

Changing the policy agenda? The impact of the Golden Dawn on Greek party politics

blogs.lse.ac.uk/greeceatlse/2017/01/24/changing-the-policy-agenda-the-impact-of-the-golden-dawn-on-greek-party-politics/

Blog Admin

2017-1-24

By Daphne Halikiopoulou, Kyriaki Nanou and Sofia Vasilopoulou



Supporters of Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party protest around a flag during a rally at central Syntagma square in Athens, November 30, 2013. REUTERS/Yorgos Karahalis

What has been the impact of the Golden Dawn on Greek party politics? From the margins of the political system during the metapolitefsi era, the party experienced an electoral breakthrough in 2012 and remains the third strongest party in Parliament. The Golden Dawn is an extreme variant of the far-right party family, claiming ownership of nationalism and justifying its policies on the basis of the nation. The party espouses the use of violence and fascist/Nazi ideals. The majority of scholarly work has focused on explanations of the Golden Dawn's electoral success. In our paper, we focus instead on the impact of the Golden Dawn on the dynamics of domestic party competition, drawing upon research funded by the National Bank of Greece, awarded to us by the Hellenic Observatory of the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2014.

Using the Comparative Agenda Project's (CAP) coding scheme, we have examined two sets of materials – party election manifestos and party leader speeches. This has allowed us to capture changes in issue salience, as reflected in parties' discursive priorities and legislative debates across time. Issue salience is important because it

can change the nature of the debate, shifting the emphasis on what is actually discussed. The growth of far-right parties entails that mainstream parties may no longer side-line issues that are integral to far-right party ideology. Since immigration is the key issue associated with the far right, the entry of far-right parties in the system is likely to influence the salience of immigration. We expect the rise of the Golden Dawn to be associated with an increase in the salience of immigration across the party system.

In addition to coding policy issues as identified in the CAP framework, we have also added a nationalism category to the Greek codebook, seeking to capture the extent to which nationalist references frame each policy issue. Far-right parties are not single-issue parties, but rather, their programmatic agendas propose reforms on a variety of issues, to which they offer 'nationalist' solutions. We expect the rise of the Golden Dawn to be associated with an increase in the salience of nationalism across the party system. In order to determine whether particular types of nationalism are associated with the agendas of specific parties, we have distinguished between four categories of nationalism (ethnic, cultural, territorial and economic), merging them into two broad ethnic and civic types that emphasise ascriptive and voluntaristic criteria of national belonging respectively.

Our findings indicate that the three most salient issues in the Golden Dawn's manifesto are macroeconomics, defence and government. The salience of minority issues and immigration is lower than these three policy areas, and much lower than expected. This may be because the rise the Golden Dawn has coincided with an economic crisis, meaning that an emphasis on issues such as the economy and governance is to be expected. There is no indication that there is an obvious link between the rise of the Golden Dawn and the salience of the immigration issue in the programmatic agendas of other parties.

Our findings also indicate that the Golden Dawn's framing of policy issues is highly nationalistic. We also observe a high proportion of nationalist references across the party system. However, there is no clear discernible pattern, nor a clear indication that the Golden Dawn's rise has driven this increase in references to nationalism. Lastly we tested whether specific types of nationalism are more prevalent among particular political parties. Here our findings confirm

that the ethnic component of nationalism is more prevalent among right-leaning parties. The civic component of nationalism is widespread both among left-leaning parties and other parties in the system.

Our research points to the importance of the economy. At a time of severe economic crisis, the economy has been the most salient issue in Greek politics. Like other parties, the Golden Dawn has focused primarily on the economy. Its entry into the system has certainly coincided with an increase in nationalism across the board.

By Daphne Halikiopoulou, University of Reading, **Kyriaki Nanou**, University of Nottingham, **Sofia Vasilopoulou**, University of York

A research seminar on the topic will take place on Tuesday, 31 January 2017, organised by the Hellenic Observatory. For more details about the event, please visit the [event page](#).