

**From Dusk to Dawn:
Political opportunities and Party Success of Right-wing Extremism**

Abstract

A marginal racist organisation, Golden Dawn, managed to attract first the votes of almost one out of fourteen Greek voters and then global media and public attention. How did an extreme right groupuscule invade the political terrain of an EU-10 member state? Existing attempts to account for this phenomenon point to demand-side explanations, related to the political turmoil that followed the notorious debt crisis and the accompanying austerity measures. These explanations, however, fail to account for the genesis of this trajectory. We delve into this exact question, focusing on the election that marked the emergence of the Golden Dawn and permitted further electoral penetration. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, we show that the party took advantage of favourable political circumstances developing a grass-roots network of goods and services and helped it enter the central political arena.

Keywords: right-wing extremism; grass-roots activity; Greece; political opportunity; new party success

Introduction

On the night of the elections of May 6th 2012, overwhelmed by the score of 6,97%, Nikos Michaloliakos, leader of the Golden Dawn (Greek:ΧρυσήΑυγή[Chryssi Avgi], GD), shouted on camera ‘Veni, vidi, vici’. With this Latin phrase, originally attributed to Julius Caesar and his facile victory against Pharnaces II of Pontus in 47 BC, he wanted to state loathe and revenge *vis-à-vis* rival parties and the media. A few minutes earlier and as a way to prepare his entrance in the press room, a dozen of party activists had impudently obliged Greek and foreign journalists to stand up, as a way to pay respect to the party leader. This image, which quickly featured in foreign media across the world, marked the unprecedented electoral success of the GD in the May 2012 Greek election. With this result the GD became one of the most successful right-wing parties of European extremism. Since then, the GD has gained enormous visibility throughout the world media. It has attracted the interest of the most highly circulating newspapers; hundreds of blogs and social media groups and conversations have devoted space and time fighting or supporting it; public opinion and academics constantly speculate about its causes and its consequences for the Greek political system and for the European political context in more general. With a constantly upward trend, it seems only a matter of time until GD also enters the European parliament.

Almost any successful entrance in an established party system merits systematic investigation. When this comes from ‘one of the most extremist political parties’ (Ellinas 2012) contemporary Europe has witnessed, the need to delve into the roots of this phenomenon becomes hardly debatable. How did the GD manage to convert from a marginal activist group into the third largest party –according to all opinion polls from late 2012 onwards– of the Greek political system?

Public commentary notwithstanding, existing academic work on the determinants of support for the GD is only scarce. Abiding by the tides of media coverage, most accounts tend to allude to the importance of exogenous factors related to the country’s debt crisis and the accompanying austerity measures. What remains remarkably neglected, however, is that the turning point in the party’s electoral fortunes is not the 2012 election. Rather, the first electoral success for the GD comes in the 2010 municipal election, won by the then incumbent PASOK, in a political context still largely unaffected by the crisis. It was in that election and in particular in the election for the municipality of Athens that GD’s leader received an

unprecedented 5.3% of the vote and was elected in the municipal council. This was the first representative of GD at a legislative body since its foundation. Much of what followed one-and-a-half year later at the parliamentary elections of 2012, when its appeal diffused nationwide, is well known through the international media commentaries. But the Athens Mayoral Election is crucial to understanding this phenomenon, since it has marked the emergence of the GD in Greek politics and has permitted further electoral penetration at the parliamentary elections of 2012.

This paper aims at explaining the emergence of the party in the spotlight at the Mayoral Election of 2010. Coupled by a series of semi-structured interviews with residents, observation of residents' committee meetings and a survey designed to study this phenomenon and administered in Athens right after these elections and long before the 2012 elections, we will argue that the case of the GD is a very illustrative example of the importance of grass-roots politics. Contrary to common wisdom, the GD did not emerge as a viable political alternative due to the breakdown of the current political system. Rather, what paved its way to the national parliament was its ability to replace the state in its provision of public goods at the local level. GD's story, therefore, is not just a story of polarizing anti-systemic attitudes. At least its birth as a significant political party is a story of tie-bridging and bonding with local communities. This is achieved through heightened visibility and the provision of service selective incentives to its supporters in ethnically diversified neighborhoods of Athens.

After a brief introduction into the ideological and historical features of the party, we provide a list of demand- and supply-side explanations of this phenomenon. We then introduce our organizational hypothesis, which draws on extensive fieldwork research. This section is followed by a systematic examination of our hypothesis, which attempts to account for a long series of competing explanations. Concluding, we allude to the implications of our findings for the explanation of the rise of GD and for the study of right-wing extremism in more general.

The Golden Dawn: more than an anti-immigration party

Two aspects with regard to the GD require our attention: its until 2010 extremely marginal electoral appeal and its radical ideological profile. We briefly discuss both aspects in turn.

Since its foundation in 1985 the GD has always primed national issues. An ultra-nationalist organisation, the GD embraces extremely hostile stances against the country's neighbours, most notably Turkey. It thus comes to no surprise that the only two instances in which some notable, yet still marginal, action from the organisation is recorded relate to issues of national conflict. The first takes place in the early '90s, when the country is driven into political turmoil accompanied by massive demonstrations against the prospect of the newly independent Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adopting the name Macedonia (Danforth 1995). The second occurs in 1996 and stems from the crisis between Greek and Turkish governments concerning over a rock in the Aegean. The last event gives GD an opportunity to establish an annual march against all the perceived enemies of the Greek nation (Raftopoulos 1997).

With the massive increase of immigrants originating from the Balkans and from Eastern Europe throughout the 1990s,¹ the Golden Dawn transfers its emphasis from national issues to immigration, violently proclaiming the departure of all immigrants from Greece, regardless of their immigration status (Georgiadou 2011). This practice does not yield substantive benefits in its popularity, however. The party participated for the first time in the 1994 European elections, winning 0.11% of the total vote. In the national elections of 1996 it confirmed its marginal appeal with a rate of 0.07%. Although salient issues for the far right (immigration, criminality, security) had never been higher on the political agenda than they were in the 2009 European elections campaign (Tsirbas 2007: 221-2; Pavlou 2012), Golden Dawn won just 23,564 (0.46%) and 19,636 (0.29%) votes at the elections for the European parliament and the general elections in 2009 respectively.

Turning to the ideological outlook of the party, Golden Dawn's official documents reveal an ultra-nationalist, xenophobic, pro-Nazi political organization that proclaims nativism and opposes itself to all immigrants, regardless of their legal status or their national origin. The GD is not only against immigrants; it is also aggressive *vis-à-vis* the immigrants. It supports racist ideas with cultural and biological connotations. It is also irredentist, since it denies existing geographical borders. The GD supports anti-parliamentarian, anti-political and anti-communist stances and defines globalization, EU and multiculturalism among its major enemies. The organization defends the idea of an organic interclassist state, which is a "People's state" that protects the "biological" and "cultural unity" of the Greek nation.²

Little is known about the party's internal profile. Following the tactic of other extremist parties, the Golden Dawn refuses to provide specific information concerning its organization and membership, although after the double elections of 2012 the party publicized its statutes for the first time in GD's history. Recent electoral successes and the consequent increased visibility have however validated a series of characteristics, which are common to right-wing extremist organizations. The GD is a rigorously structured, strictly hierarchical, introvert organization with very strong leadership. The leader's authority is absolute and personalized. Since its foundation the GD has the same party leader, who has never been challenged seriously by internal party rivals. The leader's position remains unquestioned, although the GD is not "one-man party" as it used to be. The march from the margins to the central political arena was accompanied by the rise of new cadres, who are ambitious but remain loyal to the party leader.

How did such a party, at the fringe of Greek political life and with such a marginalised physiognomy, manage to establish itself as key actor in the party system?³ How did 5.3% of Athenian voters suddenly opt for a party until then in the border or non-existence? It is to this puzzle that we now turn, proposing a two-step process, whereby the 2010 municipal election operates as the turning point. Delving into the factors of GD success in this election, we show that although contextual factors enabled political manoeuvre, significant credit needs to be attributed to the organisational vigor of the party grass-roots and their efficient use of the political opportunities generated in that election.

The demand-side: The 2010 election as a political opportunity

Whereas most previous research on extreme right has highlighted the role of historical legacies, socio-structural processes (i.e. modernization, post-industrialization, globalization, immigration) and sentiments against the parties and politicians (see inter alia Anastasakis 2002; Goodwin, Ford & Cutts 2012; Betz 1994; Schwank & Betz 2003; Mudde 1996; Merkl & Weinberg 2005), a strand in this literature has advocated the importance of opportunity structures, either institutional or situational (Goodwin, Cutts & Ford 2012; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007; Arzheimer & Carter 2006; Eatwell 2003; Roots 1999; Tarrow 1998). Following previous research on demand-side explanations (Arzheimer & Carter 2006: 422-3), we distinguish between 'long-term institutional features' (e.g. electoral system), 'medium-term factors' (e.g.

level of party polarization or convergence) and 'short-term contextual or conjunctural variables' (e.g. immigration) of extreme-right support. As we will see, only the latter has given room to the emerge of the GD. Even this set of factors, however, constitute only part of this story. The other part is explained by the party's grass-roots activities, to which we turn in the next section.

It is clear that long-term, stable features such as the electoral system or the nature of the election cannot on their own account for the rise of the GD. As Norris (2005), Carter (2002 and 2005) or Van der Brug et al. (2005) have shown, there is no statistically significant pattern between the electoral strength of a radical right party and the type of the electoral system. Against the conventional wisdom that the disproportionality of the electoral system decreases the voteshare for the radical right, Arzheimer and Carter (2006) attest the opposite, while Art (2011: 16-7) emphasizes the strategic use of electoral system that mainstream parties attempt vis-à-vis the radical right. In any case, the electoral system used in the 2010 municipal election has not changed.

A typical case of second-order elections, municipal elections usually serve as an opportunity for citizens to express their political opposition to mainstream parties by making centrifugal electoral choices (Reif & Schmitt 1980). Radical right parties are more likely to receive higher vote shares in these elections (Mudde 2007: 235-36). Kitschelt and McGann (1995: 99) argue that local elections represent a political opportunity for new, and especially anti-system, parties to get the media attention and then gradually become wide-known all over a country. However, GD had participated in previous municipal elections with only miniscule vote shares. Moreover, in the 2010 election it was only in Athens where it saw its vote share skyrocketing. Clearly, the second-order thesis alone cannot explain the level of GD support in the country's capital.

Moving to medium-term factors, the ideological divergence between the mainstream parties on policy-making related to immigration has left an ambiguous imprint on public opinion. On March 2010, the Greek parliament voted a law concerning the acquisition of Greek citizenship and the voting rights of legal immigrants.⁴ The law was proposed by the socialist government and was voted by a majority of the socialists and the left parties' votes. It was highly criticized by the conservative party of ND and the radical right party of LAOS. The issue remained high in the public agenda for several months and denoted lack of elite consensus. The

extent to which it helped the GD, however, is far from clear. According to Arzheimer & Carter (2006: 423-24), divergence between the mainstream parties might either legitimise the policies of the extreme right or cause a move to more radical anti-immigration stances by the mainstream right wing party of the political system (ibid. 439). True, policy divergence between the two traditional parties brings the issue forward and gives anti-immigrant parties the chance to be heard louder. However, the locality of GD success in the municipality of Athens indicates that is highly unlikely that this nation-wide debate played a pivotal role in the GD's success.

A factor that is more likely to have favoured GD support is the absence of another candidate on the right of ND. Greece's established anti-immigration party, LAOS, decided to withdraw an autonomous candidacy in the 2010 municipal elections in Athens. LAOS's support to the incumbent conservative candidate is likely to have produced a gap of representation on the right of the political spectrum, which might have strengthened the transfer of votes towards the GD candidate, Nikos Michaloliakos. After the withdrawal of LAOS from the electoral arena in the municipality of Athens, party competition lost its last frontier. It is the opposite of what Tarrow (1998) called 'radical flank' effect: non-extremist far right parties seem as "level-headed" in the eyes of the voters after the appearance of extremist parties in the right pole (Rydgren 2009: 25). In the municipal elections of 2010 in Athens the absence of a populist radical right candidate released far right voters to move further to the (extreme) right (Koustenis 2011: 51-2).

Yet again, a closer comparison of the 2010 and previous elections indicates that the variation in the levels of support for LAOS are nowhere close to fully determining the variation in the vote share of the GD. Figure 1 depicts the association between the vote share of LAOS in the 58 electoral districts of Athens in the 2009 general election—the most recent election before the 2010 municipal election—and GD's vote share in the 2010 municipal election. Although there is a positive relationship between the vote shares of the two parties, the relationship is not monotone. Importantly, several outliers are observed. The most exemplary case, in this respect, is the area of Aghios Panteleimonas (AP), where GD performed exceptionally well. It is on this area that we mainly focus in the next sections of the paper.

Moreover, LAOS would not have opted for the ND candidate unless the latter had provided unambiguous signals regarding his anti-immigration stances. Why, then,

would the potential voters of this party shift to the leader of a marginal organization instead of voting for the incumbent?

Figure 1 about here

The answer to this question requires a more in-depth look into short-term factors, the most important of which turns out to be the local dynamics generated by the geographical distribution of new waves of immigrants during the years before the election.⁵ The citizens of Athens have witnessed a significant increase in the level of immigration since 2008 (Maroukis 2012; Kasimis 2012).⁶ Originating from African and Asian countries, irregular inflows of immigrants entered Greece mainly from Turkey and concentrated in certain areas of the centre of Athens.⁷ This wave of immigrants was not uniformly distributed across the city. Rather, it was predominantly settled in the neighborhoods of the 2nd and the 6th city district. According to repeated evidence from our interviewees, residents of Agios Panteleimonas, a neighborhood in the 6th district of Athens, faced an abrupt and massive installation of immigrants on their return from holidays in the end of summer 2008:

*'I have no idea what happened then; what kind of negotiations between the authorities and some countries; what game was played by the government and what we gained in exchange. What I know is that since the end of summer 2008, the neighborhood was invaded by hundreds of immigrants. And it is not by accident that I am using the word invasion. They were sleeping in cartons, living in the playground, selling sandwiches... Where did these people come from? Why were they placed here? We could neither sit nor pass through the square.'*⁸

*Map of Athens' seven districts & Table 1 about here*⁹

Although we do not dispose official data for the distribution of the immigrant population in 2008, comparative data from 2005-2007 to 2008 validate the rapid increase described by the residents. From 19% between 2005-2007 in the city of

Athens, immigrants have risen to 26.5% in September 2008 (for data on the evolution of irregular immigrants in Athens, see Vaiou et al. 2007; Drettakis 2008). Immigrants' concentration in the 6th city district becomes also evident if one observes the locality of offices of the different ethnic groups in this specific area.¹⁰

A second contextual factor that might have augmented the electoral demand of the extreme right is an increase in crime rates in these areas.¹¹ Regardless of their political affiliation or ideological predisposition, all interviewees asserted the problem of criminality and the feeling of fear, which followed it. This issue was constantly high in the agenda of the regular assemblies of the 6th city district and was raised by both left wing and right wing residents' associations.¹² This should be related to a generalized decline in the standards of living in this particular area of Athens, which 'concentrates most of the contemporary social and economic problems in urban living'.¹³ The situation has been deteriorating since the 1970s by the fact that middle-class inhabitants gradually left the city center for the suburbs since the 1970s (Arapoglou et al. 2009). Regular and irregular immigrants moved into the housing stock from the 1990s. On the one hand, landlords exploited the demand for housing; on the other, immigrants utilized the supply of low-rent apartments, as well as the disposition of vacant and abandoned buildings.¹⁴ The huge turnover of people staying temporarily in those properties (the so-called 'rent per hour') and the high density of residents per property (due to the fact that large numbers of people were packed into each property) contributed to the deepening of urban decline of the city centre.

The combination of rapid increase of immigrant population, high crime rates and urban degradation boosted the demand for anti-immigrant rhetoric. The propensity to vote for far right parties increases when voters consider immigrants responsible for the rising crime (Dinas and van Spanje 2011). It was therefore a straightforward task for any anti-immigration party —and the GD was one of them— to mobilize support, by equating immigrants with criminals.

Still, however, a crucial part of the puzzle is left out. How could the GD overcome its marginal status so as to become a viable political alternative in this election? Even at their maximum, all these abovementioned factors constitute necessary conditions for GD's electoral performance. Eventually, however, it must have been GD's strategy that materialised this opportunity. The co-existence of increased immigration and crime rates does not help us understand why, for instance, the GD received such a high vote share in the 6th district but not in the 2nd, which has

similar immigration rates. A careful look at the electoral scores in the 59 electoral districts of the city of Athens per municipal department shows that, whereas the Golden Dawn won more than 5.29% in districts with low (<5%) or medium level of immigration (11-20%), it remained under the total score of 5.29% in the second department. Figure 2 presents the relationship between support for the Golden Dawn and immigrant rates. Although we find a monotone pattern, it is far from linear. Even in the 6th municipal district, GD gained a disproportionate part of the electorate in the neighborhood of Agios Panteleimonas (14.7%, that is 80% more than the average vote share in the 6th municipal district). Such findings indicate that there is a local element in the explanation of GD vote.

Figure 2 about here

Evidence from our survey¹⁵ points to the same conclusion. In both panels of Figure 3, the horizontal axis sorts respondents according to their responses in the two questions tapping attitudes towards the immigrants. The left-most panel looks at people's views on whether immigrants undermine (0) or enrich (10) the country's cultural life. We compare residents in the neighborhood of Agios Panteleimonas, the stronghold of GD's activities, and residents in the two other districts with crime and immigrant rates quite as high as those observed in the 6th district. The vertical axis measures people's propensity to vote (PTV) score for the GD, measured in a 0 to 10 scale. The local regression curves shown in the graph trace the mean responses conditional on people's scores in the horizontal axis. Looking at the left-most panel of Figure 3, we see that not only is there a gap between the residents of Agios Panteleimonas (AP) and those residing in the other two counties, but this gap is relatively stable across the x-axis. At any given point of the cultural dimension, residents of AP denote a higher mean PTV score for the GD than the residents of the other two areas. If GD's support was contingent upon the local level of anti-immigration attitudes, for a given value of the horizontal axis we would observe no difference between the three curves. The pattern observed here indicates that irrespective of people's attitudes on this issue, there is still a gap.

Figure 3 about here

The pattern depicted in the right panel of Figure 3 is analogous. The question refers to the economic pros (10) and cons (0) of immigration. Although the curve for AP is not exactly parallel to the two other curves, we still find a gap among those respondents who hold the least favorable views towards the immigrants. Thus, among people with equally extreme anti-immigration stances, i.e. people who believe that immigrants harm the economy, we find a gap which essentially cannot be explained on these grounds.

Starting from this observation, we will now turn toward highlighting the importance of another factor accounting for GD's electoral breakthrough in 2010, namely the party's intentional organizational activity in specific districts of the city. We develop our argument building on our fieldwork. We then move on to test our organizational hypothesis using a survey especially designed for this purpose and administered a couple of months after the 2010 municipal elections.

The supply-side: Mobilization, violence and visibility

Studying the electoral success of Vlaams Block in Flanders, De Witte and Klandermans (2001) highlight the importance of mobilization processes in bringing the demand for an extreme right-wing party and the existence of a radical core of militants –what they call the supply– together. Notwithstanding the growing negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities in the early 1990s in Antwerp, it was through an intensive neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood campaign that Vlaams Block succeeded in electorally exploiting demand.¹⁶ Lamontagne and Stockemer (2010) also find a strong and persisting effect of region on vote for FPÖ and BZÖ and argue that living in Carinthia –the organizational center of the FPÖ and BZÖ– may have increased popular exposure to extreme right ideas.

The GD has nothing but underestimated the importance of such mobilization techniques. In the aftermath of the first round of the Athens 2010 municipal election, Nikos Michaloliakos unfolded the party's strategy along the following lines:

'This fight, which ended by the electoral result of the municipal elections, started through the committees of residents of the squares of Omonea, Agios Panteleimonas, Attiki, Ameriki. From all these special people and the even braver women who stood in the front line in order to resist. We

*first had the assembly in Omonea, then the fights in the Court of Appeal. We passed through the residents' committees to arrive at this point.'*¹⁷

However conscious and clear in retrospect this strategy has been for the GD, its effectiveness was not taken as given from the very beginning. How did the GD manage to gain political acceptance and electoral support among residents of the 6th district of Athens?

Following a well-known tactic in right-wing extremist European parties (Mudde 2007: 269), the GD chooses the area of AP as a stronghold in order to acquire a local presence and, through it, a further visibility. AP, as well as the 6th department of Athens to which it belongs, become the headquarters of the organisation. In other words, the party adopted the opposite tactic of what it used to do the last twenty-five years: instead of being present all over the Greek territory, after 2008/2009 GD gathered its forces in few local areas. AP and the city of Athens, suburbs of Piraeus, Corinth, Agrinio or Messinia became gradually the strongholds of the organisation.

Since September 2008, residents of AP were assembling on a regular basis around the square in order to protest against immigrants' concentration and 'reclaim' their neighborhood. Four different kinds of actors constituted the scenery: the 'outraged residents' who belong to an old conservative middle class; the GD; the immigrants; and the 'solidarists', i.e. left-wing activists expressing support *vis-à-vis* the immigrants.

*'In the beginning I was watching from my balcony. Some residents distributed leaflets and called for protest against the immigrants. I did not like that. Firstly, I did not know them and then they were swearing the government and politicians. I thought that this was not serious: you cannot succeed in solving a problem by speaking this way. It was not civilized. I decided to go down. The GD was present on the side of the inhabitants. On the other side, there were anarchists. I can say that I was with the GD at that point, because after all, they were holding the Greek flag and protecting the residents.'*¹⁸

Our research in the area revealed that from 2008 to 2010 there have been at least twenty different committees or/and associations of residents. Among them, at least ten

have gradually built ties with GD. Progressively people were divided in two camps: the ‘outraged residents’ with GD, on the one side, and the immigrants with leftist activists, on the other.

‘In the middle there was the police; on the one side the inhabitants, on the other the immigrants’ supporters. And then the show started. They burnt trashcans, the police threw tear gas and they left. Then some other immigrant solidarity groups showed up. They were pretending to be in pain for the immigrants, only in order to cause problems in the neighborhood. Because if one really cares for one other, he offers food, blankets. On the contrary, these people brought nothing. They were indifferent about how these people would survive; they only came to make a fuss. At least, the GD was on the residents’ side.’¹⁹

Hence, the GD progressively merged with the committees of residents. It used a two-fold method in order to penetrate in the local population. On the one hand, it provided goods and services and, on the other, it used violence in order to “protect” against the ‘rivals’. As far as the first one is concerned, it offered security services to aged people and to shop owners of the 6th district, like the accompaniment of pensioners to the bank, to the supermarket, the protection of students, of night bars and restaurants. In case of criminal acts – among which the most frequent were street robberies – the GD offered services of persecution of the thief and promised return of the stolen goods. It organized events like food distribution for Greeks in squares of the 6th district and, last but not least, it supported the grass-roots movement against immigrants.

Violence is an instrument of double utility in the strategy of the organization: it uses it as a means of confrontation with the perceived enemies and as a symbol of power in order to attract members and voters. From 2008 to 2010, the GD brings into play violence against three social groups: immigrants, regardless of their legal status; antifa activists; and socially vulnerable individuals, like drug addicts, homeless etc. It hence exploits the presence of pro-immigrant activists and antifa groups in order to create acceptance and proximity with the local population and acquire visibility. *Interactive extremism*²⁰ between pro-immigrant groups and the GD further divided the inhabitants and reinforced the right-wing extremists:

'In the beginning, we didn't know how to handle the situation and we made mistakes. We organised continuously antiracist happenings. This polarised even more the residents and worsened the situation.' ²¹

In terms of political communication, the GD takes under consideration its difficulty in national media penetration and searches alternative ways in order to diffuse its message. A month before the 2010 municipal elections, a high-ranked party cadre –and nowadays regarded as the party's Number Two- was arguing:

'The slogan for our political action is "Break the conspiracy of silence". The sign that we already have is that we will face a tremendous war by the mass media. Nobody will mention us; do not expect such a thing. Hence the only thing that we are obliged to do is to be 24 hours per day in the streets in order to propagandize this effort.' ²²

For this reason, GD utilizes traditional practices of mass parties in the local level. It distributes a journal named "The Voice of the Residents of Agios Panteleimonas". It exploits door-to-door techniques and organizes grass-roots politics, like demonstrations and assemblies in order to create the stronghold. For this same reason, it consciously transfers its headquarters close to the neighborhood of AP. The Secretary General of GD, Nikos Mihaloliakos, clearly admits the importance of volunteers and door-to-door techniques in mobilizing support for the party:

'They hadn't calculated some uncertain factors, like the existence of crazy volunteers. Because campaigns do not demand only money; they demand the guts of being a fighter. The same happens in Athens. Dozens of fighters thresh on a daily basis door-to-door, from one car to the other, from a coffee shop to the other, from one neighborhood to the other in order to inform the people. This is how they liberated the square of Agios Panteleimonas and the square of Attiki. And then, there will follow other neighborhoods and quartiers and the whole city. Because the city belongs to us.' ²³

Through this seemingly “pre-modern” electoral campaign (Norris 2000; Farrell 1996; Blumler & Kavanagh 1999), the GD succeeded in augmenting its sphere of influence, in recruiting and promoting activists,²⁴ as well as in placing a series of issues in the public agenda. Above all, however, it gained visibility and settled in the local political terrain. After two and a half decades of electoral misery and general disesteem, GD became a local *acteur politique*.

Empirical Analysis: Our organisational theory against alternative explanations

The aim of this section is to put our organizational hypothesis to the test. To do so in a systematic way, we use data from a survey targeting a random sample of the municipality of Athens and taking place soon after the 2010 election. Using these data, we will examine our supply-side explanation against other potentially relevant explanations of extreme-right support, most of which have been already highlighted in the theoretical discussion.

A first competing explanation is that rather than being due to its organisational activity, GD’s support in these areas is due to their particular sociodemographic outlook. If the GD attracted mainly voters with lower socioeconomic status, the observed difference in its electoral appeal across the city may be due to such demographic differences across the various counties. We thus need to control for such potential confounds in order to distinguish their effect from possible mobilization effects that are of interest here. Moreover, related to our previous discussion about the contextual conjectures possibly driving GD support, we need to control for objective indicators of immigration and crime rates at the lowest possible unit of analysis.²⁵

Related to the aggregate level immigration and crime rates are people’s attitudes about immigrants. Our argument is not that the GD managed to intensify some people’s predispositions against the immigrants. Rather, by engaging in the local society, it provided goods and services that made people more sympathetic to the party, regardless of their attitudes towards immigrants. People who collect information about the GD are more likely to hold positive views towards the party. These are also the people more likely to be mobilized to take part in the party’s activities. These people are in turn likely to hold more anti-immigration views than average. To avoid this alternative link between GD visibility and GD support confound our estimates, we need to control for attitudes towards immigration.

Attitudes are of course linked with perceptions. People may resort to the GD if they perceive a personal threat from immigrants or if they simply perceive crime as an important problem affecting their living conditions. Again, if individuals mobilized by the GD are those who are also more likely to attach high importance to crime and to link crime with the immigrants, we are again faced with the same selection problem. These people would be probably more likely to rate positively the party even without having experienced its grass-roots activities in their neighborhood. Thus, we need to take into account individuals' perceptions about the current state of affairs with regard to crime.

Attitudes with regard to immigration are measured by using two indicators. The first consists of respondents' self placement in a 0 to 10 scale on a question about whether immigrants are damaging (0) or beneficial (10) for the national economy. The second question captures concerns of cultural integration, asking respondents to locate themselves in the same 0-10 scale about whether immigrants undermine (0) or enrich (10) the cultural life of the country. Perceptions with regard to the status quo in the issue of immigration are captured with a question asking respondents to locate themselves in a 1 to 5 scale with regard to where they believe the country's entrance policy stands: 1) free entrance; 5) absolute restriction. Crime perceptions are measured by a dummy denoting respondents who think crime is one of the most important problems the country is facing nowadays. Moreover, a question asking respondents whether they or significant others had been victims of a robbery attempt or some other act of violence is also included as a control.

A final factor that needs to be taken into account is that the GD is not only an anti-immigration party. It is also an ultra-nationalist party with a discourse based on racial discriminations. Again, the GD is probably more visible among people who hold nationalist views. To account for this possibility we need to take into account people's ideological predispositions as well as their more generic attitudes towards nationalism and towards other political representatives of this ideological camp. This is why we also include the classic left-right dimension as well as two indicators indicating first which TV news program people watch during the morning and which news-broadcast they follow most frequently in the evening. Finally, we also include the PTV for LAOS, as another way to capture some latent underlying tendency to vote for the Golden Dawn.²⁶

Finally, we need to discuss the measurement of our key independent variable. Recall that our hypothesis is that, on top of all the abovementioned factors, GD's grass roots activity significantly improved the party's electoral performance. Since we cannot effectively measure party activism, we will essentially deduce it by employing an indicator of GD's visibility among our survey respondents. We combine two proxies: 1) whether the respondent received a leaflet from the party; 2) whether people have been informed about the GD's activities in their area of residence either by friends, neighbours or by other acquaintances. Other potential indicators, such as looking for information about the party on the web or having participated in one of a party's rallies are not taken into account as they are deemed to be behavioural manifestations of curiosity or support rather than of learning about the GD's local action.

Instrumenting Golden Dawn's visibility

Before we move to the empirical analysis, we need to address an important remaining concern. Despite the inclusion of a long list of control variables, there may still be various unobservable factors making the GD both more visible and more likeable. In other words, people who are more likely to notice GD's activity are also more likely to vote for the party and would probably be more likely to do so even in the absence of GD's local presence. To mediate this problem, we use residence in the 6th district as an instrument of GD visibility. Although its action eventually spread in various neighborhoods of Athens, the party's core fieldwork during all this period was Agios Panteleimonas and its surrounding neighborhoods.²⁷

The use of municipality of residence is based on the idea that residing in the 6th district is likely to have brought people into contact with the GD. Although such contact is likely to be the outcome of prior predispositions, most people would most likely continue having no contact with the GD had they not lived in this area. To be sure, our instrumental variables estimand will only reveal the causal effect of GD visibility on GD support, if the following conditions are satisfied:

1. Ignorability: People may have chosen to either abandon this area or, reversely, to move in its neighborhoods as a result of the presence of the GD.
2. Exclusion: Knowledge on municipality status should not help us predict support for the GD in any other way than through its increased visibility in that area. In other

words, people living in the 6th district should not be fundamentally different in structural or demographic terms not already captured by our control variables from those living in other areas of Athens..

3. First stage: knowledge on residence status should help us predict perceived visibility of GD's activities.

4. Monotonicity: No-one is discouraged from being mobilized because of living in the 6th municipality.

Assumption 3 states that residing in the 6th district makes it more likely to have witnessed the activity of the GD than residing in another county. In effect whereas 9 percent of respondents residing in other counties received a leaflet from the party, 15 percent did so among residents of the 6th district. In the next section, we will examine this assumption controlling also for the set of observables included in X .

Monotonicity, criterion 4, is unlikely to be violated in our setting: people were not discouraged from hearing about the GD as a result of living in the 6th municipal county. In other words, it is difficult to believe that the GD would be more visible for people living in the 6th district, had they lived in a different municipality.

What is much more problematic, however, is to establish ignorability and exclusion. Violation of either of these two assumptions would imply that living in the 6th municipal county might have induced higher levels of support for the GD even if its activities were largely invisible and unknown to its residents.

Our story is a story of observables. We believe that accounting for all factors alluded to above, the selection to treatment is as good as random. Moreover, accounting for this long series of demographic and attitudinal aspects, it is difficult to think in what other relevant terms would residents of the 6th district be different from the other residents of Athens. Although this assumption cannot be tested empirically because it presupposes the joint observation of both potential outcomes, some indirect evidence provided in the next section provides some confidence that conditional on this vector of covariates, what remains to distinguish residents of the 6th district with the rest of Athens is GD's increased visibility.

Results: the IV estimation

The first column of Table 2 presents the results from the first stage. GD visibility is regressed on the set of covariates plus a dummy denoting residents from the sixth or

the fourth municipal county. Given the high number of factorized variables included in the model, we cannot present the full results here. What is of interest is that knowledge on municipality helps improve significantly our prediction about whether people were aware of GD's visibility. In other words, the first stage assumption of the IV estimation seems to be satisfied even in the presence of controls. The second column presents the average effect of visibility on GD support for those residing in the 6th district. We use the Two-Stage-Least-Squares estimator. Indeed, even when instrumented through area of residence, knowledge about GD's grassroots work at the local level seems to boost support for the party by almost 1 point in 0 to 10 scale, a remarkable effect when one considers the very highly skewed distribution in this scale, whereby only 4 percent of the population gave a score higher than 5. The third column of the Table presents the same effect using a different estimator. Given the presence of covariates, the 2SLS estimator is only consistent under the assumption of homogeneous treatment effects. This assumption may be violated, however, in various real-world instances. To allow for heterogeneous treatment effects, the same effects are estimated by using a semi-parametric estimator, namely the Local Average Response Functions proposed by Abadie (2003). Evidently, the result is almost identical, indicating that the assumption upon which the 2SLS estimator is based is probably valid in this case. Again, the same substantive conclusions are drawn. Knowing about the action of the GD almost doubles the party's PTV score.

Table 2 about here

Conclusions

Before the GD entered the central political scene and the national parliament, it gained representation in the local politics of the City of Athens. Today, after the entrance in parliament and the escalating trend in the polls, many people try to explain how did that happen. The economic crisis is not the starting point of this electoral rise. Even though the crisis augments the opportunities for penetration of a right-wing party among the insecure and poor strata, GD's exit from the political margin was already a *fait accompli* before the outbreak of the crisis.

Public debate on the causes of the electoral rise of right-wing extremism and the radical right in general tend to focus on demand-side explanations. Whilst we tried to shed light at both sides, our interpretation originates from the side of the supply.

Shortly after the 2004 Olympic Games euphoria, when the polishing of the city centre was over, new, massive immigration flows entered the country. The serious degradation in terms of living standards for the city residents coincided with a decisive change in GD's strategy. It shifted from traditional nationalist right stakes (national issues, anti-communism) to a new anti-immigration and pro-security agenda. At the same time, it no longer opted for national political presence; instead, it penetrated in specific local areas in order to turn them into strongholds.

Exogenous and endogenous factors, as well as their interaction, favoured the electoral breakthrough of the GD. The organisation activated the underlying residents' fears related to massive concentration of irregular Afro-Asian immigrants in certain neighbourhoods after the summer of 2008. But most importantly, it was GD that succeeded in accessing the local population through residents' initiatives and committees, mainly interested on anti-immigrant mobilization. It offered goods and services to Greeks and, thus, managed to get identified as an organization, which protects the residents, whilst eliminating the foreigners. It was constantly present in certain city areas, either by taking action on its own, or by penetrating in existing initiatives organised by right-wing and anti-immigrant oriented citizens. The frontiers between the extremist organization and the residents' committees progressively became porous. Hence, without being a mass party, GD managed to become a party on the ground.

In our analysis we highlighted the reasons for the electoral take off of the GD. We found out that internal supply factors such as organizational patterns and political campaign strategies are crucial, especially in an early stage, as the GD attempts to move from the margins towards the central political arena. Although explanations for the rise of radical and extreme right parties focus either on the micro (individual) or the macro (national) level, we emphasize on the meso-level, in other words on what has happened in specific neighbourhoods in the city of Athens. Differently from other meso-level studies we have shown that not only the social conditions prevailing in the center of the capital (immigration, crime, violence) and its sub-local terrain but also the political opportunities GD has created for itself (penetration in the grassroots networks, interconnection between local party activists and activist movements) have played an important role for the rise of GD in the Greek party system. In the analysis of the far right party family in the post war European party systems, extreme and radical right parties have been often seen as the consequence of socio-political and

economic determinants as well as the preferences of voters. We tried to show the sub-local organizational contribution of the extreme right spectrum in Greece for its rise in the political scene.

Notes

¹ According to the 2001 census, 6,95% of the total population in Greece were foreigners, whereas ten years earlier their number was five times lower. Following unofficial estimations (Baldwin-Edwards 2005), at the end of 2004 immigrants (documented foreigners, expatriates and undocumented) constituted at least 10,3% of the total population.

² Indicative of its opportunist tactics is the fact that even though the Golden Dawn is edified on the polytheist dogma of ancient Greeks and has glorified paganism, since it entered the political arena it has embraced the Greek orthodox church as a unifying element of the national identity.

³ Right-wing extremism has never been electorally successful since the restoration of democratic rule in 1974. According to Taggart (1995: 46), experience of an authoritarian past in conditions of transition to democracy impedes the development of a viable far right-wing pole. After the fall of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974 and the transition to a liberal democracy, pro-monarchists, ultra-nationalists and right-wing authoritarians remained at the margins of the newly born political scene. Most of them took shelter in the center-right New Democracy, the then governing party (1974-1981) headed by Konstantinos Karamanlis. Among them even those of the National Alignment (Greek: Εθνική Πιράταξη), the most electorally successful Greek far right party until May/June 2012, have been absorbed by the centre-right party in 1980-1981 despite having won parliamentary representation in 1977. The inclusiveness of the catch-all New Democracy to a wide range of right-wing voters and cadres (see Kriesi 1995: 33; Georgiadou 2011: 70) restricted the far right parties in an electorally irrelevant position within the Greek party system.

⁴ The new law amends the Code of Greek citizenship which was based on the principle of blood. Since 2010, the immigrants' children acquire the Greek citizenship by birth in Greece on condition that the two parents reside in Greece permanently and legally for 5 consecutive years. Also children of immigrants who have attended at least 6 years of Greek school and reside legally in the country, are entitled to Greek citizenship. Foreigners who wish to naturalize as Greeks should reside legally for seven consecutive years, have no criminal record, testify knowledge of Greek, smooth integration into economic and social life, and familiarity with the institutions of government. For the evolution of the status of citizenship in Greece, see Christopoulos 2012.

⁵ In the relevant literature, although political opportunity structures were first and foremost thought as "exogenous conditions" for social mobilization (Kitschelt 1986: 58), over the years it became obvious that 'most opportunities and constraints are situational rather than structural' (Uhlir 2006: 27; Tarrow 1998: 77). In other words, they are situational or contingent within already existing 'consistent dimensions of the political environment' (ibid. p. 76). The content of political opportunities and changes in their nature 'create the most important incentives for initiating new phases of contention' either referring to social movements (Tarrow 1998: 7) or to new phases of electoral resonance concerning the far right parties.

⁶ The porous Greek borders and the rigorous immigration policies in Spain and Italy "have changed the direction of African immigration flows towards Greece", which after 2008 became the country with the most irregular entries within the EU. In 2010 almost all irregular immigrants willing to access the EU flowed to Greece (Kassimis 2012). In ten years time, from 2001 to 2010, it is estimated that 358,940 immigrants have entered the country (Drettakis 2011).

⁷ For the distribution of immigrants per city district in 2009, see <http://www.publicissue.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/imm-map-2009.pdf>

⁸ Interview with resident from the square of Agios Panteleimonas. In total, our qualitative data derived from twelve semi-structured interviews with residents of the area who played a key role in the grass-roots movement, as well as observation of numerous meetings with residents' committees, eight of which focused especially on the issue of immigration. Among those eight meetings, five were organised by left-wing groups, two by the "outraged citizens" and one was an anarchists' open assembly. Important information was also collected during observation of six regular assemblies of the 6th District Council, as well as observation of six regular assemblies of the City Council. Last but not least, our knowledge on debates regarding the city centre was nourished by following a multidisciplinary seminar organized by the National Centre of Social Research on the

transformation of the city center, titled ‘The Athens City Center from the 19th to the 21st century. An interdisciplinary approach’, More information available at: <http://www.bigbananaadventures.com/seminaria.php?id=2&tp=1&id2=307>.

⁹ The municipality of Athens is divided into seven administrative units, the so-called districts. Following our previous discussion about the physiognomy of the Golden Dawn, two contextual characteristics seem to be of primary importance, namely the level of delinquency and the ethnic composition of the area of residence. Table 1 displays the crime rates and the percentage of non-indigenous population in each district. Even at first glance, it is clear that the 6th district differs from all other areas with respect to both immigration and crime rates. It scores very highly in both of them, although other districts score also high in one of the two categories (e.g. 1st and 4th district with respect to crime, and 1st and 2nd district with regard to immigrants). This aspect needs to be borne in mind in the next section when we spell out our identification strategy.

¹⁰ For instance, the Congolese, Tanzanian, Somalian, Kenyan, Aithiopian, Philippinese, Sierra Leonian, Guinean, Gambian, Senegalese, Nigerian, Sudanese communities maintain their offices in the 6th city district. In the municipal market of Kypseli –another neighbourhood of the same district– Greek language courses are given to immigrants.

¹¹ Source: Annual Data of the Ministry for Citizens Protection.

¹² Information gathered by research in the field and participant observation of the regular assemblies.

¹³ Resident’s quote during the regular meetings of the *Movement of residents of the 6th city district*. Notes collected during participant observation. Among these social problems, one ought to mention the dense concentration of brothels (according to residents there are between 105 and 250 in total, many of which function illegally), drug and humantrafficking, installation of homeless and drug addicts, irregular trade, substantial lack of green, open and common public spaces.

¹⁴ For an image of full and vacant buildings in the area of Agios Panteleimonas, see http://www.hiddenathens.info/2010/12/agios_pantelehmonas_casestudy/

¹⁵The analysis is based on a random survey of 1,630 individuals residing in the municipality of Athens. More about the survey follows in the next section.

¹⁶ De Decker et al. (2005: 163) have pointed out the strategic choice of Vlaams Blok to concentrate on the problems of the old city neighbourhoods in Antwerp in a period of time that ‘traditional parties left the neighbourhoods’ and ‘became alienated from the electorate’. Using the terminology of Warmenbol (2009), these are explanations that focus on ‘the meso level’, i.e. ‘on (social) settings like the neighbourhood, city or region’.

¹⁷ Speech of the GD leader, 26.10.2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyxQIibYYQ>

¹⁸ Interview with inhabitant of the square of AP.

¹⁹ Interview with inhabitant of the square of AP.

²⁰ For an exploration of the notion see Richards B. (2013).

²¹ Interview with left-wing activist, resident of the 6th district.

²² Speech of Elias Kassidiaris, 12.09.2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vM1CDNn108&feature=related>

²³ Speech of the Secretary General of GD, 26.10.2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyxQIibYYQ>

²⁴ The importance of mobilization mechanisms in the electoral endurance of radical right parties is also underlined by Art (2011), who focuses on the “microdynamics of party building” associating those mechanisms to the radical right activists’ profile. Within the local activists who built ties with GD, we roughly recognize aspects of the “tripartite typology” of radical right activists (‘extremists’, ‘moderates’, ‘opportunists’) proposed by Art.

²⁵ We include gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, employment sector and a dummy denoting whether the respondent has property in the 6th district. With the exception of age, all other covariates are fully factorized. Aggregate immigration data have been found in the Athens Municipality records, while crime rates have been provided at the neighbourhood level by the Athens Metropolitan Area Police Authority.

²⁶ The hidden assumption behind this line of thinking is that the PTVs for the two parties are positively associated. Indeed, their Pearson correlation is .37.

²⁷ An important caveat is that although the survey is aimed to be representative for the population of Athens, we cannot necessarily expect that this will be the case when focusing on specific areas of the city. Since we are mainly interested in conditional relationships between party preference and various contextual, socioeconomic and attitudinal traits, however, unless this measurement error at the level of the county is correlated with our key independent variables, it only affects the precision of our estimates (Wooldridge 2002).

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