

### **3.3 ECONOMIC CRISIS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPACT. THE NEW RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN GREECE,**

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#### **Introduction**

The ongoing financial and debt crisis in Greece provides a fertile ground for the rise of political extremism. Although right-wing extremism is a unique phenomenon in Greek politics during the last three decades, its causes were deeply rooted in society and politics many years ago.

Fears and feelings of socio-cultural insecurity were on the rise since the beginning of the 1990s: immigration, aspects of multiculturalism in an -until then- homogenous Greek society, Europeanization and globalization were the reasons for the widespread anxiety and dissatisfaction that have begun to overwhelm the so-called modernization losers and the most weak segments of the Greek society. In other words, those parts nowadays mostly attracted by the broad variety of antisystemic and populist actors that have emerged from one end to the other of the political arena in Greece.

A deeper sense of anti-westernism<sup>1</sup> and anti-pluralism that goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the rise of populism in the 1980s<sup>2</sup>, constituted the base and the fertile ground for the cultivation of new fears and new kinds of insecurity in the era of the financial crisis. That said, the demand for radical politics after 2010 was not only a consequence of the financial and debt crisis in Greece, but also the coincidence of a series of crises regarding the political institutions and the cohesion of the social fabric.

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<sup>1</sup> Prevelakis G. (2012), The history behind the collapse, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-12-23-prevelakis-en.html> ; Makrides V.N. (2009), «Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today: A Hindrance to European Integration?», *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol.9, No3, pp. 209-224.

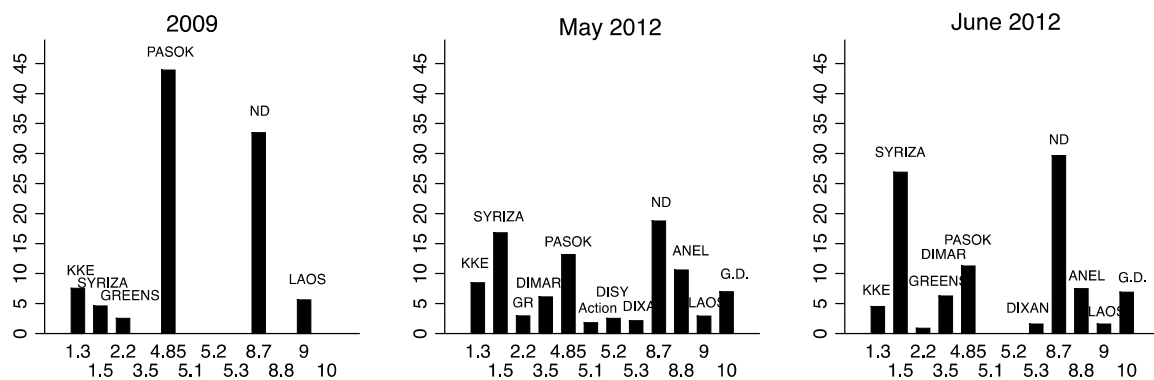
<sup>2</sup> Lyrantzis Christos, (1987) "The Power of Populism: The Greek Case", *European Journal of Political Research*, 15:6, 667-86.

## Voters' disenchantment with politics: causes and forms of expression

The Greek party system and the political contest have witnessed significant changes since the outbreak of the economic crisis. If we consider the electoral results of May and June 2012 as a safe indicator of party competition, three major shifts have to be underlined<sup>3</sup>:

Firstly, the widespread disenchantment with traditional, mainstream political parties, reflected in the spectacular electoral losses of the centre-left (PASOK) and centre-right (ND) parties. Secondly, the impressive score of the radical left (SYRIZA), which until that date was a minor party of the left, embracing Maoist, Trotskyist, Marxist and Stalinist groups and factions. And third, a comfortable parliamentary representation of the Golden Dawn (GD), currently the most xenophobic, racist, right-wing extremist party of European parliaments.

**Figure 1. A spatial illustration of Greek party competition from 2009 to 2012**



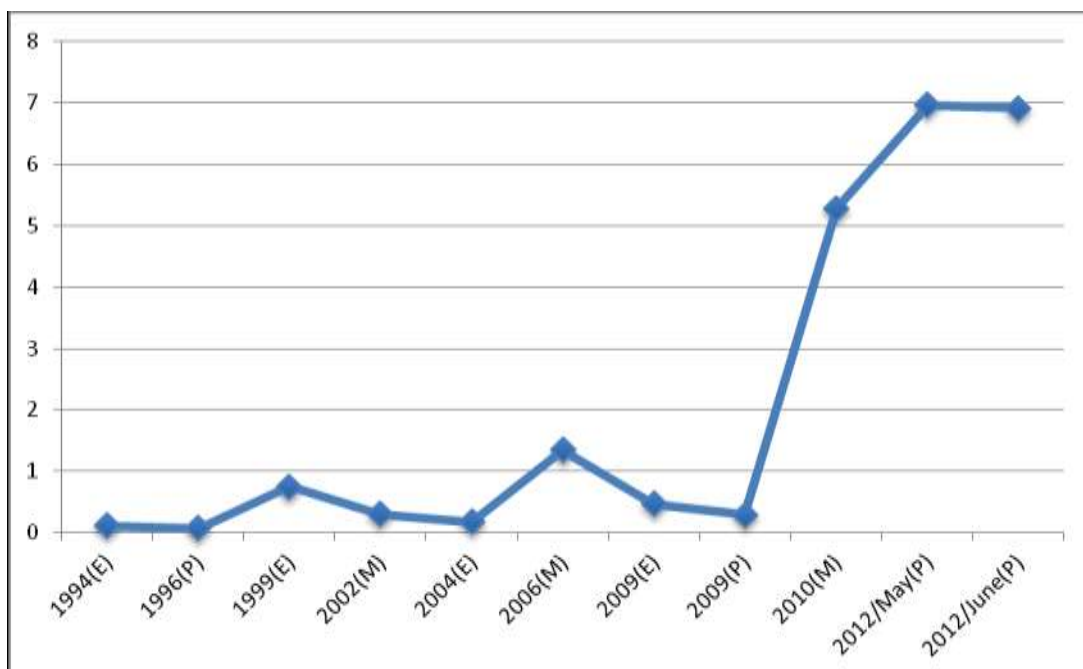
Source: Dinas and Rori, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> On the 2012 elections and changes in the party system and the party competition, see Dinas E., Rori L., «Fear and Loathing in the Polls», *West European Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 270–282.

Note: The horizontal axis represents a broadly-defined ideological continuum ranging from left (0) to right (10). The exact positioning of the parties in this continuum for the 2012 elections is based on and adapted from Gemenis (2012). The vertical axis denotes the vote share of the parties (in percentages).

Undoubtedly, the rise of the GD has been the most shocking evolution. Notwithstanding its extremist, ultra-nationalist, racist, anti-parliamentarian and Nazi-friendly ideological profile, what has been mostly alarming was the rapid ascendance of a violent groupuscule that until the local elections of 2010 has had an extremely marginal electoral appeal.

**Graph 1. The background of the electoral rise of Golden Dawn in European (E), Parliamentary (P) and Local (L) elections: from the margin to the political arena**



Source: Ministry of Interior, official results, <http://www.ypes.gr/el/Elections/>.

**Table 1. The electoral evolution of the Golden Dawn from 1994 to 2012**

| Electoral Year<br>(Types of elections) | Electoral results |         | Seats |
|--|-------------------|---------|-------|
| 1994(E)                                | 0.11              | 7.242   | -     |
| 1996(P)                                | 0.07              | 4.487   | -     |
| 1999(E)                                | 0.75              | 48.532  | -     |
| 2002(M)                                | 0.30              | 1.059   | -     |
| 2004(E)                                | 0.17              | 10.618  | -     |
| 2006(M)                                | 1,34              | 3.705   | -     |
| 2009(E)                                | 0.46              | 23.609  | -     |
| 2009(P)                                | 0.29              | 19.624  | -     |
| 2010(M)                                | 5,29              | 10.222  | 1     |
| 2012/May(P)                            | 6.97              | 441.018 | 21    |
| 2012/June(P)                           | 6,92              | 425.990 | 18    |

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, official results,  
<http://www.ypes.gr/el/Elections/>.

By gaining 7% in the 2012 elections, the GD rapidly shifts from the margins into the political arena. It is mostly appealing to men, to the relatively young (25-44 years old), to people of secondary education and to individuals experiencing labour insecurity (unemployed, self-employed, students, farmers).

**Table 2. The social demography of the Greek electorate in June 2012 (in %)**

|  | <u>KKE</u> | <u>SYRIZA</u> | <u>DIMAR</u> | <u>PASOK</u> | <u>ND</u>   | <u>ANEL</u> | <u>Golden Dawn</u> |
|--|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| <u>Men</u>                                     | <u>4.8</u> | <u>25.8</u>   | <u>5.6</u>   | <u>13.1</u>  | <u>28.8</u> | <u>7.0</u>  | <u>9.1</u>         |
| <u>Women</u>                                   | <u>4.1</u> | <u>28.4</u>   | <u>7.2</u>   | <u>11.2</u>  | <u>30.8</u> | <u>8.3</u>  | <u>4.0</u>         |
| <u>18-34</u>                                   | <u>4.0</u> | <u>30.8</u>   | <u>6.1</u>   | <u>6.7</u>   | <u>21.1</u> | <u>11.2</u> | <u>11.3</u>        |
| <u>35-54</u>                                   | <u>4.0</u> | <u>32.0</u>   | <u>7.5</u>   | <u>9.6</u>   | <u>25.0</u> | <u>8.4</u>  | <u>8.4</u>         |
| <u>55+</u>                                     | <u>5.4</u> | <u>18.6</u>   | <u>4.9</u>   | <u>19.1</u>  | <u>40.6</u> | <u>4.1</u>  | <u>4.1</u>         |
| <u>Employers/Self<br/>-employed</u>            | <u>3.5</u> | <u>29.9</u>   | <u>5.5</u>   | <u>9.6</u>   | <u>26.5</u> | <u>8.9</u>  | <u>8.8</u>         |
| <u>Employees of<br/>the private<br/>sector</u> | <u>4.7</u> | <u>32.3</u>   | <u>7.9</u>   | <u>8.2</u>   | <u>23.5</u> | <u>10.2</u> | <u>7.3</u>         |
| <u>Employees of<br/>the public<br/>sector</u>  | <u>3.3</u> | <u>30.0</u>   | <u>8.1</u>   | <u>10.7</u>  | <u>25.0</u> | <u>7.3</u>  | <u>8.1</u>         |
| <u>Farmers</u>                                 | <u>4.4</u> | <u>21.2</u>   | <u>3.2</u>   | <u>18.8</u>  | <u>34.3</u> | <u>4.6</u>  | <u>8.6</u>         |
| <u>Unemployed</u>                              | <u>5.9</u> | <u>35.6</u>   | <u>4.8</u>   | <u>6.8</u>   | <u>19.4</u> | <u>10.2</u> | <u>10.1</u>        |
| <u>Students</u>                                | <u>4.0</u> | <u>31.2</u>   | <u>7.5</u>   | <u>6.0</u>   | <u>20.3</u> | <u>9.4</u>  | <u>9.4</u>         |
| <u>Pensioners</u>                              | <u>5.3</u> | <u>15.8</u>   | <u>5.1</u>   | <u>20.2</u>  | <u>43.1</u> | <u>4.0</u>  | <u>2.7</u>         |
| <u>Housewives</u>                              | <u>4.2</u> | <u>24.3</u>   | <u>5.5</u>   | <u>14.4</u>  | <u>37.0</u> | <u>5.0</u>  | <u>4.0</u>         |

Source: Exit poll, June 2012.

**Understanding the electoral breakthrough of the GD: decline of trust in political institutions.**

In order for one to answer how did a pariah of the extreme right manage to enter into the political spectrum, one has to take under consideration the political context of the 2012 elections and the social background that lies behind the rise of the GD. Among short-term factors, the economic crisis, the austerity measures (Memorandum), the polarization and the cleavages that they nourished constitute the fertile ground for the rise of the extremes and the populist vote: according to the 2012 exit poll 53% casted their vote having in mind the Memorandum, whereas 47% by having in mind the stay in the Eurozone. Apart from the short-term factors, one can observe medium-term factors that accounted for the dramatic shift in the party's electoral fortunes: there has been a steady decline in the levels of political trust since 2009, which has accelerated since the emergence of the crisis.

**Table 3. Political Trust: Decline –lack of confidence in parties**

Trust in political institutions (% of a lot or some trust)

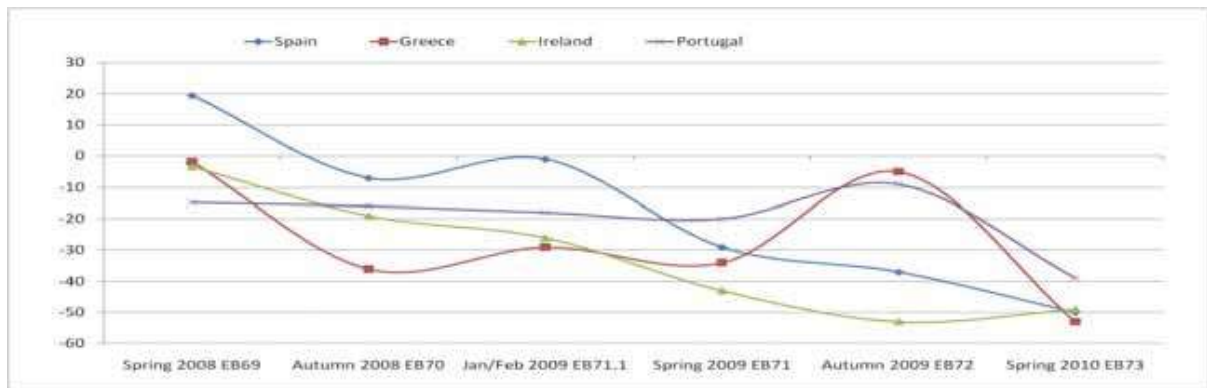
| government |      | parties |      | parliament |      | courts |      |
|------------|------|---------|------|------------|------|--------|------|
| 2003       | 2010 | 2003    | 2010 | 2003       | 2010 | 2003   | 2010 |
| 55         | 21   | 28      | 5    | 63         | 47   | 73     | 41   |

Source: Eurobarometer 2003 & 2010; Exadaktylos & Zahariadis 2012.

We can observe a general decline in the trust in governments and parties as well as in the legislative and judiciary institutions between 2003 and 2010. Furthermore, compared to the countries in Southern Europe and to the countries in crisis, Greece shows the strongest decline in political trust (in parliaments) after the emergence of the crisis in 2009, as well as an erosion of political trust years before the outbreak of the financial crisis.

## Graph 2. Trends in net trust in national parliament

(net trust=the % of citizens who trust minus the % of citizens who mistrust)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer, 69-73 & Special Eurobarometer 71.1; F. Roth (2010).

If we look deeper into the 2012 data (Table 4), political trust is particularly low as well as trust in political institutions linked to interests' representation like trade unions and the parliaments, or to the EU and the IMF, whereas it rises when it comes to social institutions which are perceived as unifying factors of the social body, offering security or spiritual cohesion within the ethno-cultural entity.

**Table 4. Trust in Institutions in Greece:** (0-10 point scale, 0=no trust at all, 10=complete trust)

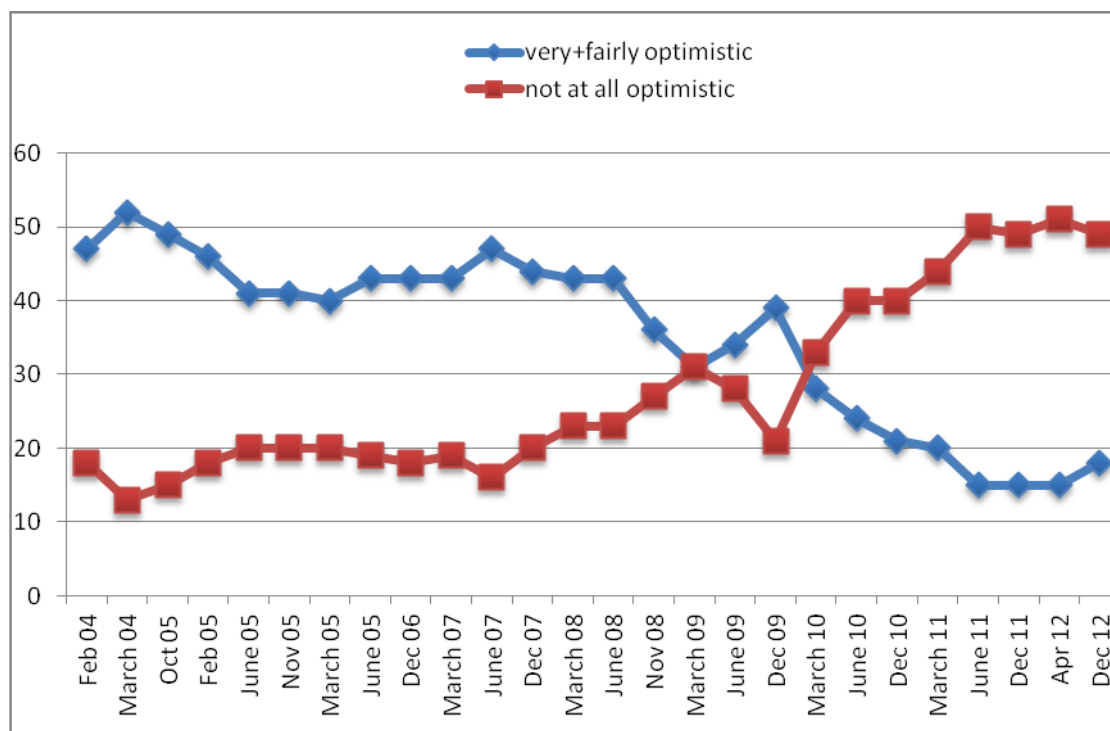
|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| <b>Army</b>           | <b>6.1</b> |
| <b>Church</b>         | <b>5.6</b> |
| <b>Police</b>         | <b>5.3</b> |
| <b>Justice</b>        | <b>4.2</b> |
| <b>NGOs</b>           | <b>3.9</b> |
| <b>United Nations</b> | <b>3.3</b> |
| <b>EU</b>             | <b>3.0</b> |
| <b>Trade Unions</b>   | <b>2.7</b> |
| <b>Parliament</b>     | <b>2.6</b> |
| <b>IMF</b>            | <b>1.8</b> |

Source: Metron Analysis, 2012.

### Climate of pessimism and lack of social cohesion within the electorate: a political opportunity for the Golden Dawn?

Lack of trust in political institutions notwithstanding, populist votes need to be seen through the prism of social feelings about cohesion in order to understand what drives demand for alternatives to austerity policies. Greek citizens not only distrust political institutions, but they feel abandoned, feared and disappointed. Among them, most of all the youngest and the middle ages (voters of the GD but SYRIZA as well).

**Graph 3. A climate of pessimism and loss of life perspectives**



Source: Konstantinos Karamanlis Foundation & Metron Analysis 2012.

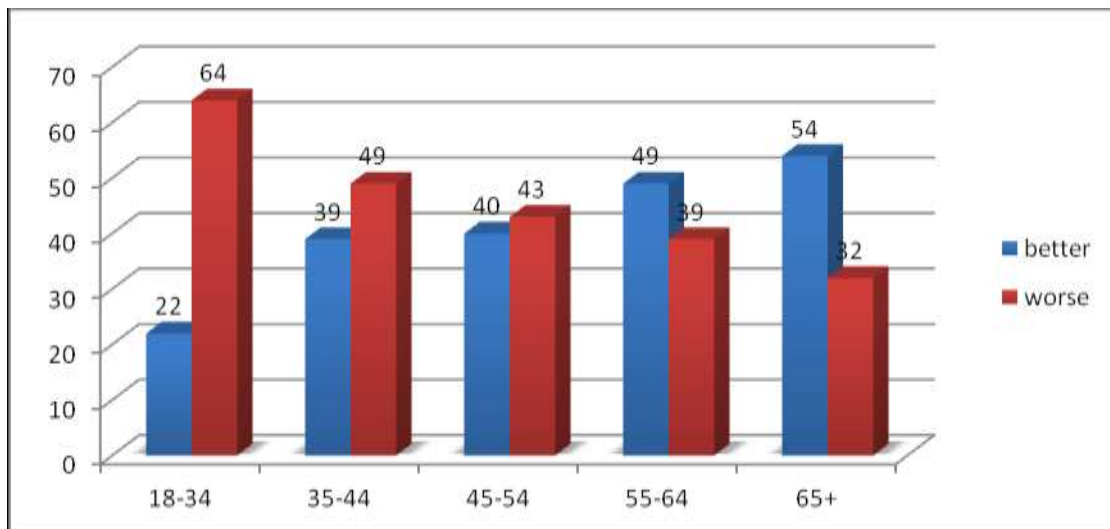
Taking into account voters' feelings in the beginning of the crisis concerning their personal situation, from 2004 to 2008 the majority of citizens were (fairly



and very) optimistic, whereas since the beginning of the crisis there has been a radical decline in the levels of optimism. Since March 2010 extremely pessimistic views are majoritarian. Hence there is a steady deficit of social trust since the beginning of the crisis.

Social fragmentation, tension and inequality become even more apparent when we delve into social feelings distinguished upon age groups. The high levels of unemployment<sup>4</sup>, especially among the youngest generations<sup>5</sup>, as well as privileges that have been unfairly distributed to different interest groups of the economic system since the 1974 transition to democracy<sup>6</sup> have created strong barriers in the career-development of the youngest generations, that since the beginning of the crisis can no longer satisfy their needs through their parents' declining revenues.

**Graph 4. Social Cohesion and Generational Gap: the feeling of being abandoned**



Source: Konstantinos Karamanlis Foundation & Metron Analysis 2012.

<sup>4</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics)

<sup>5</sup> Tubadji A., «Youth Unemployment in Greece. Economic and Political Perspectives», Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Study, November 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Iordanoglou Chryssafis, *The state and interest groups. A critique to conventional wisdom*, Athens: Polis, 2013. (in Greek)

Question: «Thinking about your parents' position and life, would you say that you are today in a better position, in the same position or in a worse position?»

This feeling of intergenerational injustice is clearly reflected in public opinion. Citizens from 18 to 54 feel that they are in a worse position and that they experience worse life conditions than their parents, whereas citizens older than 55 years old feel that they are in a better one than their parents. The feeling of injustice associated with the sense of lower expectations are the prerequisites for the spread of distrust and disenchantment with mainstream politics and the established political institutions.

### **Forms of political engagement: party membership, online debates and street movements**

Disenchantment with traditional parties, lack of political and social trust, as well as lack of social cohesion have created demand for anti-political and anti-parliamentarian political stances. Active engagement in politics has shifted from mainstream political parties to grassroot action and protest. Four are the «highlights» of the Greek crisis' experience: the outraged residents of Athens, the movement of the outraged citizens (the Greek indignants), the «I don't pay movement» and violent activism in local areas.

#### a. The outraged residents of Athens and the strategy of the Golden Dawn

In the city of Athens, the feelings of fear, disappointment and abandonment have been expressed through grassroot movements (the Citizens' Committees) in the most underprivileged and densely populated by immigrants areas of the city center (6th city district). This context has served as a structure of political opportunity for the electoral ascendance of the GD<sup>7</sup>, which followed a two-step strategy. At first, from autumn 2008 to November 2010 Golden Dawn acquired

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<sup>7</sup> Dinas E., Georgiadou V., Konstantinidis I., Rori L. (2013), "From dusk to dawn: local party organization and party success of right-wing extremism", *Party Politics*, December (Online First).

local presence, mobilization and visibility within a part of the city center. Having created a stronghold, it succeeded its electoral breakthrough in the city of Athens. Afterwards, from November 2010 to May/June 2012, GD expanded its organizational penetration and territorial diffusion. This is how it succeeded electoral rise at the national level.

In other words, following a well-known tactic in right-wing extremist European parties<sup>8</sup>, GD chooses the area of Agios Panteleimonas (AP), a neighborhood in the 6<sup>th</sup> district of Athens with a large immigrant population, as a stronghold in order to acquire a local presence and, through it, further visibility. AP, as well as the 6th city district to which it belongs, became the base of the organisation.

More specifically, since September 2008, regular residents' assemblies take place around the square of AP in order to protest against immigrants' concentration and "reclaim" their neighborhood. Four kinds of actors constituted the scenery: the "outraged residents" –who belong to an old conservative middle class–, the GD, the immigrants and the "solidarists", i.e. left-wing activists expressing support *vis-à-vis* the immigrants. From 2008 to 2010 we counted at least 20 different committees or/and associations of residents. Among them, at least 10 have gradually built ties with GD. Progressively people were divided in two camps: the "outraged residents" with GD versus the immigrants with leftist activists. GD progressively merged with the committees of residents. It used a two-fold method in order to penetrate in the local population. On the one hand, it provided goods and services to the aged people and security to shop owners. On the other, it used violence in order to "protect" against the "rivals".

Violence is an instrument of double utility in the strategy of the organization: it uses it as a means of confrontation with the perceived enemies and as a symbol of power in order to attract members and voters. From 2008 to 2010, GD brings into play violence against immigrants, regardless of their legal status,

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<sup>8</sup> Mudde C. (2007), *Populist Radical Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 269.

antifa activists, and socially vulnerable individuals, like drug addicts, homeless etc. It exploits the presence of pro-immigrant activists and antifa groups in order to create acceptance and proximity with the local population and acquire visibility. *Interactive extremism*<sup>9</sup> between pro-immigrant groups and the GD further divided the inhabitants and reinforced the right-wing extremists.

GD utilizes traditional communication practices of mass parties in the local level: local press, door-to-door techniques and grass-roots politics, like demonstrations and assemblies in order to create the stronghold. For this same reason, it consciously transfers its headquarters close to the neighborhood of AP.

The GD succeeded in augmenting its sphere of influence, in recruiting and promoting activists, as well as in placing a series of issues in the public agenda. It gained visibility and settled in the local political terrain. The institutional representation that it acquired through the election of its leader in the city council of Athens in the municipal elections of 2010 gave to GD a sense of legitimacy, further visibility and mediatization, that permitted further organizational expansion and electoral penetration in the 2012 parliamentary elections.

GD's empowerment since the 2012 elections goes hand in hand with the proliferation of a violent activism, to which we refer later.

#### b. The movement of the squares and the outraged citizens («Aganaktismenoi»)

It was the most massive and enduring protest movement in the post-junta period. In the summer of 2011, thousands of citizens were concentrating every night in the Constitution Square and in other central squares of the biggest cities in order to express their rage against the political personnel, the parliament, the political system. Its success is certainly related to the extense use of social media as a tool for mobilization, diffusion and organization. Athens

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<sup>9</sup> Richards B. (2013), Nationalist extremism and the hatred of the liberal state. In: Demertzis N (ed.) *Emotions and Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

was the epicentre of the protest. The placement of the mass *vis-à-vis* the parliament was highly symbolic.

Right-wing extremist and left activists, but also neutral and apolitical voters participated in this movement. The extreme-right activists were placed in the upper side of the square, whereas the left-wing were established in the lower one. A Popular Assembly was taking place every night. Numerous tents were placed in the square and activists lived there in order to mark the occupation.

According to some findings of an unpublished research<sup>10</sup> although the outraged citizens supported a diffuse –quite frequently idealist- idea of democracy, there is no specific support in democracy as an applied regime or system of government. Furthermore, despite the fact that violence is condemned, the fact that 2/3 of the respondents were either tolerant to the violence that others used against politicians (34%) or in favor (27%) of it, indicates the complicated and sensitive link between direct political action and democratic authority. Last but not least, what the mass mobilization of outraged citizens in Athens has revealed is that the reservoir of violence or even of use violence is large within the different social *milieux*, as well as the rejection of parliamentary democracy. Antiparliamentarism, antipartyism and an attitude of protest were all present after the outbreak of the financial crisis in Greece.

### c. "I won't pay movement"

The "I won't pay movement" was a citizens' mobilization against paying taxes, although the question remains if it is an action of civil disobedience or a play-it-safe-revolt of the middle class against the austerity measures without the risk of facing the legal consequences; in other words what is known to be rather a free

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<sup>10</sup> Georgiadou, V., Kafe, A. & Pierides, C. (2012) 'Anti-party, anti-parliamentary or anti-democratic social movements of the "Outraged" citizens in Greece', paper presented at the 22nd World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Madrid, 8–12 July.

rider behavior than a state of civil disobedience.<sup>11</sup> As far as the repertoire of the "won't pay movement" is concerned, it includes the blockade of highway toll booths, coverage subway ticket machines, refusal of paying property tax, giving access to electricity to households that have been deprived from it due to their debt to the electricity public enterprise, legal support of their members and so on.

In May 2012, the "I won't pay movement" participated in the elections, in which it managed to gain 55.675 votes. Since then, it maintains a double nature – social movement and political party at the same time. Even though its repertoire of collective action is hardly legal, the proliferation of the offered services nourishes its *clientèle*, which is constituted by economically weak and socially underdog strata. After the 2012 elections the influence of this organization has been visibly reduced.

#### d. Violent activism related to local issues

Acceptance of certain forms of violence was ingrained in the Greek society as historians like Koliopoulos and Veremis have shown<sup>12</sup>. Political violence itself, as well as tolerance vis-à-vis violence has been exacerbated throughout the Greek economic crisis<sup>13</sup>. Nonetheless, after the 2012 parliamentary elections mobilization became openly and particularly violent, as the local anti-gold investment movement in Skouries<sup>14</sup> and the violent activity of the GD in the

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<sup>11</sup> «We Won't Pay: Greece's Middle Class Revolt Against Austerity», Der Spiegel, 23.09.2011 (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/we-won-t-pay-greece-s-middle-class-revolt-against-austerity-a-787847.html>).

<sup>12</sup> Koliopoulos J. S., Veremis T. M., *Modern Greece: A History since 1821*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> For an indicative but non exhaustive list of political violence incidents from 2008 to 2013, see <http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231230686>

<sup>14</sup> The investment of the Greek company Hellas Gold and its main shareholder Canadian Eldorado Gold Camp in four gold mining projects in Skouries - an ancient forest in the region of Chalkidiki, in Northern Greece - has mobilized the local society, local and national political actors in order to protest against its environmental-threatening character. Opponents of the projects include owners of houses rented to tourists, environmentalists and leftist activists. Local

popular southwest areas of Keratsini and Perama have revealed<sup>15</sup>. This new kind of violent activism is located in certain local areas. Whereas the first one is left-wing driven and is addressing a local problem with economic and environmental repercussions for the natives, the second one is right-wing driven and concerns the strategy of the GD in order to penetrate in the popular suburbs by the means of frontal confrontation with the Left in order to win the blue collars, the youth and the insecure.

The common feature of all these phenomena was their anti-systemic and populist mass character.

### **Electoral motives in the local elections of 2010 and the double parliamentary elections of 2012: xenophobia, political protest, and the financial crisis**

In national elections immigration did not figure among the dominant issues of the public agenda. On the contrary, it has been high during the municipal elections of 2010, at least for the residents of the city centre. The lack of public policy concerning immigration, coupled with the dense concentration of immigrants in certain areas of the city centre, the fear of the local population *vis-à-vis* the immigrants, which they have been connecting to criminality and unemployment, have created a *momentum* of political opportunity for the electoral breakthrough of the GD in 2010. The GD was the anti-immigrant party

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communities have been bitterly divided since 2012 and the opposed residents have held several demonstrations against it, many of which have turned violent. The movement of Skouries has acquired support especially –but not exclusively– from the left and citizens throughout the country, who organized demonstrations in Athens and in Thessaloniki in 2012 and 2013 as well.

<sup>15</sup> On September 12th, 2013, 50 members of the GD hit brutally communist cadres of the union of metalworkers, in the area known as the Zone of Perama, a tough, blue-collar region, reliant on heavy industry and the shipyards until the crash came and pushed unemployment over 90%. Only a few days later, on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Pavlos Fyssas, an antifa, community activist and rapper known as Killah P, was stabbed to death on Panagi Tsaldari avenue, a commercial and well-lit street of Keratsini, which is a popular suburb of Pireaus. Fyssas was murdered by an unemployed track driver and member of the Golden Dawn named Giorgos Roupakias.

*par excellence*: not only it was against immigrants but it proclaimed immediate expel of all immigrants living in the country, regardless of their official status.

Hence, in the 2010 municipal elections anti-immigrant stances favoured the vote for the GD. But this was not the case in 2012. What motivated vote for the GD in the last parliamentary elections?

If we compare the motives of the GD voters to those of all the voters, it becomes clear that it was political protest, anti-parliamentarian and antipolitical stances, the opposition *vis-à-vis* the Memorandum and the issue of permanence in the Eurozone which motivated citizens to vote for the GD.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 5. Electoral Motives in the 2012 parliamentary election**

| Motives                          | Voters of Golden Dawn (in %) | All voters (in %) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| To create a one-party government | 8                            | 39                |
| To create a coalition government | 14                           | 35                |
| The rise of a strong opposition  | 38                           | 11                |
| To reject political parties      | 40                           | 14                |
| Discussions on Memorandum        | 71                           | 53                |
| Discussions on Euro              | 47                           | 29                |

Source: Exit Poll May & June 2012.

What kind of voters are right-wing extremist voters and the voters of the extreme right in general? Fieschi, Morris & Cabalero (2012) distinguish among

<sup>16</sup> Georgiadou, V. (2013) Right-Wing Populism and Extremism: The Rapid Rise of "Golden Dawn" in Crisis-Ridden Greece', in Melzer, R. & Serafin, S. (eds.), *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe. Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and Labour-Market Oriented Exit-Strategies*, Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert Foundation.



- committed radicals: “people who vote for a RPP and are close to a RPP”,
- reluctant radicals: “people who vote for a RPP but are not close to a RPP”, and
- potential radicals: “people who do not vote for a RPP but who are against immigration”.<sup>17</sup>

So far, we do not dispose sufficient data in order to be able to discern the GD voters with a similar typology. However, we can discern their political congruence (according to their ideological distance from the party positions) in three categories:

**Table 6. Ideological proximity to the Golden Dawn in 2012**

| Ideological distance from Golden Dawn | National Elections, National elections |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
|                                       | May 2012<br>(in %)                     | June 2012<br>(in%) |
| Too close                             | 44                                     | 48                 |
| Neither nor                           | 37                                     | 37                 |
| Far away                              | 19                                     | 15                 |

Source: Exit Poll May & June 2012.

With regard to Golden Dawn voters and their proximity to the party they have voted for, almost half of those admitted that they are very close to it, while one-fifth to one-sixth remained ideologically unaffected by the Golden Dawn (Table 6). Those who have voted for the right-wing extremist party without sharing its ideology constitute a small part of the entire electorate of Golden Dawn.

<sup>17</sup> Fieschi, C., Morris, M. & Caballero, L. (2012) *Recapturing the Reluctant Radical*, London: Counterpoint,  
<http://tsforum.event123.no/UD/rehc2013/pop.cfm?FuseAction=Doc&pAction=View&pDocumentId=46621>

### Concluding remark

The enduring and constant lack of public policies *vis-à-vis* immigration contributed to the electoral increase of the Golden Dawn. Voting for Golden Dawn was a choice of rejection rather than a positive one. Voting for the Golden Dawn meant almost for the half of its electorate voting against all the others: the institutions, the ideologies, and the establishment. For more than a year after the elections the political system seemed unable to address the problem of right-wing extremism and face the Golden Dawn: the Conservatives tried to respond to its accusations by embracing the “law and order” and the anti-immigrant agenda in order to attract the GD electorate; the Socialists and the Left tried to stigmatize the Extreme Right and to put it at the margins. Nor the one, neither the other seem to be appropriate methods to confront with it.

Since the brutal murder of the anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, the public outraged that followed and serious EU pressures in order to deal with the problem, the democratic institutions have found a way of reaction towards criminal actions engaged by the extremist party. The public prosecutor has labeled the GD a criminal organization and several party members have been arrested. Among them, the leader, the party sub-leader, the spokesman, the press officer and the man who constituted the link between the parliamentary group and the party’s paramilitary structure. The GD is linked to multiple offenses, among which murder, attempted murder, aggravated assault, trafficking, kidnapping, money-laundering and extortion.

Prosecution of the party members is reflected with losses in public support towards the GD in the polls. Nonetheless, the fact that the party keeps a stable support equal or even superior to its electoral forces needs to raise awareness on the strong roots on populism and extremism in the Greek society and eventual institutional responses of countering the phenomenon.