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**'A New Era of Far-Right: The shift of Golden Dawn's, National Front's and UKIP's discourse to the economy, as a path to normalization and electorate success'**

Boudalaki, Kleopatra

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**LEIDEN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
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GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY**



‘A New Era of Far-Right: The shift of Golden Dawn’s, National Front’s and UKIP’s discourse to the economy, as a path to normalization and electorate success’

A Thesis Submitted to The Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in International Relations (Global Political Economy)

By

Boudalaki Kleopatra (s3262448)  
[s3262448@vuw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:s3262448@vuw.leidenuniv.nl)

Supervisor: Dr. Fynn-Paul  
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## **Abstract**

Far-right has been a traditional debate and conflicting phenomenon since 1945. In this thesis I aim to demonstrate the changes that far-right discourse has undergone during the fourth-wave of far-right. In this analysis we use as a starting point, ‘the winning formula’ of Kitschelt that mainly indicates how the far-right tends to adopt the economical aspect in their discourse, especially in times of great social despair. In order to demonstrate this change, we are examining in this paper the following cases: the case of Golden Dawn, National Front and UKIP. In these cases, we are examining the political discourse of the parties, the relationship between the discourse and a crisis, to what extent the far-right is a danger to the present political system and lastly, their eurosceptical aspect. By answering these questions, and by proving the strong presence of economy within the far-right’s discourse, we aim to highlight the changes that the far-right has undergone, and how these changes are a path to normalization.

Keywords: Far-right, Economical Aspect, Normalization, Euroscepticism, Financial crisis, Immigration crisis, Mainstream Elite, Golden Dawn, National Front, UKIP.

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## 1. Introduction

Far-right parties today are considered the most successful new party family of postwar Europe (Mudde, 2016). Their electoral success, especially within European Member States, is expected to bring changes to the political system, changes that may threaten the idea of democracy itself. As this era is their most successful one, it is important to understand what Von Beyme has already stated: “we seem to know who they are, even though we do not know exactly what they are (Iversflaten, 2002). This era would be classified as the fourth wave of the far-right, with the fourth wave to be still not fully explored. As this wave is characterized by crises, and also a substantial electoral performance, it is important to understand the far-right of today, and how it has been developed, in order to be able to assess the changes that they may inflict to the political system specific, and to democracy in general.

Liberal democracy is not without his political challenges-with one of the challenges to be the far-right. Since we witnessed the first major electoral success of the far-right parties, like the Centrum Partij in the Netherlands and the National Front in France, in the early 1980s, we can see that the far-right party family became the center of attention within the scientific community (Mudde, 2000). In the last decades, we can see that countries around the world have witnessed the rise of far-right populist parties (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2018). In the beginning, the research related to the far-right parties was connected to the similarities that exist within these parties and the fascist ideology. However, with the developments that occurred in the study, specifically the ones about political parties and political families, and in general in comparative politics, we witnessed a more comprehensive and empirical research related to the far-right family.

The far right is an international and transnational phenomenon, in which extreme diversity is ruling, and that is why we should first recognize and appraise these differences, and not try to create one definition that holds all of them (Mammone et al. 2012). Specifically, within the European Union (EU), we have two governments (Hungary and Poland) fully controlled by populist radical right parties. Another four include such parties (Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia), and lastly, two are using the support of a populist party in order to hold (Denmark and the United Kingdom). Research tried to determine their electorate success, and also their common characteristics.

Ignazi (1992) suggested three criteria in order to group parties in one family. The criteria are the following: (a) placement in the political spectrum (spatial), (b) declared party ideology and its reference to fascism (historical-ideological), and (c) attitude toward the

political system (attitudinal-systemic). With these three criteria Ignazi proposed the distinction between 'old right type' and 'new right type'. The first one is connected to parties that are matching the historic-ideological criterion, as also the systemic one. The latter one includes parties that are not linked to fascism but have at the same time an anti-systemic profile (Ignazi, 1992). This distinction has its foundation to one of the major debates concerning the far-right, which continues until today (Kitschelt, 2007; Mudde, 2007; Griffin 2013; Rydgren, 2018)

The debate is separated between two groups: the first, has as lead theorists Laclau and Mudde, and is connected to the old far-right and its connection to fascism. The second group has as a lead theorist Kitschelt, and basically promotes the idea that the far-right has changed and follows the paradigm of mainstream parties, by adding economy in their political discourse. The first group did not necessarily include only theorists that perceive the far-right as still affiliated to the ideology of fascism, but they still agree on their key characteristic of their discourse. These are nationalism, exclusionist and xenophobic vision (Rydgren, 2018).

As this current political era is identified as one of the far right's successes in Europe (Mudde, 2016), it is important to establish if they indeed have changed their "winning formula" (Kitschelt, 2007), and how these changes may affect the political system itself. In order to prove that, we are going to analyze the following three cases : (1) the Golden Dawn Party during the 2008 financial crisis, (2) the French National Front during the 2016 refugee crisis, and (3) the UKIP during the 2016 and Brexit. These three cases will show us to what extent the discourse of the far-right has changed, in summary it will demonstrate if the far-right of today is the same far-right of the past. In more specifically, we will try to demonstrate to what extent the second group of scholars, with Kitschelt as the main theorist, were correct when they said that the far-right will focus also on the economy, in order to have electoral success. In this analysis we aim to answer the following question:

*"To what extent the political discourse of the far right parties of the fourth wave-UKIP, National Front and Golden Dawn- have shifted their discourse by employing the path of economics, as a path to normalization?"*

The research also aims to answer the following subquestions, which they assist us to answer our main research question, and verify the theorists of the second group: To what extent this shift to normalization is connected to the occurrence of the crises? To what extent the far-right that belongs to the fourth wave is a threat to the political system? As we are analyzing the far-right within Europe, the last sub-question is also important: To what extent the far-right of today is against the EU?

## 1.1.Literature Review

As we already mentioned, when the research community started occupying itself with the far-right, they started mostly by comparing the party's ideology with the Fascism of pre-war. This did not necessarily stop, even when other perspectives resurfaced. The main group of theorists within the far-right was still connecting the far-right family with the former ideology and was claiming that the main distinguishing factor of this family is that they want to promote national sovereignty and empowerment (Laclau, 1997; 2005; Mudde, 2000). While this could be said for the first two waves of the far right parties, researchers starting to point out that that was not the case for the third wave.

To understand the shift and development of the far-right, it is important to refer to the waves of the far-right, a distinction connected to both societal and historical parameters, as much as the distinguished characteristics of the far-right and their electoral success. Theorists claim that in the first three waves, the far-right of the postwar era remained limited to the political margins (von Beyme, 1988). This changed in the fourth wave.

The first wave was from 1945 until 1955, and included small neo-fascist groups, which were inspired by the ideology of Fascism and Nazism. These parties did not achieve political significance. That did not necessarily change in the second wave. The second wave was roughly between 1955 and 1980, and was basically characterized by the so-called flash parties. These parties included Poujadists in France and the Progress Party in Denmark, parties that had at the end short lived electoral success (Mudde, 2022).

The third wave came afterwards, between 1980 and 2000, and included far-right parties that achieved electoral wins in several West European countries (Austria, Italy and Switzerland). Even though the third wave was the start of establishing the far-right, as a party family with a strong presence in the political arena, only during the fourth wave did we witness this family to become a relevant political force (Mudde, 2019). Globally, during 2019 and 2020, we witnessed that two billion people were under far-right rulers, with the examples of India, the United States, Brazil, Hungary and Poland, to be the distinguished ones. In the fourth wave, the far-right parties of the third wave managed to be represented in the national parliament, and not only be marginalized in the public debate. The fourth wave, that started from 2000 and continues until the present, is the one that will occupy us in this paper, as we want to examine what changed for the far-right and how they managed to break through.



Mudde as we already stated in the introductory section belongs to the first group of the debate. This group includes theorists like Laclau, Norris that claim a correlation between the far-right parties and fascist parties. As we already mentioned, when the research community started occupying itself with the far-right, they started mostly by comparing the party's ideology with the Fascism of pre-war. This did not necessarily stop, even when other perspectives resurfaced. The main group of theorists within the far-right was still connecting the far-right family with the former ideology and was claiming that the main distinguishing factor of this family is that they want to promote national sovereignty and empowerment (Laclau, 1997; 2005; Mudde, 2000).

They claimed that the far-right still envisioned an exclusionist and xenophobic community, in which they want to promote the ideas of ethnicity, race, and in general nativist ideologies around inequality and hierarchy (Griffin, 2013). They are still attached to the traditional values of the past, as they keep communicating with a populist posture against an 'elite' (Mudde, 2007; Griffin 2013; Rydgren, 2018). In addition to that, this group does not believe that the far-right affiliate itself to include in their discourse the economical aspect. So, the radical right does not embrace market-liberal positions on economic distribution (Norris, 2005). This comes in a complete contrast to what Mudde says, which is that the far-right does not occupy themselves with liberal economy. Even though it is perceived that this group had this perspective for only the first and the second wave of the far right, we can still see that the debate continues until today. But, before we go and examine the second group, it is important to refer to the waves of the far right, and what their role is in this debate.

In the 1980s and 1990s when structural changes of the economy resurfaced and threatened both small and medium enterprises, many theorists came to acknowledge that the economical factor will be part of the far right's future discourse (Kitschelt, 2004). Kitschelt started his research by pointing out that it is essential for the radical right to start incorporating in their discourse labor ideas. That is how the far-right will start using market-liberalism, and they will continue to do so in order to establish themselves in the political arena.

Even though we can see that the far right of the third wave promoted ideas in connection to anti-market stance, and opposed free trade and the globalization of the economy, we can still see steps towards a direction connected to the mainstream parties (Kitschelt, 2007). Later on the far-right claimed that it tried to gain support from the small and medium enterprises by making the elite (the rich) the enemy of the nation (Ivarsflaren, 2005). With these developments, Kitschelt (1995) suggested that in order for the far-right to

be successful, it needs to adopt a 'winning formula', which is going to combine an opposition to immigration, but also free-market economic and socio-cultural conservatism. The main debate from the third wave onwards, was related to what extent economy was included in the far-right parties discourse.

The winning formula was introduced especially to highlight the fact that the far-right needs to focus also on the economical aspect, in order to gain further electoral support. That formula was against the other group's main perspective, which was that the far right is focusing only on nationalism, and from the third wave onwards to immigration related policies. Our purpose is to examine if Kitschelt's theory is the one that the far right is continuing to use during the fourth wave. That automatically proves that the far right of the third wave were initially the starters of the winning formula. Kitschelt and later Norris supported how this shift will occur because of the occurrence of crises. At the same time we can see that the shift to normalization, and if that is proven within our research can lead to the result that the far-right, at least when it comes to their discourse, do not pose a threat to the political system. Lastly, the far-right has been called deeply Eurosceptic. We wanted to include in our analysis a sub question related to that, as it is also a factor that can enhance our case related to normalization.

This winning formula in combination with the social and political circumstances will create a new type of family: the new radical right party. This party will now also attract a new audience, which is threatened by enhanced capitalism and modernization. That strategy of the radical right to adopt ideas of the mainstream parties, by focusing on the economy, worked also the other way around. We saw that many mainstream parties, during the third wave, started to adopt ideas from the discourse of the far-right, in order to stop their electorate rise (Rydgren, 2005). This strategy worked for a while, and indeed it managed to brand the far-right as firework-parties, making them a 'one time thing'. But then what changed in the fourth wave?

During the third wave we witnessed a lot of mainstream parties adopt ideas from the far-right discourse, something that was considered based on the supply demand side of politics (Mudde, 2016). In that period most of the mainstream parties started incorporating in their discourse radical right issues, such as corruption, immigration. It is not that weird that strategy was used the other way around.

There are multiple indications that the far-right, besides taking advantage of the crises, also started to adopt a more mainstream discourse, in order to gain as much electoral support as possible (Kitschelt, 2007). This normalization, in combination with the

occurrences of the crises had two results: the first, was the electorate success of the far right, as they gained percentages that even allowed them to access governmental positions. Secondly, European countries in total developed a more authoritarian discourse, and policies related to crimmigration and national security (Mudde, 2016).

In our analysis we aim to provide an overview about how indeed the fourth wave is a continuation of the third one, with the fourth one to lean even more to the theoretical framework that was presented from the second group of theorists. One good indicator that will be used in our analysis is how the far-right tend to try to normalize their discourse and policies, in order to gain electoral success. This strategy is called 'normalization' and it is important to have an overview about how it was developed in the first place, and how it is an extra indicator when it comes to the initial theory of Kitschelt and the winning formula that the far-right is adopting.

When the radical ideas of the far-right are being normalized from the mainstream parties, push the far-right either to radicalize further or to adopt ideas from the mainstream parties (Ignazi, 1992). But what ideas the radical right tend to adopt from the mainstream parties and in what context remains to be discovered. Our analysis will support that the far-right parties decided to follow the winning formula that Kitschelt introduced first in 1992, and included decisively the economical aspect.

## **1.2.Methodology**

In order to answer our research question, and also our sub questions we are going to examine three case studies that have the following four common characteristics: (1) the far-right part has a historical background and it is not considered a 'firework party', (2) the electorate success of the party is connected to a crisis, (3) the party is considered a threat to democracy, and the political system, and lastly (4) the three cases belong to the four wave of far right. These characteristics are important in order for us to answer both our main research questions, but also the subquestions.

The case studies have been chosen to have these characteristics as we want to answer our main question, as also the three subquestions. The three parties are quite studied in terms of their impact and consequences, but they are not quite studied when it comes to the changes that have occurred within the discourse of the far-right. That is why we did not include the

Italian case of Meloni's Italian far-right party, as we consider that the appropriate time-frame has not passed, for us to use the case sufficiently. In its case study, we will try to answer our question, and subquestions by using secondary sources that include the discourse of the selected cases. By answering these questions, we will concentrate sufficient evidence, with the aim to support the second group of theorists, and the winning formula of Kitschelt.

In Chapter One we wanted to give an overview of the problem, and why it is relevant to research the far-right party especially now. Also we demonstrated the main theoretical debate around the far-right and what ideas are still connected to the family party. Finally, we clarified what would be our methodology for this analysis. In Chapter Two, we are going to start our analysis with Golden Dawn and the financial crisis of 2008. In Chapter Three, we are going to proceed with our second case study, about National Front and the 2016 immigration crisis. In Chapter Four, we are going to finish our analysis with the third and last case study about UKIP and again the immigration crisis that occurred in 2016. Lastly, Chapter Five will include a summary with the findings and also the discussion for future theoretical discussion around our findings.

## **2.The case study of Golden Dawn, during the financial crisis of 2008**

The Greek far-right Golden Dawn success story, started with the occurrence of the financial crisis in 2008. During this crisis the living standards dropped considerably, and the majority of the population had to live under austerity measures, with the unemployment to reach a record figure of 27,8% (Angouri & Wodak, 2014). Based on that the financial crisis was also labeled as a humanitarian one. The consequences of the crisis and the continuance of the austerity measures, lead to the polarization of society, which in turn lead to the rise of Golden Dawn. As there is no excessive research related to the complex relationship between the crisis of 2008, the discourse of Golden Dawn and also the danger that this party can pose, this Chapter aims to analyze this complex relationship.

Since 2005, the ongoing financial crises within the Eurozone, has been highly present through the media, as also political discourse. Greece was one of the countries that were badly hit by the markets (Angouri & Wodak, 2014). As we already stated the Greek government had to undertake severe austerity measures, and follow unpopular structural reforms, in order to receive funds from both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU) (Toloudis, 2014). In these conditions, we have the re-emergence of the far-right party Golden Dawn, and its success story, as they managed to not only enter the parliament, but also be part of a coalition government (Papachristou, 2013).

This success story brought to the surface anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and tried to capitalize fear and anger, not only for the present, but also for the past and the future (Papachristou, 2013). Golden Dawn managed to not only enter the parliament, they managed to capitalize the crisis, and also the hostility against the EU. But before we continue with our analysis, it is important to refer to the party itself, the history behind it and its electoral success. The political far-right party named Golden Dawn (GD) or People's Association, was first founded by politician Michaloliakos in 1983. At the beginning, it started as a magazine with nationalist-socialist context, and then eventually turned to a political party (Toloudis, 2014).

The party started its action by focusing on nationalism and anti-immigration policies. Until the occurrence of the crisis in 2008, the GD did not manage to achieve any major electoral success. That changed in 2010, when they managed to receive the unexpected 5.29% (Angouri & Wodak, 2014). Even though the discourse of the party is in line with the

extreme far-right parties in Europe, it is important to establish if that discourse was changed during the financial crisis, and if that change was also a factor to their electoral success.

## **2.1.The impact of the financial crisis**

Does financial crisis equals changes within the political discourse of the far-right? In order to answer this question it was important first to analyze what the Golden Dawn was offering within their discourse. This is based on the fact that Golden Dawn was considered a “new successful product in the electorate market” (Roushas, 2014). By perceiving the GD as an electorate product, we are able to understand in what way they were able to capitalize on the financial crisis, and how this was incorporated in their dialogue. From our research, we were able to retrieve the following concepts that were highly highlighted and introduced for the party. These concepts include: antiglobalization policies, economic and political crisis, anti-immigration policies (Norris, 2005; Mudde, 2007).

First, we have to pay attention to Stath and Wodak (2009), who tried to determine the importance of a crisis, and how it affects the electorate's support towards a party. Specifically, they stated that a crisis always constitutes a symbolic or iconic value, and it manages to make history. Hay (1996) at the same time, defines a crisis as ‘a process of transformation that ends up to constitute a narrative, which always needs decisive intervention in order to be resolved’ (p.254). In our case, we are seeing that Golden Dawn used and transformed the narrative of the financial crisis, by trying to demonstrate who is accountable for the crisis and what they can do to resolve the financial situation of the country.

Golden Dawns’ discourse tried to capitalize the crisis in three main ways: (1) through immigration and unemployment, (2) by blaming the mainstream parties and label them as ‘fortunate elite’, (3) by promoting fear and uncertainty for the future, and the economic stability of the country. As a far-right party, we should expect that Golden Dawn’s discourse also included terms connected to nationality, xenophobia, and the need to exclude the immigration from social welfare (Georgiadou, 2013). But, in order to examine if the crisis actually affected the discourse of the far right, we need to focus to what extent they contained in their discourse the economical factor.

From the start of the occurrence of the crisis in 2008, GD took the stance and positioned itself against the public debt and all the loan agreements, They stated that a big part of the debt is illegal and everyone that took bribes should be exposed (GD, 2012c). Specifically, in their promotional fliers they stated: “Golden Dawn wants to cancel the

Memorandum outlining the bailout terms, as the only solution to the Greek problem is the immediate write-off of the illegal and unbearable debt that the Greek people are paying” (GD, 2012c).

In that sense, they demonstrated that in order for Greece to gain back its national independence, they should think of adopting a national currency, and the fact that Greece entered the Eurozone should be deemed as a big mistake (Ellinas, 2013). This stance against the memorandum, and also the criticism of the overall financial policy since 1975, created a dynamic front against the mainstream parties, and in general everyone that supported to follow the steps that EU and IMF pointed out.

At the same time, one of the most used arguments from the party was connected to both the crisis and immigration. The issue of unemployment and economic discontent were the prominent ones and they were highly connected with anti-immigration discourse (Eatwell, 2003; Koopmans et al, 2005; Norris, 2005). Anti-immigration policies were always included in the far-right parties discourse (Norris, 2005). Usually though they were connected to national sovereignty and the superiority of ethnos. This time though we can see that immigration was connected mostly with the crisis, unemployment and the fact that it is an extra burden to the Greek population alongside the economic instability (Ellinas, 2013). So, immigration is connected to the economy this time and not nationality.

The GD tended to label immigrants as an economic threat (Mudde, 2007). The most common slogan that was used in that period was: “Every foreign worker is one unemployed Greek. An expulsion of illegal immigrants would mean hundreds of thousands of new jobs for the Greek population” (Golden Dawn, 2012b). The solution also that they were suggesting in relation to the crisis, was for the state to focus again on the primary sector, ‘which is currently occupied by a large number of cheap immigrant labor’ (Ibid, 2012b). This solution was promoted as much as their refusal to back up the memorandum, and it became one of the most covered issues from both the national and international media.

## **2.2.The dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘others’**

Connecting immigration to the financial crisis and the instability within the country, was not the only argument that was presented from GD. In their efforts to provide a cause for the instability and the humanitarian crisis, the party questioned initially the credibility of the mainstreamed parties that were in the government at the moment and in the past (Angouri & Wodak, 2014). By calling the population in a national unity, it does not call them only against

the immigrants (foreigners), but also against the political elite that consists of the mainstream governing parties of that period. These parties are blamed not only for following the memorandum provided by the EU and IMF, but also because they are perceived to be the instigators of the crisis.

Part of their anti-globalization policy and their opposition to the entrance of Greece into the Eurozone, was their determination to make the mainstream parties ‘the enemy of the nation’ (Golden Dawn 2012c). As the enemy of the nation, this elite is accused to be the reason behind not only the unfortunate incidents of the present and the past, but also they claimed: “if the Greek population do not take a stand against these leaders that are not only taking advantage of the our country, but also continue to do so, we will never see ourselves out of this crisis” (Golden Dawn, 2012c). Political leaders were not naturally the only ones included in the threatening elite. GD multiple times declared their opposition to plutocracy, as they believe that it eventually undermines the productive capacity of the country. In sum, plutocracy is imposing barriers to indigenous developmental efforts (Ellinas 2013). A distinctive example was given from the party: the example of a retailer that promotes imported goods and undercut Greek products (Golden Dawn, 2012c).

Citizens that are part of plutocracy, and the politicians of the mainstream parties are blamed for phenomenon, such as clientelism, corruption, and fiscal mismanagement. With this way they were aiming to discredit the credibility of the ruling parties (Toloudis, 2014). The strongest accusation, that was also included in the narrative against the memorandum, was related at the same time to the decision undertaken by the government to sign off on the bailout agreements of 2010 and 2012. The GD claimed that these agreements are the ones that led the country to be a protectorate of the European Union (Golden Dawn, 2012b).

What we can summarize from the discourse of GD and the formulation of the threatening elite, is that GD is not opposed to the political system per se, but the party is against the decision-making that was undertaken from the ruling parties. This realization comes quite contradictory when we are being referred to the far-right family, as they tend to be considered a danger to the political system (Toloudis 2014). Initially, that was the case also for the GD, as the party was blamed for several attacks towards homeless immigrants and immigrant businesses.

The party being blamed for several attacks and the fact that their discourse was against the ruling elite, making a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘the others’, labeled the party as a threat to the political system. The party was also labeled as a criminal organization after they were accused of demonstrating several attacks with the alleged cooperation of the greek



police (Georgiadou, 2013). The party took over a vigilante role in which they tried to capitalize on the immigration issue and they were using immigration issues to justify the vigilante-type activities. These activities and the overall discourse of the party do not point to a direction where we can label the party anti-systemic, as they want to take over the role for the ruling party.

This was demonstrated by the fact that the party put the blame of the crisis and the immigration issues entirely on mainstream parties and the main solution that was represented is that 'us' meaning the party and everyone that supports it, to take over the role of the ruling power (Golden Dawn, 2012b). This statement immediately shows that the GD is not against the present political system, they do not want to change it, they just want to take the place of the ruling parties.

### **2.3. The unexpected representation of the EU**

Another contradiction that we have in the case of GD is connected with how they represent in their discourse the EU. The far-right is known to demonstrate an anti-capitalism, anti-globalization rhetoric, alongside with a eurosceptic one (Georgiadou, 2013). When we are being referred to Euroscepticism, we are being referred to the opposition to the process of European integration (Taggart, 1998). The EU is portrayed as posing a threat to national sovereignty, and that is why this party-family has been against this European Unification (Vasilopoulou, 2018). As the far-right party family tends to have nationalism as a major policy, the EU has been one of the major issues that the far-right extensively uses in order to gain more electoral success.

In general, as we saw also at the beginning of the analysis the GD did not hold back when it comes to national autonomy, and the fact that Greece has to prioritize operating independently. The EU was used in their discourse, in two main ways: the first when it comes to immigrants, as the EU was blamed for the increase of immigrant flows to Greece. The second was about the Eurozone, and the fact as we already mentioned, that Greece should have not been part of it, instead adopting a national currency.

Despite the fact that GD overall ideology and discourse is not in line with multilateral cooperation (Vasilopoulou & Halikopoulou, 2015), the party did not actively campaign against the EU, and specifically the EU membership of Greece. When it comes to the Eurozone, the party supported the idea that the country should not have entered initially, and they should not have abandoned their national currency (Georgiadou, 2013). But they did not

make any claims that Greece should abandon their membership now. Even when it comes to the memorandum and the measures that the EU proposed, the party positioned itself against it, but they did not proceed by claiming as an alternative the abandonment of EU membership (Pirro, 2014).

Overall, the campaign that was referred to the EU mainly included the accusation related to the hegemonic role of Germany and the fact that the austerity measures imposed on the country were detrimental to the Greek economy (Ibid, 2014). The EU was capitalized from GD, as it was highly linked to the financial crisis of 2008. But in contrast, of what we would expect from a far-right party, we do not see an extreme Euroscepticism, which could result in a proposition for the country to abandon EU membership. On the contrary, GD has a discourse related to the EU, that was quite similar with the rest of the parties that were not the ruling ones, either of left or right ideology.

### **3.The case study of French National Front, during the refugee crisis of 2016**

The French National Front party, started once as Neo-fascist group, with the aim to centralize French nationalism in the 1970s, and today it counts 84,000 members, and even one presidential candidate. The party's history is full of successes and failures, but after the two main crises of the 21st century, the party has been one of the main actors of the French political scene (Benard, 2017). After the succession of Jean-Marie Le Pen, by his daughter Marine Le Pen, the party also changed its discourse and its focus (Kauffman, 2016). The two mentioned crises combined with the central role of France within the EU, has made the NF a substantial actor, not only within the European far-right, but also within the mainstream parties. This chapter aims to answer the three subquestions, by describing the changes that occurred within the discourse of the party from 2000 onwards, with the main focus to be 2016 and the refugee crisis.

Before proceeding with our analysis, it is important to be referred to the history of the party, as the history's party highlights the changes that Kitschelt introduced in his winning formula, and we described in the section of literature review. It is known that the party was first founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen, but that is not exactly the case. The origins of FN are going back to Ordre Nouveau, a movement that tried to bring together all the far-right parties and movements of France (Benard, 2017). This movement was first founded in 1969, and the principles of the movement were introduced by its leader Francois Brigneau (Hammoura, 2016).

After Le Pen took over the leadership, and decided to formulate a party named National Front, the party participated in the 1973 general elections (Benard, 2017). The party had to wait until 1982 to witness their first electorate success. Many political theorists of the time claimed that this election managed to be the entrance of FN in the political scene (Kauffman, 2016). The NF success back then, was connected to socio-economic shifts of the times, such as immigration and security. The party had to experience many electoral failures, until 2007 when they managed again a substantial electorate success.

On 16th of January 2011, Marine Le Pen succeeded her father as a new President of the party (Bernard, 2017). Marine Le Pen distinguished her rhetoric from her father's. She promoted through her discourse national protectionism, redistributive patriotism, anti-globalization policies and economic protectionism, especially for middle-class businesses, and Euroscepticism (Hammoura, 2016). This shift was not only affected by the

succession but also the occurrence of the two major crises, with the one in 2016 to be the most significant one for the electorate success for the party.

### **3.1.The Crises of 21st century and the shift to an economical narrative**

#### **3.1.1.The Financial crisis of 2008 and a fragile European Vision**

The National Front has traditionally been promoting immigration issues, alongside securitization of French society. This is both evident in the campaigns of 2002 and 2007 (Ivaldi, 2018). After the occurrence of the 2008 financial crisis, the FN shifted its policies towards economic protectionism and how immigration jeopardizes the future of french economical development. At the same time, the EU came as a central actor that can affect the French economy in a negative way, with FN to take a stand using its arguments against the single European currency (Ibid, 2018). Even though the pick of the party was substantiated during the refugee crisis of 2016, we are starting first from the financial crisis of 2008, because that is when the first shift to economics occurred within the FN's discourse.

The FN initially was labeled as an anti-globalization party, a party that did not agree with free-trade and market liberal orientation (Lloyd, 2016). After the occurrence of the financial crisis, France was quite affected, and by 2009 was led to economic recession. Unemployment numbers were on the rise, with the country's economic stagnation and income inequality to be the main issues covered by the media of that period. At the same time, the French economy was highly dependent on domestic consumption, up to 70% of its GDP. This combination led to a substantial crisis in french exporting firms, with the importing to continue to be at a higher cost, and the exports to no longer have viable markets (Ivaldi, 2018).This naturally led the electorate to develop an anti-establishment sentiment, and the far-right, and specifically FN, to focus on the economical aspect.

In order to capitalize the frustration of the French people, the FN and specifically, Marine Le Pen shifted the party's attention away from the traditional racist platform, towards a new and more populist discourse. Le Pen focused her discourse around increasing unemployment rates and anti-globalization sentiments in her 2012 campaigns. Meanwhile another strongpoint of the party's discourse was its opposition to Euro as a single currency, that suppresses France sovereignty and trade abilities (Lloyd, 2016). The EU was characterized as a 'Trojan horse of globalization' and even a threat for the French welfare

state (FN, 2002). Overall, the FN adopted an egalitarian socioeconomic package during the crisis that got even more enhanced during the refugee crisis of 2016 (Ivaldi, 2015).

### **3.1.2. The refugee crisis of 2016, and economic insecurity**

Economic Euroscepticism continued to be promoted and became central to FN's 2017 presidential campaign (Mudde, 2019). The campaign was targeting financial and corrupt globalism, phenomena that were both linked to the EU. The FN continued protectionist policies on foreign imports, and they were advocating against free trade agreements like TAFTA and CETA (Ignazi, 2015). Euro-exit was introduced and it was enhanced even more because of the refugee crisis, which came to enhance even more based on FN, 'the restorage of national sovereignties' (FN, 2017a).

As the EU did not have the appropriate funds to deal with the surge of asylum seekers, EU member states had to deal also independently with the crisis. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2015 around 850.000 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece, with the vast majority of them to have crossed from Turkey (Hammoura, 2016). The crisis was not the one that introduced FN to the electorate, but it was certainly the one that led Le Pen to the second round of French Presidential elections.

Even before the start of the 2016 crisis, Euroscepticism because of immigration flows was already one major factor in voting for the FN (Belot et al., 2013). In 2012 Le Pen managed to receive 17,9% in presidential elections. After the occurrence of the crisis, we see that Le Pen managed to increase this percentage up to 21,3% and 33,9% in the first and the second rounds of presidential election in 2017 (Hammoura, 2016). The agenda and discourse of FN was mainly focused on Euroscepticism, and then immigration, and how these flows are going to be even more harmful for the French economy. The refugee crisis was connected to both financial instability and Islamist terrorism in France (Ivaldi, 2015).

Even before the campaign Le Pen stated at the beginning of the crisis that "the influx of Syrian refugees would be similar to the invasion of the fourth century" (Le Figaro, 2015a). She even tried to stigmatize the refugees and immigrants as carriers of diseases and destabilization of France's national identity (Belot et al., 2013). The party most of the time was branding the migrants as representatives of burden for the French public finances and healthcare system, as also a criminal threat (Le Monde, 2015).

The refugee crisis managed to emphasize even more the issue of immigration, and in combination with the previous financial crisis, FN had the opportunity to combine these two and earn even more electorate support. Meanwhile, the campaign of 2017 was the first

campaign that emphasized that deeply to the economical aspect and the fact that the closer you are to gain government position, the more you need to be referred to the economical aspect. The EU was also central to FN discourse, with initially the party supporting EU membership, but advocating to leave the Eurozone and advocate for national currency.

### **3.2. FN and the multiple ‘enemies’ of France**

As Fn is a far-right party, naturally we should expect them to create dichotomies of ‘us’ and ‘others’, in order to gain further electorate support. In the case of FN, we have multiple groups that are labeled as other, threats or even enemies of France. Since the mid-1990s Euroscepticism has been the main device to create antagonism between groups and specifically, the European elite was the main one to be labeled as ‘others’. Since the two crises occurred, FN added more groups, within immigrants, and mainstream parties to make the list.

As we already stated, the pro-EU elite is the one that is being mentioned the most by the FN (FN, 2017a). The demonization of the EU, has led the party to claim that whoever is pro Europeanization and Euro should consider himself an enemy of the Nation, as their inclination to these beliefs prove that they are not patriots or supporters of French sovereignty (Bernard, 2017). The FN positioned itself as a party that will be able to protect ‘the people’ from the effects of being in the EU, which are blamed partly because of the country’s economic performance, and the lack of national identity.

The party at the same time wants the electorate to make a distinction between the national population (‘pure french’) and the immigrants and refugees that live or come to France for asylum (FN, 2017a). These populations are blamed for the economical consequences, but also for most of the crimes that have been occurring in France the last twenty years (Lloyd, 2016). France is also one of the countries that have witnessed several terrorist attacks, attacks that have been instigated by Islamist groups (Kauffman, 2016). Even though originally immigrants were connected to racial superiority, the discourse on immigration now is focused on cultural differences, and how these differences between Western and Islamic civilizations, will impact France’s political-social and economical life.

Lastly, we should not forget that as every far-right party, FN also makes a distinction between the ‘people’ and the ‘mainstream parties’. The mainstream parties that are in governing positions are being blamed for being pro-EU and globalization. Specifically, the party stated multiple times: “As the mainstream parties are the one that promoted the policies

that led us to be ‘victims’ of both financial and refugee crisis (FN, 2017a). This dichotomy is quite mentioned through the years and as we said is usually connected to the EU. The fact that these dichotomies exist does not mean that FN is against the political system itself. On the contrary, FN believes that if these groups that we already mentioned stop to pose a threat, and also if FN governs instead of the mainstream parties, “France will be back at its old glory” (FN, 2017a). In summary, we should not include the FN as a threat to the political system, but a party that wants to govern.

### **3.3. A deeply Eurosceptic party that will not leave EU**

As we already stated in the introduction of this chapter, FN discourse was always around Euroscepticism (Ivaldi, 2018). Euroscepticism was always central in the FN discourse, as France has a quite strategic position within the EU. The last twenty years the EU has been weakened by three crises: the financial one, the refugee crisis and the UK referendum, that led eventually to Brexit. These crises created a new party competition and new opportunities for the FN to capitalize the narrative. But to what extent FN is a supporter of a Frexit?

In general far-right parties are claiming to be advocates of national interests, and they often support that they are against furthering European integration (Gomez-Reino & Llamazares, 2013). The anti-Eu stances have different dimensions and they differentiate themselves. In the case of FN, we know that before the crisis FN had from the start adopted deeply Eurosceptic stances, and they became even deeper after the financial crisis in 2008. FN started then to not only doubt the efficiency of the EU, but also they started promoting the exit of France from the Eurozone (Ivaldi, 2018).

As we already mentioned in the previous chapter, Euroscepticism refers to any kind of opposition to the process of European integration (Taggart, 1998). When the party started to gain substantial electorate support during the 1980s, they were showing support for a common European defense and currency. But since the 1990s the FN has been calling for restoration of French sovereignty and advancing against a “Europe of Nations” (Hainsworth et al, 2004). With the financial crisis in 2008, this narrative was enhanced with the exit from the Eurozone to be the center of it, and France to adopt a national currency.

This exit was connected to anti-globalization stances, and to the fact that France got really affected from the crisis, especially in sectors like trade, imports and exports (Goodliffe, 2015). The EU crisis enhanced the nationalistic narrative around national independence and

the change in taxation when it comes to imports and exports. In combination with that, the occurrence of the refugee crisis and UK referendum came once again to deepen the narrative and anti-EU stances.

Because of the extensive flows of asylum seekers and France to be already a country with substantial numbers of immigrants, FN took a stance and combined the immigration issue with the fact that France still remains a member of the EU (FN, 2002). The EU was described quite frequently as “an insane and totalitarian legal system, under the rule of an oligarchy and a jail for its people” (Ivaldi, 2018). They went one step further by claiming that Frexit should have happened, even before Brexit was on the agenda. This extremity against the EU changed quietly after the 2017 campaign.

During 2017, the main aim of FN was to be seen as presidential (Lloyd, 2016). Even though they still continued with the Eurosceptic perspective, FN focused more on the things that can change in order for France to remain in the EU. She said that she would advocate changes for the termination of EU directives that give advantages to refugee workers and give priority to French citizens, when it comes to jobs, social benefits and housing (Hammoura, 2016). She also added that she will oppose any family reunion rights and advocate for a drastic reduction when it comes to asylum seekers. Conclusively, Le Pen after the occurrence of Brexit stopped advocating for a Frexit, and started advocating for an EU that puts citizens first. Until now the narrative is following the same pattern, with the FN to understand that they need to preserve their anti-EU stance, but also after the exit of the UK, the strategic position that France has in EU decision-making.



#### **4. The Case Study of British UKIP before the inevitable Brexit**

When it comes to the far-right, the case of the British party UKIP is the most relevant one, especially the exit of the UK from the EU in 2016 (Goodman, 2021). The far right and mainly UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) was an essential tool in the success of the ‘Leave’ campaign, and it is labeled as the first eurosceptic successful far-right party, mainly because of the outcome of the British referendum. Following the Referendum we witnessed hate crime, anti-immigration policies and economic protectionism (Belot et al., 2013). Even though the party did not achieve a substantial electoral success after the referendum, it is important to examine its general progress from his creation, and also the role that it played during the British Referendum. By doing this we will be able to answer our three subquestions, and also see to what extent UKIP also used the winning formula during the “Leave” campaign, by putting the economy to the table.

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was first founded in 1993, and its only purpose was the immediate withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) (Ray, 2023). The party has its roots in a group named Anti-Federalist League, which was first established by Alan Sked, and it was positioned against the 1991 Maastricht Treaty on EU. The UKIP party then was founded by Sked, after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. The party was focused mainly to anti-EU stances, with slowly including in their discourses both anti-immigration and economic protectionism policies (Ahmet, 2016).

The first main electoral success of UKIP was in 2004, with the party winning 12 seats in the European Parliament, and also gaining a substantial percentage in local elections of the same year. After the occurrence of the financial crisis in 2008, UKIP had again in 2013, an important success, by winning 13 seats this time (Ahmet, 2016). The next one would be in 2012, when they managed to increase their percentage up to 14%. But the peak of their electoral success was the influence that UKIP exercised in the British political scene in 2016, with the “in and out” referendum (Ray, 2023).

Even though the party has not substantial history and operation, we will see that its role was strengthened by the occurrences of the two crises in 2008 and 2016, and at the end it was one of the main actors to affect the British population to vote for their country to exit EU, leading the governing party to resign and establishing a xenophobic discourse against any kind of immigration. Their discourse changed from a pure Eurosceptic one, to one that became relevant with the crises, by appointing enemies of the British citizens. In the next

section we are going to study their discourse and how they managed to combine immigration and economical perspective, as also the party's discourse through the crises.

## **4.1. The impact of the crises and the inevitability of Brexit**

### **4.1.1. The unpredictable impact of the financial crisis of 2008**

As we already discussed in the previous chapters, the financial crisis of 2008 deeply affected the economy of EU states, and consequently the euro itself (Thompson, 2017). Britain was partially part of the Eurozone, as they did not adopt euro currency, but only the agreements related to trade and movement. The UK was not willing to sacrifice its monetary sovereignty and also to enhance a more political union. Britain as a non-Eurozone member was not affected that badly from the financial crisis, or at least that was the first impression. Even though economically the country did not witness severe losses, the British citizens were quite dissatisfied because this crisis led to the movement of huge immigration flows both from EU states, but also from states outside EU.

When the rest of Europe sank back into recession in 2012, the British economy grew again significantly faster than any other large EU state (World Bank, 2016). This changed the immigration patterns, as from 2012 onwards the UK has to also welcome a substantial amount of immigration from the Eurozone states. Except for that, as Eurozone states were still trying to recover from the recession, third countries migrants and refugees were choosing to go to the UK, instead of the euro-zone periphery (Bulmer, 2014). The euro-zone crisis had two imminent results for the UK: first, it showed the weaknesses of the currency union, and secondly, Germany had the opportunity to expand its political influence within the EU (Ibid, 2014).

These realizations led the UK citizens, and the political elite to establish a narrative that their membership is worth the 'sacrifices' that they have to make, in order to support the rest of member states. This is where UKIP started including in its discourse anti-immigration policies and the fact that the country is jeopardizing its national and economical sovereignty (Watson, 2017). The crisis of 2008 added to the UKIP's discourse not only anti-immigration stances, but also the establishment of political protections when it comes to financial matters (Stocker, 2017).

#### **4.1.2. The immigration crisis as the beginning of the end**

Many people were shocked when Cameron first suggested the referendum about whether the UK should stay or not in the EU. What was even more shocking for the most, was the fact that a referendum that intended to just pressure the EU, ended Brexit (Stocker, 2017). If someone had paid closer attention, he would have realized that UKIP and even some of the mainstream parties were already promoting from 2012, that immigration is a drain to the economy and the main concern of the UK should be the admittance of fewer immigrants. The political field was already heated against immigration flows that were the result of the financial crisis. The political environment became even more hostile, when the immigration crisis of 2016, not only enhanced the cultural threat but also the economical one (Thompson, 2017).

On 23 of June 2016, the choice of British people to leave the EU was characterized initially as an irrational act, which would eventually be an instant regret (Stocker, 2017). In order to understand the debate and what affects the voting of British people, it is important to refer to both the Leave campaign, but also about the circumstances that led to that debate. David Cameron, then British Prime Minister and President of the conservative party, promised a referendum on Britain's membership in the EU. This promise was an outcome of the growing influence and impact of the radical right (Owen and Walter, 2017).

As we already stated in the introductory section of this chapter the far-right started gaining quite the attention in the 1990s, when immigration started to be on the rise. Since then UKIP but also the British National Party (BNP), both gained electorate support, and they managed to influence the political scene (Ahmed, 2016). Then after the intense immigration movement after 2008, and the several terrorist attacks that the UK experienced in 2015, both of the parties' influence reached the ceiling. Following this path, it was not a surprise that both of the parties, alongside the hard-core politicians within the British Conservative Party, were the leading force of the "Leave" campaign.

The then PM D. Cameron promised the referendum in order to put in peace both the Eurosceptics within his own party, but also the UKIP, which was gaining more and more ground by the day (Applebaum, 2017). It is really probable that when the then PM was making these promises, he was not expecting that he would win the next elections, and then he would have to implement his promises (Duke, 2018). As a prophecy that it was meant to happen, Cameron won the elections and he had to hold a referendum between Leave versus Remain.

Even though Cameron campaigned on behalf of Remain, a substantial part of his party followed the lead to the far right and campaigned for the exit of Britain from the EU (Duke, 2018). The Leave Campaign included all the essential parts of the UKIP's discourse. The campaign targeted global trade, immigration and the EU (Applebaum, 2018). What happened differently though was that this time the UKIP did not link these issues only to national sovereignty, but it made connections with the economical prospect of the UK.

A research that was done by Swalles in 2016, indicates that the UK people had three main objectives in mind when they were voting for the referendum: (1) the economy (up to 21%), (2) immigration (up to 20%), and sovereignty (up to 17%). This shows not only that the economy is a main factor when it comes to political decision making, but it is also an important actor when it comes to navigating the main narrative (Clarke et al, 2017). It is not surprising then that the Leave campaign in general, and UKIP in specific, decided to enhance the economical aspect in their efforts to navigate the debate in their preferential path.

When it comes to the economy, UKIP emphasized on how after the euro-zone crisis and the extensive immigration flows, the UK would have to face increased costs from trade barriers rising, and an inevitable lower foreign direct investment (Bulmer, 2014). This naturally would lead to a less cooperative environment with the EU in total. The British economy should also expect a labor force shrinkage, which will result in higher unemployment. Special attention was given to consumer prices rising, higher inflation and lower wages (Shipman, 2016).

Immigration naturally was a key factor, with Nigel Farage, the then party leader of UKIP to emphasize the fact that “if the UK wants to gain its independence back, they need to get rid of, all these EU immigration policies, that allows the migration from one EU member state to another (Shipman, 2016). EU migrants do not only have the right to migrate to another EU country, but also they have access to the national social infrastructures, which includes education, healthcare, employment, and even housing.

The British citizens were characterized as the losers of globalization, and the ones that ended up suffering because of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the immigration crisis in 2016 (Thompson, 2017). The party went a bit further to declare that they will promote restrictions on freedom of movement and for the EU employment rights to be completely lifted, especially Romanian and Bulgarian citizens (Ahmed, 2016). The main message was that “we have to support people that their lives have been affected and they do not possess economic opportunities, and because of that they do not have confidence on what the economical future would hold for them (Applebaum, 2017).

## **4.2. Everyone that does not support the British citizens, is the enemy!**

We already analyze a big part of the debate during the Brexit campaign, but it is important to emphasize the dichotomies that the UKIP created, not only for the debate but in general for its Eurosceptic agenda. UKIP has distinguished three main enemies of the 'people', which are the citizens of the country, the 'pure British' (Duke, 2018). The three main categories that were labeled as 'enemies', 'others' are the following: (1) the European elite, (2) Immigrants, and (3) mainstream parties that are supporting European policies related to immigration.

UKIP never concealed the fact that it is a deeply Eurosceptic party, hence it should not come as a shock that they are demonishing, not only the European elite, but also everyone that supports the EU in general. UKIP has raised initial concerns about how the UK as a rich EU member state will end up subsidizing EU citizens that come from less developed EU members. In that context, the party did not go against the EU elite. They went against the mainstream parties that are not only failing the citizens with their internal policies, but they also tend to follow whatever EU detects (Belot et al., 2013). This was the case especially when the mainstream parties were not going hard to European Immigration (Ray, 2023).

The main enemy though, that people should recognize and 'fight to take back control', is the immigrants that keep coming to the UK and they are the reason that not only the economy, but also the cultural aspect keep getting affected (Stocker, 2017). These distinctions were really appealing, especially during the Brexit campaign, both to blue-collars and white workers. These categories were labeled, as the ones that fell behind after the multiple economic transformation, and quite anxious about all the changes that comes with globalization (Duke, 2018). These three categorizations of enemies played a really important role to the Brexit campaign, as they made clear that all these three 'evils' are coming from the EU, so an exit from the EU will 'make the enemies go away' (Bulmer, 2014). This though also indicates the fact that UKIP did not wish for the political system to change, but for them to take over and 'dethroned the enemies'.

## **4.3. The Threat that became Reality**

As we already stated in the introductory section, Cameron suggested this referendum, in order to defeat UKIP, the far-right in general, and counterparties within his own party. That political risk backfired (Applebaum, 2017). The then PM could not possibly predict that more than 30 million British citizens would turn out to vote, with the 51,9% to vote in favor of Leave the EU, and only 48,1% voting to Remain (Ahmed, 2016). This was the first case when the far-right is deeply Euroseptic and against the EU elite, and secondly, this is the first time their wish was granted!

The campaign was able to reveal deep divisions within the country, with many researchers to claim that the issue was not connected to the EU per se, but with immigration (Ray, 2023). UKIP in specific, and the Leave campaign in general, managed to connect the Eu with immigration, and everything else that comes with it. UKIP during the campaign never mentioned immigration, without connecting it to the EU and European policies. Even though Farage was also mentioning immigration from non-EU member states, he was still connecting these flows with the Eurozone crisis, and the fact that the EU is not effective to accommodate these flows (Ahmed, 2016).

What we have to mention is that an important factor during the campaign was that the economical aspect was emphasized as much as the cultural one (Thompson, 2017). UKIP was one of the most Euroseptic parties within the EU, and they are the first that not only promoted Brexit, but they managed to actually implement their vision. This factor distinguishes UKIP from the other two case studies, as in this case the party is anti-EU, and did not just use Brexit as a threat, but as the solution to all the British struggles. That and the fact that Brexit led many far-right, not only to gain percentages but also promote referendums, should alarm the EU.

## 5. Conclusion

With this analysis we aimed to investigate whether the far-right parties within Europe have undergone changes in their discourse. Specifically, we started from the theoretical debate around the far-right, with our focus to be on the second group of theorists, who were the first to suggest that the far-right will undergo changes in the future. With Kitschelt to be the main representative of the first group, we wanted to demonstrate to our papers whether the far-right of the fourth wave is starting to include the economical factor within their discourse. At the same time, we establish sub-questions, in order to sufficiently answer our first question, with the ultimate goal to be the realization that the far-right is trying to mirror the mainstream parties.

The three case studies that we analyzed (Golden Dawn, National Front and UKIP) showed us that indeed after 2000, the far right adopted a discourse that was focused more to the economical factor and even though immigration was the main issue in their agenda, they were still linking immigration with economical consequences. We showed in our analysis that the economy was used to highlight the negative consequences of both the global economy (and specifically European integrationism), and also the fact that mainstream governing parties are not appropriate and they are the reason why the economy is going that way. So, economics in the far-right discourse is both linked with the mistakes of the past, the cruciality of the present and a desirable future.

At the same time, our analysis proved that one of the main factors of this change is the occurrence of a crisis. As Kitschelt (2007) suggested, when a crisis occurs the far-right will not have any other option besides to turn to the economy, if they want to gain the desirable electorate support. In our three cases we show indeed that both the crises of 2008 and 2016, made the far-right focus more on the economy, and link their rest of their agenda to the economical aspect. We can also see through our analysis that these parties gained their most substantial percentages around these crises. The first crisis of 2008, was a financial one and naturally the far-right adapted to that. The second one in 2016, was focused on immigration, but it was still heavily linked to the present and future economical consequences. In sum, both of the crises played a crucial role both when it comes to the discourse of the party, and then to their electorate success.

Then our second sub question was focused on whether the far-right is a danger for the political system. The three cases that we analyzed pointed that the far-right is focusing

mainly to create dichotomies, dichotomies that include them with the “innocents” and usually the governing elite as a “threat” for their vision. The far-right does not demonstrate a behavior that indicates their aim to change the political system. On the contrary, through their discourse they initiate that they want to change the present by changing the governing elites, or the elites that are against their beliefs. That means that they want to change the actors of the system and not the system itself. This is another indicator that the far-right is trying to become more mainstream, by adapting to certain extent to normalities of the present, as they realized in the past that they cannot just change them.

Lastly, as our case studies were also European ones, we wanted to examine to what extent the far-right is Eurosceptical in an extreme sense. In the first case we saw that Golden Dawn was not considering an exit from the EU as a viable solution, and they were only mentioning that they should have not joined initially, but now that they have, a Grexit is not a solution. When it comes to our second case study, Golden Dawn, we had to do with a deeply Eurosceptic party that even used to mention a referendum for Frexit. That changed after the crisis of 2016 and also even though after the occurrence of Brexit, Le Pen was cheering, we witnessed that later on she was mentioning that they want the EU to change, but not a Frexit to occur. At last, we examined the case of UKIP with our main focus to be around Brexit. Naturally, Brexit indicates the main example of extreme Euroscepticism and it warned the EU that the far-right and the ideas around it should not be underestimated.

Having answered all of our questions through this paper, we are confident to point and suggest that the EU, but also the European members themselves should take a better look at the far-right. As every political phenomenon, the far-right is developing and changing based on the times and changes. Our study demonstrated a serious change within the far-right discourse, and that is the inclusion of the economy, in their effort to resemble the mainstream parties in certain ways. Yet, the EU as an institution is continuing to portray and examine these parties in the same way as they used to, when they have to take a closer picture and understand that new characteristics require new ways of coping.

As the far-right is looking more and more mainstream, they are becoming more desirable from the electorate, and they have managed to gain substantial percentages in the last decade. Even though they try to present themselves mainstream by adding the economical aspect in their discourse, we still have to understand that they are promoting ideas that could jeopardize both the EU vision and maybe even the democratic one. The fact that they camouflage themselves better should be noticeable, and only then we would be able to find sufficient solutions on how to proceed.



While writing this paper, we witnessed the ‘fresh’ win of Meloni, from the Italian far-right, and also two weeks ago the win of Wilders and his dutch far right party PVV. These two wins occurred after the two main crises, and it would be valuable to be included in a future study, when the appropriate amount of time has passed. These two wins confirmed once again that we should never underestimate the power of discourse, and also how the circumstances can make an outsider an important political opponent. Now more than ever, we should be conscious about what has changed around the far-right, and how we should proceed, if we do not want the past to be repeated.

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