National populism and xenophobia in Greece

Aristos Doxiadis
Manos Matsaganis

COUNTERPOINT

Supported by:
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Counterpoint is a research and advisory group that uses social science methods to examine social, political and cultural dynamics. With a focus on how civil society operates in different contexts, Counterpoint helps organisations to develop solutions for more resilient and prosperous societies.

Published by Counterpoint 2012

www.counterpoint.uk.com

ISBN: 978-1-909499-02-7
Copy edited by: Julie Pickard
Series design by modernactivity
Typeset by modernactivity
Printed by Lecturis
Text & cover paper: Munken Print White
Set in **Transport** & Scala

National populism and xenophobia in Greece

Aristos Doxiadis
Manos Matsaganis

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Nikos Marantzidis, Vasiliki Georgiadou and Chrysa Leventi for comments and suggestions. Obviously, the authors alone are responsible for all views expressed here, and their interpretation of the evidence.

Counterpoint would like to thank the Open Society Foundations for their generous support of the project 'Recapturing Europe's Reluctant Radicals'.

Introduction: the rise of xenophobic populism in Greece

The success of Golden Dawn (a formerly marginal political formation on the criminal' fringe of the far right) in the 2012 general elections has caught the attention of world media. Its spokesmen's vitriolic rhetoric (including the denial that the Holocaust really took place[2]) and its supporters' violent practice (ranging from the systematic intimidation of foreign immigrants to a series of well-documented cases of criminal attacks) have rightly caused widespread consternation at home and abroad.

Nevertheless, we maintain that the rise of Golden Dawn was not as sudden, nor its set of beliefs as alien to those held by the majority of Greeks, as many commentators seem to imply. On the contrary, as we seek to illustrate in this pamphlet, the party's electoral success to a considerable extent rested on a widely shared worldview, which has been consolidated in Greece over the last two decades, and has now come to resemble something of a national consensus. In this sense, Golden Dawn, rather than being an embarrassing outlier, is in many ways a mere manifestation of that consensus, albeit at its most violent (but also 'logical') extreme.

More specifically, we argue that we can make better sense of the recent rise of xenophobic populism in Greece if we set it against the background of five distinct but related developments:

- The consolidation of national exceptionalism as the default worldview of most Greeks: a widely accepted set

of beliefs that has helped turn xenophobic populism into a mainstream ideology.

- The discontent associated with the mass influx of foreign immigrants in what was until recently a relatively homogeneous country, causing legitimate concerns about rising crime in inner city areas but also racist and near-racist reactions.
- The political fallout from the economic crisis, the longest and most severe in Greece's modern history, and its disruptive effects in a social context which is conducive to populism and nationalism.
- The rise of national populism as an economic ideology: a set of reflexes originally to be observed mostly on the left, more recently spilling over to other political areas.
- The culture of lawlessness and disobedience: this was always there, but has become much more pronounced in recent years, as people have lost faith in the political system and in the institutions of law enforcement.

Before we move to that, let us return to the results of the two general elections of 6 May and 17 June 2012 – destined to be seen by future historians as a watershed in the country's political history. We will show that there is in fact a continuum of xenophobic and/or populist forces in Greece, at both ends of the political spectrum, with sharply opposing views on many important issues, but (more than they care to admit, even to themselves) also drawing on a set of common beliefs. We will also describe the social and demographic characteristics of those voting for xenophobic populist parties.

1

The anatomy of national populism: the general elections of May and June 2012

The two recent general elections, held in quick succession on 6 May and 17 June 2012, and dominated by the question of the country's place in Europe and the Eurozone, confirmed that xenophobic and/or populist forces are on the ascendancy.

A dramatically changed political landscape

To a considerable extent, the rise of national populism would not have been possible were it not for the sharp decline of mainstream parties. Indeed, the results of the May 2012 general election changed the political landscape beyond recognition. The two parties that had monopolised power in Greece for nearly four decades since the restoration of democracy in 1974, the conservative New Democracy and the socialist PASOK, both sank to a historic low: their combined share of the vote did not exceed 35.6%.

Just how astonishing this showing was can be seen by the fact that two and a half years before, in the October 2009 general election, the two parties had obtained between them more than twice as much (77.4% of all votes), which in turn had been the worst performance of Greece's two-party system since 1977! Specifically, in May 2012 New Democracy polled 18.85%, down from 33.47% in October 2009, while PASOK fared even worse: 13.18% of the vote, compared to 43.92% two and a half years earlier.

The decline of New Democracy and PASOK can be traced to the failures of the post-*junta* Republic, which they led for almost four decades, corruption and clientelism being its most visible distortions. However, there is little doubt that the two parties also paid the price for their support of the austerity policies stemming from the bailout package[3] of May 2010 and its subsequent updates. The fact that that support was half-hearted clearly failed to stop the erosion of the two parties' electoral strength (even though it certainly limited the effectiveness of those policies in balancing the budget and setting the economy on the way to sustainable growth).

The new demarcation lines

The sudden end to a decade of high rates of economic growth (based on strong consumer demand, boosted in turn by cheap credit) was coupled with the humiliation of international supervision and the subsequent transfer of sovereignty from the national government to the IMF–EC–ECB 'troika', now dictating economic and much of all other domestic policy. Their combined effect was more than sufficient to inflame political passions to a level not seen since the end of the 1946–49 Civil War.

As a result of Greece's near bankruptcy in 2010, the resulting austerity and the recession that followed, political conflict assumed new characteristics. On the one hand, more Greeks than in the past, even though still a minority, looked themselves in the mirror and began to ask the obvious questions: How had the country ended up in that mess? What could be done to ensure that it never happened again? And, how in the meantime could they weather the austerity in the most effective and equitable way possible? On the other hand, many Greeks went into denial. They refused to take any sort of critical look at the model of economic development that had led to

high deficits and debt, and on the everyday practices that underpinned this model. They preferred to pin the blame on narrowly defined targets, such as a small group of politicians, corrupt businesspeople, and above all, foreign bankers and speculators.

The bailout Agreement with the troika, approved by Parliament in May 2010, was demonised right from the start as being imposed on Greece by a half-foreign prime minister, who was beholden more to global capital than to the interests of the Greek people. It did not help that most government ministers sought to avoid blame, by suggesting that the austerity and reform policies in the Agreement were wrong, unjust, ineffective, etc, and that they had to implement them only because our foreign creditors demanded it. It did not help that Antonis Samaras, as leader of the right-wing opposition, immediately rejected the bailout Agreement in its totality (only to begin implementing a newer version recently, when he gained power). Outside the Prime Minister's narrow circle, no major political grouping came up with anything resembling either qualified support for the Agreement, or an alternative rescue plan that could be presented to Greece's EU partners.

Many observers therefore believe that the political tactics of all or most parties are the cause for the angry rejection of any form of austerity and reform package by most people across the political spectrum. It may well be that a different set of party tactics would have contained the rise of extremist feelings. But there were also grassroots processes at work, independent of what leading politicians were doing.

The broader public narrative was shaped not only in traditional media but also, to a very large extent, in blogs and social media on the one hand, and in street protests on the other. These were not controlled by parties to any significant extent. In the media, both old and new,

positions quickly crystallised into two poles, pro- and anti-Memorandum. Almost every take on the crisis was tagged into one of the two poles, sometimes unfairly. Nuances and variations often got lost in the increasing polarisation and accusations of the two camps.

The vast majority of 'anti-Memorandum' politicians and commentators did not propose any alternative strategy to deal with the crisis. Often, the implication was that the bailout Agreement was more to blame for the sudden drop in incomes than the unsustainable economic model that preceded the Agreement. This enabled them to focus the discussion (such as it was) on the actions of specific centres of power: the Greek government, and Mr Papandreou in particular; the German government, and Mrs Merkel in particular; the ECB acting as agent of the French and German banks; and so on. It deflected discussion from any painful choices that might divide 'the people'.

This, of course, is the fundamental axiom of all forms of populism: any ills originate from outside 'the people', who are united in their interest. There are no major contradictions or issues to be resolved within this homogeneous entity. There is always an enemy exogenous to the people that must be expelled or demolished, so that prosperity can be attained.

In the case of Greece, this other pole was immediately in 2010 located among foreigners: it was global financial capital and/or 'neo-liberal' politicians in Europe. Those (presumably few) Greeks who attempted to reach an agreement with these foreigners could only be their agents, or their 'willing' stooges (as in 'coalition of the willing' in Donald Rumsfeld's phrase about the Iraq war). In the words of Alexis Tsipras, politicians implementing the Memorandum were 'less Greek' than the rest of us.

Based on this simple polarity, of Greek people versus foreign banks and their stooges, a set of new or transformed political parties grew in popularity, dominated

the public sphere, and made great gains in the elections of 2012. The codeword for this broad spectrum was *'anti-mnimoniakoi'* – the anti-Memorandum front. This broad spectrum is what we refer to in this pamphlet as 'national populism'. Chapter 5 presents the main tenets of this new populist economic narrative.[4]

The 'Indignados' movement

As the austerity measures began to bite, and the recession deepened, large groups of people – now more radicalised than ever before – refused to take (any) responsibility and turned against a variety of culprits, some more improbable than others: the two main parties of course, which until recently had been happily chosen in free elections by equal large majorities, more often than not by the very same people; then 'foreigners' as in the IMF, but also the EU, and – in wilder versions – the Bilderberg Group, Henry Kissinger and other assorted Jews; then 'foreigners' again, as in immigrants from Africa and Asia, replacing earlier waves from the former Eastern Bloc, in terms of arithmetic significance, but also as threats to the national body in popular imagination.

This potent mix reached a paroxysm in the spring and summer of 2011, when the central square of Athens, Syntagma ('Constitution') Square, with the Parliament at one end and the Ministry of the Economy at the other, was occupied for several weeks by a heterogeneous multitude: thousands of people simply describing themselves as 'Indignados'. The far right and the far left (positioned in the Upper and Lower Square respectively) coexisted largely peacefully, going their separate ways in terms of improvised debates and other events, but also occasionally chanting the same slogans against politicians, Parliament, and of course foreigners (of various hues).

Elective affinities?

The coexistence of far left and far right at Syntagma Square during 'the long summer of the Indignados' left its mark. For all their differences, and in spite of the occasional protestations of party leaders, at grassroots level the radical left and the nationalist right discovered they had rather a lot in common, and began to take a more sympathetic view of each other. Quite astonishingly (even though not entirely unpredictably), a recent poll[5] found that, among radical left (SYRIZA) voters, the approval rate of Nikos Mihaloliakos (leader of the criminally anti-immigrant Golden Dawn) was 16%, while that of Panos Kammenos (leader of the hysterically nationalist Independent Greeks) was 52%. The sympathy was to some extent reciprocal: the approval rate of SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras among Independent Greeks voters was 38%, and among Golden Dawn voters 14%.

National populism at the polls I: May 2012

As the summer holiday season began in earnest, the occupation of Syntagma Square slowly dwindled and then ended, but the energies released by the heterogeneous multitude of the 'Indignados' paved the way to the electoral success of the equally heterogeneous 'national-populist'[6] bloc in the general election of 6 May 2012.

On the left:

- SYRIZA (the 'Coalition of the Radical Left') emerged as the main beneficiary of political instability and the erosion of support for mainstream parties. Its share of the vote rose to 16.78% (from 4.60% in 2009). SYRIZA, having established itself as a prominent champion of foreign immigrants and their rights, can hardly be described as xenophobic. Nevertheless, many of its spokesmen and most of its activists clearly adopt an anti-western

stance that is anti-imperialist in origin, often (especially at the grassroots) assuming shades of anti-semitism not always successfully dissimulated as anti-zionism. This stance, shared with other forces of the left, is often indistinguishable from that of the extreme right.
- The Communist Party (KKE), the most pro-Soviet communist party in the West (when the USSR still existed), surviving as the most consistently anti-western political force in Greece (the only parliamentary party explicitly rejecting the country's membership of NATO as well as the EU), also did well at the polls: 8.48%, up from 7.54% in 2009.
- Among the scattered forces of the far left, all failing to clear the 3% barrier as required for entry in Parliament, the best result was achieved by ANTARSYA (the 'Anti-capitalist Left Alliance'): 1.19%, a significant improvement on its 2009 performance (0.36%). Unlike KKE, ANTARSYA had taken active part in the 'Indignados' movement of 2011. Earlier, at the local election of November 2010, the party had scored a small victory collecting enough votes in Athens (2.87% of total) to enter the municipal council electing one councillor.

At the other end of the political spectrum:

- Golden Dawn, as is well known, did spectacularly well: 6.97%, up from no more than 0.29% in 2009. As a foretaste of things to come, party leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos (now an MP), having entered the race for mayor of Athens in November 2010, was elected councillor after polling a surprising 5.29% (reaching as much as 14.70% in the infamous Aghios Panteleimon area, where the presence of immigrants was highest).[7]
- Independent Greeks, a vociferously nationalist formation calling for the unilateral denunciation of the bailout package, which had only shortly before come to life as a

splinter group of New Democracy, saw its share of the vote reach 10.61%, briefly emerging as the fourth largest party in the land.

- Less successfully, LAOS (the 'Popular Orthodox Rally'), formerly the main party of the far right, having joined PASOK and New Democracy in a coalition government under former Governor of the Bank of Greece Loukas Papademos in November 2011, suffered what seemed to be a terminal blow: from 5.63% (and 15 MPs) in 2009, its share of the vote went down to 2.90% in May 2012, failing by a small margin to clear the 3% barrier and hence enter Parliament.

By comparison, those outside the national-populist consensus fared considerably less well:

- The Greens marginally improved their 2009 performance (2.93% vs. 2.53%), but failed narrowly to clear the 3% barrier. The party had scored its best result in the European Parliament election of 12 June 2009, when it polled 3.49% of the vote and managed to elect one MEP.
- The three formations of the liberal centre (Democratic Alliance, Dimiourgia Xana and Drassi), in spite of a lively campaign that attracted lots of attention, also failed to enter Parliament, even though their combined share of the vote reached 6.50%.
- Democratic Left, founded in June 2010, when the moderate wing of SYRIZA (hundreds of congress delegates including four MPs) walked out in protest at the latter's radical turn, was the sole survivor of those outside the national-populist consensus. The new party quickly became the point of reference for those leftists of a pro-European, anti-populist persuasion. Having skilfully (albeit disappointedly for many of its supporters) refrained from supporting the bailout package and austerity measures, the party obtained a respectable 6.11% of the vote.

National populism at the polls II: June 2012

When the three largest parties (New Democracy, SYRIZA and PASOK) failed to form a government supported by a majority of MPs, a second general election in quick succession became inevitable and was held on 17 June 2012. For many at home and abroad, if SYRIZA were to emerge as the largest party the country's exit from the Eurozone would only be a matter of time. Moreover, electoral law gave the largest party a bonus of 50 MPs. In view of that, the contest became highly polarised, which worked to the benefit of both contenders.

Indeed, New Democracy increased its share of the vote to 29.66% (from 18.85% five weeks earlier),[8] while SYRIZA leaped to 26.89% (from 16.78%). A coalition government was formed, headed by New Democracy (whose leader Antonis Samaras became Prime Minister) and supported by PASOK and Democratic Left. Both parties largely held their ground: PASOK's share of the vote fell a little to 12.28% (from 13.18% in May), while that of Democratic Left rose slightly to 6.26% (from 6.11%). As a result, the new government rested on a combined 48.20% of the vote, and counted on the support of nearly three-fifths of MPs (179 out of 300). Opposition parties shared the remaining 121 seats: SYRIZA 71, Independent Greeks 20, Golden Dawn 18, KKE 12.

On the left, the rally to SYRIZA seemed to have squeezed competitors. KKE fell to 4.50% (from 8.48%) and ANTARSYA to 0.33% (from 1.19%). On the right, Independent Greeks also lost ground to 7.51% (from 10.61%).[9]

All other parties did worse in June than in May and failed to elect MPs.[10] With one notable exception: with 6.92% of the vote compared to 6.97% in May, support to Golden Dawn proved remarkably stable.

As will be made clear in Chapter 2, national populism (with shades of xenophobia) has long been

a staple of Greek politics, and forms at least part of the identity of the two parties that ruled the country in the last two decades: New Democracy and PASOK. Nevertheless, both national populism and xenophobia have changed dramatically (in nature and intensity) since the onset of the current crisis. It is for this reason that in the rest of this pamphlet we focus on the criminally xenophobic Golden Dawn, plus the two leading national-populist parties today, Independent Greeks and SYRIZA.[11]

Characteristics of the xenophobic and/or populist vote (June 2012)[12]

Contrary to expectations, electoral support for Golden Dawn was not limited to the inner city areas, worst affected by crime, and with a strong presence of illegal immigrants. In geographical terms, its vote was quite evenly distributed across the country, with peaks (approaching or exceeding 10%) in Greater Athens, Central Macedonia and especially the Peloponnese. In demographic terms, support for Golden Dawn was skewed towards younger voters (13% and 16% in the 18–24 and 25–34 age groups respectively), and was much higher among men than among women (10% vs. 4%). In terms of education, it share among those with tertiary education was not very different from its total share of the vote (total 7%; primary education 3%; secondary education 9%; tertiary 6%). In terms of occupation, the party vote was above average (11–12%) among the unemployed, private-sector employees and the self-employed. In terms of economic situation, the party was supported by 8% of those reporting that 'they found it difficult to make ends meet', compared to 4% of those stating that 'they got by / lived comfortably'. Unsurprisingly, in terms of self-positioning along a left–right scale, Golden Dawn voters overwhelmingly placed themselves on the right.

More recent evidence shows that the popularity of Golden Dawn is on the rise. While before the June 2012 general election as many as 16% of those asked said they had a favourable view of the party, by October 2012 Golden Dawn's approval rate had gone up to 21%. The proportion of positive views was higher than average among men (25%), those aged 18–44 (30% in the 18–24 age group), residents of small towns (27%) or rural areas (23%), the unemployed (26%), and those with only primary (26%) or secondary education (25%). Relative to June 2012, support for Golden Dawn in October 2012 seemed to have become more evenly distributed in terms of gender and age: it had grown more among women (+6 percentage points, pp) and those aged over 35 (+8 pp in the 45–54 age group). Otherwise, in terms of geography and education, opinion poll findings in October seemed to reinforce those in June: the proportion of respondents with a positive view of Golden Dawn had increased further among residents of small towns or rural areas (+7 pp), persons with secondary education (+7 pp) and, quite spectacularly, among those with primary education only (+13 pp).[13]

Independent Greeks did particularly well in Northern Greece, Greater Athens and some island regions (especially Cyclades and the Dodekanese). The party scored best (10%) among voters aged 25–44, and better among women than among men (9% vs. 6%). In terms of occupation, it was over-represented among the unemployed (11%). Independent Greeks were supported by 9% of those reporting that 'they found it difficult to make ends meet', versus 5% of those stating that 'they got by / lived comfortably'. In terms of the left–right scale, those voting Independent Greeks said they identified with the centre-right and the centre, followed by the right and (even) the centre-left.

SYRIZA emerged as the largest party, obtaining a share of the vote in excess of 30%, in the urban zones

around Athens and Pireaus, in Crete, the Ionian islands, in the former industrial regions of Achaea and Magnesia, in Xanthi and elsewhere. On the whole, the party vote was higher in urban areas (30%) than in semi-urban / rural ones (23% and 22% respectively). Support for the party peaked among youngest voters (37% in the 18–24 age group), falling slightly with age, and was higher among women than men (29% vs. 25%). With respect to occupation, SYRIZA did best among students (39%), followed by the unemployed (37%) and salaried workers (33–34%). SYRIZA was supported by 31% of those reporting that 'they found it difficult to make ends meet', relative to 18% of those stating that 'they got by / lived comfortably'. The party vote fell monotonically as one moved along the left–right scale, but remained substantial among those positioning themselves on the centre-left and even the centre.

On the whole, the formerly dominant parties (New Democracy and PASOK) tended to be preferred by electors of older age, by pensioners and housewives, by those of low educational attainment, and by residents of rural areas. Remarkably, all three parties making up the coalition government (i.e. including Democratic Left) did better among those claiming that 'they got by / lived comfortably' than those who 'found it difficult to make ends meet'.

In contrast, the xenophobic and/or populist vote was highest among the young, the unemployed, and those facing financial difficulties. On this evidence, it is not likely to disappear anytime soon.

Whether or not it has a future, national, often xenophobic, populism in Greece certainly has a past – and, what is more, not as a minority creed exiled to the political fringes, but as mainstream ideology. This is the subject of Chapter 2.

2

National exceptionalism: xenophobic populism as mainstream ideology

'National exceptionalism' is one of the founding myths of modern Greece – perhaps the main one. The idea that the Greek nation is not just distinct but radically different (read: 'superior') than all the others is steeped in history. Current members of the Greek nation learn early in life to assert a direct line of descent from the Classical Greece of Homer, Pericles and Socrates, to take pride in the latter's achievements, to claim them as their own.

Never mind that in 1830, when Greece emerged as a modern state (with decisive support from the Great Powers), after a long War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire (with the active involvement on the battlefield of many hundreds of *philhellenes* from Western Europe and beyond), most Greeks did not define themselves as Greek, and many did not speak the Greek language (itself the subject of many transmutations and bitter controversies over the last two centuries).[14]

The notion that an unbroken line connected Modern Greece to the glory that was Classical Greece proved extremely useful in diplomacy, in 19th-century nation- and state-building, and later as a morale-booster and an antidote to the many failures and disappointments that being a Greek often entailed.

'Fatherland–Religion–Family' (1946–74)

After the 1946–49 Civil War, the mantle of nationalism was monopolised by the victorious right, claiming for its

own supporters (some of whom had actually collaborated with the Nazis in 1941–44) exclusive membership of the national community, and portraying the defeated communists as enemies of the nation. The nationalist rhetoric ('Fatherland–Religion–Family') reached an apogee with the Colonels' *coup d'état* of 1967, and came crashing down together with the military regime in 1974. The event that triggered the Colonels' downfall, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which led to the division of the island lasting to this day, showed that more often than not it is nationalism itself that lies at the root of the most catastrophic national tragedies.

'National Popular Unity' (1974–96)

With right-wing nationalism entirely discredited, and the ruling conservative party (New Democracy, founded in 1974 by Constantine Karamanlis) firmly pro-European and more liberal than ever, the late 1970s witnessed the transformation of nationalist energies. This time it was the new socialist party PASOK (also founded in 1974, by Andreas Papandreou) that played the game of *holier* – i.e. more patriotic – *than thou*. Its rallying cry, the platform of 'National Popular Unity', blended anti-imperialist sentiments, quite diffuse on the left then as now, with the conviction that the 'people' were the sole depositories of wisdom, and a reasserted belief in the timeless allure of the 'national character'.[15]

Early PASOK was a movement not a party (Papandreou never tolerated internal dissent, and had no time for party democracy and other such bourgeois niceties); it was radical (it promised 'socialism'); it was fiercely nationalist ('Greece to the Greeks', a slogan borrowed from Nasser's 'Egypt to the Egyptians') and anti-Turkish; it was anti-western, i.e. against the US, against NATO, and against Greece's entry into the European Economic Community (in 1980, as the

Karamanlis government officially signed the accession treaty, PASOK mobilised its supporters and joined KKE in mass demonstrations against 'the EEC of monopolies').[16]

The recipe proved a winner. PASOK's meteoric rise to a mass party that won one general election after the other and ruled the country for 21 out of the 30 years from 1981 to 2011 amounted to a triumph of national populism.

PASOK in power moderated its anti-western stance, but never entirely abandoned it for as long as Papandreou remained in charge. Under Costas Simitis, PASOK leader and Prime Minister from 1996 to 2004, a pro-European party discourse was tacitly adopted. Too tacitly, most probably: the new party line, taken for granted at leadership level, never really convinced the rank and file. By that time, the anti-American and anti-European sentiments of party activists were too deeply entrenched to go away.

In the meantime, the Berlin Wall had come down, shattering all remaining illusions of 'proletarian internationalism'. Moreover, much nearer home, and too close for comfort, Yugoslavia had imploded into full-scale war, with extensive 'ethnic cleansing' practised on all sides.[17] Both events caused a resurgence of nationalism in Greece, this time across the political spectrum.

'Macedonia is Greek' (1992–?)

In the early 1990s, Greek politics and society were infected by the widespread anxieties associated with the new post-Cold War international order. The influx of hundreds of thousands of Albanian immigrants, who simply crossed the border as their country sank into chaos, caused considerable tension, including a spate of armed robbery and murder cases that shocked public opinion (and, incidentally, shattered the illusion that 'Greeks are not racist').

Even more alarmingly, the Yugoslav war made the Balkans the 'powder keg of Europe' once again, caused

old conflicts to resurface (Orthodox vs. Catholic, Christian vs. Muslim),[18] and for a moment seemed to suggest that Europe's borders were not as inviolable as everybody thought.

In particular, the emergence of a 'Republic of Macedonia' north of the Greek border, as the successor to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was provisionally called, encouraged a siege mentality[19] and ignited an unprecedented wave of nationalist feeling at home.

In February 1992, a huge rally took place in Thessaloniki, the administrative capital of the Greek region of Macedonia. Speakers included the conservative mayor, the city's Orthodox bishop, representatives of all political parties (except KKE) and others. Schools and public services helpfully remained closed for the day, allowing the (largely voluntary) participation of thousands of school children and civil servants in the rally. All in all, an estimated one million people marched, chanting 'Macedonia is Greek', many going a bit further ('Freedom to Northern Epirus', i.e. Southern Albania, home to a Greek minority), some shouting blood-curdling slogans (such as 'Axe and fire to the Skopje dogs').

In April 1992, all political parties were invited to a Council of Political Leaders chaired by President of the Republic Constantine Karamanlis: they all agreed to refuse to recognise any state that called itself 'Macedonia', or had the word 'Macedonian' in its name. After that, the Greek government (under Constantine Mitsotakis, New Democracy leader and prime minister) hardened its stance, rejecting all attempts at compromise (including the mediation of the European Union at the Lisbon summit of June 1992).

At the Council of Political Leaders, a seven-point plan of aggressive action on the 'Macedonian Question' was presented by the then young Foreign Minister Antonis Samaras (the prime minister of Greece since June 2012).

Both the president of the Republic and the prime minister rejected the plan, and forced Samaras to resign.

Both Karamanlis and Mitsotakis feared that, while a full-scale war raged north of Greece's border, a seemingly innocuous dispute over the neighbour's name could easily spin out of control. Nevertheless, putting the nationalist genie back in the bottle proved impossible. In August 1992, the Greek government imposed an oil embargo on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

With PASOK and Papandreou back in power, the dispute escalated. In February 1994, the Greek government closed down the Greek General Consulate in Skopje, and extended the scope of the embargo to all goods except food and pharmaceuticals.[20] That went down rather well with public opinion: when 300 personalities from the democratic left and the liberal centre signed a letter of protest against the embargo, they were ignored by the government, ridiculed by the media, and viciously attacked in publications (and, later, websites) of the far right.

Since then, the 'Macedonian Question' has been left open. Due to opposition from Greece, the country officially goes by the name of 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM). Even though a member of the UN (since 1993) and other international organisations, FYROM has failed to gain either an invitation to join NATO or a start date for accession talks with the EU – because of the Greek veto.

At about the same time, as everyday life began to change under the impact of mass immigration (whose real or imaginary effects began to dominate first the evening news then political debate), xenophobic nationalism became consolidated, its racist undertones more and more pronounced.

The role of the Greek Orthodox Church, with its centuries-old hostility to the West and all it represents, was quite instrumental in all that.

The Church versus the Government

Far more interested in 'national issues' than in Christian charity, the Greek Orthodox Church began to assert its role as guardian of the nation's purity against all sorts of threats, old and new. This reached new heights under the ten-year reign of Archbishop Christodoulos (1998–2008), whose popularity and media success led him to challenge the authority of the government on any issue deemed 'of vital interest' to the Church.

In May 2000, a month after the general election that returned to office the socialist 'modernisers' of Costas Simitis, Minister of Justice Michalis Stathopoulos announced that since religion was a personal question, the government intended to remove the field 'Religion' from the new version of citizen identity cards about to be issued. A few days later, the Hellenic Data Protection Authority pronounced the Minister's position consistent with respect for privacy as enshrined in recent legislation. Soon after that, in response to a parliamentary question tabled by his conservative opposite number, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Minister had his full support.

Archbishop Christodoulos was furious.[21] In June 2000, the Holy Synod organised two mass rallies, first in Thessaloniki then in Athens. In September 2000, when that failed to budge the government, it called for a referendum, starting to collect signatures in support of its demand. In August 2001, he handed a list of (allegedly) three million signatures to Constantine Stefanopoulos, then President of the Republic. It was only when the latter, putting respect for the Constitution above his personal beliefs, refused to second the Church's demand that the issue began to die away.

In spite of this setback, Church leaders (the Archbishop himself but also the bishops, or at least some of them) continued to pontificate on a variety of issues, including the presence of black immigrants on the streets

of Athens (dismissed contemptuously) and the bailout package that kept the Greek state functioning (condemned in no uncertain terms).

The previous rise of the far right

Hostility to immigrants and a reasserted Orthodox identity were the key ingredients to the success of LAOS (the 'Popular Orthodox Rally'). The party (founded September 2000), originally a breakaway from New Democracy, exploited the shrewdness and media savvy of its leader George Karatzaferis to make a splash.

Rather moderate by the standards of Golden Dawn, the agenda of LAOS emphasised law and order, and featured calls for the repatriation of those illegal immigrants in excess of a certain limit and 'not needed' for their skills. The party also made symbolic gestures towards die-hard supporters of the 1967–74 military *junta*, including the demand that those officers still in jail for their role in the coup should be released 'on humanitarian grounds'. On the whole, LAOS managed (for a while) to attract 'traditional conservative and ultra right voters, who were disaffected by New Democracy and its shift [to] the centre of the left–right ideological scale'.[22]

In electoral terms, although it failed to enter the national parliament in March 2004 (having won 2.2% of the vote), LAOS entered the European Parliament in June of the same year (4.1%). It did better in the general election of September 2007 (3.8% and 10 MPs), and better still in October 2009 (5.6% and 15 MPs), having achieved its best ever result in the European Parliament election of June 2009 (7.2% and 2 MEPs).

As described earlier, at about this point the party's fortunes ebbed. Its decision to enter the coalition government of Loukas Papademos in November 2011, itself a confirmation that LAOS had gained the respectability it coveted,

proved fateful: its share of the vote shrank first to 2.9% in May 2012, and lower still to 1.6% in June 2012. As of now, the party, left with no seats in Parliament, is in disarray – with some of its former MPs (including the two ministers under Papademos) having joined the New Democracy of Antonis Samaras.

Xenophobic nationalism as mainstream ideology

As the previous analysis demonstrates, undercurrents of xenophobic nationalism have now become accepted parts of popular culture and are present in the political discourse of mainstream parties.

In light of that, it should come as no surprise that a recent survey[23] found that 63% of respondents thought 'the Greek nation superior to other nations' (up from 43% in 2011), nor that 65% said 'they were willing to support what the country did irrespective of whether it was right or wrong' (up from 41% in 2011).

On the whole, national populism PASOK-style (since the mid-1970s) and the 'Macedonian Question' (since the early 1990s) built on deeply rooted notions of 'national exceptionalism' and helped legitimise xenophobic nationalism once again – in the media, across the political spectrum and in society at large. Mass immigration into Greece, first from the Balkans and Eastern Europe, then from Asia and Africa, gave it a further boost. The current economic crisis, often experienced as causing impotence and humiliation, has made it the default reflex of both left and right. It is only in this broader context that one can make proper sense of the recent electoral success of Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks and – in a different sense – SYRIZA.

3

The role of immigration

Apart from the impact of the crisis, it can hardly be denied that the rise of xenophobic populist parties is related to recent immigration trends. More specifically, in the space of merely two decades Greece completed the transition from source to destination of migration movements.

In the early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Albanians crossed the border. That first wave of alien migrants caused moral panic and in the view of many was associated with increased crime. In retrospect, it is now commonly accepted that they settled in remarkably well, and their return to Albania in the current crisis is seen as something of a loss. Their economic role was to provide useful cheap labour for micro-employers. While this undeniably contributed to the high rates of growth experienced in the last two decades prior to the crisis, it also kept alive a whole range of otherwise uncompetitive economic activities, while it also had a modest displacement effect in certain sectors of the labour market (particularly in construction).

The recent influx of many hundred thousand migrants from Africa and Asia through the Turkish border is proving more resistant to integration and/or assimilation. It has been associated with a sharp rise in crime and a growing sense of insecurity among residents of inner city areas, in Athens and elsewhere.

It was in the neighbourhood of Aghios Panteleimon in Athens, where thousands of undocumented immigrants have flocked since 2008, that Golden Dawn began

its recent ascent to becoming a national political force. There, it capitalised on the fear and angst of the locals. Many of them, independently of Golden Dawn, were discussing forming vigilante groups. Even a few left-wingers were talking of the right to bear arms.[24] In Aghios Panteleimon, at least, it seems that support for Golden Dawn was a reaction to immigration. 'If the problem were to be solved tomorrow, Golden Dawn would finish tomorrow', says a local resident.[25]

The issue is not just crime. Many Greeks are disturbed by the sight of their neighbourhood filling up with dark foreigners, often idle and sickly looking. In parts of central Athens, where poor and unemployed immigrants concentrate, many locals feel displaced or unsafe. Even in areas where immigrants work for a pittance and are being exploited by local farmers and builders, they are despised and sometimes hated. Fear of the 'other' is deep rooted.

Surveys record the general mood as one of growing unease and, often, open hostility to immigration. The survey mentioned above,[26] conducted in May 2012, revealed that 68% of respondents believed that 'immigrants from less developed countries had better not come to Greece at all' (up from 59% in 2011). That contrasted with the findings of a recent Eurobarometer survey,[27] also conducted in May 2012, according to which only 14% of respondents in Greece cited 'crime' and 7% 'immigration' among the most important issues facing the country at the moment (max. two answers), while the corresponding figures in the EU as a whole were 11% and 8% respectively. In any case, both issues were thwarted by concerns about the economy: in Greece 66% of respondents mentioned 'the economic situation' and another 57% 'unemployment' (relative to 35% and 46% respectively in the EU as a whole).

That there are too many immigrants in Greece has become something of conventional wisdom. Is this true?

As the latest Eurostat data[28] show, there is certainly a higher percentage of immigrants in the population in Greece than in the European Union as a whole: in 2011 foreign citizens made up 8.5% of the Greek population (citizens of countries outside the EU: 7.1%), compared to 6.6% (4.1%) for the EU as a whole. Leaving aside Estonia and Latvia, with the peculiar situation of 'recognised non-citizens' mainly from the former Soviet Union, only Spain and Cyprus hosted a higher percentage of non-EU citizens than Greece – and then only marginally so (7.2% and 7.4% respectively).

A similar story emerges when one looks at those born in a foreign country (which allows for differences in the scope of policies of 'naturalisation' of foreign citizens in the host country): the proportion of the population foreign-born was 11.1% in Greece versus 8.8% in the EU (8.3% vs. 6.4% respectively if only those born outside the EU are considered).

Given that official statistics typically underestimate the extent of illegal immigration, the gap between Greece and the rest of Europe may in fact be larger. As the annual reports of FRONTEX (cited by FRA, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights) document, 90% of all illegal immigrants to Europe cross the Greek land and sea border with Turkey.[29] This is corroborated by Greek police statistics, according to which as many as 712,000 persons were apprehended upon crossing the country's borders irregularly in 2006–2011.

Even though the overwhelming majority of those entering the country do not in fact intend to settle there but try to reach other EU countries, Greece's obligations under the Dublin II Treaty render this practically impossible: on the one hand, the western border (the sea border with Italy) is better and more easily policed than the eastern one; on the other hand, those managing to escape to Italy or elsewhere risk being returned to

Greece if caught – or did so until October 2010, when the European Court of Human Rights, alarmed by the manner in which Greek authorities handled the humanitarian crisis along the north-eastern border, called for a halt of transfers to Greece.

Turning to crime, there can be no doubt that the rise of immigration has coincided with a sharp increase in crime rates. This increase has been nothing less than spectacular with respect to petty crime, such as burglaries (from fewer than 42,000 cases in 1991 to 97,000 in 2011) and especially car thefts (from around 850 cases in 1991 to over 32,000 in 2011). Armed robberies also became six times as common, their number rising from around 1,000 in 1991 to more than 6,000 in 2011. In spite of a few horrible well-publicised cases that caught the popular imagination, the number of murder cases in Greece over the last two decades fluctuated (rather than increasing monotonically): the number of cases rose steadily from 138 in 1991 to a peak of 203 in 1997, then fell rapidly to 94 in 2002, only to rise again to 143 in 2009 – and more steeply to 184 in 2011.

Of course, not all victims are Greek and not all criminals are foreign: crime is often confined within the immigrant population, while (as the recent cases of Asian and African immigrants violently attacked by racist mobs illustrate[30]) it can also go the other way.

4

Social structure and the crisis

Up until late 2009, when it became apparent to all that the economy was in deep trouble, most Greeks were firmly pro-European. Despite the ideology of national exceptionalism, the great majority would be offended if anybody suggested that we do not belong to the core of Europe, and very few questioned the benefits that Greece derived from being a member of the European Union.

For many, this changed drastically within a few months. The mood shifted to one of suspicion or hostility towards the government, political parties and European institutions. According to the findings of Eurobarometer surveys, between November 2009 and June 2010 the proportion of Greeks responding that they tended to trust the European Union fell from 60% to 19%. Over the same period, trust in the national government declined from 44% to 25%, trust in the national parliament from 47% to 23%, while trust in political parties declined from 19% to 9%.[31]

This was beyond any rational questioning of the pros and cons of the Eurozone, or of how to share the burden of accumulated past debt. It was a reaction of blame, anger and defiance. To understand this attitude, it helps to look at some aspects of Greece's social structure, and of Greeks' economic behaviour.

Petit bourgeois, protected, fragmented and low trust

Compared to all other members of the EU, and of most of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), Greece has an exceptionally high number of self-employed and of micro-employers. Very few private-sector employees work in sizeable companies, and even fewer have careers in them. Most households own some land or a house, and many own their business. It is largely a *petit bourgeois* society. This has been a permanent feature of Greek society since the creation of the modern state in the 1830s.

The size of the state by conventional metrics is about average for a European country, but its influence on the incomes of private households, and especially of the middle class, is extraordinary. Whereas in northern Europe states typically provide public services for all and a safety net for the most needy, in Greece a major function of the state is to provide, or to support, the incomes of middle-class occupational groups, during their working age. Thus it provides pensions to selected groups from an early age, while they can still be active for many more years; it gives salaries and benefits in public utilities that are way over what would be paid in the private sector; it enables engineers, journalists and lawyers to have comfortable pensions without having to set aside much from their current income. Further, by regulation it protects pharmacists, truck owners, tour guides and shopkeepers from competition; by turning a blind eye, it allows civil servants, doctors and planning officers to profit from their position; by tolerating tax evasion, it supports income from self-employment; and it allows many farmers to have incomes for doing nothing, often through fraud.

All this has created a large middle class (broadly defined) that has relied to a large extent on a profligate state and a set of protective barriers.

A polarised labour market reflects and reinforces the state's role: over-protected 'insiders' (working in the public sector, in public utilities, and to a diminishing extent in banking) coexist with unprotected 'outsiders' (active in

micro and small firms, often 'informally'), and under-protected 'mid-siders' (formal employees in larger firms of the non-banking private sector).

Outsiders work in precarious jobs, usually badly paid and often uninsured. However, up until the onset of the crisis, an underclass (in the fashion of US urban ghettoes or of French *banlieues*) was far more limited in Greece, or concerned only recent immigrants from South Asia and Africa. Jobless or precariously employed Greeks typically were the wives or (grown up) children of 'male breadwinners' with steady jobs paying 'family wages'. Small ownership, multiple sources of income and family support played the role of an informal safety net, preventing precariousness or unemployment from becoming acute social issues. The crisis has changed all that: unemployment and precarious employment no longer spare male breadwinners. But the informal safety net, although under pressure, is still there.

In the upper tiers of society, the Greek elite is composed of public works contractors, global shipping magnates, medium-sized local employers, politicians, media personalities, lawyers, doctors, and a few other high-status professions. Most of these are neither large employers in the country, nor work for large companies.

Prevailing behaviour corresponds to this fragmented and protected occupational structure. Distributional politics rarely takes the form of conflict and settlement between large capitalist employers and organised labour. Rather, it centres around government budgets and ministerial decrees that may improve or damage the income or priviliges of particular groups. Most of the time, industrial action is addressed to the state, either as employer, or as regulator.

Much of this give and take between government and special interests is completely opaque, so that the degree of equity of specific policies cannot be easily

assessed with hard data. Independent studies[32] show that the distribution of pensions and other social benefits is skewed towards powerful occupations, rather than towards the needy; but this has not been a central issue in public debate.

In the private sector, firms in unprotected industries prefer short-term opportunist strategies to long-term planning. Tax evasion, 'moonlighting' and breaching of regulations are widespread, and often (but not always) necessary preconditions for survival. Firms in protected sectors also have little incentive to plan for efficiency and innovation.

The cultural traits of a low-trust society (documented in value surveys, and familiar to anyone living or doing business in the country) underpin these patterns of behaviour: cooperation is difficult, sticking to commitments is given low priority, respect for different points of view is rare.[33]

Crisis and anger

This was the society that sank into deep recession in 2009. The drop in incomes was dramatic. Between the end of 2009 and the end of 2011 GDP contracted by over 10%, and is set to fall further by at least 5% in 2012. Disposable income fell even more due to a sharp increase in the tax burden: a burden which falls unfairly on wage earners and pensioners, since they are the ones whose income can be taxed directly, and therefore don't have as much opportunity to evade taxes.

Official unemployment shot up from 8.6% in June 2009 to 23.9% and rising in June 2012. Unofficial unemployment is probably higher, and there is now extensive under-employment among the self-employed. No one in the public sector has been laid off, so the whole burden fell to private-sector workers.

Many working-class and lower-middle-class people faced destitution in the space of a few months. As the Greek welfare state was not geared to supporting the weakest, benefits for the unemployed and basic services for the poorest are grossly inadequate, at a time when they are most needed. While there are as yet few homeless Greeks, many more are reduced to scouring the garbage containers in the streets looking for food and other necessities.

The sharp drop in incomes would be more bearable if people were given hope that the hardship would be temporary. But to this day, no one has provided a convincing vision of revival in the near future. This deepens the sense of despair, and has led many to seek to pin the blame and to vent their anger on a handful of easily identified targets.

Because of the class structure outlined above, standard class politics does not apply. Few people believe that taxing corporate profits would solve the fiscal issue and restore justice, because there are not that many corporations to tax. There are few large employers to blame for their insensitive workplace practices. Tax evaders and harsh employers abound; but they are very many and as a rule not so wealthy.

So, who are the most popular objects of anger?

Inside the country, the political class is the primary target. This makes sense, since the crisis in Greece was, in the first instance, a crisis of public debt and of public deficits over many years. At a deeper level, politicians were, for many people, the equivalent of large corporate employers in industrialised economies: guarantors of income and of pensions, and even definers of occupational identity. Once politicians became unable to provide that, they became the enemy, in much the same way as a capitalist employer does, when he lays off employees.

Furthermore, in a state where there is no defined accountability of individual entities (be they hospitals, schools, municipalities, public enterprises or pension

funds), a fiscal crisis cannot be contained by targeting the worst offenders; all are guilty and all are victims. So anger can be focused only towards the top, i.e. the government. The culture of fudge and subsidise, which politicians fostered in order to keep public-sector employees happy, has now turned against them.

In addition, many politicians are known or assumed to be corrupt. Most people disliked that, even in good times, but were willing to overlook it. But now, ill-gotten wealth can no longer be forgiven.

So, one slogan which united all 'Indignados' at Syntagma Square was 'burn down the bordello Parliament'. And one demand which is reiterated by people of all persuasions, pro- and anti-Memorandum, pro- and anti-government, is: 'put (some of) them in jail'.

Beyond that, blame and targets diverge. Inside Greece, tax evaders are one group of culprits, and idle public employees are another. Political ideology influences which group is seen as most to blame.

But, here is one interesting distinction: it is moderates who are most vocal on these issues. National populists, at both ends of the spectrum, tend to downplay both tax evasion (except among the very rich) and idle or corrupt bureaucrats as important issues. Because everybody has friends, relatives or neighbours who evade tax, and others who are on the government payroll, to campaign against these would be to divide 'the people'; and that would defeat the populists' strategy.

5

National populist economic ideology

Greek politicians may be high on the list of culprits for the crisis in popular narratives, but it is powerful foreigners who are by far the biggest villains. This view, as explained earlier, is an ideal foundation for populist politics.

Originally anti-American, anti-imperialist and leftist, populist economic ideology has recently morphed into a broader anti-western, anti-globalisation and anti-market stance gathering support from across the political spectrum.

The rise of charlatan economics is a more recent twist of the above. Aided by social media, a new type of economics pundit has emerged, devising 'explanations' of the crisis based on conspiracy theories, or on extreme anti-capitalist narratives, taking a hold on popular imagination.

A look at the most viewed Greek videos on YouTube is instructive. The most popular video that we have found (excluding music clips) is titled *The Video that ALL GREEKS MUST see.*[34] In 15 minutes it packs an astounding collection of fabricated stories and bizarre interpretations of the bailout agreements, interwoven with valid questions about the government's actions and reports of real suffering.

It quotes an oft-cited fake Henry Kissinger 'talk' of 1974, in which Kissinger purportedly said that the USA should conduct a campaign to degrade the Greek language and eliminate Greek culture, so as to drain the proud and troublesome Greek nation of its vital spirit. It shows a retired professor of constitutional law, who claims that the

Loan Agreement of May 2010 (the basis of the bailout package) allows foreigners to take over any asset of the Greek state, including land of strategic military importance, and implying that they could even confiscate the Acropolis. The American pundit Max Keiser states that the crisis was engineered so that wealthy investors could get their hands on Greek assets, and reports that Steve Forbes, in private conversation, has called it 'the opportunity of a lifetime'. An unnamed source refers to a deal that the USA proposed to the Greek government, by which all debt would be written off, on condition that a joint venture would exploit the oil of the Aegean Sea (which has not been found yet); the joint venture would be owned 60% by Americans, 20% by Turks, 20% by Greeks. And so on.

The second most popular Greek video (again excluding music clips) is titled *WAKE UP!!! HERE ARE THE TRAITORS SHOCK VIDEO!!!*[35] It was produced by a group called Hellenic Research Organization, which appears to be militantly Orthodox Christian. It begins with a photograph of George Papandreou (prime minister at the time) decorated with medals on a broad ribbon and claims that he is wearing his 'Rosicrucian uniform', explaining that Rosicrucians are 'a secret society' which dictates Papandreou's policies. It goes on to show more than a dozen leading politicians (mostly from PASOK and New Democracy, but also Alexis Tsipras of SYRIZA), each with pictures and a caption explaining how they are betraying national interests and that they are obeying orders of Masonic Lodges. Other targets of the video include Partiarch Bartholomaios of Constantinople and several well-known television journalists.

The first video (the one with Henry Kissinger) was produced by a group called Anti-New World Order, which is connected to Dimitris Kazakis. Kazakis is a prime example of the new breed of charlatan

economists, who have become a fixture of public debates on the economy. Virtually unknown until 2010, he catapulted to fame on the basis of his videotaped interviews, which went viral on the web.

His two-hour interview, titled *The Best Ever Technical-Economic Analysis of Greece*,[36] was the third most popular on YouTube. Talking in a self-assured manner, as if everything he claims is indisputable, he provides an even more outlandish interpretation of the default clauses of the Loan Agreement. Our creditors, he says, could transfer part of the loan to Turkey, which could then lay claim to our fighter jets, so that we would be defenceless. Further, the Loan Agreement has assigned to Greece's creditors the wages and salaries of all Greek employees, public and private. As he says: 'not even the Tsolakoglou Government during the German occupation accepted such onerous terms for Greece's debt' (Tsolakoglou being the Greek equivalent of Quisling).

He also argues that none of the debt incurred by Greek governments over many decades was ever used to finance public spending, other than recycling previous debt with ever ballooning interest expenses. All of this debt that the Greek people are called to repay was never used in Greece (note: since Greek governments have been running primary budget deficits of between 3% and 10% of GDP almost every year for 30 years, it would be interesting to see Kazakis' arithmetic).

He denounces our creditor's plans to 'integrate economically' certain Greek regions with neighbouring countries: Crete and the Dodecanese with Turkey, Epirus with Albania. He reveals a German conspiracy to revive the (short-lived) independent state of Crete: why else would a German university award a doctorate to somebody who is researching that period?

He states that Greece does not need EU support, since it can get a better deal from Russia. Also, that our

vegetable produce could be as good as gold. 'We can trade vegetables for oil with Egypt' (yes, Egypt). And many, many more equally 'solid' ideas.

Views like that are not confined to some remote corner of the public sphere. Kazakis is a regular panellist on second-tier television channels, along with similarly minded analysts. Many of these ideas pop up in blogs, in the tabloid press, and in private conversation, among people from different ideological and social backgrounds. They transcend the left–right divide. Kazakis himself, and other nationalist populist public figures have flirted both with SYRIZA and with Independent Greeks.

On a slightly more serious level, a long documentary titled *Debtocracy* produced in early 2011 has also made a big impact. It was crowdfunded, and then shown in cinemas, on television and of course on the web, where it has had several hundred thousand views from around the world.[37] It is technically accomplished, in a typical militant narrative style. Several well-known international personalities appear, each saying a few sentences, all of them icons of the left (Samir Amin, David Harvey, Alain Badiou, and others; and with one exception to the left-wing rule: Ron Paul). Emotional images are intercut into the narrative to suggest evil and guilt by association, when it cannot be directly asserted. The central theses are: the euro is to blame for the crisis (including the Greek crisis); the Greek government is a *junta*, mandated to make the people suffer to save the creditors; and Greek sovereign debt, like that of Ecuador, may very possibly be 'odious' and can be legally written off.

The creators of *Debtocracy* are decidely left-wing; but their ideas are echoed on the extreme right. Along with Kazakis and with many others, including a few academics, they have shaped a broad narrative which is believed by many national populists. In outline, it is as follows:

- Greek public debt was not used to pay for either wages or pensions or infrastructure; it was all a scam to refinance much older debt at usurious rates; or it was appropriated by the wealthy; or, it was 'odious'.
- The crisis is entirely due to global or European factors; there is nothing Greeks can do on their own to improve their economy. The serious version of this argument has been stated by Y. Varoufakis: Greece today is to Europe what the state of Ohio in the 1930s was to the USA; could the Governor of Ohio have revived the economy without action by the Federal Government? Most national populists take this to mean that domestic policies are not important.
- There is great endogenous potential for growth, which has intentionally been left idle. In the more sinister versions there are undisclosed oil and mineral reserves which foreign powers want to take over after they have humiliated the Greek people. This line is particularly popular among Independent Greeks supporters.
- Privatisation, and even leasing idle land owned by the state to international investors, is a sell-out. Assets will be sold for way below fair value, and no benefits can be had from foreign investment. In the wilder versions, the crisis was engineered intentionally by bankers in order to buy Greek land and public enterprises cheaply.
- Greece could have avoided the bailout package and troika supervision if the government had acted differently in late 2009. They could have sought help from Russia or China; or they could have threatened to disrupt the European monetary system in order to get a bailout without austerity.
- Greek government leaders, in all governments since 2009, are either too spineless, or too beholden to global capital to promote true national interests. A government by our party (whichever that is) will be a more effective negotiator, because we are not afraid of confrontation.

- The Greek economy can now start growing again if only we write off most of the debt and started drilling for oil south of Crete. In most variations, this is combined with exiting the Eurozone.

What is missing from this narrative is any concept of structural flaws within the Greek economy, and any acknowledgement that the Greek crisis was caused to a large degree by behaviour approved or tolerated by the vast majority of 'the people'. Rent-seeking, tax evasion, benefit fraud, parasitic businesses, illegal work practices, a free-spending state, unsustainable pension funds, bad schools, corrupt officials, and useless public-sector organisations do not figure in the analysis (except to the extent that they can be blamed on the very wealthy, or on leading politicians). The populists never accept that the short-term benefits of long-term ruin may not have been equally shared, but they extended to a very large part of the population.

The emphasis of the narrative is much more on issues of sovereignty and national pride than on the perils of austerity. Everybody hates austerity, and many people think it will not work, but these views are not confined to the national populists. Moderates share them too. Furthermore, most people recognise that there has been waste in the state, excesses among the middle strata, corruption, etc. So a total rejection of austerity measures is not convincing even among populist voters, and a serious discussion of how to reduce the deficit risks dividing the people. Sovereignty issues can unite on a visceral level; that is why they are preferred by national populists.

6

Disobedience, violence and vigilantism

Golden violence

In the weeks between the May and June 2012 elections, opinion polls were showing a decline in support for Golden Dawn. Mainstream media and politicians had reacted to the shock result of May with a strategy of stigmatising Golden Dawn. This seemed to be working. Some pollsters were predicting that the party would fall below the 3% threshold and thus fail to get into Parliament. This changed on the morning of 7th June, when during a live TV debate a Golden Dawn candidate, a muscular young man, flung a glass of water towards a female SYRIZA candidate, and then slapped a female Communist Party candidate. The incident became prime news, the video went viral, and polls show that from that day on, support for Golden Dawn started rising, from 4% to 5.4% within a few days, to reach 6.92% on election day, 17 June.[38]

Golden Dawn entered Parliament with 18 MPs. Some analysts predicted that it would gradually soften its profile and become more mainstream, as some right-wing extremist parties have done elsewhere. Instead, during the summer and up to the end of October as we write, Golden Dawn has conducted a campaign of well-orchestrated and publicised events which feature public intimidation and violence against immigrants and atheists, and have stepped up their rhetoric of ethnic cleansing, of jailing thieving politicians, and even of an upcoming civil war. Concurrently, incidents of violent attacks against immigrants resulting in serious injury or death

have become more frequent. No direct involvement of the party has been proven in these, but it is generally believed that Golden Dawn tacitly or actively supports the attackers.

In a recent incident, a group of Golden Dawn members, including MPs, bearing Greek flags on wooden poles visited a street market. Some of the stalls belonged to immigrants. The MPs asked to see their vendor permits, and then attacked those who did not produce the documents, smashing their stalls and wares, using the wooden poles. They videotaped the event, which was heavily publicised. A street vendors' association issued a statement in support of Golden Dawn, and the party itself defended its right to support legal Greek merchants against 'illegal' immigrant merchants. 'We are doing the job of the police', was their main argument.

All this raises the issue of the broader culture of violence, of disobedience, and of taking the law into one's own hands: Is this culture particularly strong in Greece? If yes, is it responsible for the rise of Golden Dawn? If yes again, to what extent is the disobedience and violence practised by others in the opposite end of the political spectrum responsible for the rise of Golden Dawn?

These are hotly debated subjects among intellectuals in Greece. The issue is not so much about the 'supply side'. Few doubt that Golden Dawn violence is an independent manifestation of an extremist ideology, combined with a criminal mentality, and it cannot be explained as a reaction to left-wing violence. What is more contentious is the 'demand side'. Many people tolerate or even applaud the violence and the vigilantism. Would they be less approving if breaking the law had not been sanctioned by politicians and opinion makers in other cases, over many years?

The fact is that it is too soon to tell. Nor are there any in-depth surveys of Golden Dawn supporters that could help answer this. We can only offer a macroscopic narrative, and some reflections.

Disobedience: politics as usual

Protests, both peaceful and violent, have been a staple of post-*junta* democracy. Before the bailout, the high-water mark was reached in December 2008. Following the killing of a teenager by a policeman in Athens, huge demonstrations and then violent riots and guerilla attacks engulfed the centre of the city for weeks, and spread to towns all over Greece. The rioters included anarchists, radical leftists, and some criminal looters, but they were mostly angry young citizens from all walks of life. The depth of feeling, and the wide support for the rioters surprised the political establishment, and led many to state that politics would not be the same after that. The situation calmed down with the New Year holidays, but the shadow of December 2008 is still with us.[39]

In December 2010, the residents of Keratea near Athens erected barricades and conducted sabotage to stop construction works on a waste disposal facility that the regional authority of Attica had decided to establish in their municipality. The whole town was up in arms (sometimes literally), riot police moved in, teargas and street fighting and digging up of roads ensued. The work was stopped, and after four months the police moved out. That was the first major unrest after the Memorandum was signed. What distinguished it from a typical NIMBY protest was its intensity, and the fact that it united the two extremes, left and right. Activists of SYRIZA (a rather small party at the time) and others on its left (including self-declared anarchists) adopted the cause and tried to weave it into a broader anti-capitalist, anti-state narrative. But many on the radical right (including Golden Dawn militants with party insignia) were also active from the start.[40] In political rhetoric, the 'events of Keratea' were hailed as the beginning of a mass resistance movement that would oust the government and the troika.

More recently, in August 2012, the mayor of Korinthos and hundreds of local people reacted angrily and tried to blockade a large army camp at the edge of town, when it was announced that it would be housing illegal immigrants. Among other acts, the water supply was cut off. Again, the event was politicised – this time primarily by Golden Dawn, whose members appeared among the protesters *en masse*, disciplined and in military formation. The message was: 'only we can protect you from immigrant trash that the government is dumping at your doorstep'.

In between, and starting from early 2010, hundreds of acts of defiance erupted around the country, usually went unpunished, and were often supported by the radical left and the extreme right. These included riots in central Athens, during otherwise peaceful mass demonstrations; strikes and blockades of ports and airports during the tourist season; disruptive picketing at tollbooths on national roads to ensure that no driver paid tolls; more of the same at the Athens metro to ensure that no passenger paid for tickets; secondary picketing by activists not working there to close down factories; and strikes and occupations by students and even academics to block university reform by forcibly preventing other professors from convening and voting; sometimes even locking professors in rooms for hours.

Like elsewhere, bending or breaking the law has been common in Greece in good times as well as bad; so have strikes and protests that disrupted the economy and the life of the city. They occurred regularly in the long period of rising incomes from the fall of the *junta* in 1974 to 2008. During this period, when PASOK and New Democracy dominated the political scene, it was their own voters that swelled the ranks of the protesters, without that eroding the electoral strength of their parties. Protest and defiance became part of the

consensus on which the post-*junta* democracy was built, in parallel with joining the EU, and then the Eurozone, and in parallel with adopting increasingly western forms of consumption and lifestyle.

The broader culture of disobedience, including a tolerance for unlawful behaviour, extends well beyond xenophobic populism and precedes its recent rise by decades. Still, there can be little doubt that it has helped legitimise it. Moreover, recent episodes seem to differ from more 'traditional' patterns of protest over the previous period in two important ways.

First, each protest or act of defiance, however local, is now placed within a broad anti-systemic narrative: resist neo-liberalism, defend Greek identity, throw out the troika, bring down the government. Within current political geography, such protests are naturally adopted by the anti-Memorandum front, even if they do not directly address Memorandum policies. Instead of being a shock absorber for moderate parties, protest now becomes a constant threat to them.

Second, breaking certain laws is part of the core strategy both of SYRIZA and of Golden Dawn, albeit in very different ways. SYRIZA resists the implementation of laws that enact reforms, because it seeks to project a radical identity and broaden its electoral appeal. In some cases, especially in universities, it sanctions the systematic intimidation (although not actual physical violence) of academics who support certain reforms. SYRIZA-supported demonstrations often degenerate into clashes with the police; but they are generally non-violent, and many peaceful people feel they are within accepted bounds of civil disobedience. Golden Dawn on the other hand openly preaches vigilante violence, and it is widely believed that some of its members regularly attack, injure and sometimes kill immigrants.

The law of the mob

Golden Dawn plays up the lack of law enforcement by the state. When asked about calls to outlaw his party, Nikos Mihaloliakos, the leader, answers sarcastically: 'Why, is there any law, so that they can place us "out" of it?' [41] When he was accused of saluting Nazi-style with an extended arm, he answered, 'Yes, sometimes we do salute this way, but we salute with clean hands. Our hands are not stained by corruption.' They wear uniform black t-shirts, and make a point of appearing disciplined. They stage blood donations, and soup kitchens for the poor, but 'only for Greeks'.

This seems to strike a chord. For some young men it is a chance to 'belong' to an organisation with purpose and power. This is well described in a vignette by somebody who has been observing first-hand:

The underlying emotion of the new recruit is loneliness, and the party is an answer to this. Society has been unable to teach him to develop mature choices. The starting point of life in a gang is acceptance. Then comes the test period and then membership, like with close buddies, when you are tested for keeping secrets. Today's 25-year-olds like the bravado of Golden Dawners, recognize the power of masculinity, are proud of the fear that they provoke, but mostly, they discover a place to hide.[42]

Among other supporters, one reaction is: 'Golden Dawners are nazis, fascists, yes, they are whatever you say! But tell me if there is any other, better party!! Doing things for the common people (like providing food, jobs), running a jobs centre, and most importantly being called in by the police when there is trouble or a problem with foreigners!!!' [43] The reference to the police echoes what many analysts believe, i.e. that many police officers either are active Golden Dawn supporters, or at least prefer to turn a blind eye.

Yet a third line of thought is exemplified by a well-educated man who in earlier years was arguing against nazism in the social media: 'I had business with the state, and they paid me in government bonds which then lost most of their value in the "haircut". I have six kids, and the state has robbed me. How can I trust them again? I'll vote Golden Dawn to punish them, and I am moving abroad.' [44] Punishing the corrupt establishment by voting for a dangerous fringe seems to be another common motive.

So, Golden Dawn draws votes sometimes as a force of disruption, sometimes for its racism, sometimes for its nationalism, and sometimes for its local mafia-style 'law enforcement'. It is all that.

7

Synthesis

Most voters pick their party not because they agree wholeheartedly with everything it says or does, but rather because they care about a few significant issues that it champions, or because they like the leaders' style, or because it seems less bad than all the others.

So it is hard to pinpoint exactly what drives 7% of Greeks (now more, according to opinion polls) to pick Golden Dawn. We do know, from exit polls, that only 40% of June 2012 Golden Dawn voters declared an 'ideological affinity' to the party. This was the lowest among all parties.[45] But if it was not ideology, we do not really know what drove the vote. Is criminal vigilantism part of the attraction? Would Golden Dawn get even more votes if it stopped being violent?

How many SYRIZA voters believe the official line that it would denounce the Memorandum and still keep Greece in the euro and avoid chaotic default? Or do some voters really wish that Greece moved to the drachma? Or do they believe neither of the two, but still hope that SYRIZA would do more for social justice?

Do all Independent Greeks voters buy the line that the key to prosperity is mineral wealth, which the treacherous ruling parties are concealing from the public because that is the diktat of sinister global forces? Or are they just protesting against the leaders of New Democracy, who categorically rejected the Memorandum before they switched to defending it?

No detailed survey is yet available of beliefs and arguments that have driven voters to vote for particular parties. What follows is a summary of what seem to be the main drivers.

We have outlined five sets of factors, some of which apply broadly across the political spectrum, while others are more specific to nationalist populism.

The *economic crisis* affects everybody. Poverty, unemployment and economic uncertainty can be fertile ground for the politics of anger and blame. However, on their own, they do not neccessarily lead to support for anti-systemic parties, either of the xenophobic variety or any other. In certain circumstances, in a crisis people can rally around a positive programme of reconstruction and reform. In Greece this has not happened, to a large extent because mainstream parties have been unable to outline a convincing roadmap for exit from the crisis. The only such roadmap currently available is the troika's, i.e. the one implicit in the Memorandum. However, nobody within the country really 'owns' that. The only options left are either to accept the Memorandum reluctantly, or to reject it.

This introduces a second set of factors: *low trust, opportunism, contempt for institutions and disregard of the law*. These have been permanent features of modern Greek society, again across the political spectrum.

At times of crisis, big adjustments are needed; incomes will fall, jobs will be lost, and so others must be created by reforms, and by reallocating resources. Yet any programme which entails short-term pain for long-term gain can be adopted only by people who trust their leaders and each other. The Swedish recovery programme in the mid-1990s was one example. In the present crisis, the Italian and Spanish governments have announced harsh austerity measures, yet polls indicate that citizens 'remained optimistic that their leaders would be able to

address the problems raised by the crisis, with Italians proving the most upbeat, with 83 per cent responding that they were at least "somewhat confident" in their leaders' ability, and Spaniards the least, at 63 per cent'.[46]

Greeks, on the other hand, mistrust their governments, and each other (see Chapter 4). This has always been the case, and is even more so now. This makes it very hard for any extensive programme of cuts and reforms to be accepted by the public. If there appears to be no credible, pragmatic plan for recovery, people are more likely to turn to saviours and to magic formulae for hope.

In addition, if breaking (some) laws is socially acceptable under many circumstances, party strategies that are based on disobedience will provoke no instinctive repulsion, as they would perhaps in countries where the dominant culture is one of respect for laws and rules.

Furthermore, contempt for the state and for the police open the door to vigilantes, such as Golden Dawn bands. Having said that, it is hard to believe that criminal violence, allegedly including murder, can be condoned by the 440,000 persons who voted for Golden Dawn.

It is the third set of factors which partly explains tolerance for such violence. This is the *impact of recent immigration* on the quality of life of Greeks. To some extent the impact is tangible; to some other extent it is perceived (i.e. the result of sensational media coverage of what once passed unremarked). Some people have been victims of crime by immigrants, others feel insecure in their neighbourhoods, as they feel watched and stalked by strangers. To many, foreign looks and customs alter the feel of a city, raising issues of identity; others associate immigrants with dirt and disease. In addition, some (but not much) public rhetoric claims that the scarce resources of the welfare state are wasted on immigrants, whereas they ought to be reserved for native Greeks.

It is interesting to note, though, that support for Golden Dawn is high both in areas that are directly affected by immigrants and in those that are not. This suggests that perception rather than real impact may be at work; this perception is shaped in part in the media. Mainstream television has been accused of highlighting the nationality of criminals when they are foreign, and of downplaying the criminal aspects of Golden Dawn. In addition, Golden Dawn is popular among the police, which in the eyes of some lends the party respectability (while in the eyes of many others it lowers trust in the police even further).

A fourth set of factors concern *national identity and exceptionalism*. A nation which places its greatest achievements in the distant past, and which has little to show in terms of world-class success in recent times, tends to barricade itself behind national symbols, and to be insecure in its international relations. Most Greek politicians in the post-*junta* era have been defensive nationalists: they have reflected, and shaped, the views of their constituents. Most but not all: some politicians and many Greek citizens are open to the world, have worked or studied abroad, travel often, and have contacts with foreign friends and colleagues as well as with an extensive diaspora of Greeks living abroad. But the prevailing attitude *vis-à-vis* foreigners remains one of suspicion and mistrust.

In view of the above, a fifth set of factors came into play when the crisis struck: *an economic worldview* according to which exploitation and instability come from abroad, and can be blamed on a few plutocrats and their political lackeys. The worldview is particularly appealing in a *petit bourgeois* and statist economy, where local class enemies are hard to identify.

So which political programme might help reduce the appeal of xenophobic populism? The logical answer is: a programme which counters, one by one, the five sets

of factors that we have identified. Elaborating such a programme is beyond the scope of this essay, but we can offer a summary:

- A growing economy providing good jobs, and a welfare state geared to the needs of the weakest. The most effective therapy of the underdog mentality is hope and economic security. Hope will not be created by Greeks alone: Greece's European partners must help.
- Rebuilding trust in the political system by a combination of punishment of corrupt politicians, law enforcement especially in troubled areas, and transparency in all decision making. In addition, refocusing secondary education towards civic values, cooperation and the institutions of democracy.
- An immigration policy which combines measures for the integration of those who wish to settle here peacefully as well as public information campaigns to allay our visceral fear of the 'other', with a policy of zero tolerance of violent crime, whether committed by immigrants or by vigilantes. None of this can succeed, however, unless Greece can somehow regulate immigration flows, and this is not possible without sharing the burden with the rest of the EU.
- As for the the last two sets of factors (i.e. the ideologies of national exceptionalism and of nationalist economic populism), we can only call on those who feed the paranoia and the illusions to consider the consequences. This applies to opinion makers in Greece (politicians, journalists, public intellectuals, media stars); but it also applies to all of their European counterparts who from time to time find it expedient to fan the flames of national divisions and finger-pointing.

All of this is much easier said than done, of course. But any victory on any of these fronts might make a real difference in the battle against extremism.

Notes

1 As a recent Human Rights Watch report described it: 'Golden Dawn is an unabashedly neo-fascist party with a logo reminiscent of the Nazi swastika; its manifesto calls for the creation of a People's Nationalist State which does "not ignore the law of diversity and difference in nature" and asserts that "[b]y respecting the spiritual, ethnic and racial inequality of humans we can build equity and law in society".' The leader of the Golden Dawn, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, won a seat on the Athens municipal town council in local elections in November 2010; he was filmed doing the Nazi salute in the Athens town hall in January 2011. In an interview with Human Rights Watch before the elections, Michaloliakos explained, "We want Greece to belong to the Greeks. We are proud to be Greek; we want to save our national identity, our thousands-year history. If that means we are racist, then yes we are. We don't want to share the same fate of the Native Americans. Right now, the immigrants are the cowboys and we are the Apache." He added that if Golden Dawn were in government they would give everyone asylum "and cheap tickets on Easyjet, because they all want to go elsewhere".' See Human Rights Watch, 'Hate on the streets'

2 A report by the Simon Wiesenthal Center stated that 'The extreme right-wing, violently anti-immigrant Golden Dawn Party exploited economic chaos to make an electoral breakthrough in 2012 [...]. Golden Dawn's flag closely resembles the Nazi swastika. It campaigned heavily on an anti-immigrant platform under the slogan: "So we can rid this land of filth". Golden Dawn's leaders proudly unleash the Nazi salute and its charter limits membership to "only Aryans in blood and Greeks in descent". According to Golden Dawn's Nikolaos Michaloliakos, "There were no ovens. This is a lie. I believe that it is a lie," said Michaloliakos. "There were no gas chambers either."' See Brackman, 'European extremist movements'

3 The original bailout package, meant to cover the country's borrowing requirements for the next three years (to the tune of an unprecedented €110 billion), was signed in May 2010. In return for that, the Greek government signed a Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies with the 'troika' of donors: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission (EC) and the European Central Bank (ECB). Under the Memorandum, the government committed itself to sweeping spending cuts and steep tax increases, aiming to reduce the country's public deficit to less than 3% of GDP by 2014.

4 A note of clarification is needed here: The vast majority of the anti-Memorandum front are national populists; but some are not. The exceptions are those who make a reasoned case for Greece to exit the Eurozone, and those who propose a pragmatic alternative strategy for cooperation with Greece's partners in the Eurozone. These, however, are rare voices, and not part of the main story.

5 See VPRC, 'Political conjuncture and governance'

6 See Pantazopoulos, *National-Populism as Ideology*, drawing on the recent work of Taguieff, *Le nouveau national-populisme*

7 See Dinas, Georgiadou, Konstantinidis, Marantzidis and Rori, 'New political opportunities for an old party family?'

8 New Democracy mainly benefited from the repatriation of the small Democratic Alliance party (which had polled 2.55% in the May 2012 election), the absorption of a number of former members of LAOS, including the party's two cabinet ministers under Papademos (LAOS' share of the vote subsequently declined further from 2.90% to 1.58%), as well as the reluctant support of many voters who feared SYRIZA more than they disliked New Democracy.

9 Interestingly, evidence from opinion polls suggests that between May and June 2012 approximately 2% of voters switched from Independent Greeks to SYRIZA, another 2% from Independent Greeks to New Democracy, while 1% of voters switched from other parties to Independent Greeks. See Public Issue, 'General election June 2012: the political origin of current voters'

10 Two small liberal parties, Dimiourgia Xana and Drassi, agreed to form an electoral alliance. However, the alliance's vote in the June election did not exceed 1.59% (compared to 2.15% and 1.80% respectively in May). The Green vote declined further to 0.88% (from 2.93%).

11 Using Catherine Fieschi's tentative classification of populist movements, we can safely put Golden Dawn in the 'toxic and dangerous' category of Strictly Populists, SYRIZA in the 'populism lite' category of Demagogues, and Independent Greeks somewhere in between. See Fieschi, 'A plague on both your populisms'

12 Information on the geographical distribution of the vote was drawn from the official website of the Ministry of the Interior. The remaining material in this chapter relies on opinion polls. See Public Issue, 'General election June 2012: the anatomy of the vote'

13 See Public Issue, 'The popularity of Golden Dawn before and after the June general election'

14 As the great historian Eric Hobsbawm has written: 'The literate champions and organizers of Greek nationalism in the early nineteenth century were undoubtedly inspired by the thought of ancient Hellenic glories, which also aroused the enthusiasm of educated, i.e. classically educated, philhellenes abroad. And the national literary language constructed by and for them,

the Katharevousa, was and is a high-flown neo-classical idiom seeking to bring the language of the descendants of Themistocles and Pericles back to their true heritage from the two millennia of slavery which had corrupted it. Yet the real Greeks who took up arms for what turned out to be the formation of a new independent nation-state, did not talk ancient Greek any more than Italians talk Latin. They talked and wrote Demotic. Pericles, Aeschylus, Euripides and the glories of ancient Sparta and Athens meant little if anything to them, and insofar as they had heard [of] them, they did not think of them as relevant. Paradoxically, they stood for Rome rather than Greece (*romaiosyne*), that is to say they saw themselves as heirs of the Christianized Roman Empire (i.e. Byzantium). They fought as Christians against Muslim unbelievers, as Romans against the Turkish dogs.' See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, pp. 76–77

15 '[A key] component of Papandreou's proposed project was ethnocentric nationalism, which was expressed either as a strong belief in the superiority of the Greek nation or as antipathy, let alone fear, towards other stronger nations. Fervently anti-American, early PASOK also opposed Greece's accession into the EU, a stance it modified later in an often ambiguous way.' See Pappas, 'The causes of the Greek crisis are in Greek politics'

16 'Particularly important was the hostility of Papandreou to anything foreign to Greece, most notably the "imperialist" US and – lower level but no less important – the EC, which was simply thought of as "an intermediate link in the structure of control of US capital over Southern Europe". Taken together, the EC, the US, and NATO were presented by Papandreou as an unholy trinity threatening Greek democracy and the well-being of the Greek people. In what concerned economics, the EC was seen by PASOK's leader as a route to national dependence and underdevelopment rather than modernisation. Instead, he became an advocate of a policy of "self-sustained" development that would be based upon import substitution and the creation of bilateral relations with nations occupying peripheral positions in the world capitalist system and belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement.' See Pappas, 'Macroeconomic policy, strategic leadership, and voter behaviour'

17 For what probably remains the best account of that bloody conflict, see Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*

18 Most Greeks actively sided with their Serb 'Orthodox brothers' against German-backed Croats and (Muslim) Bosnians. Media coverage of the Yugoslav war was shockingly biased. The Church helped collect food, clothing and medical supplies to be sent to Belgrade and Pale (capital of the self-styled Republika Srpska of Radovan Karadžić). Greek volunteers were present (and, on some accounts, actively involved) in the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, when 8,000 civilians were killed by units of the Army of Republika Srpska under the command of General Ratko Mladić. The infamous story of Greece's involvement in the Yugoslav war, all too easily forgotten in Greece itself, is told in detail by Takis Michas in his *Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milošević's Serbia*.

19 '[N]ationalist populism led many citizens into believing that the Greek nation is perpetually betrayed, nationally superior, but historically unfortunate, always right but always disaffected by "Western foreigners" who detest it and machinate towards its exclusion.' Cited in Kalpadakis and Sotiropoulos, 'Europeanism and national populism'

20 See Kalpadakis and Sotiropoulos, 'Europeanism and national populism'

21 As the *Guardian* reported at the time: 'Proposals to make Greeks more European by removing their religious affiliation from state identity cards have ignited the fury of the country's Orthodox church. The plans have been dismissed by clerics as nothing short of a sinister plot to rid Greeks of their innate Orthodox faith. "Our faith is the foundation of our identity," said Archbishop Christodoulos, the church's flamboyant leader. "These changes are being put forward by neo-intellectuals who want to attack us like rabid dogs and tear at our flesh."' See Smith, 'Greek church at war over plans to change ID cards'

22 Georgiadou, Kafe and Nezi, 'The radical right parties under the economic crisis'

23 See TNS ICAP / BaaS, 'Racist as well as nationalist?'

24 Vasiliki Georgiadou, personal communication (25 October 2012). Professor Georgiadou has been conducting field research in Aghios Panteleimon.

25 See note 24.

26 See TNS ICAP / BaaS, 'Racist as well as nationalist?'

27 See Standard Eurobarometer 77, 'Public opinion in the European Union'

28 Eurostat news release, 'Foreign citizens and foreign-born population'

29 A recent FRA report explained: 'Over the past five years, migration routes at the southern European border underwent an important shift. In 2006, the Spanish towns of Ceuta and Melilla, the Canary Islands, Sicily and the island of Lampedusa, as well as the Greek Turkish sea border were particularly affected by arrivals. Primarily as a result of closer cooperation between Spain and transit countries in West Africa, detections at the sea border of Spain decreased by 70% in 2007. Irregular movements shifted to the Italian and the Greek sea borders, a trend which continued in 2008. Following the return of almost 1,000 persons to Libya by the Italian authorities in summer 2009, arrivals in Italy and Malta almost stopped. Italy reported a 96% drop in arrivals in the first three months of 2010 compared with 2009. In 2009, the number of detections of irregular crossings in Greece accounted for 75% of the EU total. At the end of 2010, Greece reported around 90% of all detections of irregular crossings at external EU land, sea and air borders [...]. This development is the result of the accelerating shift in migration routes from the central to the eastern Mediterranean.' See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Coping with a Fundamental Rights Emergency*, pp. 11–12

30 See the recent Human Rights Watch report, 'Hate on the streets'; see also the *Annual Report 2011* of the Athens-based Institute for Rights Equality and Diversity

31 By May 2012, trust in institutions had fallen further: EU 19%, national government 6%, national parliament 12%, political parties 7%; see European Commission, 'Public opinion index'

32 See Matsaganis, 'The welfare state and the crisis'

33 See Papaioannou, 'Civic capital'; see also Doxiadis, 'The real Greek economy'

34 See Anti-New World Order, *The Video that ALL GREEKS MUST see*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYGx924PMgU, uploaded October 2011 (1.2 million views as of September 2012)

35 See *WAKE UP!!! HERE ARE THE TRAITORS SHOCK VIDEO!!!*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70WwSadyrug, 13 minutes, uploaded November 2010 (480,000 views as of September 2012)

36 See *The Best Ever Technical-Economic Analysis of Greece*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pgb71Hxi8hE, uploaded March 2011 (460,000 views as of September 2012)

37 Katerina Kitidi and Aris Chatzistefanou, *Debtocracy*; see one of many links to the entire film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKpxPo-lInk, uploaded May 2011 (with English subtitles)

38 See Papasarantopoulos, 'Golden Dawn's Big Bang'

39 For a multifaceted analysis, see Economides and Monastiriotis, *The Return of Street Politics*?

40 Both SYRIZA and Golden Dawn were handsomely rewarded by voters for their role in these events: in the June 2012 general election their share of the vote in Keratea reached 37% and 10% respectively, i.e. well above their average scores for Greater Athens or the country as a whole.

41 Hasapopoulos, 'The two-faced leader'

42 Papadaki, 'Golden Dawn voter, aged 25'

43 From a Facebook wall. The original comment is in Greek in all capital letters, with the exclamation marks. This style is very common in right wing populists' comments in the social media.

44 From a Facebook wall, recounted by an acquaintance of the person quoted.

45 Vasiliki Georgiadou, personal communication (25 October 2012).

46 Spiegel, 'Germans write off Greece, says poll'

References

Harold Brackman, 'European extremist movements: who's who and what's what', Simon Wiesenthal Center, available at: www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/FINAL_REPORT_619_12.PDF, released June 2012

Elias Dinas, Vasiliki Georgiadou, Iannis Konstantinidis, Nikos Marantzidis and Lamprini Rori, 'New political opportunities for an old party family? The case of Golden Dawn in Greece'. Presented at the XXII World Congress of Political Science, Madrid, 8–12 July 2012

Aristos Doxiadis, 'The real Greek economy: owners, rentiers, opportunists', *Open Democracy*, http://www.opendemocracy.net/aristos-doxiadis/owners-rentiers-opportunists, September 2010

Spyros Economides and Vassilis Monastiriotis (eds), *The Return of Street Politics? Essays on the December Riots in Greece*, London School of Economics: The Hellenic Observatory, May 2009

European Commission, 'Public opinion index', http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/index_en.cfm

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Coping with a Fundamental Rights Emergency: The Situation of Persons Crossing the Greek Land Border in an Irregular Manner*, Thematic Situation Report, 2011, available at http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1500-Greek-border-situation-report2011_EN.pdf (retrieved October 2012)

Eurostat news release, 'Foreign citizens and foreign-born population', STAT/12/105, 11 July 2012

Catherine Fieschi, 'A plague on both your populisms', *Open Democracy*, www.opendemocracy.net, posted 19 April 2012

Vasiliki Georgiadou, Anastasia Kafe and Roula Nezi, 'The radical right parties under the economic crisis: the Greek case'. Presented at the 62nd Political Studies Association Annual International Conference, Belfast, 3–5 April 2012

Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, Penguin Books, 3rd edn, 1996

Nikos Hasapopoulos, 'The two-faced leader'. *To Vima*, 23 September 2012

Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University, 2nd edn, 1992

Human Rights Watch, 'Hate on the streets: xenophobic violence in Greece', www.hrw.org/reports/2012/07/10/hate-streets, released 10 July 2012

Institute for Rights Equality and Diversity, *Annual Report 2011*, Athens, available at www.i-red.eu/resources/publications-files/annualreport-2011.pdf, released on 19 March 2012

George Kalpadakis and Dimitris A. Sotiropoulos, 'Europeanism and national populism: the Europeanization of Greek civil society and foreign policy', *Hellenic Studies* 154:1, 43–66, Spring 2007

Manos Matsaganis, 'The welfare state and the crisis: the case of Greece', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 21:5, 501–13, 2011

Takis Michas, *Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milošević's Serbia*, Texas A&M University Press, 2002

Ministry of the Interior, http://ekloges.ypes.gr/v2012b/public/index.html

Andreas Pantazopoulos, *National-Populism as Ideology: International Experience and the Greek case*, Nea Estia, March 2012 (in Greek)

Lina Papadaki, 'Golden Dawn voter, aged 25', *Protagon*, 10 October 2012; see www.protagon.gr

Elias Papaioannou, 'Civic capital', talk at TedXAcademy, October 2011; video available at http://www.tedxacademy.com/talks/elias-papaioannou

Petros Papasarantopoulos, 'Golden Dawn's Big Bang', *The Books' Journal*, September 2012

Takis Pappas, 'The causes of the Greek crisis are in Greek politics', *Open Democracy*, www.opendemocracy.net, posted 29 November 2010

Takis Pappas, 'Macroeconomic policy, strategic leadership, and voter behaviour: the disparate tales of socialist reformism in Greece and Spain during the 1980s', *West European Politics*, 33:6, 1241–60, November 2010

Public Issue, 'General election June 2012: the anatomy of the vote', www.publicissue.gr/2043/koinwniko_profil_6_2012, posted 21 June 2012 (in Greek)

Public Issue, 'General election June 2012: the political origin of current voters', www.publicissue.gr/2041/proekefsi-kommaton, posted 22 June 2012 (in Greek)

Public Issue, 'The popularity of Golden Dawn before and after the June general election: social characteristics', www.publicissue.gr/2054/gd_popularity, posted 12 October 2012 (in Greek)

Helena Smith, 'Greek church at war over plans to change ID cards', *Guardian*, 22 May 2000, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/may/22/helenasmith

Peter Spiegel, 'Germans write off Greece, says poll', *Financial Times*, 2 September 2012

Standard Eurobarometer 77, 'Public opinion in the European Union', Spring 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_anx_en.pdf

Pierre-André Taguieff, *Le nouveau national-populisme*, Paris: CNRS Editions, 2012

TNS ICAP / BaaS, 'Racist as well as nationalist?', www.tnsicap.gr/documents/Racism_2012.pdf, released 9 July 2012

VPRC, 'Political conjuncture and governance', http://www.vprc.gr/uplds/File/teleytaia%20nea/ellada%20avrio/Political%20Conjuncture%20and%20Governance_July2012.pdf, posted July 2012 (in Greek)

The rise of the criminally anti-immigrant Golden Dawn in the 2012 general elections has caught the attention of world media, and has caused widespread consternation in Greece and abroad. In this pamphlet we argue that Golden Dawn is in many ways a manifestation of a worldview that is widely shared in Greece, albeit at its most violent extreme. We set the recent rise of xenophobic populism against the background of five distinct but related developments:

1. The consolidation of national exceptionalism as the default worldview of most Greeks;
2. The discontent associated with the mass influx of foreign immigrants;
3. The political fallout from the economic crisis;
4. The rise of national populism as an economic ideology;
5. The culture of lawlessness and disobedience, and lack of faith in the political system and in the institutions of law enforcement.

Aristos Doxiadis and **Manos Matsaganis** are economists, based in Athens, and active participants in public debates on the political economy of the current crisis. Aristos is a business economist and venture capital professional, and has written on Greek economic institutions, small businesses and opportunistic behaviour. Manos teaches public economics and social policy at the Athens University of Economics and Business, and has written on the welfare state, labour market and tax evasion.

ISBN 978-1-909499-02-7
counterpoint.uk.com