup> Richard Wray, ‘Angela Merkel: EU summit should not discuss bailout for Greece’, *The Guardian*, 21.03.2010.

<sup>182</sup> Andrew Walker, ‘Greece calls on EU-IMF rescue loans’, *BBC*, 23.04.2010; Niki Kitsantonis & Matthew Saltmarsh, ‘Greece, Out of Ideas, Request Global Aid’, *The New York Times*, 23.04.2010.

billion euros to Greece, on the condition that Greece would have to implement an austerity programme of 30 billion euros.<sup>183</sup> The parliament agreed to the conditions of the first bailout with 172 out of 300 votes, but the result was met with violent demonstrations in Athens and ended in the loss of three lives.<sup>184</sup>

Protests were again reported outside the Greek parliament in May 2011. There were also reported rumours at the time that members of the euro area were contemplating a possible Greek exit. In a cabinet reshuffle in June, Evangelos Venizelos was made the new finance minister.<sup>185</sup> This was done just in time for the vote for the new austerity package measures that took place at the end of the month. Amidst violent demonstrations, which led to clashes between the police and protestors in front of the Greek parliament, the proposal still passed with 155 votes in favour and 136 against.<sup>186</sup> This was a somewhat surprising result, since the polls at the time suggested that between 70 and 80 per cent of the people were opposed to the austerity plan. In an interview done with *BBC* reporter Malcolm Brabant, a bank worker reportedly said: 'We know very well that these measures will be our tombstone [...] They will have extreme consequences for workers and for everyone on all social levels.'<sup>187</sup>

Unemployment levels continued to increase as yet another austerity bill passed through parliament in October. The bill also included a plan for a cutback of 30,000 workers in the public sector.<sup>188</sup> At least 70,000 people now joined the protests in front

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<sup>183</sup> IMF, 'Europe and IMF Agree €110 Billion Financing Plan With Greece', 02.05.2010; Lefteris Papadimas & Jan Strupczewski, 'EU, IMF agree \$147 billion bailout for Greece', *Reuters*, 02.05.2010; Gavin Hewitt, 'Eurozone approves massive Greece bail-out', *BBC*, 02.05.2010.

<sup>184</sup> Clogg 2013:253; Malcolm Brabant, 'Three dead as Greece protest turns violent', *BBC*, 05.05.2010.

<sup>185</sup> *The Telegraph*, 'Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou announces cabinet reshuffle', *The Telegraph*, 17.06.2011; Helena Smith, 'Greece's new finance minister faces unenviable task', *The Guardian*, 17.06.2011.

<sup>186</sup> Graeme Wearden, 'Greek parliament passes bill enabling new package of austerity measures', *The Guardian*, 30.06.2011; Maria Petrakis & Natalie Weeks, 'Papandreou Wins Budget Vote as Risk of Default Recedes', *Bloomberg*, 29.06.2011.

<sup>187</sup> Malcolm Brabant, 'Greece protest against austerity package turns violent', *BBC*, 28.06.2011.

<sup>188</sup> Kerin Hope, 'Greece approves austerity bill on first reading', *The Financial Times*, 19.10.2011.

of the parliament in Syntagma Square in Athens.<sup>189</sup> The anti-austerity protests continued through-out the month, and by the end, Prime Minister George Papandreou decided to call for a confidence vote and a referendum to approve a deal made by the euro summit for a new 130 billion euro loan to Greece.<sup>190</sup> The news caused great turmoil, both nationally as well as internationally. Papandreou won the vote with 153 votes in favour and 145 votes against, but was soon after summoned to the G20 summit in Cannes, after which he revoked the referendum and resigned on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>191</sup> A few days later, Lukas Papademos, a non-partisan leader of a tripartite coalition government consisting of PASOK, ND and LAOS replaced him as prime minister.<sup>192</sup>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2012, the Greek parliament approved the new loan agreement with a two-thirds majority. Again, the vote was met with major demonstrations and due to the use of Molotov cocktails, more than 40 buildings were set on fire in the Greek capital.<sup>193</sup> The new austerity measures also led to LAOS leaving the coalition, leaving PASOK and ND in a bipartite government.<sup>194</sup> In a public speech, president of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso spoke of the Eurogroup's approval of the new agreement for a second financial assistance programme for Greece. Barroso finished by emphasising that 'We [the Eurogroup] are committed to the future of the Euro.'<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Renee Maltezou & Harry Papachristou, 'Greece adopts austerity bill amid protests', *Reuters*, 20.10.2011.

<sup>190</sup> Euro Summit Statement, 26.10.2011.

<sup>191</sup> Graeme Wearden, 'Greek PM Papandreou wins confidence vote – November 4 2011', *The Guardian*, 04.11.2011; Smith, 'Eurozone crisis: Greek PM George Papandreou to resign'.

<sup>192</sup> Mark Lowen, 'Lucas Papademos named as new Greek prime minister', *BBC*, 10.11.2011.

<sup>193</sup> Rachel Donadio & Niki Kitsantonis, 'Greek Parliament Passes Austerity Plan After Riots Rage', *The New York Times*, 06.05.2012; BBC, 'Buildings ablaze as Greek MPs vote on austerity plan', *BBC*, 12.02.2012.

<sup>194</sup> Donadio & Kitsantonis, 'Greek Parliament Passes Austerity Plan After Riots Rage'.

<sup>195</sup> José Manuel Barroso, 'Statement by José Manuel Barroso on Greece, 21/02/2012, Brussels', 21.02.2012.

## The far right from 1974 to 2012

As the financial crisis took its toll on the Greek economy, the far right used the crisis as a springboard towards further acknowledgement in the general population. The increase in number of immigrants in a struggling community was perhaps easy to identify and present as the scapegoats, along with the leading politicians. According to Vassiliki Georgiadou it was ‘characteristic of the Greek parliamentary democracy in this period that there was no room in the political arena for far-right politics’.<sup>196</sup> Instead the conservative ND absorbed the votes of many who considered themselves ultranationalist and pro-monarchists, as well as the old supporters of the Junta. An example is the absorption of National Alignment (Greek: Εθνική Παράταξις) in the early 1980s.

New Democracy has also experienced the dominating cleavages in Greek politics. When the monarchy was finally abolished in 1974, an ultraconservative faction withdrew its support for New Democracy. As the only anti-communist, pro-monarchist party with some significant electoral basis in the parliament next to ND after the end of the Junta, National Alignment was determined to punish ND for its neutrality on the fate of the monarchy in the elections of 1977.<sup>197</sup> Towards the end of the 1970s, ND lost over half a million voters, mainly to the socialist PASOK, but also to National Alignment, which was slightly further to the right of ND. National Alignment was absorbed into ND when ND leaders, Konstantinos Karamanlis and Georgios Rallis, decided to use the following simple tactics: ‘In the 1981 parliamentary elections they placed the number two from National Alignment third on their national electoral list and put MPs and activists of National Alignment on the party list.’<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Georgiadou 2013:76.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*, 78.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*, 80.



Other far right parties after the end of the Junta include the short-lived Progressive Party (KP) and the more successful National Political Union (EPEN). EPEN emerged after the disintegration of National Alignment, and during the 1980s it was able to mobilise some influence among extreme right-wingers. EPEN was nostalgic about the military regime of the Junta and demanded the release of the imprisoned colonels; former dictator Georgios Papadopoulos was in fact considered the ‘spiritual leader’ of the party.<sup>199</sup> As we shall see, EPEN was also to be the starting point of Nikos Michaloliakos’ political career.

It took years before another right-wing party appeared on the political arena. People’s Orthodox Rally, shortened LAOS, the Greek word for ‘people’, entered the stage in the late 2000s, and won 3,8 per cent of the votes at the elections of 2007, and in so doing overcame the 3 per cent threshold and gained 10 members of parliament.<sup>200</sup> This was the first time that the far right had any significant presence in parliament since the beginning of the *Metapolitefsi*.

A somewhat surprising turn of events was seen in November 2011 when PASOK and ND decided to create an interim coalition government under the leadership of Lukas Papademos. Despite having held a majority for years, the support for both parties had fallen, and there was a need to include another party to regain the majority. The question was whether Papademos should turn to the left or the right for support. He decided to invite LAOS, rather than SYRIZA or KKE due to the two latter parties’ strong opposition to his economic policies.<sup>201</sup>

The general support for LAOS was, however, soon to decrease, at the same time that support for Golden Dawn increased (see table 1 below). Of course, it takes larger political surveys to prove that previous supporters of LAOS voted for Golden Dawn in the elections of 2012, and saying so is mere speculation on my part. LAOS still gained

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<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, 81.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, 83; Bistis 2013.

<sup>201</sup> Bistis 2013.

two members of parliament in the European Parliament in 2009, as the only far right party in Greece.

## **Intra-governmental crises and anti-racist measures:**

### **Recent developments 2012–2014**

#### **Parliamentary elections 2012**

The year of 2012 again saw two parliamentary elections, one closely followed by the other. The elections would come to see the establishment of a political stage defined by multi-party rather than two-party politics. After the fall of the Junta in 1974, the political system in Greece has mostly been a two-party system dominated by PASOK and New Democracy. The communists have always played a part on the political scene, albeit a minor one after the civil war. Even so, in the elections of 2012 one should note the sudden rise in support for the radical left, here represented by SYRIZA. Though originally functioning as a coalition between left wing and radical left parties, as well as ecological parties, SYRIZA was founded before the elections in 2004, in which the newly established party came in fourth with 3.26 per cent of the votes and 6 seats in parliament.<sup>202</sup> Despite being in the minority in parliament, SYRIZA quickly gained support in the broader population. In the elections of 2007, their share of the votes had increased slightly to 5 per cent and a total of 14 seats.<sup>203</sup> They kept 13 of the seats after the elections of 2009, and also gained a seat in the European Parliament the same year.<sup>204</sup> However, 4 of their MPs would come to leave the party in June 2010 to form the Democratic Left (DIMAR), which would come to be among the biggest parties in the following elections.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs, [ekloges.ypes.gr](http://ekloges.ypes.gr) [17.02.2014].

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> E Kathimerini, 'Syriza split creates new party', *E Kathimerini*, 10.06.2010.

SYRIZA was popular in front of the parliamentary elections in May 2012, and the results showed, what some characterised as a surprising turn of events as the party gained 16.78 per cent of the votes, pushing PASOK down to third with 13.18 per cent.<sup>206</sup> SYRIZA's results were to be further improved in the re-elections in June, with 26.9 per cent giving them 71 seats in parliament.<sup>207</sup>

As mentioned, PASOK's results are surprising if one looks at the long-ruling two-party politics that had been dominant in Greek politics since the 1970s. *The New York Times* interpreted the results of the election as 'a rejection of the terms of the bailout [...] The elections were seen as pivotal, determining both the country's future in Europe and its prospects for economic recovery.'<sup>208</sup> The voters seemed to be punishing the leading parties, PASOK and ND, and instead showed their support for the parties that were opposed to both the existing government as well as the terms of the loan agreement offered to Greece. This included 8.48 per cent to the old KKE, 6.11 per cent to the newly established DIMAR, but also a significant 10.60 per cent to the eurosceptic conservative party Independent Greeks (ANEL) and 6.97 per cent to Golden Dawn (see table 1 below).<sup>209</sup>

New Democracy still won the elections, but with an all time low of only 18.85 per cent of the votes. Efforts to form a coalition government were unsuccessful, and new elections were called for approximately six weeks later, the 17<sup>th</sup> of June. This time, ND had strengthened their position and won 29.66 per cent of the vote. SYRIZA was not far behind with 26.9 per cent, but PASOK had sunk even further and only received 12.3 per cent of the votes.<sup>210</sup> The result was a tripartite coalition government by PASOK, ND and DIMAR, with ND's Antonis Samaras as the new prime minister.

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<sup>206</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*









<sup>208</sup> Rachel Donadio & Niki Kitsantonis, 'Greek Voters Punish 2 Main Parties for Collapse', *The New York Times*, 06.05.2012.

<sup>209</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*

The result of the 2012 elections was a many-faceted government with parties ranging from the far left to the far right, including ‘neo-Nazis, Stalinists and Maoists together with radical, radical leftwingers, populist rightwingers and a numerous defenders of paranoid conspiracy theories’<sup>211</sup> – all parties with authoritarian features. Once again, the situation is not unlike the developments in Germany under the Weimar Republic, leading up to the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler.

**Table 1:** Greek Election results 2000–2012: Percentage of votes and number of MPs.

		2012: 17.6	2012: 6.5	2009	2007	2004	2000
	<b>New Democracy</b>	29.66 %	18.85 %	33.47 %	41.84 %	45.36 %	42.70 %
		129	108	91	152	166	125
	<b>PASOK</b>	12.28 %	13.18 %	43.92 %	38.10 %	40.55 %	43.80 %
		33	41	160	102	116	158
	<b>SYRIZA</b>	26.89 %	16.79 %	4.60 %	5.04 %	3.26 %	
		71	52	13	14	6	
	<b>KKE</b>	4.50 %	8.48 %	7.54 %	8.15 %	5.90 %	5.53 %
		12	26	21	22	12	11
	<b>DIMAR</b>	6.25 %	6.11 %				
		17	19				
	<b>XA</b>	6.92 %	6.97 %	0.29 %			
		18	21	0			
	<b>ANEL</b>	7.51 %	10.60 %				
		20	33				
	<b>LAOS</b>			5.63 %	3.8 %	2.19 %	
				15	10	0	
	<b>Others</b>	5.34 %	18.90 %	4.54 %	2.56 %	2.74 %	4.80 %

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, ekloges.yypes.gr.

<sup>211</sup> Aristides Hatzis, ‘Watch Greece – it may be the next Weimar Germany’, *The Financial Times*, 06.11.2013.

## **‘Has Greece’s economy finally turned a corner?’<sup>212</sup>**

The new government under the leadership of Samaras met one of its largest challenges in November when the Greek parliament approved the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy (MTFS) for 2013–2016, by a three-vote majority.<sup>213</sup> *The New York Times* had noted as early as April 2010 that the financial crisis had ‘highlighted the constraints of euro membership’.<sup>214</sup> Because of a common fiscal policy for the whole euro area, single countries are unable to devalue in times of need to help regain competitiveness in the international market. The agreement between the euro area and the EU also dictated the requirement to meet certain budget targets, the result of which was hard austerity measures at a time when the economy would rather have benefitted from additional spending. The MTFS was a part of a larger National Restructuring Plan to reduce deficits and regain the credibility of the Greek economy.<sup>215</sup> The strategy also included another austerity package of 13.5 billion euros. DIMAR abstained from the vote and members of parliament from both New Democracy and PASOK rejected the strategy. Later the same month, the Eurogroup decided to resume the disbursements to Greece, and the Greek programme was extended for another two years.<sup>216</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2013, the Eurogroup ‘note[d] with satisfaction’ that Greece fulfilled its commitments.<sup>217</sup> Greece returned to the financial market in early April 2014, for a first sale of government bonds since the crisis started.<sup>218</sup>

## **The anti-racist bill and the shut down of the Public Broadcasting Service**

Between the 21<sup>st</sup> of May and the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, Greece experienced an intra-governmental crisis because of a disagreement amongst the parties of the governing

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<sup>212</sup> Mark Lowen, ‘Has Greece’s economy finally turned a corner?’, *BBC*, 11.12.2013.

<sup>213</sup> Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy 2013-2016. Hellenic Republic Ministry of Finance. June 2011.

<sup>214</sup> Niki Kitsantonis & Matthew Saltmarsh, ‘Greece, Out of Ideas, Request Global Aid’, *The New York Times*, 23.04.2010.

<sup>215</sup> Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy 2013-2016.

<sup>216</sup> Eurogroup, ‘Eurogroup statement on Greece’, 27.11.2012.

<sup>217</sup> Eurogroup, ‘Summary Eurogroup (21 January 2013)’, 21.01.2013.

<sup>218</sup> Graeme Wearden & Helena Smith, ‘Greek return to financial markets attracts flock of investors’, *The Guardian*, 09.04.2014.

coalition on the content of an anti-racist bill. The increase in racist violence had led the more centre-left parties in government, DIMAR and PASOK, to wish for such a bill to supplement the existing legislative framework. The aim of the bill would be to impose tougher penalties for racist attacks, and could be seen as one of the first serious attempts by the government to counter the growing influence of Golden Dawn. This was later confirmed by PASOK leader Venizelos, who said, ‘Greece has a political grouping that is unashamedly Nazi and organizes acts violating the rule of law.’<sup>219</sup>

Yet another crisis in the Greek government followed the government’s closing of the Public Broadcasting Company. The decision led to strong reactions both from the opposition and the trade unions. The crisis led to the withdrawal of DIMAR from government, upon which a new two-party government with New Democracy and PASOK was announced on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.<sup>220</sup>

### **The murder of Pavlos Fyssas and the arrest of Michaloliakos**

In September 2013, newspapers all over the world reported the murder of the anti-fascist rapper Pavlos ‘Killah P’ Fyssas by Giorgos Roupakias, a member of XA. Reactions took place throughout Europe, with anti-fascist demonstrations in cities like Barcelona, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and London.<sup>221</sup> Prime Minister Samaras was quick to condemn the killing and said that he would not let Golden Dawn ‘undermine’ democracy: ‘This government is determined not to let the descendants of the Nazis poison out social life or commit crimes’, Samaras reportedly said in a national TV address.<sup>222</sup> Though the leadership of XA denied any connection with Roupakias or the murder of Fyssas, speculations on the involvement of the party began and were soon

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<sup>219</sup> Niki Kitsantonis, ‘Push for Antiracism Bill Leads to Rift in Greek Coalition’, *The New York Times*, 28.05.2013.

<sup>220</sup> E Kathimerini, ‘Greece coalition partner pulls out ministers in wake of ERT debacle’, *E Kathimerini*, 21.06.2013.

<sup>221</sup> Margarita Papantoniou, ‘Anti-fascist Demonstrations Around Europe for Fyssas’, *Greek Reporter*, 19.09.2013; BBC, ‘“Neo-Nazi” held over Greek musician Pavlos Fyssas death’, *BBC*, 18.09.2013.

<sup>222</sup> BBC, ‘Greece PM Antonis Samaras condemns “neo-Nazi” killing’, *BBC*, 19.09.2013.

followed by the arrest of prominent Golden Dawn members. XA's leader, Michaloliakos, was also arrested and formally charged for leading a criminal organisation.<sup>223</sup> The anti-terrorism unit arrested a total of 20 people, including four of XA's members of parliament.

As of April 2014, Michaloliakos is still in prison, awaiting trial. Golden Dawn are also facing a new crisis as one of the members of parliament, Chrysovalantis Alexopoulos, chose to leave the party and instead decided to sit in parliament as an independent. This was directly before the parliament was to vote on the possibility of pressing criminal charges against XA's 18 members of parliament, charged for using their position to organise a criminal organisation. Alexopoulos himself claimed that he had no prior knowledge of the criminal activities of the party, and that he now withdrew because he no longer wished to be associated with XA's actions and practices.<sup>224</sup> Alexopoulos' actions will likely affect the trial against the members of Golden Dawn, including Michaloliakos, as it can be seen as an implicit admission that the acts of XA should indeed be seen as criminal. Alexopoulos' proclaimed innocence could also be questioned if one takes into account the recruitment process of XA. Membership in XA can be characterised as semi-exclusive. According to XA's statutes, '[a]ny Greek citizen or Greek in Genus' can become a party member after a recommendation by two existing members of the party.<sup>225</sup> The relevant committee must then approve the potential member. All new members who gain prominent positions in XA must also go through a trial period of one year of active involvement prior to getting the right to vote or stand for intraparty elections.<sup>226</sup> It therefore seems rather unlikely that Alexopoulos was unaware of XA's policies and actions.

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<sup>223</sup> Mark Lowen, 'Greece crackdown: Golden Dawn leader Michaloliakos charged', *BBC*, 29.09.2013; Smith, 'Golden Dawn leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos arrested'.

<sup>224</sup> Helena Smith, 'Crisis for Golden Dawn as MP leaves, claiming ignorance of criminal activities', *The Guardian*, 17.03.2014.

<sup>225</sup> Ellinas 2012:11.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*

## 6 People's Association – Golden Dawn

Golden Dawn began as a national socialist magazine in 1980. Many of those who took part in the establishment of the magazine were previous members of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August Party that had been disbanded in 1977, including the founder of XA, Nikos Michaloliakos, who had joined the party at 16. The magazine was soon to be described as neo-Nazi and often featured articles hailing Adolf Hitler. In the late 1970s, Michaloliakos spent time in prison. There he befriended the former Junta dictator Georgios Papadopoulos and was asked to lead the youth organisation of the far right party EPEN. He left the organisation a few years later in order to establish Golden Dawn as a political party. However, Golden Dawn did not participate in national elections until 1996, in which they won 4,487 votes or 0.07 per cent of the total votes.<sup>227</sup> After their defeat, XA temporarily retreated from politics until their comeback in the local elections in Athens in 2010. Here they won 5.29 per cent of the vote and Michaloliakos gained a seat in the city council.<sup>228</sup>

To understand the ideology of Golden Dawn one needs to take into account not only official party documents, but also the writings and activities of the party leaders. To try to define what the party is working towards may be just as interesting as finding out what they are against. The analysis is therefore structured into three parts. The first part will answer the following question: *What* do they want? This may sound simple enough. XA wishes to create a *popular state*<sup>229</sup>, but what exactly does this

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<sup>227</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>228</sup> Ellinas 2012.

<sup>229</sup> A note on the translation: XA Ameriki has translated 'Λαϊκό κράτος' (Laïkó krátos) to 'social state'. I have still chosen to use 'popular state' in my analysis, as I believe it is more accurate and closer to the original text. Even so, the translation by XA Ameriki to 'social' is understandable, considering that Golden Dawn frequently refers to its movement as national socialist. The frequent use of both 'third' (Third Great Ideology) and 'social' may also be a reference to Italian neo-fascism, with the Movimento Sociale Italiano and Terza Posizione (Third Position), which has arguably inspired other nationalists such as the British National Party's Nick Griffin, a known supporter of XA. Metaxas also spoke of creating the Third Hellenic Civilisation. The translation of 'Λαϊκό' to 'popular' has been approved both by Nina Biering Alexidis and Dr Vemund Aarbakke, professor at the University of Thessaloniki.



entail? Who constitutes the people that will be allowed to reside within this state and who will be excluded? The second part will look at the organisation, including the structure of the movement and use of symbols. The third part will look at the electoral base of XA and also discuss what motives may have governed people's decision to vote for the party.

## **Ideology**

The ideology of Golden Dawn is mainly presented in *The Program of the Golden Dawn* and *Our Identity, The Manifesto of Golden Dawn*.<sup>230</sup> From now on, these two documents are only referred to as the *Programme* and the *Manifesto*.

### **The third great ideology and the popular state**

In Chapter 2 I mentioned that typical forms of nationalism seek to preserve and highlight common features within a populace, aiming to create some form of unity. According to the *Manifesto*, 'nationalism is the only absolute and true revolution because it seeks the birth of new moral, spiritual and mental values.' Nationalism is also frequently referred to as the 'Third Great Ideology'. This ideology does not want 'to salvage anything from the current economic and social interests that lead nations, peoples and cultures in decline.' Golden Dawn is also open about its critique of the existing political system, and especially the left and right spectrum of party politics. These two opposing poles are an illusion created to uphold the dominance of 'cosmopolitan internationalists, anti-national and anti-social forces.' The only solution to this is to abandon the system altogether, and instead create a popular state 'where political power comes from the people, without party promoters.'<sup>231</sup> The *Metapolitefsi* era, i.e., the time after the fall of the Junta is seen as a 'national tragedy'. It is the 'the final act of a drama that led our Nation to financial destruction, dissolved the social

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<sup>230</sup> The *Manifesto* can also be found in English in the Appendix.

<sup>231</sup> Ellinas 2012; XA Ameriki, 'The Manifesto of Golden Dawn'; Golden Dawn, 'Kinima' [Ideology].

and national fabric of our country, crushed the Hellenic ethos and every traditional value.’<sup>232</sup>

Though the *Manifesto* is against party promoters, the *Programme* leaves no doubt about the fact that there is still one party that should be allowed. However, the XA shall, once having gained power through *democratic* means, rely heavily on referendums. In fact, the people should be truly sovereign and referendums should therefore be held ‘for every important national issue’.<sup>233</sup> According to XA, the people have never before been able to express its opinion in major political decisions. Ministers should be appointed on the grounds of knowledge and experience, and will not receive any special treatment. Their privileges will be abolished, and their payment reduced. It may seem ironic that in the *Programme*, XA also want to abolish the immunity of ministers, the very immunity that the sitting parliament at this very moment is trying to remove in order to formally charge XA’s members of parliament for participating in illegal activities.

The goal is ‘to revive Hellenism and help Hellas become a central power of the geopolitically sensitive area of the Eastern Mediterranean.’<sup>234</sup> To achieve this goal one must first reach national independence. The *Programme* emphasises the strategic, geopolitical value of Greece, including Cyprus, and maintains that it is possible to solve the modern financial problems and give Greece a prominent position on the international market if her resources are properly exploited. For energy and resources, Greece should turn away from the West and instead concentrate on Russia and the Middle East. The Greek debt should be deleted, and all connections to the EMU and the EU should be broken. For XA, the power lies in the hands of the ‘Hellenes’ and the popularly termed *Grexit* is seen as a huge weapon as ‘[t]he cost of Greece’s exit from the EU will be disastrous for the world economy.’<sup>235</sup> A Grexit would create a

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<sup>232</sup> Golden Dawn International Newsroom, ‘The Program of the Golden Dawn’.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*

domino effect, ‘Portugal, Spain and Italy would be next [...] and the whole planet will be facing an economic depression.’<sup>236</sup>

In 2012, Eurostat could report that 31 per cent of the population, 3.5 million people, were living near or below the poverty line.<sup>237</sup> As for unemployment, levels reached an all time high in November 2013 with 28 per cent of the total population, an increase from 7.7 per cent in 2008. The unemployment rate for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 went up from 28.9 per cent to 63.2 per cent for females and from 17 per cent to 48.4 per cent for men between 2008 and 2012.<sup>238</sup> The suicide rates also went up. A newly released study shows that austerity was the cause of over 500 cases of suicide in men between 2009 and 2010.<sup>239</sup>

In the words of XA, ‘[e]very foreign worker equals a Greek unemployed.’<sup>240</sup> The party therefore wishes to fight unemployment by deporting all illegal immigrants. They also wish to strengthen the national economy through an increase in primary production. Work will be hard, and they do not promise richness and glory, only the sufficient means to get by. XA therefore wants to recoup the loan the Bank of Greece gave to the German Army during the occupation in the Second World War.<sup>241</sup>

## **A Golden Dawner**

Twelve points that characterise what it means to be a Golden Dawner build up *The Manifesto of Golden Dawn* and each point is written as a personal testimony.

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<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Daniel Trilling, ‘A warning from Athens: in Greece, the far right has taken advantage of public anxiety caused by hyper-austerity, stoking xenophobia and violence. But the country’s experience is by no means unique’, *New Statesman*, 12.12.2012.

<sup>238</sup> Data from the World Bank, [data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS/countries/GR--XS?display=graph](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS/countries/GR--XS?display=graph) [13.03.2014]; BBC, ‘Greece jobless rate hits new record of 28%’, *BBC*, 13.02.2014; E Kathimerini, ‘Greek unemployment rises to 27.5 percent in Q4 of 2013; young women worst off’, *E Kathimerini*, 13.03.2014.

<sup>239</sup> Katie Allen, ‘Austerity in Greece caused more than 500 male suicides, say researchers’, *The Guardian*, 21.04.2014.

<sup>240</sup> Golden Dawn International Newsroom, ‘The Program of the Golden Dawn’.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.*

[As a Golden Dawner] I embrace the need for a [...] state that constantly serves the eternal revolutionary principles of the Nationalist Worldview, with the ultimate goal of forming a new society and a new type of man.<sup>242</sup>

This is the second point of the *Manifesto*. It not only speaks of a revolution to replace the existing society, but for a revolution that goes even deeper, where the ultimate goal is to create ενός νέου τύπου ανθρώπου, a new type of man, or a new race altogether. This society should be governed by the popular state and the power should reside with the people. This point is similar to Griffin's palingenetic ultra-nationalism that speaks of a revolution in which a new man will be created. This new type of man is born out of the decadence and experience that have led to the decay of modern society. A Golden Dawner is an enemy of the existing system, or in their own words, of 'every power that spreads this disease that finds foothold in the Plutocracy'.<sup>243</sup> For XA these powers represent the reason for Greece's decay, not only in recent years, but all the way back to the Second World War.

The revolution is sometimes referred to as the end of the *Metapolitefsi*. This could be interpreted as a critique solely of the developments after, and not of the developments prior to, the regime of the Junta. That XA Ameriki and other Golden Dawn members frequently refer to the 4<sup>th</sup> of August regime of Metaxas, and have also gone so far as to compare XA leader Michaloliakos to the military dictator, supports this interpretation.<sup>244</sup> So too does the party's use of the Celtic cross as one of their symbols, as Metaxas also did (see figure 3 below). It may then seem ironic that the third point in the *Manifesto* states that they do not support previous right-wing regimes, they mention, for instance, that they neither support a military-financial dictatorship, nor a parliamentary dictatorship, i.e., the Junta and the two-party system of ND and PASOK, as 'those are two sides of the same coin, and their purpose is to

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<sup>242</sup> XA Ameriki, 'The Manifesto of Golden Dawn'.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> See XA Ameriki, 'Frequently asked questions', xaameriki.wordpress.com/faq/ [22.03.2014].

tear down national identity.’ Put another way, XA wants a revolution, even though they advocate a type of nationalism that also glorifies the past.

### **International aspirations**

Golden Dawn not only works for the ‘indigenous Greeks’ within the Greek borders, but has also long sought cooperation with similar organisations abroad, and exhibited a will to expand beyond its own borders. According to XA’s view that all who are born Greek are Greek nationals, the party also wishes to include Greeks living abroad. In an article about XA’s wish to expand ‘wherever there are Greeks’, Dimitris Psarras says that Golden Dawn ‘not only wants to become the central pole of a pan-European alliance of neo-Nazis,’ but that ‘[i]t wants to spread its influence worldwide.’<sup>245</sup> Local branches of Golden Dawn have been established in other parts of the world as well, with XA Ameriki being the most prominent one.

Michaloliakos has also been open about his support for a revival of the *Megali Idea* and has expressed wishes to take back Turkey and Izmir as well as the Black Sea.<sup>246</sup>

### **Xenophobia and anti-immigration**

‘The nation is one race. That’s how God fixed [the] Earth’, Golden Dawn Member of Parliament Ilias Panagiotaros said in an interview done by the Australian news channel *60 Minutes*.<sup>247</sup> For him, the number of illegal immigrants in the past years is seen as an invasion. It is an undeclared war that someone needs to fight. Being the gateway to Europe from both the Asian and the African continent, Greece has experienced an increase in immigration over the past years.<sup>248</sup> The numbers increased

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<sup>245</sup> Dimitris Psarras, quoted in Helena Smith, ‘Greece’s neo-Nazi Golden Dawn goes global with political ambitions’, *The Guardian*, 01.04.2013.

<sup>246</sup> Today’s Zaman, ‘Greek far-right leader vows to “take back” Istanbul, Izmir’, *Today’s Zaman*, 15.06.2012.

<sup>247</sup> Allison Langdon, ‘Greek Tragedy: The rise of Europe’s neo-Nazis’, *60 Minutes*, 10.04.2014; Helena Smith, ‘Greece’s Golden Dawn party describes Hitler as “great personality”’, *The Guardian*, 16.04.2014.

<sup>248</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), [www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/europa/european-economic-area/greece.html](http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/europa/european-economic-area/greece.html) [24.03.2014].

even further due to EU regulations that allow member states to send immigrants back to the European country in which they first set foot, which is often Greece. Members of XA are often accused of violent acts towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. In March 2013, the British TV broadcaster Channel 4 published a video made by the student Konstantinos Georgousis, who had spent a month filming members of Golden Dawn on the streets of Athens. The video shows how members of XA operate on the streets of the Greek capital, campaigning for their party and proudly expressing their extreme ideas and proclaiming their hatred for immigrants.<sup>249</sup> This is also stated in *The Manifesto of Golden Dawn*. The second paragraph is worth quoting in its entirety:

The social [popular] nationalist movement of GOLDEN DAWN [*sic*] finds itself at the frontline of the struggle against nation-killing memorandum and the sinful regime of the parties that consists the political establishment. We fight against altering our racial demographics by the millions of illegal immigrants, and the dissolution of the Greek society promoted by both the coalition parties and the so-called left. We propose a national strategy so that we can overcome the crisis imposed on our country. We are struggling for a Greece that belongs to the Greeks.<sup>250</sup>

The last sentence warrants particular attention. It suggests that the Greek identity is exclusive rather than inclusive. The question, then, is to whom does the title of ‘Greek’ apply? As the previous chapters on Greek history have shown, the Greek identity was not originally based on ethnic criteria, but was instead determined by linguistic as well as territorial grounds. Today Greek nationality can be acquired either through descent, following the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or through naturalisation. Obtaining nationality through naturalisation is possible for aliens over the age of 18 if one follows the following three prerequisites:

- a) One makes a declaration before the mayor or chairman of the village where one resides;
- b) One has lived within Greece the last ten out of twelve years or if one intend to reside in Greece five years after the declaration concerning naturalisation;

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<sup>249</sup> Channel 4, ‘Filming with the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn’, *Channel 4*, 05.03.2013.

<sup>250</sup> XA Ameriki, ‘The Manifesto of Golden Dawn’.

c) One has submitted an application for naturalisation to the Ministry of the Interior<sup>251</sup>

It is then up to the minister of the interior to decide whether or not the alien should be naturalised after an investigation of the character and personality of the alien. However, when asked to define whom XA considers as Greek, XA Ameriki states that the party line of XA is that you are born Greek, you do not become Greek. In other words, XA emphasises the use of nationality defined through blood rather than by naturalisation. The question of immigration, and especially of illegal immigration, is referred to as the ‘Elephant in the Room’.<sup>252</sup> According to XA Ameriki, about 1/3 of the Greek population live ‘condensed’ in the metropolitan areas of Athens, and the areas are getting increasingly more crowded because ‘roughly around 4/5ths of Greece’s 3 million illegal immigrants have also settled there’ in the past 15 years.<sup>253</sup> XA opposes the increase of immigrants in the past two decades and claims that Greece had little experience with violence and rape, before the large inflow of immigrants.

When the indigenous Greek population cried for help, the state ignored them, as most wealthy state officials lived in areas where all illegal immigrants did was take care of their large gardens and houses as servants.<sup>254</sup>

The sentence is highlighted in bold and the ‘Elephant in the Room’ is illustrated by a video of Shi’ite Muslims in Greece celebrating the religious festival of Ashura with prayer, song and self-flagellation.<sup>255</sup>

Some have claimed that the success of Golden Dawn in the 2012 elections was also due to their pledge ‘to “scour the country” clean of illegal immigrants.’<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Code of Greek Nationality, Chapter A, Article 6, available in English at [www.legislationline.org/topics/country/27/topic/2](http://www.legislationline.org/topics/country/27/topic/2) [21.03.2014]

<sup>252</sup> XA Ameriki, ‘Frequently Asked Questions’.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> The video was also published by Reuters, ‘Greek Shi’ites mark Ashura with fierce flagellation’, *Reuters*, 25.11.2012.

Nevertheless, it should be said that it is not only the parties on the far right that have expressed discontentment with immigration. In front of the second election of 2012, ND's Samaras reportedly called for a crackdown on immigrants, promising that the 'mass invasion of immigrants' would stop and the 'mass return to their homelands' would begin.<sup>257</sup> In that sense, the leader of ND only affirms what seems to have become a strong tendency towards xenophobia, especially on the streets of Athens. The violence against immigrants predates the crisis, but it was not highlighted until two Afghans killed a Greek man on his way to fetch the car to take his pregnant wife to the hospital. For Golden Dawn, this was probably an opportunity they could not ignore, and they arranged for a pogrom that lasted for two weeks, in which fascist gangs frequently attacked non-whites in broad daylight. They also destroyed immigrant shops.<sup>258</sup> XA has also proposed placing landmines on the borders of Greece to permanently prevent a continued inflow of illegal immigrants.<sup>259</sup>

A study done by the Racist Violence Recording Network reported 87 attacks in Greece between January and September 2012. 83 of these attacks took place in public spaces for all to see.<sup>260</sup> The report also emphasised incidents in which there was a connection between the police and racist violence. As an example, it is interesting to note that Greek mainstream media stopped reporting 'Neo-Nazi attacks on migrant communities' at the end of 2012.<sup>261</sup> Approximately half a year later, in June 2013, Human Rights Watch launched the report *Unwelcome Guests*, detailing the actions of the Greek police towards what they assumed to be illegal immigrants. The police operation started in August 2012 and was named 'Operation Xenios Zeus', named

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<sup>256</sup> John Hadoulis, 'Michaloliakos: Golden Dawn leader in sights of Greek justice', *E Kathimerini*, 03.10.2013.

<sup>257</sup> E Kathimerini, 'Samaras calls on electorate to shun SYRIZA', *E Kathimerini*, 15.06.2012.

<sup>258</sup> Trilling 'A warning from Athens ...'.

<sup>259</sup> Bistis 2013.

<sup>260</sup> Racist Violence Recording Network, '2012 Annual report of the racist violence recording network'.

<sup>261</sup> Dimitris Dalakoglou, 'Neo-Nazism and Neoliberalism: A few comments on violence in Athens at the time of crisis', in *Working USA: The Journal of Labor and Society*, vol. 16, 2013:283.



after the Greek god of hospitality.<sup>262</sup> The HRW report had gone through official statistics and found that between the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2013, almost 85,000 people of foreign origin had been stopped on the streets of Athens and led to the police station for further examination of identification papers and legal status. Out of these 85,000 people, only 6 per cent proved to be residing unlawfully in Greece. The reports document that xenophobic violence and anti-immigration have proved not to be a phenomenon isolated to far right groupings such as Golden Dawn.

## Organisation

### Structure

Little has previously been officially known about the structure of Golden Dawn. Recently, *E Kathimerini* wrote that documents unveiling more information about the organisational structure of XA had been found at the apartments of many of the arrested members of parliament. After the arrest of yet another of Golden Dawn's members of parliament, Christos Pappas, in April 2014, new discoveries showed documents describing the structure of XA being similar to a medieval German military order with a rigid hierarchy.<sup>263</sup> Amongst the documents was also an organisational chart in the form of a pyramid of power with the leader at the top.<sup>264</sup>

The organisation is more similar to a paramilitary movement than a political party, and it includes a youth organisation and stormtroopers dressed in black, usually with 'Chrysi Avgi' in capital white letters on the back. Both a youth organisation and stormtroopers were also a visible part of the German Nazis, and a youth organisation was also part of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August regime of Metaxas.

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<sup>262</sup> Dalakoglou 2013; Eva Cossé, 'Xenios Zeus: hard times in Greece', *Open Democracy*, 2013; Human Rights Watch, *Unwelcome Guests*, Human Rights Watch, 2013.

<sup>263</sup> E Kathimerini, 'Documents found at Golden Dawn MP's home detail rigid hierarchy', *E Kathimerini*, 10.04.2014.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*

## Symbols and symbolism

The name of the party should also be discussed. The name *Golden Dawn* creates an image of the rising sun, both a symbol of new beginnings – Golden Dawn refers to itself as a new (and better) alternative to the existing system – and of eternity – the sun will always rise. Also, if something is *golden* it is considered pure, and so the party name can be interpreted as a symbol of a pure new start, free from the decadence of the previous society. Once again we are reminded of the *palingenetic* aspect of fascist ideology (see Chapter 2). I will get back to this in Chapter 7.

XA not only glorifies the past in words, but also by tactical use of symbols. The emblem of Golden Dawn is often referred to as a symbol that is either similar to or a modified version of the *swastika*.<sup>265</sup> In reality, the symbol is called the *meandros* and it is also known as the Greek key in archaeological circles. A meander means a turn or wind in a stream, and the name originates from the river Maiandros in Asia Minor. It can also refer to a labyrinth, a common symbol in Minoan culture. The *meandros* is used in the official party flag, often depicted in black on a bright red background (see Figure 1). The use of symbols can be a powerful way of spreading one's message to an external audience. The symbols in use should be rather simple, but yet again unique, so that people easily recognise them on the street. An example is the sticker found on a bus shed near Mytilini in the Greek island of Lesbos (Figure 1). The message is easy enough – the name of the party in capital letters above the meander, and below it announces that this is a local branch of the organisation, located on the island. All is written in red on a black background, making it easy to spot at a long distance.

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<sup>265</sup> See for instance Anthony Faiola, 'In Greece, a low-grade street war brews with neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party', *The Washington Post*, 03.02.2014.



*Figure 1: A sticker from a bus stop in Lesvos showing the symbol of Golden Dawn. Photo: Author.*

The *meandros* serves both as a symbol and a reminder of the ancient roots of the Greeks, as well as being a reminder of the Nazis. It should be mentioned that the *swastika* is not an unfamiliar symbol for XA; pictures from a conference in 1990 show the congress hall decorated with *swastika* flags.<sup>266</sup>

Like the party name, the *meandros* – and also the *swastika* – can be interpreted as symbols of eternity, similar to the circle and the sun. The use of the old sun cross, or the Celtic cross (Figure 2), further strengthens the metaphor of eternity. This type of crosses has been used in old fascist movements, like the Nazi party of Norway before and during the Second World War, and was also used in the symbol for Metaxas' 4<sup>th</sup> of August Regime (Figure 3).

In 2012, Michaloliakos was filmed using the Nazi salute in the Athens city council.<sup>267</sup> In his defence he reportedly said that the salute was not the one usually connected with Adolf Hitler, but rather a version of the old Graeco-Roman Salute. Once again we are reminded of Metaxas, as the salute was also used by his youth organisation in the late 1930s. Michaloliakos did, however, later confirm that it was indeed a

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<sup>266</sup> Bistis 2013.

<sup>267</sup> The incident was filmed and can be found on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNoRUbkuZ-c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNoRUbkuZ-c) [23.04.2014]; Dina Kyriakidou, 'Special Report: Greece's far-right part goes on the offensive', *Reuters*, 12.11.2012; Michaloliakos admits the use of the Nazi salute: [www.keptalkinggreece.com/2012/10/21/golden-dawn-chief-admits-his-party-uses-nazi-salute-and-demonstrates-it-with-a-gesture/](http://www.keptalkinggreece.com/2012/10/21/golden-dawn-chief-admits-his-party-uses-nazi-salute-and-demonstrates-it-with-a-gesture/)

reference to the Nazis, and the media have later gotten hold of footage picturing prominent members of XA doing the same Nazi salute.<sup>268</sup>



*Figure 2: A typical sun cross/Celtic cross.*



*Figure 3: The cross as it was used by Metaxa's 4th of August regime.*



*Figure 4: Black cross on red background. Used by Golden Dawn.<sup>269</sup>*

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<sup>268</sup> Helena Smith, 'Golden Dawn photos shock Greece', *The Guardian*, 17.01.2014.

## **Solidarity programmes: Helping only Greeks**

*The Social Solidarity Program of the Golden Dawn* includes food and clothing drives, legal aid, medical exams, a blood bank and lastly a hospitality programme providing financial aid for those who wish to support and travel to relatives in need of intensive medical care. Information about the programmes is available in the Golden Dawn International Newsroom, ‘Your only source for news regarding the Social Nationalist Movement of the Golden Dawn, in English, free of Western Marxist propaganda.’<sup>270</sup>

During one of their help programmes, the old Horst-Wessel *lied* frequently used by the Nazis was played over the loudspeakers, with new lyrics in Greek.<sup>271</sup> The song, which is also known as ‘keep the banner flying’, was played while members of XA handed out food and clothing to those in need. However, all who wished to receive help were thoroughly checked by party members to make sure that non-Greeks were excluded from any benefits. The whole event was filmed and later published both on the party’s website and the party’s channel on YouTube. The day the party had picked for their charity event was the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Junta, a day celebrated as the restoration of democracy. Michaloliakos purportedly commented that they did not chose this day by coincidence, but rather wished to emphasise that though ‘[the government] say they are celebrating the return of democracy ... they are really celebrating state thievery, scandals, and treason.’<sup>272</sup> Similar events were also reported in back in 2012.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Source: Tomislav Todorović, [www.fotw.net/flags/gr%7Dhrav.html](http://www.fotw.net/flags/gr%7Dhrav.html) [14.03.2014].

<sup>270</sup> The Golden Dawn International Newsroom, [golden-dawn-international-newsroom.blogspot.no](http://golden-dawn-international-newsroom.blogspot.no) [04.05.2014].

<sup>271</sup> Derek Gatopoulos, ‘Greece’s Golden Dawn Party Plays Nazi Anthem “Keep The Banner Flying” Outside Central Athens Offices’, *The World Post/Huffington Post*, 24.07.2013; Umberto Bacchi, ‘Greece’s Golden Dawn Plays Hitler’s Nazi Anthem at Athens Food Handout’, *International Business Times*, 12.12.2013.

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> See BBC, ‘Golden Dawn nationalists hand out “Greeks only” food’, *BBC*, 01.08.2012.

## Electoral support

Some have said that they vote for XA to ‘punish’ the politicians they believe have led Greece into the crisis.<sup>274</sup> The party is seen as trustworthy, in contrast to leading politicians. A woman interviewed by Daniel Trilling for an article published in *New Statesman* in December 2012 explains:

They say to you, ‘I am the devil’, and they are the devils. I prefer someone that says the truth and says to me, ‘You know what, I am the bad guy,’ rather than another one that says to me, ‘I am the good guy and I will save you.’<sup>275</sup>

Her view is not unique. A survey done by Metron Analysis shows that the desire to punish mainstream parties was the motive for up to 40 per cent of Golden Dawn voters, whilst being the motive for only 14 per cent of the entire electorate.<sup>276</sup> Forms of political protest have previously taken the shape of support for the extreme sides to both the right and the left in Greek politics. It is worth noting that the increase in support for SYRIZA after the financial crisis may also have contributed to a rise in support for the right, as the Greek people seem just as scared of the left as they are of the right. People are scared when something exceeds what is considered ‘normal’, and so in the end, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, when something has become extreme, it does not matter on which side it originates.

The question that still remains to be answered is how XA manages to have a stable percentage of support, according to the opinion polls, despite the party’s extreme ideology? It may seem that the Greek people in desperation choose to ignore the extreme positions, and instead focused on the party’s will to change the society. The saying ‘extreme times calls for extreme measures’ comes to mind. XA is not only seen as trustworthy, but also as the only party that is able to do what others, like the

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<sup>274</sup> See Trilling ‘A warning from Athens ...’.

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> Georgiadou 2013.

governing politicians, dare not.<sup>277</sup> The sudden increase in support for Golden Dawn suggests that the Greek people were looking for change. The parliamentary elections of 2012 may support such a claim. Increased unemployment, especially amongst the younger population, had contributed to an increase of the tension between the populace and the government.

The earthquake election of May 2012 could at the time be interpreted as a onetime phenomenon, but the fact that XA maintained a stable percentage in the June elections just a few weeks later refutes any such claims. The previously mentioned survey by Metron Analysis also shows the earlier political preferences for voters of XA.<sup>278</sup> In May, 33.9 per cent had previously voted for ND, 23.3 per cent for PASOK and 12.3 per cent for LAOS. There was also a significant percentage, 20.9 per cent, of the vote that came from new voters. In June, 64 per cent of those who voted had also voted for XA in May. This suggests that a significant amount of the votes actually came from people who had not voted for the party in May, but changed their minds during the six intervening weeks. It is also interesting to note that the electoral basis drew on a variety of other political parties, not only on the right, but also on the left of the political spectrum.

As for the demographics of the voters, a total of 76 per cent of those who voted for XA were men, whereas only 24 per cent were women. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that of the entire sample, only 58 per cent were men and 42 per cent women. They drew an almost even amount of votes in all age groups from 18 to 54, but less in the older age groups from 55 to 65 and older. When it comes to levels of education, 58 per cent of those who voted for XA had an intermediate education, meaning that they had completed high school or technical training. As for the occupation of the workers, the highest percentage of those who voted for XA were white-collar workers, employers and independent contractors, unemployed, or public servants.

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<sup>277</sup> See Wheeler, 'Europe's New Fascists'; Trilling, 'A warning from Athens...'.

<sup>278</sup> Georgiadou 2013:92.

## Younger support

XA has a special appeal in the younger population and was one of the parties that received the highest share of the young vote in the 2012 elections. In 2012, MYPLACE<sup>279</sup> reported that the violence and the military structure of XA seemed to impress the young:

[T]here are now school students that salute their friends and even their teachers using the characteristic Nazi salutation, paint swastikas on the school walls and recruit their friends and fellow students.<sup>280</sup>

The party was becoming fashionable.<sup>281</sup> As part of their solidarity programmes, XA members have also been known to be active in neighbourhood initiatives, especially in areas with an increased report of migrant violence. They are there to protect, and there have been reports of members handing out phone numbers to children, claiming to be only a phone call away if they need protection on their way home from school.<sup>282</sup> The recruitment of young students is usually done through sports clubs or the Internet.

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<sup>279</sup> MYPLACE is short for Memory, Youth, Political Legacy And Civic Engagement. It is a collaborative large-scale project funded by the European Commission. The project investigates how the social participation of young people is shaped by the 'shadows of totalitarianism and populism in Europe'. For more information, see [myplacefp7.wordpress.com](http://myplacefp7.wordpress.com) [07.05.2014].

<sup>280</sup> MYPLACE, 'Golden Dawn and the Greek Schools: The fascist penetration in Greek society', MYPLACE FP7, 14.11.2012.

<sup>281</sup> Nathalie Savaricas, 'Greece's neo-fascists are on the rise... and now they're going into schools: How Golden Dawn is nurturing the next generation', *The Independent*, 02.02.2013.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*



## **7 The appeal of the extreme right**

In Chapter 1 I presented the following research question:

*In light of the recent financial crisis, how do modern Greek history and political tradition, party ideology, and European integration through membership in the European Union affect the rise of the extreme right party Golden Dawn?*

The previous chapters have considered Greek history from 1821 and up until today, emphasising the developments since the financial crisis of 2008. I have also looked at the ideology and electoral support of Golden Dawn as well as the organisation in itself. In this chapter I will discuss some of the factors that have been presented as possible contributing causes for the increase in support for Golden Dawn. The first question I wish to answer is whether this increase in support was to be expected considering the political situation in Greece and the political cleavages that go back to the 1820s, or if the financial crisis might have been the precipitating cause? The second is whether the case of Greece can be seen as unique?

### **History, nationalism and political tradition**

It is not only in the categorisation of Golden Dawn as either ‘right-wing’, ‘populist’, ‘fascist’, ‘neo-Nazi’ or all of them combined that the party shares a resemblance with other right-wing and populist movements in general – and German Nazism in particular. My review of the modern history of Greece has shown the influence enjoyed by far right parties, especially in the military. Unstable democracies were frequently replaced by temporary military dictatorships, the regimes of General Metaxas and the military Junta being the most prominent ones. The pursuit of a national identity has also been a dominating force, and Greece has been struggling to find her place at the corner of Europe, bordering two other great continents.

Yannis Andricopoulos argues that the ‘power base of authoritarianism in Greece has consistently been the military, acting as an agent for the monarchy and/or the bourgeoisie, or in its own interests as a power *élite*.’<sup>283</sup> Internal as well as external forces have taken part in shaping Greek politics throughout the years, and *personal interests* have no doubt played a significant role. This can be seen not only in the frequent occurrence of corruption and clientelism, but also in the almost dynastic aspects of Greek politics, in which family name is everything and positions at times seem to be inherited from father to son.

It is this idea of a corrupt political system that Golden Dawn wishes to change. Even though XA was not established until 1980, I argue that the ideology of the movement can be traced back to the struggle to create a unified Greek nation from Greece’s independence in 1821. Greece is a young nation built on the foreign premises of western powers. Nationalist sentiment is stronger in younger than in older nations, and foreign involvement only intensifies the wish for complete self-rule. As we have seen, the history since 1821 is full of examples of foreign interference, first by the choosing of the first king of Greece, later by the British support of the right’s fight against the communists during the civil war, and even later by the United States’ support for the colonels’ regime, a ‘natural’ reaction considering the tensions of the cold war. The bailout, under the supervision of the Troika, the IMF and the EU, can be – and has been – interpreted as yet another incident in which foreign powers meddle in official state affairs. The result has been a people that seem to feel trapped within a society governed by non-democratic external policies and with little individual opportunity to actively participate in government policy-making. The fact that many of those who voted for XA in the last elections said they did so to punish the sitting government might support this view, especially if one takes into account that XA was seen by many as the only party willing to do something *for* the Greek people. XA has thereby managed to use Greek history to create their own power base, using populist rhetoric to play on the already strong nationalist sentiments in the population.

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<sup>283</sup> Androcopoulos 1980:568.

## **Xenophobia and anti-Immigration:**

### **The hesitant police response**

‘The murder that awakened Greece’ was the headline in an article published by Ola Storeng in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2013.<sup>284</sup> The murder of Pavlos Fyssas had led to a sudden, but massive reaction from the police. The media saw it as a long-awaited response that strengthened the sitting government. The question that still remained to be answered at the time was: Why had the government waited so long to take action? According to Storeng there were indications that as many as half the police force in Greece had voted for XA in the previous year’s elections. A poll conducted by Public Issue in September 2013 showed that the support for XA at the time had reached 13 per cent, though it should be taken into account that the poll was conducted before the murder of Pavlos Fyssas later that month.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, a new survey, this time asking questions related to the recent arrest of Michaloliakos in October, showed that 14 per cent of the population disagreed with his pre-trial detention. When asked about the arrest of three other prominent members of XA, 27 per cent agreed with their release on bail.<sup>286</sup> The results do not give us an accurate percentage of the support of Golden Dawn in the general population after the arrests in late September 2013; however, they do provide us with a rough estimate, and it is not unthinkable that people might have responded negatively because it was a sudden mass arrest of *democratically elected* members of parliament. In that way it might support the view of the *Huffington Post* stated above, and it might also explain why the police had seemed so hesitant to react when Golden Dawn members patrolled the streets, dressed in black and beating up what they presumed to be illegal immigrants.

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<sup>284</sup> See Ola Storeng, ‘Drapet som vekket Hellas’, *Aftenposten*, 01.10.2013.

<sup>285</sup> Public Issue, ‘Political Barometer 123 – September 2013’, 12.09.2013.

<sup>286</sup> Public Issue, ‘Greek public opinion on the issue of Golden Dawn and the role of television’, 15.10.2013.

There is another explanation. Just before the murder of Fyssas, the sitting minister of public security, Nikos Dendias, had assembled information regarding 32 incidents in which the police had refused to respond to violent acts, most of them related to XA member activities.<sup>287</sup> Prime Minister Samaras gave Dendias permission to fire police chiefs, and an internal investigation began to look at these 32 violent incidents. The violence within the police is confirmed in a report launched by Amnesty International in March 2014. When asked about the report, Jezercan Tigani in Amnesty International says: ‘Our research has shown that the rise of Golden Dawn is only the tip of the iceberg.’<sup>288</sup> The report uncovered a variety of incidents of severe racism and excessive use of force within the police force. Another surprising turn of events was made public in early April 2014 when *The Guardian* could report that Prime Minister Samaras was facing possible resignation after his chief of staff had been caught on tape saying that Samaras had instigated the prosecution of XA for political gain.<sup>289</sup> Again we are reminded of the tendency towards a corrupt political elite becoming a premise in Greek politics, as was also mentioned in the previous section.

## **The ideology and symbolism of Golden Dawn**

*The Guardian* frequently uses the terms far right as well as neo-Nazi when referring to the XA. Others state that they are fascist. The *Manifesto* emphasise nationalism and the ‘Nationalist Worldview’, but what exactly does this imply? It should be unnecessary to say that Nazism and nationalism is not the same thing. Yet for Golden Dawn this is of some importance, as they are frequently referred to as both. Similarly, fascism is not the same as Nazism, though it can be the other way around. Members of XA deny any accusations of Nazism and the *Programme* states that:

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<sup>287</sup> Storeng, ‘Drapet som vekket Hellas’.

<sup>288</sup> Jezercan Tigani in Amnesty International, quoted in Karoline Kvellestad Isaksen, ‘Rapport: Gresk politi friir til høyreekstreme’, *NRK*, 03.04.2014, my translation; see also Amnesty International, *A law unto themselves: A culture of abuse and impunity in the Greek police*, Amnesty International, EUR 25/005/2014, 03.04.2014.

<sup>289</sup> Helena Smith, ‘Greek prime minister facing resignations calls after aide’s gaffe’, *The Guardian*, 03.04.2014.

The Golden Dawn is a purely Greek political phenomenon. Nothing to do with other countries and historical periods [*sic*]. It is the People's Nationalist Movement, the success of which will make a difference for our survival as a Nation-State.<sup>290</sup>

Despite denials, known members of XA have stated being supporters of both Adolf Hitler and the ideas of Nazism. The same pertains to the symbolism of the party's exterior, as has been discussed above. Whether one interprets the symbols and ideology of Golden Dawn as fascist statements and reminders of Nazism or as strictly nationalist sentiments and reminders of the old Hellenes is up to each individual. In that way the symbolism of XA is more implicit rather than explicit, and those who vote for them may see what they wish to see and ignore the rest. Thus it is mainly those who are aware of traditional fascist symbols that will recognise the use of the Horst-Wessel *lied* or the idea of a party symbol referring to eternity. Nevertheless, in an article published by *The Independent* in February 2013, professor at Panteion University, Vassiliki Georgiadou, who has studied Golden Dawn for years, comments: '[...] They use ancient Greek history as a camouflage to hide their true identity: that they're fans of Hitler, anti-Semitism.'<sup>291</sup> This was again confirmed in *60 minutes*' interview with XA Member of Parliament Ilias Panagiotaros, which was referred to in Chapter 6.

Despite being inspired by earlier fascist and authoritarian movements, both in Greece and in Europe, XA wishes to represent something new. Vangelis Lagos in MYPLACE has been part of a team of researchers doing extensive analyses of all available documents by Golden Dawn, including those of associated organisations. He claims that XA is a revolutionary, totalitarian ultra-nationalist organisation with the goal of salvaging the nation. XA see a nation in peril that can only be salvaged by destroying the whole previous political and social history of the nation. Lagos adds that XA rejects and denounces any notion of human or individual rights as well as all forms of democracy. Everything must be destroyed in order for a new nation to be born out of

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<sup>290</sup> Golden Dawn International Newsroom, 'The Program of the Golden Dawn'.

<sup>291</sup> Savaricas, 'Greece's neo-fascists are on the rise...'

the ashes. Again we are reminded of the palingenetic aspect of fascism, as I will get back to shortly.

## **The financial crisis and the bailout**

It is striking that Golden Dawn as a movement, as well as the surrounding events upon which it has built its popularity, share similarities with earlier as well as contemporary movements. Nevertheless, Greece was not the only country struck by the crisis. In fact the crisis was probably just as deep in other similar South European countries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, with unemployment levels skyrocketing as the crisis deepened. Despite this, these countries have not seen an increase in right-wing extremism. Instead they have seen other forms of political protest, such as separatism and far left mobilisation in Spain, and general populism with Beppe Grillo's Movimento 5 Stelle in Italy. Even so, the rise in support for right-wing movements is not a phenomenon that can be isolated to Greece; there has in fact been a right-wing upsurge in many European countries in recent years. Other studies have shown that in June 2011, populist radical parties were represented in national parliaments in twelve of the then twenty-seven member states of the EU.<sup>292</sup> This included Greece, with LAOS representing the radical right with an electoral result of 5.6 per cent at the time.

Many thought LAOS would be the main opponent to ND, but the party moderated itself and became increasingly mainstream.<sup>293</sup> As part of the tripartite government with ND and PASOK, LAOS also supported the bailout agreement, leaving Golden Dawn as the only far right party with significant electoral support to oppose the bailout and the Memoranda. According to Antonis A. Ellinas, this is the first out of three main reasons for Golden Dawn's electoral success in 2012. The second is 'the failure of the political system to provide alternative forms of political participation', which led to 'the legitimisation of and support for political violence as a means to

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<sup>292</sup> Cas Mudde, 'Who's Afraid of the European Radical Right?' in *Dissent*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2011.

<sup>293</sup> Ellinas 2012.

express political dissatisfaction’.<sup>294</sup> This might also in part explain why the police took their time to react to the street violence of XA. The third point is xenophobia. Eurobarometer polls show that Greeks are more apprehensive than other Europeans, and Greek public opinion has also viewed increased immigration with some scepticism.<sup>295</sup>

According to journalist Jamie Bartlett, the support for the far right is a general tendency that can be traced back at least twenty years, and is therefore not a direct consequence of the financial crisis. He builds his argument on the following: First of all, many known far right parties in Europe saw a decrease in support directly after the crisis, and those who increased their support were parties in more prosperous countries which experienced a smaller effect of the crisis. Second, the far right parties in general ‘cite immigration, a lack of integration by minorities, and national identity being under threat as their motivating force.’<sup>296</sup>

It is not economics and austerity that increase the support of the far right, neither is it culture. Instead, the one thing all far right parties have in common is their opposition to the present political system. In the case of Greece, however, I argue that it is a combination of all the above-mentioned factors. The scepticism towards, and collapse of trust in, leading politicians, political parties and the system in general, are the underlying causes for their increased support, but economics and the austerity measures, directly related to the financial crisis, are the precipitating causes. The crisis and the austerity measures are seen as proof of the faults of the political system and have further strengthened the far right’s call for change. And so the popularity of Golden Dawn might, in the words of the *Huffington Post*, have been a ‘symptom of the alienation and hardship that their society is experiencing.’<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>295</sup> Eurobarometer 2003; 2009; Ellinas 2012; HRW 2012.

<sup>296</sup> Jamie Bartlett, ‘Does Culture or Economics Motivate the Far-Right? Neither’, *Huffington Post*, 19.12.2012.

<sup>297</sup> Associated Press, ‘Golden Dawn, Greek Far Right Party, Returns To Parliament’, *The World Post/Huffington Post*, 17.06.2012.

Vangelis Lagos confirms this. In contrast to my suggestion that the results of the elections in 2012 was a protest vote mainly motivated by a need for change and a wish to punish the sitting government, Lagos believes the votes were cast out of ideological conviction.<sup>298</sup> There are three things that might support his argument. First, the stable percentage from the May to the June elections do not bear witness to a one-time protest vote, but rather suggest a wish for long-term change. Second, if the votes were cast in an anti-austerity protest, the other anti-austerity parties should also have gained a higher percentage of the vote. Third, ever since the 1990s, nationalism and xenophobia have been prominent features not only in politics, but also in the general population, and a vote for Golden Dawn could therefore be perceived as an extension of the nationalist sentiment already present in the population. If Lagos is correct, XA is an example of a party that has been able to use populist rhetoric to turn a significant percentage of the population in their favour. What is even more significant is how the party has maintained a stable level of support throughout the financial crisis, despite the many crises within the party.

## **Golden Dawn: A step further to the right?**

The purpose of Roger Griffin's work towards a generic definition of fascism was to create a concept *broad* enough to include a wide range of previously categorised fascist movements, whilst *narrow* enough to exclude enough movements to keep the concept from becoming too general. His definition includes the words 'populist', 'nationalism' and 'palingenetic'. This is similar to my use of the concepts as presented in my theoretical framework. I proceed to go a step further in using the generic definition as one of the principles crucial to defining extreme right-wing movements like Golden Dawn.

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<sup>298</sup> Radio Bubble, 'rbnews international show 20 April 2013: The anatomy of the Golden Dawn vote', 20.04.2013.



How, then, does Golden Dawn fit the generic definition? Here one should be mindful of the difference between a movement, a party and a regime. In my opinion XA is both a movement and a party – or more precisely; it is first and foremost a movement, and second a movement that has participated in elections as a party. As for a regime, it is not until a party has come to power that one can witness how it will use its power to govern. In the case of XA, that has not yet happened, and it is therefore mainly as a movement that XA will be analysed.

Golden Dawn is a populist movement. Chapter 2 considered two different interpretations of populism. The first, represented by Cas Mudde, created a social cleavage between the *people* and the *elite* – in the case of Greece represented at first by the military and later by the politicians. It is a populist belief that politics should then be expressed through the *volonté general*, not for the benefit of the elite, thereby reminding us of the democratic aspect of populism. This is in line with the second interpretation of populism represented by Margaret Canovan and Anthony Painter.

Golden Dawn is based on ‘people power’, in line with Griffin’s definition of ‘populist’. As a party, both the *Manifesto* and the *Programme* speak of the importance of the people and how they will be included in every important decision if XA ever comes to power. As a movement, XA resembles a leader cult more than a ‘people’s association’; with a hierarchic structure, the leader on the top is the one making the calls, and in theory, what the leader says is law. In practice, Golden Dawn has several leadership figures, and though they may have to answer to Michaloliakos, they seem to be allowed to speak freely. It does not seem that the fact that Michaloliakos has been imprisoned since September has significantly weakened the party, though it should be mentioned that the withdrawal of Chrysovalantis Alexopoulos as one of XA’s members of parliament (see Chapter 5), may have been an example of a slight wither. At the same time, as a response to the investigations against the party and in the case of a ban from national politics, Golden Dawn has announced the

establishment of a new party: the National Dawn.<sup>299</sup> This does not look like a movement in panic or in decay, but rather a movement that intend to weather this crisis.

Golden Dawn is nationalist. It fits Griffin's definition of ultra-nationalism as a part of his generic definition understood as 'forms of nationalism which "go beyond", and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions or with the tradition of Enlightenment humanism which underpins them.'<sup>300</sup> As we have seen, nationalism has also been important in shaping the history and development of modern Greece. Anthony D. Smith's idea of nationalism as attempts to unify a people and identify those who do not belong is also highly relevant in the case of XA – especially if one is to believe the polls and the media reports that suggest that XA's promise of a vendetta against illegal immigrants may in part have been the reason for their electoral success in 2012.

Golden Dawn is fascist. Not only in their resemblance to other fascist movements, their use of symbols and exultation of earlier dictators, such as Hitler and Metaxas (and Stalin!<sup>301</sup>), or in their more extreme viewpoints as presented in speeches, interviews and official documents, but also according to Payne's typological description and Griffin's later generic definition of fascism. However, two of the main features of fascism as well as the extreme right are revolution and anti-democracy. I do not think these features fully apply to the case of XA.

Though anti-democracy can be defined in many ways, the simplest definition is that one opposes the ruling system. In that way, anti-democracy and revolution are highly related concepts. Nevertheless, it is possible to be anti-democratic without wanting a revolution. XA also explicitly says that they wish to overthrow the existing government. However, though XA both in their ideological documents, such as the

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<sup>299</sup> Smith, 'Golden Dawn to form new party if banned from polls'.

<sup>300</sup> Griffin 1994[1991]:37.

<sup>301</sup> Langdon, 'Greek Tragedy: The rise of Europe's neo-Nazis'.

*Programme* and the *Manifesto*, as well as in verbal statements from their main leaders and members of parliament, are unsparing in their critique of the ruling politicians during the *Metapolitefsi*, they are not extreme in the sense that they seem to want to oust the government by force. Instead they emphasise that ‘Golden Dawn's objective is to overthrow the corrupt governance system of the Metapolitefsi era, *through* the democratic procedure’ by obtaining ‘[an] absolute majority in the Parliament.’<sup>302</sup>

My discussion on the difference between the radical and the extreme (Chapter 2) should be kept in mind here. Anti-democracy and revolutionary ideas are one of the main differences between the radical and the extreme. Arguably, it is easier to ban an extreme party than a more moderate radical party, since only the former is a real threat to existing society and the political system. The fact that XA uses milder formulations in their ideological documents than in their rhetoric could therefore be interpreted as a tactical approach. Even so, it could be beneficial to distinguish between the party and the movement. The party is clearly defined through the *Manifesto* and the *Programme*, and the movement is defined by XA’s actions and the rhetoric used by the leaders. And so I have established that XA in general can be seen as nationalist, fascist and populist, but is it extreme as well? This is where the division is important.

The question is not whether or not the party can be considered as belonging to the far right, but whether or not it can be categorised as extreme. Consequently, I place Golden Dawn *as a party* within Anders Widfeldt’s group 4 (see Chapter 2) and categorise it as a ‘neo-populist radical right-wing party’. It is neo-populist due to its pursuit and use of the *volonté general*, as defined by Cas Mudde. It is radical and not extreme due to its ideological core, and the documents citing the wish for a peaceful revolution through the existing system. Even so, I argue that *the movement* should be categorised as belonging to the extreme right, not only due to the use of violence displayed by prominent party members, but also due to the frequent xenophobic references evidenced in their ideological documents.

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<sup>302</sup> Golden Dawn International Newsroom, ‘The Program of the Golden Dawn’, my emphasis.

As I have demonstrated, fascism is a central component of extreme right movements. This is also relevant in the case of Golden Dawn. However, XA is also illustrative of the relation between nationalism, National Socialism and fascism, and so I argue that nationalism, often through a national socialist interpretation, is the foundation for XA as a fascist extreme right movement. The question that remains to be answered, then, is whether or not the case of Golden Dawn is a general case, i.e., can it demonstrate something beyond the case at hand?

### **Beyond the Greek borders: What can we learn from the case of Golden Dawn?**

In Chapter 1 I briefly introduced a study done by de Bromhead *et al.* on the growth of political extremism in Germany in the late 1920s and 1930s. They isolated the explanations into five broad categories, namely economic factors, social cleavages, external influence, electoral systems and institutional/cultural inheritances. I argue that these explanations are applicable in the case of extremism in Greece as well, thereby strengthening the generalisability of the study done by de Bromhead *et al.* I will shortly elaborate.

The economy is an integrated part of any modern society, and it is therefore highly vulnerable to external influences. In the case of Greece, the integration with the common market and the euro area made it impossible for the country to devalue its currency when the financial crisis struck. The admission, in 2004, of having ‘fudged’ the convergence criteria further deepened the crisis in an already unstable economy. The crisis must also be seen in the context of a tradition of corruption and clientelism that had existed both prior to and throughout the *Metapolitefsi* era, which calls to mind the fifth point of de Bromhead *et al.* As for the second explanation I have argued that cleavages have been an important part in shaping Greek politics and society, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I have often referred to these cleavages as political cleavages, though they have at times been socially or religiously motivated.

There has been a custom to use the electoral system in Greece to the advantage of the sitting parties in government. Though the system in itself has not been used to benefit the far right per se, it has instead been common to abolish it altogether and establish dictatorships, such as in the case of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August regime and the military Junta. As for external influence, this has been the case both now and in the past. As a curiosity, it may be worth mentioning that in most cases of political turmoil in Greece, external forces have interfered. This was the case during the establishment of the first kingdom in the 1820s, the regime of Metaxas in the late 1930s, the civil war in the late 1940s, as well as after the Junta and the inclusion of Greece in the EU in 1981. In conclusion, all five categories can also be found in the case of recent far right mobilisation in Greece, thereby strengthening my argument that the financial crisis might in fact have been the precipitating cause for the rise of Golden Dawn.

## 8 Conclusion

To see whether or not the financial crisis may have been the precipitating cause for the rise in support for Golden Dawn, one needs to understand Greece both in the past and in the present. One needs to understand the condition of Greece at the time of the crisis, and how such events may have influenced the opinion of the populace. In this thesis my argument stretches from 1821 until today. This is a long period of time, and I have not covered every single event in this period. Instead I have tried to focus on politics and especially the elections. Election results may give a lot of information on people's opinions, and of their anxieties, especially at times of crisis. And modern Greece has seen many crises. From the War of Independence and the unstable years of nation-building that followed, through the 4<sup>th</sup> of August regime of the 1930s, the civil war of the early 1950s and the regime of the Junta between 1967 and 1974, and up to the latest crisis, the financial crisis. The latest is set in a time at which the increase in the inflow of immigrants has, according to some, taken its toll on an unbalanced and unstable economy – at time when a single Greek farmer on Lesbos seems insignificant amidst the whole system that is the European Union.

My account of the history of modern Greece has shown that there is a Greek tradition of leaning on far right parties at times of crisis. Now, an increase in unemployment has seen a rise in the support for extreme parties both to the left and to the right, especially amongst the younger population. The far right is again an alternative to the existing political system and the regime of the left and centrist parties. As the financial crisis progressed, the EU seemed hesitant to come to Greece's rescue, and people took to the streets in large demonstrations. Most of the time, the riots were peaceful, but some featured groups of unemployed men questioning the authority of the police, with violent results. Suicide rates and unemployment rates increased as the crisis continued, and so did the support for the far right parties.

‘Has Greece’s economy finally turned a corner?’ asked the BBC on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2013.<sup>303</sup> If they are correct and I am correct, my thesis will have shown that support for Golden Dawn will drop; however, it is unlikely that politics will again be balanced between ND and PASOK. Political cleavages linger for a long time in Greece, and discontentment with the existing political system does not disappear over the night. Nevertheless, the developments in Greek politics since the turn of the new millennium does suggest a wish for change that should not easily be brushed aside. Neither should the sudden blossoming in support for the far left party SYRIZA.

As both local and European elections approach, the far right is mobilising across Europe, and it will be interesting to see whether the imprisoned Michaloliakos will retain his seat on the Athens city council, and whether the far right in Greece will keep their two members of the European Parliament, either through LAOS or XA.

Greece is a country of extremes. The project of nation building, the *Megali Idea*, and the deep cleavages between royalists and republicans, and later communists and the far right created a sentiment given to political extremes – at either end of the spectrum – that is still present today. As a country of extremes, it rarely manages to stabilise something in between, instead creating systems of extreme opposites. It may therefore seem fitting (or frightening) that the Greek national motto is ‘Ελευθερία ή Θάνατος’ (Elefthería í thánatos), ‘liberty or death’.

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<sup>303</sup> Mark Lowen, ‘Has Greece’s economy finally turned a corner?’

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# Appendix

## *The Manifesto of Golden Dawn*<sup>304</sup>

### Our identity

**Golden Dawn** is a Social and Nationalist movement with a structure, principles and positions. It has been active in the political life of the country since the mid-90s, having taken part in EU elections (1994, 2009) and national elections (1996, 2009). On November 7, 2010 the Golden Dawn participated in the municipal elections. In the recent elections of June 17, 2012 it received 7% and elected 18 MPs.

The Social Nationalist movement of Golden Dawn is at the front line of the struggle against the suicidal memorandum and the sinful regime of the Parties that form the political establishment. We fight against the alteration of our racial demographics that is conducted by the millions of illegal immigrants, and the dissolution of the Greek society promoted by both the governing parties and the so-called Left. We propose a national strategy so that we can overcome the crisis imposed on our country. We are struggling for a Greece that belongs to the Greeks.

### WHAT BEING A GOLDEN DAWNER MEANS

1) I embrace the Third Great Ideology of history, the one that is rooted deeply in the history of my people. Opposed to both internationalist communism and globalist capitalism.

2) I embrace the need for a state founded and built based on this ideology that nourishes and guides continuously our lives as individuals and as a society. A state that constantly serves the eternal revolutionary principles of the Nationalist Worldview, with the ultimate goal of forming a new society and a new type of man.

3) I embrace the moral imperatives arising from my worldview and aim to a radical renewal of the obsolete and counterfeit social values. My ideology is not looking to salvage anything from the current economic and social interests that lead nations, peoples and cultures in decline. So I'm an enemy of every power that spreads this disease that finds foothold in the Plutocracy. Whether this power is a military-financial dictatorship or a parliamentary dictatorship. Because those are the two sides of the same coin, and their purpose is to tear down national identity.

4) I am aware that nationalism is the only absolute and true revolution because it seeks the birth of new moral, spiritual, social and mental values. The Right and Left solutions supposedly fighting each other, is just an illusion created by the two partners that perpetuate the dominance of cosmopolitan internationalists, anti-national and anti-social forces.

5) I believe the only state that serves correctly it's historical role is the Social state, where political power comes from the people, without party promoters. Nationalism sees people not only as a numerical entity of individuals but as a qualitative synthesis of people with the same biological and spiritual heritage, which is the source of all creation and expresses its power in the social state. The only state that can represent the people as an organic and spiritual living entity.

6) The politicians on both the Right and the Left are deliberately lying, because democracy means "rule of the People", of the society that is comprised by people of common origin ( the definition of the Citizen in Classical Athens). The Social State of Nationalism is the only direct democracy. The state where the people are the only reality and do not need authority but leadership. The People are the real sovereign and

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<sup>304</sup> Source: [xaameriki.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/the-manifesto-of-golden-dawn-for-the-communists-who-lie-and-claim-we-have-no-ideology/](http://xaameriki.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/the-manifesto-of-golden-dawn-for-the-communists-who-lie-and-claim-we-have-no-ideology/) [07.05.2014], original available at [www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/kinima](http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/kinima) [07.05.2014].

rule themselves through their leader. So the social state can fulfill the only possible equality (that derived from Human Thought and that is not a natural, but a human cultural-political creation), the equality of opportunities. In contrast to the transient and fleeting majority of parliamentary governing, the will of the people is the supreme law, and obedience to it results in true justice....

7) I realize that in the Social State of the Nationalist Ideology, ultimate equality before the law and politically structured social equality exist. In the Social State there is no social stratification based on income or economic classes. The social classes are organically collaborating groups of people with different abilities and productive skills each, just like in a living organism. The different systems contribute harmonically and in full cooperation for their survival. Solidarity is the rule of the Social State for the relations between social classes. The few people who have burgled their organic relationship with the people are the members of the Plutocratic Oligarchy with their cosmopolitanism, and members of the leading groups of "Bolshevik partisanship-unionist oligarchy" with their internationalism. The oligarchies of money and the political parties are all the same-enemies of the Nation and the People.

8) I am an enemy of the vast and exploitative Capital, either local or international, and a champion of small family ownership like the "kleros" or "temenos" of our ancestors. Money is a mean of necessity, not a governing principle of life or the purpose of it. The ultimate goal of the Social State is the elimination of the false value of money and the controlled use of it as a trading mean. The State should have control over private property so that it won't be abused and won't endanger the survival of the People. The economy should be planned to serve the National policy and to ensure maximum self-sufficiency without dependence on international markets and the control of multinational corporations.

9) I believe that the state, the Social State, is the political expression of the nation and that the nation sprouts from itself, without it being an invention. It is an automatic spiritual event that springs from the existence of the People, it is a reality that is based on the existence of the People. Whether or not the People realize the extent and depth of its existence, the Nation is the highest spiritual entity. The People is born from

the Race, and its existence gives birth to the Nation as a superior spiritual manifestation (moral, cultural, religious). Derived from the people, the Nation - Race, needs to be strengthened and developed through the state. It may exist without a state but will be steadily declining (See the national rise of the Greeks after 4 centuries of subjugation and the lack of a state). So I understand that international communism and liberal cosmopolitanism are undermining the nation by stirring up class divisions.

10) I believe in the importance of the society, the community of the People, and not that of the individual. The individual becomes a person and forms his shape, his "I" identity within the "We" of the total. Individuals do not have historical significance as opposed to the People who are space-time condensations of qualities of the People and the Nation. An individual can become a person when he socially integrates himself, through his ability, as the harmonious composition of social and individual values. This superior type of human is the new kind of human that nationalism seeks to create.

11) I honor and respect my tradition because it is the sum of beauty and the goodness that occurred and revealed in my People's history. While bound by tradition, I seek the new creation, the incessant evolution.

12) The Social State of Nationalism delivers social equality of opportunities based in meritocracy and does not ignore the Natural law of diversity and difference. Respecting the spiritual, ethnic and racial differences of men we can build a society of social justice and equality before the law. This equality is the proof of the moral transgression of nationalism and shows that there is no legal modulation to protect the naturally existing inequalities that are an integral part of nature and life. On the contrary, the Social-National State gives the same opportunities of enhancement and conservation to everyone of the different elements of every existence. So, as a Nationalist, I fight all forms of destructive "equalizing" policies (of Nations, Races, Men), and any false artificial inequalities and oligarchies (Money, Political Parties, Perversions).

**ARISTOCRACY IS BORN OUT OF MERITOCRACY, THIS IS WHY I FIGHT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF OLIGARCHY**

