

ROOTS OF THE GOLDEN DAWN RISE IN THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM OF GREECE: AN ANALYSIS OF ALBANIAN, BULGARIAN, GEORGIAN IMMIGRATION TO GREECE, THE EUROPEAN DEBT CRISIS AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FAR-RIGHT RISE - 23.06.2021

Aleyna Tutku Bağcı

Uep Rapor No: 5
23.06.2021

Aleyna Tutku Bağcı

Traineeship Program Participant

Introduction

Far-right rise is a phenomenon that has been particularly apparent in Greece for the last two decades. In this paper, three reasons will be analyzed as the principal roots of this nasty rise. Firstly, immigration is a concept that has highly affected Greek society and economy, particularly after the 1990s and until today. Especially the large number of immigrants coming from the Balkans, mainly from Albania and Bulgaria, and besides, Georgia, had and continue to influence the culture and the societal interrelations. There have been instances where the immigrants, who came to Greece to seek better living conditions out of their own state, have been both integrated into this new culture with the passage of decades, but also there are instances where they did not find the desired warm welcoming from the Greek citizens. Along with the refugees who seek asylum in the Greek territory in order to, most probably, have the opportunity to enter the European continent, the crisis of 2015, a huge internal problem occurred in the country. However, this was definitely not the first time that domestic uprisings due to the immigrants occurred. In Greece, it can be argued that there are different groups of citizens with different opinions over the reality of immigration in their state. While there are people who are highly accepting about such a situation, having no issue for either befriend with

an immigrant or send their kids to the same school with immigrant kids, there are, on the other hand, people with views which make the coexistence harder because of often xenophobic, often racist arguments. The focus of the anti-immigration group is essentially based on the economic outcome of immigration for Greece and on the criminal incidents that are directly linked with immigrants.

For the case of the economic outcome, for example, there is the argument that immigrants, through working for much lower salaries in comparison with Greeks, decrease the value of the job and cause high levels of unemployment for the Greek citizens. They are, therefore, often blamed for "stealing" the jobs of the actual citizens of the state. Especially the European debt crisis, which harmed the Greek economy and society to a great extent, was most of the time viewed by the anti-immigrants as a result of immigration and as the inability of the Greek government to control its own fate. The more and more conservative and nationalist ideas rose at that period, consequently leading to the success of the Golden Dawn, the far-right party of Greece, during the elections in 2012. So, it can be argued that the anti-immigration norm is attached to the economy mostly rather than just to the fact that there are differences in the cultures of the nations. For the case of the criminal incidents occurring in Greece, when for instance, an event, like a murder, theft, or rape, takes place, the immigrants are the first who come to mind in the investigation process and in Greek media. However, this is nothing else than targeting the immigrants unjustly en masse. For example, a recent murder of a woman in Glyka Nera province of Greece is a case that targeted immigrants from the first moment, but in reality, it was the Greek husband of the woman who killed her and set a crime scene as it was people who didnt speak Greek fluently who killed his wife and stole a high amount of money from their house, probably immigrants that worked in the construction of their maisonette.[1] It was much more feasible for the society to mark the foreigners as the criminals of this case, but as it was announced some days ago, it was the husband himself who committed it. I should make it clear that the main focus of this paper is the far-right rise of the Golden Dawn, but I consider it important to comprehend the general framework of the society and its perspective to the immigrants in the first place, as it was the ethnic Greeks who gave the opportunity to a fascist party to emerge in the domestic politics of the state. The effect of the economic and refugee crises are definitely quite instrumental, but underlying some societal points and providing examples of the difficulties of the coexistence is also important, as all these concepts are interlinked.

In this particular paper, therefore, I will include five sections. In the first section, I will concentrate on Albanian immigration to Greece. Albanian population is the highest immigrant population in Greece, so their impact in the Greek perspective on immigration is huge, and most of the time, they are the ones who face the "targeting" habit of Greeks for nasty cases. In section two, I will argue the Bulgarian and Georgian populations in Greece, which are also significant parts of the immigrants. Both in the first section and in the second section, I will provide historical facts about their immigration and discuss Greece's identity and culture as a state. In section three, I will discuss the European debt

crisis and the refugee crisis, which are regarded as two of the most significant sources of the anti-immigration attitude of citizens and the far-right rise. In section four, I will refer to Golden Dawn exclusively, their success in the elections of 2012, and their situation in Greek politics currently, after all the violent crimes that its members were found guilty of. In the final section, I will conclude the paper by summarizing the main points of this paper and making assumptions about the right-wing's short and long-term situation in Greece in the future.

Albanian Immigration To Greece And The Greek Culture

Albanians are today the biggest immigrant population in Greece and one of the most targeted populations by the Greek far-right violence. They work in multiple jobs varying from construction to cleaning, etc. It cannot be argued that they get quite high-paid jobs or build high-ranked careers. They come to Greece in order to seek jobs as workers. The reason why I mention this is because of the arguments of the far-right supporters about Albanians being the ones who steal the jobs that the ethnic Greeks deserve in their home country. I do not believe that even the majority of Greeks is interested in the kind of jobs that the immigrants work at. Greeks, as a nation, are quite elitist in their choices, and working as cleaning ladies or construction workers is not an often-seen incident.

Regarding the historical background of Albanian presence in Greece, they had come as masses in the Greek territory during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, besides their immigration process in the Ottoman period. At the time of those migrations, they worked mainly in the textile area or indifferent agricultural occupations.[2] So, the mass immigration that began primarily in 1991, after the fall of communism, and continued from then and on, was not really the first time that Greece faced Albanian immigrants in its territory. For the recent immigration, which started in the 90s, I can highlight that this is the process that can be linked to the far-right rise in Greece. The previous phases of Albanian immigration resulted in greater integration in comparison with the latest phase, especially in the example of the Cham Albanians and the Arnavites population. One possible reason why these populations integrated better is their common religion with the ethnic Greeks and the period that they migrated. Through time they got more and more accepted by the Greek society, and their culture developed to a mixed one, with Orthodox-Christianity as its priority.

However, the transition of flows of immigrants to the Greek territory after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was an event that caused panic in the state. One of the main reasons behind the panic was that these flows of immigrants were illegal, from different ideological atmosphere and probably from other religious groups, as Albanians are not solely Christians, they have a great number of Muslim citizens, as well. Firstly, this sense of illegality formed a perspective against Albanians, as they were illegal and criminal people who entered a sovereign state in order to maybe distract the internal stability. This perspective, unfortunately, continues to exist until today actually, as Albanians are the

first that Greek ethnics blame at any criminal incident with unknown perpetrators. In a "study" that was carried out with the requirement of a Golden Dawn MP to be presented in the Greek Parliament, it was shown that from 1998 to 2012, the number of crimes committed by immigrants increased from 6,094 to 20,265, respectively.[3] This kind of study is just an effort to denigrate the immigrant population, implementing propaganda to frame the ethnic Greeks' opinions on immigration. The fact that such studies are not held for the Greek citizens but for specific groups of people in a state shows that a chaotic atmosphere is tried to be created. Furthermore, power sources for the unwelcoming attitude of Greeks are the religious and political differences of the two nations. Albania consists of a great number of Muslims, and not all immigrants were Orthodox-Christians as the large majority of Greeks are. Also, Albania was part of a communist ideology for years, and the dissociation from this identity was not regarded as feasible, in the short term at least. It is important at this point to underline that Greece is a state with a deep-rooted Orthodox-Christian identity and the patriotic sentiments are quite powerful among ethnic Greeks, especially after the Greek War of Independence in 1821.

In order to comprehend why the far-right wing rose especially against the Albanian and other immigrant populations, the dynamics of the Greek identity and culture should be analyzed. Greece's geographical situation is significant for its identity, it is one of the passage routes for Europe from Asia. It has shaped its culture throughout centuries with numerous instances, with both the Eastern and the Western influence. More specifically, the East has always been a problematic matter for Greece, as there Turkey is located. A neighbour with population which had non - Christian beliefs seemed problamatic for Greece. Furthermore the fact that it had multiple armed or diplomatic conflicts with it throughout its history. It is definite that Greece does not want to be perceived as an Eastern state and has followed a path towards a Western type of politics. If Greece's religion and culture are considered, neither would I argue that it is clearly an Eastern state. So, Greece tends to have much more pro-Western and pro-European political and domestic views, rather than a pro-Eastern one, the Byzantine. For example, the fact that it became a member state of the European Union in 1981, an early date in comparison with many current EU member states, proves its interest in being in cooperation and in accordance with the other European states.[4] It differs, however, from the West, as well, as I would argue that the Western model of life is "too" modern for Greek norms. Greece is highly attached to both nationalistic norms and religious faith even today, as it can be understood from the curriculum it imposes at schools, too. The importance that Greece gives to teach its Orthodox-Christian customs is quite elevated. At schools, every morning, the "stavros", which is one of the Orthodox-Christian worship kinds, is performed by all students, no matter the weather conditions or any other extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, on every religious holiday, the students visit the churches where their schools are submitted to. So, religion is not a point that Greece would ever sacrifice in order to be more and more integrated into the EU. This is why, despite its efforts and desire, it cannot be counted as a completely European state and that it regards the West as too modern. For the case of immigrants and mainly the Albanian population in Greece, therefore, it can be underlined that even though Greece is not solely a Western culture, it is a culture that is highly integrated into itself. Expecting from such a society with such predominant norms to be welcoming for other populations, especially

for populations with different political ideologies and religions, coming in masses in its territory is difficult.

Definitely one of the most targeted immigrant population by the Golden Dawn supporters is the Albanian one, as shown with the example of the study made in the Parliament to target Albanians mostly because of their high presence in Greece and the fact that they sometimes identify themselves as Greek, as well, after all those years of living in Greece and expanding their families in Greece. The violence of the far-right supporters is not just limited to adults; there are, for example, opposing groups to the fact that Albanian children are accepted at the same schools as Greek children. So, racist and xenophobic ideas are present in all age levels. At this point, I should make a clear distinction between these terms because they are not the same. For instance, the effort to inhibit the Greek schools for the education of Albanian children is a racist move from the aspect that the supporters of this view consider the Greek schools as the possession of just the Greek ethnos. The Albanians are regarded as an inferior "race" with a different history, language, and appearance. There have been a lot of instances, where Greeks were judging a person as an Albanian, only and only because of his or her clothes. Besides, making fun of the accent of Albanians is nearly an every-day incident in Greek schools. I do not believe that children would have such discriminatory cast of mind that they could separate the right and wrong behavior towards another person. The domestic familial life, and the views that are expressed at home influence the behavior of the children. Moreover, for the xenophobic side of the discrimination at school example, where Albanian immigrants were blamed unjustly for a minor or major crime not only in school, but constantly by the society in every-day news. Matching an entire ethnic group with criminality in newspapers, televisions and social media, automatically leads to xenophobia, "the fear from a foreign nation". In the introduction, I had mentioned a crime committed by a Greek husband, but was shown as committed by Albanian immigrants for more than a month. It was much more feasible for the Greek audience to accuse the foreigner construction worker candidates for the crime rather than a Greek man who is pilot and good-looking. For targeting the Albanian immigrants in this particular crime, the Albanian Community of Greece has requested an apology from the media.[5] I do not think, though, that an apology would alleviate the overall burden of the immigrant population to be perceived as dangerous and nasty. On the contrary, as far as I observe from the current situation in Greece, the far-right and anti-immigration sentiments are more and more supported, and if another crime like the one in Glyka Nera happens, again first the immigrants will be targeted as potential committers.

Thus, the Albanian immigration to Greece is a significant issue for the state's internal stability and for the far-right rise. The way that those people were stigmatized all those decades as criminals and problematic resulted in a general racism and xenophobia from the ethnic Greek side. Certainly, there are Albanians who were integrated into the Greek society to a great extent and receive the same amount of respect as the other citizens of Greece, but all this propaganda, along with the violence and hate crimes against their nation, the undervaluation of their potentials as workers or their loyalty as workers, the "humor" that they face with their language, and many other incidents make Greece a rather difficult state to live in and to exist with its citizens. It is not quite fair to expect

Greece to be like Turkey, for example, as it was never a state that received high flows of immigrants in the era of Empires, unlike the Ottoman Empire, which was full of several different groups of nations and religions. As I mentioned, Greece is a small state in dimension and a relatively closed society with certain dogmas. So, there is a facility for the far-right ideas to rise in this kind of a state, as immigrants are different and open to be marked for any nasty situation.

Bulgarian And Georgian Immigration To Greece

The Albanian population is the largest immigrant population in Greece, as I mentioned in the previous part of my paper. There is, though, a considerable number of Bulgarians and Georgians in the Greek territory, as well. Firstly, the Bulgarian presence in Greece will be discussed. Bulgarian immigration to Greece can be divided into three phases, according to Triandafyllidou and Nikolova as they highlight in their study: the first phase was from 1989 to 1996; the second was from 1997 to 2000; and lastly, the third phase took place from 2001 until 2007.[6] The first wave of Bulgarians immigrating to Greece came to this new country in order to pursue seasonal and agricultural jobs. They were mainly middle-aged women who worked as cleaners and babysitters. The second wave was the outcome of a harsh economic crisis that Bulgaria faced. Rather than being single seasonal workers, they came with their families this time and settled in the Greek territory establishing the first migrant associations. So, the second flow was the one that pursued integration in Greece and was determined to continue their lives in this state. The third period of Bulgarian immigration was much related to the visa waiving for traveling to Greece in 2001. As a result, a great number of Bulgarians arrived in Greece with the vision of better living conditions economically in comparison with their homeland. After the accession of Bulgaria in the European Union, the passage of the populations has been much more feasible, creating certain displeasure among Greeks, though. These displeases are not just limited to Bulgaria. The possibility that the other Balkan states, like Albania or North Macedonia, are right now on the agenda of the EU to be member states is a negative point for Greece, which is already afraid of more immigrants or refugees.

There are still many Bulgarians in Greece. Some of them even married ethnic Greeks and formed great multicultural families together. I think that one reason behind the fact that Greeks are more tolerant of the Bulgarian population instead of the Albanians is because there were flows of Bulgarians who came to Greece with the desire to get an education and build careers. Bulgarians were not, consequently, perceived altogether as such an "inferior" nation to be treated as drudgery as Albanians. Besides, the fact that Bulgarians are in majority Orthodox-Christians, in contrast with Albania, which has more than half of its population identifying as Muslims. This is significant because the common point over the religious belief proves that there are further common habits and identity with the Bulgarians. There were, of course, situations with highly nationalist people supporting Basil II, "the Bulgar Slayer" in front of Bulgarian students at high school, but this kind of behavior was not that ordinary like the "making fun of" the accent of Albanian children.

However, it should be comprehended that all these do not mean that Bulgarians are considered as Greeks, and no problems at all emerge between the two populations. There are anti-immigrant crimes and unjust propaganda going on for Bulgarians, as well. I should mention that there are definitely crimes committed by the immigrant population, but the problem is that showing only immigrants as the perpetrators of all crimes shape the subconscious of, not only the adult Greek audience, but also the children of young ages who are highly affected by their parents' views. So, even though Bulgarians seem to have been integrated deeper in the Greek society in comparison with Albanians, it should not be forgotten that Albanians are much more in population in Greece, so it is next that they take more attention.

On the other hand, the Georgian immigration to Greece can also be divided into three periods based on the political and economic spectrum during the phases. The first phase is until 1995, the second between 1996 and 2004, and the third one is the current phase, the era after 2004.[7] The three phases are characterized based on the motivation of the Georgians while immigrating. In the first period, their motivation was mainly ethnic and they migrated in high numbers to Greece. In the second period, the economic dimension of immigration was much more visible, the pursuit of better living conditions was apparent, but the number of migrating population was less than the first period immigration. Marourof in her work argues that it is the augmented levels of poverty that motivate Georgians today to immigrate in Greece. There might be other reasons for them choosing Greece as the location to immigrate, though. One reason that should be discussed is the cultural and religious similarities of Greece and Georgia. Georgia has, just like Greece, quite well-rooted Orthodox-Christian beliefs and gives special importance to religious customs. The other reason is the ease of immigrating to Greece, rather than to other states in the European continent. It is a cheaper state, but with a lot of open positions in different job areas. It is true that Germany, for example, has way more working opportunities for immigrants, but it is a highly developed and relatively expensive state. Besides that, entering Greece is anyway an easier solution, the same amount of acceptance is definitely not observed by the developed states of the European Union. Moreover, Georgians already have immigration experiences in Greece and there is a certain Georgian population there especially in Athens, Thessaloniki and Crete. When this argument of a cheap and easy state to immigrate is regarded along with their similarities in religion and culture, it can be argued that Georgians, which are fewer in Greece than Albanians and Bulgarians, are more accepted as a nation. I find it normal that Greeks create certain categorizations and distinctions even among the immigrant populations, when I consider it as a country that has been divided into several identities itself, as well. It deserves to be mentioned that the Cretans, the Macedons and the Pontics are all different groups trying to leave each other out when the matter is about being the "most Greek". While the Cretans show themselves as a part of the Mycenaean civilization of Ancient Greece, the Macedons claim being the offsprings of Alexander the Great, and lastly the Pontic regards themselves as the most Greek because of their significance during the Byzantine era. So, the behavior towards the immigrants and the tendency to follow nationalist views is not a surprising phenomenon for the Greek example.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Greece's reaction to immigrants varies in general. However, it is certain that the far-right rise has its roots not only in the immigration of a specific foreign population. The anti-immigration nationalists, therefore, are opposing to all kind of "foreigners" in the Greek territory, supporting that "Η Ελλάς είναι ελληνική", meaning "Greece is Greek". It is interesting on the other hand, that the then leader of the Golden Dawn, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, while supporting this idea, has expressed that his vision is "the Europe of nations" and that Greece is just one step for this end.[8] I do not think that such a statement is reasonable, as the far-right's main focus for Greece is to be completely detached by the "chains" and relations with the other states, even under the

EU roof, and decide for its own future based on its own citizens' and national interests. Having a general vision for the other states in the continent, as well, shows that the political wing of the far-right has further structural plans for the countries. So, Michaloliakos reminds me not of a typical right-wing party leader, but of one, who have certain ideas, clearly neo-Nazi, though, giving an effort to be the modern version of Hitler in current politics. Fortunately, though, such a situation is almost impossible for the Greeks to support, even if they dislike immigrants at some level.

European Debt Crisis And Refugee Crisis

The European Debt Crisis was one of the factors that provided for the far-right wing's gradual rise in Greece. This was not, though, an unexpected outcome, as in times of crises states have the tendency to yield on extremism, either on far-left or far-right ideologies. So, this was what happened in Greece, as well. While the Golden Dawn obtained instrumental power in domestic politics, the radical leftist party Syriza won the 2015 general election. More specifically, Greece was the most-affected country by this economic crisis, and it did not manage to completely discard its negative impacts on the state's social, political and economic situation.[9] So, the European Debt Crisis was a major turning point as one of the initiators of adopting far-right ideas by several European Union member states. Regarding its background, it was the European outcome of the Global Financial Crisis that hit the American mortgage market in 2007-8 harshly. Especially in the case of Greece, the government deficit skyrocketed in 2009, with a budget deficit of 13%. This, consequently, led to a panic among banks in Europe, as they had lent significant amounts to Greece and they feared that other heavy borrowers might end up in the same situation with Greece in the short-term. As a result, the International Monetary Fund along with the European Union agreed to bail out Greece in return for high applications of austerity measures. This led to political chaos in the country, causing the period of severe unemployment, the failure in the function of public health services and cuttings to the infrastructure to Greek citizens and government.[10] All the pressure led to the outcome of severe political instability. This was the time, therefore, that both Syriza and the Golden Dawn rose in Greek politics. Because of the austerity measures and of the social collapse, the humiliation and the 45% increase in the suicide rates from 2010 to 2015[11], rather than leaving their destiny in the hands of the EU which put more and more pressure on Greece, national control was preferred by the Greeks.

Furthermore, along with the harsh austerity measures which were imposed on Greece by the International Monetary Fund and the European Union after the outbreak of the European Debt Crisis and its negative economic implications for both the Greek government and the Greek population, the citizens observing the then government's incapability to rectify the economic and social prosperity of Greece, shifted towards the Golden Dawn, granting it a high number of votes during the 2012 Greek legislative election.[12] The heavy and tough effects of the economic crisis on the Greek domestic politics, therefore, begat the seeking of hope from an ultranationalist, even neo-Nazi

party, as comprehended by the 2012 election results and the sudden rise of the fascist Golden Dawn. This hope can also be regarded as a response to the EU ineffectiveness and its enforcement for the application of austerity measures. So, I think that at this point it can be argued that the reason why Greece shifted to a nationalist party is also the feeling of being betrayed by the EU and the integration project during its hard time economically and domestically. From my personal experience in Greece at the time of the crisis, I can highlight that this also explains the multiple protests about the desire of returning to the Greek drachma, its former currency, and even leaving the European Union, in order to have solely national control of the state. Thus, the blame of the economic sanctions and societal collapse was put on the EU hypocrisy and pressure, as portrayed by the far-right, rising the nationalist feelings of the people and creating an atmosphere of a national collaboration to overcome the hards times rather than to be steered by the supranational interests of the European Union.

On the other hand, the migrant crisis that arrived its peak in 2015, was another instance that rose once again the racist and xenophobic sentiments in Greece and gave power to the far-right arguments. I do not believe, though, that this negative and harsh reaction of Greeks was just an opposition to refugees from other nations entering their country. It was also an uprising against the ineffectiveness of the European Union managing the refugee issue. As in the case of the economic crisis, the migrant one, therefore, has also been a source for EU disintegration from the perspective of Greece. The current situation with the refugees trying to enter the Greek waters and territory in illegal ways is met with high opposition both from the government and from the ethnic Greeks and this is why inhumane actions in order to send back the refugees are applied by the government and criticized at a great extent bu human rights activists. I will, however, discuss the current situation after first referring to the initial reaction of Greece towards the new flows of helpless populations. I consider it instrumental, though, to mention that in my opinion the current situation with anti-immigration policies is the outcome of years of being used by the interests of the powerful states in the European continent. So, I think that the opposition must be directed against the faces that exist behind the lack of planning of the migrant crisis rather than against weak people who had no further resort in their home country.

During its peak, the European migrant crisis created an atmosphere of mixed reactions. On the one hand, there was the group predicting that such a crisis might help the ongoing economic catastrophe that Greece had experienced some years earlier, as the European Union would provide financial assistance to the states that accept the migrant flows in their territory and supply them a protecting society. In my opinion, this perspective was quite optimistic, because I believe in the proverb "give someone an inch and they'll take a mile". This is what happened between Greece, the European Union, on the one side and Turkey on the otherside. Greece as it signed agreements about the refugees and is taking grants from the EU from the beginning of this crisis, it was the expected result of the current situation, as the number of refugees increase from day to day, the peak in 2015

was not a short-term one. Besides, for this "optimistic" group of people, identifying masses of immigrants as just financial aid is not reasonable, because there is the social dimension of the issue, as well. It is the people, the citizens of Greece themselves who are going to coexist with the refugee population. On the other hand, there was the group of people highly contradicting with accepting refugees in the territory, so the migrant crisis that brought thousands of foreigners in Greece caused great shock and panic among them. I can argue that most of the people who first sought some kind of a financial advantage behind this crisis, are at the moment quite displeased with the social, economic and structural hardships that Greece experiences. Thus, the far-right and the Golden Dawn rose, consequently, supporting arguments about forbidding refugee entrance in Greece and ripping the core-periphery relations off with the European Union.

Recently, Greece is being highly criticized because of its harsh attitude towards the refugees and their entrance into Greek territory. As Amnesty International claims, there are illegal pushbacks of immigrants, combined with torture and maltreatment of their health conditions.[13] After being treated in these inhumane ways, refugees were sent to Turkey, and today is certainly not the only day that such an incident happens. In April, for example, a similar pushback took place, resulting in a lawsuit against Greece at the European Court of Human Rights. [14] It can be understood from these examples that the anti-immigrant sentiments are not observed just at the public level, but at the governing level, as well. On the other hand, there are of course pro-migrants who organize protests to protect the rights of the refugees in Greece. For instance, Greece, during the Covid-19 period, did not lift the lockdown measures applied for the refugee camps for months, while for the rest of the country the hard measures were alleviated.[15] This caused a great amount of opposition and criticism in the state, not only from the refugees residing in the camps, but also from the ordinary public that disapproved of this particular discriminatory attitude. Thus, there are mixed perspectives in Greece towards the question of refugees, but what seems to prevail nowadays with the actions of the government is the rise of a right-winged and a distanced demeanor.

The Far Right Golden Dawn Rise And Fall

Not only is the Golden Dawn a political party in Greece, but also it is a criminal organization having perpetrated serious crimes against immigrants and left-wing supporters, mainly based on its views of anti-immigration, neo-Nazism and ultranationalism. As I analyzed in my paper, the Golden Dawn managed to turn the Albanian, Bulgarian, Georgian immigration, the European debt crisis and the migrant crisis to its political interests' favor. For Greece which was always a state with specific predominant characteristics in its identity, welcoming people with different customs, accepting them to work at jobs that ethnic Greeks could work instead, and sending their children to take education along with children of different religion and ethnicity was not that much feasible, so I think that the culture and identity parameters are also important when discussing the far-right rise. Furthermore, the economic crisis was a real dead end

for the Greeks and the internal chaos, blaming different ethnic groups or the EU, for example, was unavoidable for this severe situation. The migrant crisis, lastly, was the final phase that contributed significantly to the rise of the Golden Dawn. This success story, however, was interrupted in October of 2020.

More specifically, the Golden Dawn was founded in the 80s and was registered in the beginning of the 90s, so it is active in the Greek political spectrum for many years. Its peak was the 2012 elections, which took place literally at the time of a deep internal crisis for Greece. The Golden Dawn, quite successfully, ran anti-immigrant and anti-EU campaigns with promises for a "Greek" Greece, deciding for its own destiny and fighting for its own nation's interests. All its campaign was built on arguments about the economic crisis and the austerity measures. This is why I think that the support that it received at the 2012 election was not surprising. The internal situation in Greece because of the high economic and social pressure, cuttings at salaries, and numerous other negative effects of the crisis were all responsible for the state of mind that the citizens had in 2012, so a call for national cooperation was appealing for them. The campaigns of the Golden Dawn with the at present space that ethnic Greeks had put between them and the immigrant population led to a general sentiment of racism and discrimination. Some crimes committed by the immigrants were also presented to the public audience in the campaings, resulting in, this time, to xenophobia, which is still apparent in Greece, as observed in the murder case in Glyka Nera. The Golden Dawn's rise was, thus, the outcome of their electoral agenda through exaggerating the situation and framing whole populations for this cause.

I do not believe that the far-right parties, especially the Golden Dawn will reach such a high support that will run the government of Greece one day. Already, a decline is observed in Golden Dawn's power within the national politics. Particularly, after the serious accusations about violent crimes against immigrants and about the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, leftist Greek rapper who made campaigns to be welcoming towards the immigrants, the neo-Nazi party lost all its seats in the Greek Parliament in 2019 elections. Moreover, last year, along with the murder case of Fyssas, and several other series of crimes against immigrants especially taken place in 2013, after their success at the elections, the court rules that Golden Dawn is a criminal organization. Besides, the party leader Michaloliakos and 17 other neo-Nazi party members were arrested, for running a criminal organization and for participating in the perpetration of certain crimes, respectively.[16] Also, in the last elections the Golden Dawn did not achieve a similarly great success with the one it did in 2012. It still has thousands of supporters in the country surely, but it was proven that more than the majority of the state is not supportive for its further rise. So, it can be argued that the tendency to vote for a far-right party was a direct outcome of the economic crisis of 2009. After that, the migrant crisis, the panic and the unsuccessful efforts of the European Union to ease the situation for Greece with financial aid, also contributed that time to their rise. This tendency, when the situation was eased in Greece, did not continue to grow, leading the Golden Dawn to a

significant backlash in the Greek politics. Thus, the far-right rise was a domestic reaction to the inefficiency of both national and EU regulations and policies for the economic and social instability. The success story, therefore, was interrupted with the convictions of last year and I predict that the far-right support will be further decreased at some point. However, in order for a decrease like that to happen, currently efficient measures are essential for both the state, its international interests and internal stability, so that the refugee crisis is solved without significant impact in favor of the far-right wing. The fate and chance of the far-right is now a question mark.

Conclusion

To sum up, the rise of the far-right wing in Greece especially in the last one decade has different reasons that were discussed in this paper. Firstly, the Albanian immigration to Greece was analyzed, through providing a historical background, Greece's cultural and identity features and the perception of Albanians from the Greek side. Secondly, the Bulgarian and Georgian immigration processes were referred to one by one historically, and the reasons why both of those two ethnicities managed to be more integrated with the ethnic Greeks in comparison with the Albanians were mentioned. Thirdly, the European debt crisis which began in 2009 and the migrant crisis of 2015 were highlighted as the main sources of the far-right rise, as its success at the 2012 Greek legislative election is considered. Both their background and their effects on the society was mentioned so that the increased support to the far-right is comprehended more clearly. Fourthly, the initial rise of the Golden Dawn in the time of crises and its gradual fall because of the conviction of its leadership were discussed.

This research led to some important findings about the Golden Dawn and generally of the far-right wing in Greece, not only for the last decade, but also for its future in the states politics. First, for the European migrant crisis and the European debt crisis that I discussed in my paper as two of the roots of the rise, I believe that they had a sudden and direct effect on the politics of 2009 to 2015, and that this effect is a short-term one. Especially, for the economic crisis, I think that the negative attention, hate and discrimination that were directed to the immigrants working in Greece during the period of the crisis peak and the propaganda of the far-right about the immigrants "stealing" jobs from Greeks are all now faded with the gradual improvement of the economy. The austerity measures, the inability of the then government to control the situation without being oppressed by the EU and the IMF impositions were the main reasons for the success of the Golden Dawn in the 2012 elections, not a specific sympathy and enthusiasm for the partys objectives was the case. The refugee crisis, on the other hand, was also a direct effect of the situation in 2015, the high number of refugees entering Greeces territory was regarded as panicking, particularly in combination with the economic hardships that the state was facing. This is why the responsibility of so many refugees with limited sources became another difficulty for Greece to encounter. Moreover, I do not think that the Albanian, Bulgarian and Georgian immigration can be considered as the sole causes of the Golden Dawn, especially when the period of its electoral success is contemplated. It is true that these immigrants are not fully integrated, but they have lived in Greece for many decades and

still are permanent residents of the country, so the immigration argument does not completely explain this rise. I believe that the economic crisis and the refugee crisis led to the already-there immigrants exclusion from the society, as the far-right used them for anti-immigrant propaganda. Regarding the future of the Golden Dawn, particularly now that it is an accused criminal organization, I do not think it has a strong probability of success in the short-term. For the long term, though, another possible crisis or again an incapable and disliked government could lead to its rise, but not to the extent to form a government. Thus, even though Greece is a closed Orthodox-Christian and nationalist state, as I described it in my paper, it has a civilized and highly democratic face, too. I think that this face would always avoid the utmost success of a neofacist ideology.

*Photo: https://ifex.org/

Bibliography

Baldwin-Edwards, Martin. "Albanian Emigration and the Greek Labour Market: Economic Symbiosis and Social Ambiguity." SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe 7, no. 1 (2004): 51-65. Accessed June 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293028.

Bathke, Benjamin. "Pro-migrant protests in Athens as Greece extends lockdown." InfoMigrants, June 22, 2020. Accessed June 23, 2021. https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/25521/pro-migrant-protests-in-athens-as-greece-extends-lockdown.

Chtouris, Sotiris, Anastasia Zissi, George Stalidis, and Kostas Rontos. "Understanding Xenophobia in Greece: A Correspondence Analysis." European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie 55, no. 1 (2014): 107-33. Accessed June 17, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43283263.

Drymioti, Marilena, and Vassilis Gerasopoulos. "Entangling the Migration and the Economic' 'Crisis': Claiming What's Rightfully Greek." Etnofoor 30, no. 2 (2018): 49-70. Accessed June 22, 2021. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26543128.

Εγκληματικότητα αλλοδαπών: Αλβανοί, Ιρακινοί και Πακιστανοί οι συνήθεις ύποπτοι. iefimerida, February 14, 2013. Accessed June 17, 2021. https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/90684/%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B4%CE%B1%CF%80%CF%8E%CE%BD-%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B2%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%BF%CE%B9-%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%AE%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82-%CF%8D%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%80%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9

"Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are de facto border policy." Amnesty, June 23, 2021. Accessed June 23, 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/greece-pushbacks-and-violence-against-refugees-and-migrants-are-de-facto-border-policy/.

"Greece Suicide Rate 2000-2021." Macrotrends. Accessed June 17, 2021. https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/GRC/greece/suicide-rate.

"Greek court rules Golden Dawn party criminal organization." eKathimerini, October 7, 2020. Accessed June 23, 2021. https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/257783/greek-court-rules-golden-dawn-party-criminal-organization/.

Κοινότητα Αλβανών για το έγκλημα στα Γλυκά Νερά: Αξιώνουμε τη συγγνώμη των ΜΜΕ για την «προπαγάνδα». Lifo, June 18, 2021. Accessed June 21, 2021. https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/koinotita-albanon-gia-egklima-sta-glyka-nera-axionoyme-ti-syggnomi-ton-mme-gia-tin.

Maroufof, Michaela. "The Role of Social Networks in Georgian Migration to Greece." European Journal of Migration and Law 19, no. 1 (2017): 34-56. Accessed June 22, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718166-12342114.

McKernan, Bethan. "Greece accused of 'shocking' illegal pushback against refugees at sea." The Guardian, April 26, 2021. Accessed June 23, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/26/greece-accused-of-shocking-pushback-against-refugees-at-sea.

Migkos, Vasileios. "The Rise of the Golden Dawn: Right Wing Extremism in Greece." Economic and Political Weekly 48, no. 50 (2013): 18-20. Accessed June 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24479037.

Πώποτας, Δημήτρης, and Άρια Καλύβα. Γλυκά Νερά: Αυτή είναι η 20χρονη που δολοφονήθηκε μέσα στο σπίτι της. Πρώτο Θέμα, May 11, 2021. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/1122699/gluka-nera-auti-einai-i-20hroni-pou-dolofonithike-mesa-sto-spiti-tis/.

Triandafyllidou, Anna, and Mariangela Veikou. "The Hierarchy of Greekness: Ethnic and National Identity Considerations in Greek Immigration Policy." Ethnicities 2, no. 2 (2002): 189-208. Accessed June 17, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23890525.

Trilling, Daniel. "Golden Dawn: the rise and fall of Greece's neo-Nazis." The Guardian, March 3, 2020. Accessed June 21, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/mar/03/golden-dawn-the-rise-and-fall-of-greece-neo-nazi-trial.

Anna Triandafyllidou, Anna, and Marina Nikolova. "Bulgarian Migration in Greece: Past Trends and Current Challenges." In Migration from and towards Bulgaria 1989-2011, edited by Tanya Dimitrova and Thede Kahl. Berlin: Frank&Timme, 2014.

[1] Δημήτρης Πώποτας, Άρια Καλύβα, "Γλυκά Νερά: Αυτή είναι η 20χρονη που δολοφονήθηκε μέσα στο σπίτι της," Πρώτο Θέμα, May 11, 2021, accessed June 15, 2021, https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/1122699/gluka-nera-auti-einai-i-20hroni-pou-dolofonithike-mesa-sto-spiti-tis/.

[2] Martin Baldwin-Edwards "Albanian Emigration and the Greek Labour Market: Economic Symbiosis and Social Ambiguity," SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe 7, no. 1 (2004): 51-2, accessed June 15, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293028.

[3] "Εγκληματικότητα αλλοδαπών: Αλβανοί, Ιρακινοί και Πακιστανοί οι συνήθεις ύποπτοι," iefimerida, February 14, 2013, accessed June 17, 2021, https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/90684/%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B4%CE%B1%CF%80%CF%8E%CE%BD-%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B2%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%AF-%CE%BF%CE%B9-

%CF%8D%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%80%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9.

[4] Anna Triandafyllidou, Mariangela Veikou, "The Hierarchy of Greekness: Ethnic and National Identity Considerations in Greek Immigration Policy," Ethnicities 2, no. 2 (2002): 192, accessed June 17, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23890525.

[5] "Κοινότητα Αλβανών για το έγκλημα στα Γλυκά Νερά: Αξιώνουμε τη συγγνώμη των ΜΜΕ για την «προπαγάνδα»," Lifo, June 18, 2021, accessed June 21, 2021, https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/koinotita-albanon-gia-egklima-sta-glyka-nera-axionoyme-ti-syggnomi-ton-mme-gia-tin.

[6] Anna Triandafyllidou, Marina Nikolova, "Bulgarian Migration in Greece: Past Trends and Current Challenges," in Migration from and towards Bulgaria 1989-2011, ed. Tanya Dimitrova, Thede Kahl, (Berlin: Frank&Timme, 2014), 131.

[7] Michaela Maroufof, "The Role of Social Networks in Georgian Migration to Greece," European Journal of Migration and Law 19, no. 1 (2017): 40, accessed June 22, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718166-12342114.

[8] Daniel Trilling, "Golden Dawn: the rise and fall of Greeces neo-Nazis," The Guardian, March 3, 2020, accessed June 21, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/mar/03/golden-dawn-the-rise-and-fall-of-greece-neo-nazi-trial.

[9] Sotiris Chtouris, Anastasia Zissi, George Stalidis, Kostas Rontos, "Understanding Xenophobia in Greece: A Correspondence Analysis," European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie 55, no. 1 (2014): 108, accessed June 17, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43283263.

[10] Marilena Drymioti and Vassilis Gerasopoulos, "Entangling the Migration and the Economic Crisis: Claiming Whats Rightfully Greek," Etnofoor 30, no. 2 (2018): 55, accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26543128.

[11] "Greece Suicide Rate 2000-2021," Macrotrends, accessed June 17, 2021, https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/GRC/greece/suicide-rate.

[12] Vasileios Migkos, "The Rise of the Golden Dawn: Right Wing Extremism in Greece," Economic and Political Weekly 48, no. 50 (2013): 20, accessed June 15, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24479037.

[13] "Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are de facto border policy," Amnesty, June 23, 2021, accessed June 23, 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/greece-pushbacks-and-violence-against-

.

[14] Bethan McKernan, "Greece accused of shocking illegal pushback against refugees at sea," The Guardian, April 26, 2021, accessed June 23, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/26/greece-accused-of-shocking-pushback-against-refugees-at-sea.

[15] Benjamin Bathke, "Pro-migrant protests in Athens as Greece extends lockdown," InfoMigrants, June 22, 2020, accessed June 23, 2021, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/25521/pro-migrant-protests-in-athens-as-greece-extends-lockdown.

[16] "Greek court rules Golden Dawn party criminal organization," eKathimerini, October 7, 2020, accessed June 23, 2021, https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/257783/greek-court-rules-golden-dawn-party-criminal-organization/.

About the author:

To cite this article: Aleyna Tutku Bağcı. 2026. "ROOTS OF THE GOLDEN DAWN RISE IN THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM OF GREECE: AN ANALYSIS OF ALBANIAN, BULGARIAN, GEORGIAN IMMIGRATION TO GREECE, THE EUROPEAN DEBT CRISIS AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FAR-RIGHT RISE - 23.06.2021." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Uep Rapor No.2021 / 5. June 23. Accessed November 23, 2026. https://www.avim.org.tr/public/index.php/UEPRapor/ROOTS-OF-THE-GOLDEN-DAWN-RISE-IN-THE-POLITICAL-SPECTRUM-OF-GREECE-AN-ANALYSIS-OF-ALBANIAN-BULGARIAN-GEORGIAN-IMMIGRATION-TO-GREECE-THE-EUROPEAN-DEBT-CRISIS-AND-THE-REFUGEE-CRISIS-AND-THEIR-IMPACT-ON-THE-FAR-RIGHT-RISE-23-06-2021

Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Posta: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

© 2009-2025 Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) All Rights Reserved