

The police and the far right in Greece: a case study of police voting behaviour in Athens

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Abstract The electoral advance of the far right party of Golden Dawn has left a clear mark on the Greek parliamentary elections of 2012. A less debated aspect of these results involves the extent of the electoral influence of Golden Dawn among police personnel. Using electoral data from two districts in Greece's capital city, this paper explores the extent of that influence among major front line police units based in those localities. Our analysis obtains clear indications that Golden Dawn's presence has been much more emphatic among police personnel than among the general public. These results warrant further exploration of this development, particularly in light of the possibility that far-right ideology may influence the character of everyday policing in Greece and the use of police discretion at the detriment of vulnerable or politically undesirable groups.

Introduction

This paper explores the extent of the electoral influence of the far-right, particularly of the far-right party of Golden Dawn, among members of the police personnel in Greece. The rise and affirmation of Golden Dawn as a significant political force since the beginning of the 2010s has attracted considerable public and scholarly attention [1–6]. Indeed, the sheer quantitative weight of the far-right vote has been one of the most dramatic aspects of the parliamentary elections of 6 May and 17 June 2012, whose results we consider in this paper. Subsequent analyses have queried the party's electoral influence [7], to an extent that one may speak of an extensive recomposition of the far- and populist right in Greece, featuring Golden Dawn as a dominant formation in that

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political space. The party has had a turbulent and highly controversial course since the twin elections of 2012. It was found at the centre of a high profile judicial investigation initiated against it as a criminal organisation in October 2013, and criminal trial procedures against Golden Dawn members, including its leadership and several MPs commenced in May 2015. It nevertheless still received just under 9.5 %, 6.3 % and 6.9 % of the popular vote in the 2014 European elections, and the January 2015 and September 2015 general elections respectively.¹

Yet one of the aspects of Golden Dawn's ascent that continues to be downplayed and even dismissed by mainstream political actors and commentators has been the extent of this party's influence among police personnel, particularly among front line services, such as patrol and emergency response units as well as the riot police, whose role in maintaining public order has been accentuated in crisis-ridden Greece. This situation constitutes a serious knowledge gap in light of a continuing stream of reports by human rights organisations and left-wing activists of a certain convergence, if not practical complicity, between these police units and Golden Dawn activists [8–13]. The urgency of the matter is only underscored by the considerable deficit of academic research on key aspects of the organisation, practice and social composition of the police force in Greece.

The analysis of the results of the 2012 elections presented in this paper offers compelling evidence that relations between the far- and populist right and the personnel of the police in large key units in Athens are firm and extensive. The implications could be far reaching arguably. If important parts of Greece's national police service are becoming colonised by far-right ideology, then elements of that ideology—extreme nationalism, notions of racial purity and glorification of vigilante style violence as means to promote those ideas—are becoming more likely to underpin the character of everyday policing and the use of police discretion at the detriment of vulnerable or politically undesirable groups. A more systematic investigation of Golden Dawn's influence among police personnel is thus fully warranted. The opportunity, as explained below, to interrogate the electoral behaviour of police personnel offers additional significant insights on the far-right's influence on parts of the Greek state personnel, an aspect which only very recently has drawn scholarly attention [14, 15].

A detailed discussion of Golden Dawn as a political formation lies beyond the scope of this paper, and interested readers would be well advised to explore the rapidly developing literature regarding the party's origins, discourse and political practice [1–4, 16–20]. This literature also offers the necessary conceptual links to the wider voluminous literature on the far- and populist right phenomenon (e.g., [21–25]) We draw selectively from this literature in so far as the analysis and insights found in it may pertinently inform the discussion of our findings from the viewpoint of police

¹ In October 2013, the leadership, including several MPs, and several other members of Golden Dawn were prosecuted by Greek judicial authorities on charges of forming and operating a criminal organisation (art.187 of the Greek Penal Code). The incident that prompted judicial action has been the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, a leftist musician and activist by a member of Golden Dawn allegedly acting as part of a hit squad operating under orders and guidance from the party's local and national leadership. A discussion of the investigation and the details reaching the public domain would lie beyond the scope of this article. We are very confident that the effort of the prosecuting authorities and the leadership of the Hellenic Police to root out Golden Dawn support from various Hellenic Police units does not render our analysis outdated nor does it invalidate any of the questions we are raising here, particularly in light of the party's resilience in subsequent elections.

sociology. As our investigation capitalises on conditions resembling a natural experiment, our main focus is on the election results and police voting behaviour. In the first part of this paper we offer the indispensable background information on the twin elections of 2012, and on the particularities of the Greek electoral system by means of which our observations were made possible. The bulk of our analysis focuses on the actual police vote: we document and explore the rise and stabilisation of the far right's electoral influence in two key operational formations of the Hellenic Police in the capital city of Greece, Athens in the May and June elections. The concluding part situates our results and outlines a number of possible paths for further investigation, building on both the limited existing knowledge on the police in Greece and extant insights regarding the nature, reasons and extent of the apparent convergence between police personnel and the party of Golden Dawn.

The twin elections of 2012: issues and dramatis factiones

Greece's twin elections of 2012 occurred in a highly charged and polarised political atmosphere. Following the early dissolution of the parliament elected in October 2009, the first general election took place on 6 May 2012. It resulted in a hung parliament and was thus followed by the second general election of 17 June 2012, whose result made possible the formation of a coalition government supported by the centre-right and centre-left, namely the conservative New Democracy party, the social-democratic party PASOK, and the centre-left Democratic Left, which, however, left the coalition in the summer of 2013. The government under the conservative Antonis Samaras implemented the severe austerity programme in continuation of its predecessors' policies since 2010. But while the twin elections of 2012 provided a certain political resolution to what at the time appeared as an acute and catastrophic dilemma for Greece's economic and political future, they constituted nothing less than a radical overturn of that country's political scene.²

The crisis has engendered an acute rupture of relations of political representation and a generalised state of incredulity towards the discourses emanated from a range of power centres, including institutions of government and technical expertise, the media or even trade unions. Such development has been reflected, firstly, in increasing political instability. The government of Georgios Papandreou of the PASOK social democrats, which came to power by an astounding 10.5 % margin of the popular vote over the outgoing conservative New Democracy of Costas Karamanlis, was replaced in late 2011 by a government led by the former head of the Bank of Greece Lucas Papadimos and supported by a parliamentary coalition of New Democracy and PASOK. Secondly, at the level of everyday social relations, it has also activated a dark undercurrent of racism, xenophobia and conspiratorial right wing populism. The rise of the extreme right, which openly scapegoated the increasing population of migrants as a

² A reference to Greece's economic and social meltdown since the imposition of the austerity programme would be imperative for understanding the complex dynamics that shaped the results of the 2012 elections. Anything more than a brief and selective reference would go well beyond the scope of this paper, but a number of more comprehensive accounts may now be found in the English language (Douzinas, 2013; Lynn, 2011; Manolopoulos, 2011; Mitsopoulos & Pelagidis, 2012; Pryce, 2012).

key and deadly threat to the nation's cohesion and prosperity, has been underpinned by this very same current [2, 19, 26].

With the political scene looking increasingly fluid and uncertain under mounting popular discontent and the superintendence of the IMF-ECB-European Commission 'troika', the established major political formations contested for the popular vote both against their own splinters taking the form of new dissident parties, and against up and coming forces on the left and the right of the political spectrum. In the buildup to the 6 May election, a clear division emerged between a side arguing for the necessity of the implementation of the memorandum as means for the salvation of Greece's position in the eurozone and as a blueprint for structural reform, and another side openly challenging the memorandum, its consequences and its conditions of implementation under the superintendence of the troika (e.g. [27, 28]). The result of the 6 May election indicated a collapse, below a cumulative 35 %, of the established two-party system, whose components New Democracy and PASOK stood firmly in support of the memorandum. At the same time, it brought to the political centre stage the previously minor, radical leftist party of SYRIZA as a contender for an anti-memorandum parliamentary majority [29]. Thus the public's polarisation on the memorandum issue became considerably more intense in the run-up to the election of 17 June.

Since a detailed profiling of the political formations and their manifestos is not feasible here, and our concern is the electoral influence of the far-right, in what follows we opt for more conventional lines of political demarcation using the Right-Left axis. For our analysis, we focus primarily on the results of the seven parties that gained parliamentary representation in May and June 2012, namely the conservative *New Democracy* ('ND'), the left-wing *SYRIZA*, the social-democratic *PASOK*, the renegade conservative party *Aneksartitoi Ellines* ('Independent Greeks'—'ANEL'), the *Communist Party of Greece* ('KKE'), Golden Dawn ('GDawn') and the centre left *Democratic Left* ('DIMAR'). Secondly, we have specifically included in our calculations the party of *Popular Orthodox Rally* ('LAOS'), which in the 2000s had been the major political formation of the populist and far right and had gained parliamentary representation in the 2007 and 2009 elections. An analysis of the electoral influence of the extreme right would be incomplete without taking explicitly into account the result of LAOS.

We also present the results of smaller parties which polled above 1 %, but did not gain any parliamentary seats. Other parties polling under 1 % appear in our analysis under the category 'Other', regardless of their political orientation. A more detailed look at the results of smaller parties would reveal that the balance between Right and Left is tilted to the centre-right overall. On the left side of the political spectrum on the *Green Party* ('Greens') and the radical left party of *ANTARSYA* polled above 1 %, while the centre-right parties of *Democratic Alliance* ('DS'), *Drasi* and *Demiourgia Ksana* ('Creation Again'—'DemKs') all polled just short of the 3 % threshold for parliamentary representation in May 2012 and thus represent the largest portion of the popular vote in this category. In June 2012, 'Drasi' and 'Demiourgia Ksana' formed an electoral coalition, whereas Democratic Alliance collaborated with New Democracy. As we look specifically at the influence of the extreme right, their results do not have significant import for our analysis, and, additionally, the category 'Other' simplifies our presentation. The results of those smaller parties are taken into account when we aggregate using the Right-Left axis. Thus, ND, ANEL, Golden Dawn, LAOS, DS, Drasi and

Demiourgia Ksana represent the political Right, with Golden Dawn and LAOS representing specifically the extreme right, and SYRIZA, PASOK, KKE, DIMAR, the Greens and ANTARSYA represent the Left.

Greek electoral legislation and special electoral rolls

A closer look at the police vote is made possible in Greece by a special provision of the electoral legislation, currently article 27 of p.d. (presidential decree) 26/2012 [30]. Members of the personnel of the Hellenic Police, Fire Brigade, Greek Armed Forces and Coast Guard may choose to vote in the district where their unit is based at the time a general election is called. These individuals must declare in advance their intention to vote in the municipality they serve in, and thus are included in what are known as special electoral rolls. Within a particular constituency they are then distributed among the polling stations of that constituency, and on the day of the election they vote alongside the constituents regularly registered to vote at those polling stations.

In Greece, citizens are entitled to vote in the constituency in whose electoral rolls they are included. However, unlike, for example, in the UK, this is not the constituency in which they reside, but rather the constituency in whose municipal registers they have been included, typically the constituency in which their birth was registered. A special procedure is required for people to migrate to the municipal register of the place where they normally reside, and many people simply remain on the registers of their birth-place for life. As the electoral legislation does not permit postal vote, members of the general public must travel back to their place of origin in order to exercise their right to vote. Special electoral rolls, therefore, facilitate the participation of army, police, fire brigade and coast guard officers in the elections, while ensuring minimum interruption of service by these state agencies around and on the day of the election. The key point here is that voters on the special electoral rolls are *an addition* to a constituency's electorate comprised of members of the general public.

Within any constituency, electoral rolls reflect the administrative divisions into communities and municipalities, or, in the case of municipalities with a population larger than 5000, electoral districts. Voters who are included in the (regular) electoral roll are then allocated to electoral departments within districts according to their registered address in order to ensure that they are allocated to approximately equal size groups to vote at a nearby polling station. The law, p.d. 8/2000 [31], explicitly states proximity as the main criterion for the allocation of voters to electoral departments and the procedure ensuring the application of this principle takes into account both older and newer administrative and other divisions, such as parish boundaries or post codes. The same principle of proximity applies to the allocation to polling stations of voters included in the special electoral rolls. Therefore, police officers, for example, are allocated to particular polling stations in the vicinity of the police station in which they serve. Because the electoral legislation places an upper limit to the number of voters that can be allocated to a polling station (theoretically up to 800, according to art. 55 p.d. 26/2012), special electoral register voters attached to larger units are also allocated in approximately equal size groups across nearby polling stations (art. 53 p.d. 26/2012).

The result of the above procedure is that in any given constituency two types of polling stations can be found: firstly, regular polling stations, where those normally

included in the electoral roll of that constituency exercise their right to vote; and, secondly, special polling stations, which include regular constituents and members of the police, fire brigade, armed forces and coast guard who have been allocated to vote there on the basis of the special electoral register. Consequently, polling stations of the second type include a larger number of registered voters, since those included in the special electoral register *are added* to those included in the regular electoral register. For example, if regular polling stations within a given constituency include 500 registered voters, special polling stations will include 700, that is, 500 regular constituents and 200 members of the police, army etc. It is also important to note that, because the procedure for the allocation is carried out by administrative and judicial authorities, members of these different agencies are normally allocated to vote in different polling stations, so in the above example the additional 200 voters will all be police officers or army officers and so on.

Our dataset

In this paper we use the feature of special polling stations in order to make inferences about the voting behaviour of the police in Greece's capital city of Athens. We focus on the central unit of the largest police formation in Athens, and nationally, the General Police Directorate of Attica (GADA). Located in the area of Ampelokipoi, in the heart of the city of Athens, GADA's central unit includes the formation's headquarters and staff units as well as specialised CID units (such as the drug or vice squad), and also critical front line units, particularly the special patrol and emergency response unit known as 'Amesi Drasi' ('instant action'). The latter comprises the car and motorcycle units which provide the bulk of patrol in greater Athens and are also responsible for fast response to incidents (p.d. 1/2001 [32], see also [33, 34]). In Athens, GADA is also the organisational umbrella for the motorcycle and motorbike fast-response units DELTA and DIAS. More particularly DIAS (an acronym standing for 'motorbike policing' that reads as the name of the ancient greek deity Zeus) relies exclusively on motorbikes and is currently 2500-strong, armed and intended to provide 'rapid and combative intervention' (Hellenic Police, n.d.) particularly in incidents of violent crime. But it has now become omnipresent in Athens (and other large cities) as a patrol unit too. The second important front line component of GADA, the Police Operations Directorate, primarily comprises the riot police units and is based in the eastern sector of greater Athens, in the municipality of Kesariani. It was, in fact, in Kesariani, where Golden Dawn's increasing electoral influence was detected as early as the 2009 general election, by means of querying the results of the special polling stations to which the personnel of the riot police units had been allocated [35]. By including both the results of Kesariani as well as the results returned by the stations in the vicinity of GADA's central unit, we essentially investigate the voting behaviour of the bulk of front line police units serving in Athens, particularly the inner city.

We have obtained from the Attiki (Greater Athens) Region the numbers of the special polling stations in the constituencies concerned (*Athens A* and *Athens B*), using the procedure established by art. 5 of the Greek Code of Administrative Procedure (L.2969/1999). This is the equivalent in Greek legislation of a FOI request. Such course of action was necessary because, in the wake of the May election and initial

commentary on the police vote for Golden Dawn in Greek media, the Region was rather reluctant to make known the numbers of the special polling stations without following this formal procedure, even though this is publicly available information theoretically. This was due to both an initial uncertainty as to whether this information could be released to researchers, and, interestingly, fear of Golden Dawn reprisals. Even though there were no major changes in the allocation of special polling stations for the June election, a small number of special polling station was reshuffled, and our dataset was modified accordingly for the purposes of analysis.

As explained above, the police units in question are located in two different constituencies of the greater metropolitan area of Athens. Firstly, GADA's central unit is located within the boundaries of the constituency of *Athens A*, Greece's third largest constituency, with 490,339 registered voters electing 17 MPs in May and June 2012. From an administrative point of view, Athens A consists in the City of Athens in its entirety and comprises seven electoral districts, which themselves largely coincide with the city's seven municipal communities. The 7th municipal community and electoral district, is the largest one with a population of approximately 160,000 according to the 2001 census and it comprises the areas of Polygono, Gyzi, Ampelokipoi and Erythros Stavros. It presents a degree of socioeconomic diversity, as the western and southwestern areas are in continuation of the inner city lower middle class areas, such as Kypseli, whereas the areas towards the northeast are more markedly middle class, especially those that lie in proximity to the neighbouring affluent area of Psychico. For electoral purposes, it was divided in ten departments comprising in total 88,476 and 89,188 registered voters in May and June respectively. In both elections these voters were allocated in 151 polling stations in total.

Consistently with the legislative guidelines and established practice, the special polling stations were located in the vicinity of police services. Thus our dataset includes the results of 70 of the District's polling stations, namely the stations of electoral departments 27–29, 37 and 38 of Athens A (stations 796–846 and 856–874), all found in the area of Ampelokipoi, in the eastern part of the district. GADA's central service, the police station of Ampelokipoi, and some of the services of the Headquarters of the Hellenic Police and Ministry of Public Order (MPO) are located in this area. Voters included in the special electoral registers were allocated in 42 and 43 special polling stations in May and June respectively. It can be assumed with confidence on the basis of the rule of proximity and the distribution of registered voters that all these stations were police polling stations, with the possible exception of one station which may have been allocated to the nearby local fire brigade unit.

We have excluded the other departments of the district because they did not comprise any special stations. Additionally, while no other significant differences between the regular polling stations of Ampelokipoi and those of the rest of the 7th District were found in our preliminary analyses, the electorate in the former voted more for the New Democracy party and less for Syriza and PASOK. Therefore by excluding the other departments in our comparisons between regular and special polling stations, we account for the more conservative profile of this particular locality.

The second district we examine is Kesariani, which lies in the east of the City of Athens, and of Ampelokipoi. The base of the Attiki Police Operations Directorate is located in this district, which comprises a population of just less than 27,000 according to the 2001 census. For electoral purposes Kesariani belongs to the constituency of

Athens B, which comprises approximately 1.4 m registered voters and elects 42 MPs, approximately 14 % of the members of the Greek parliament. In Kesariani, approximately 26,000 people were registered to vote in the 2012 elections, but this figure also includes the police officers serving with the Directorate. The presence of these units makes for an intriguing contrast, as Kesariani has been historically a stronghold of the left—for example, in the local elections of 2010 (for which special registers do not apply), the candidate of the Communist Party alone polled at around 25 %, whereas the official conservative candidate received just over 10 % of the vote.

From an administrative viewpoint the organisation of elections in Kesariani is much simpler compared to that of the City of Athens: voters were allocated to 44 polling stations distributed in two electoral departments. Most special polling stations were included in the first department (stations 1784–1806) on the east-southeast side of the town where the police units, including the local police station are located, whereas, conversely the second department consisted almost exclusively of regular polling stations.

Table 1 presents and allows a comparison between the national result, the district result and the results of the special and regular polling stations in our sample for both elections. We also provide aggregate results by general political orientation (left, right and extreme right) so as to facilitate comparisons. The results by party and political orientation immediately permit the observation that Golden Dawn polled better in special polling stations. The other party of the extreme right, LAOS, also performed above its constituency and national average. Finally, the share of the left plunged well below its national and constituency averages. As the only factor differentiating special from regular polling stations was precisely the addition of the police voters from nearby police services, clearly, this outlook raises questions about the voting behaviour of the police and thus a more detailed analysis is clearly warranted.

Difference between special and regular polling stations

The purpose of our analysis was to examine whether the observed variation in the election results of special and regular polling stations was systematic. Using the type of polling station as independent variable, we compared the results between the two types (special, regular) of polling stations for each party, and also for groupings of parties according to their positioning on the left, right, and far right (*XRight*) of the political spectrum; note that the categories ‘right’ and ‘extreme right’ have not been constructed as mutually exclusive. The unit of analysis in this instance was polling stations, thus our calculations are based on the party (and party groupings) average percentage of the vote in the polling stations. This value may differ from the aggregate reported in Table 1. Our approach has been to compare the two means by performing an independent samples t-test, except when the assumption of normality was violated. In these cases we performed an equivalent non-parametric test (Mann-Witney). All statistical tests were two-sided, and *p* values of less than 0.05 were considered to indicate statistical significance. We have produced four sets of results for the polling stations in Ampelokipoi (as described above) and Kesariani in the May (Table 2) and June (Table 3) 2012 elections respectively.

Table 1 National, district and sampled polling stations results by party and political orientation, 6 May and 17 June 2012

		6 May 2012										17 June 2012									
		Greece	7 Dept	Amp Spec	Amp Reg	Athens B	Kes Spec	Kes Reg	Greece	7 Dept	Amp Spec	Amp Reg	Athens B	Kes Spec	Kes Reg						
Registered		9,945,859	88,477	29,219	15,231	1,419,469	15,724	10,207	9,947,876	89,188	30,364	14,801	1,420,926	15,944	10,214						
Turnout %		65.12 %	65.00 %	67.84 %	60.72 %	73.46 %	69.70 %	63.41 %	62.49 %	64.11 %	66.25 %	62.73 %	70.81 %	66.08 %	60.58 %						
Valid votes		6,324,136	56,685	19,398	9352	1,024,000	10,736	6372	6,155,464	56,731	19,960	9207	988,870	10,446	6139						
ND		18.85 %	15.92 %	16.99 %	18.17 %	12.40 %	10.54 %	9.21 %	29.66 %	31.67 %	33.13 %	33.78 %	26.49 %	23.13 %	17.93 %						
SYRIZA		16.79 %	18.21 %	14.17 %	18.41 %	21.82 %	21.83 %	26.82 %	26.89 %	25.01 %	19.43 %	25.86 %	31.75 %	31.05 %	39.18 %						
PASOK		13.18 %	9.77 %	9.13 %	10.82 %	9.07 %	9.04 %	9.81 %	12.28 %	8.82 %	8.18 %	9.30 %	8.63 %	8.04 %	8.88 %						
ANEL		10.62 %	8.93 %	10.11 %	8.40 %	11.01 %	9.03 %	9.01 %	7.51 %	6.21 %	6.84 %	6.18 %	7.45 %	6.17 %	6.47 %						
GDawn		6.97 %	9.41 %	15.31 %	6.36 %	6.71 %	12.16 %	4.77 %	6.92 %	8.60 %	14.28 %	5.72 %	6.44 %	10.76 %	4.97 %						
KKE		8.48 %	8.09 %	6.21 %	8.55 %	9.64 %	15.19 %	17.40 %	4.50 %	4.49 %	3.36 %	4.45 %	5.42 %	9.10 %	10.21 %						
DA		6.11 %	6.27 %	5.91 %	6.29 %	6.60 %	5.55 %	6.14 %	6.25 %	7.61 %	7.06 %	7.58 %	7.79 %	6.01 %	7.02 %						
LAOS		2.89 %	2.95 %	3.42 %	2.66 %	2.78 %	2.92 %	2.31 %	1.58 %	1.85 %	2.26 %	1.64 %	1.70 %	1.81 %	1.24 %						
DemKs		2.15 %	3.72 %	3.47 %	3.76 %	3.77 %	2.24 %	2.76 %	1.59 %	2.71 %	2.59 %	2.67 %	2.34 %	1.52 %	1.58 %						
Drasi		1.80 %	4.75 %	4.18 %	4.79 %	3.44 %	1.71 %	1.52 %													
DS		2.55 %	2.45 %	2.28 %	2.63 %	2.05 %	1.37 %	1.33 %													
Greens		2.93 %	3.00 %	2.59 %	2.99 %	3.45 %	2.54 %	3.15 %	0.88 %	0.94 %	0.88 %	0.83 %	1.05 %	0.70 %	0.96 %						
ANTARSYA		1.19 %	1.52 %	1.09 %	1.37 %	1.49 %	1.23 %	1.35 %	0.33 %	0.43 %	0.23 %	0.39 %	0.44 %	0.28 %	0.36 %						
Other		5.48 %	5.03 %	5.14 %	4.78 %	5.77 %	4.63 %	4.41 %	1.60 %	1.67 %	1.77 %	1.60 %	0.50 %	1.42 %	1.21 %						
		100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %						
Left		45.75 %	46.84 %	39.10 %	48.44 %	48.63 %	55.38 %	64.67 %	50.26 %	47.29 %	39.13 %	48.41 %	54.04 %	55.19 %	66.61 %						
Right		45.84 %	48.13 %	55.76 %	46.78 %	42.15 %	39.99 %	30.92 %	47.26 %	51.04 %	59.10 %	49.99 %	44.42 %	43.39 %	32.19 %						
XRight		9.87 %	12.36 %	18.73 %	9.02 %	9.49 %	15.09 %	7.08 %	8.50 %	10.45 %	16.54 %	7.36 %	8.14 %	12.57 %	6.21 %						

Amp = Ampelokipoi; Kes = Kesariani. Left = SYRIZA, PASOK, KKE, DIMAR, Greens, ANTARSYA; Right = ND, ANEL, GDawn, LAOS, DemKs, Drasi (May only), DS (May only); Xright = Gdawn, LAOS. Source: Ministry of Interior, Hellenic Republic (www.ekloges.yypes.gr)

A general observation applying to all four sets of results regards the inclusion of the number of registered voters and of the turnout in our tests. The inclusion of the number of registered voters and the comparison of the respective means between special and regular polling stations serves to document the observation that voters on the special register constitute an addition to the number of regular voters, and thus that a systematic difference between the two types of stations existed. In the May election special polling stations in Ampelokipoi and Kesariani included about 151 and 91 additional (police) voters on average respectively, while in June these figures were 158 and 100 (police) voters on average respectively. Furthermore, consistently with the purpose of special polling stations, which is to allow serving police officers to exercise their right to vote at a polling place near the location of their unit, voter turnout was significantly higher in special polling stations both in Ampelokipoi and Kesariani in both elections.

Results on 6 May 2012

The analysis of the election results indicates that significant differences occurred between the behaviour of voters in the special and regular polling stations of both Ampelokipoi and Kesariani on the election of 6 May 2012, particularly in connection with the parties of the left and of the extreme right (see Table 2).

In Ampelokipoi, where the bulk of the police personnel assigned to regular frontline police services of GADA (motorised patrol, CID) cast their vote, Golden Dawn polled higher in special polling stations (Mdn = 14.58) than regular polling stations (Mdn = 6.28). This difference was significant ($U = 61$, $z = -6.32$, $p = .001$), representing a large effect size $r = -.76$. The other party of the far right, LAOS, also polled significantly higher $t(68) = 3.08$, $p = .003$ in special polling stations ($M = 3.4$, $SE = .15$) than in regular ones ($M = 2.65$, $SE = .19$), well above its national and district averages. This difference represented a medium effect size $r = .35$. Similarly, the renegade right wing ANEL also polled significantly better in the stations where the police voted ($M = 10.12$, $SE = .24$; Regular stations $M = 8.37$, $SE = .42$; $t(68) = 3.83$, $p = .001$, $r = .42$), whereas there was no significant difference for the New Democracy vote between the two types of stations.

All parties of the left polled significantly worse in the special polling stations. Voters in the later voted less for SYRIZA ($M = 14.23$, $SE = .41$; regular: $M = 18.43$, $SE = .46$). This difference was significant $t(68) = -6.62$, $p = .001$, and represented a large effect size $r = .63$. Results in special polling stations were similarly worse for the Communist Party (Special: mdn = 6.01, regular: mdn = 8.52; $U = 153$, $z = -5.22$, $p = .001$, $r = .62$), but we found no significant difference for ANTARSYA. On the centre left, the outgoing PASOK polled worse in special stations ($M = 9.21$, $SE = .29$; regular: $M = 10.77$, $SE = .37$; $t(68) = -3.28$, $p = .002$, $r = .37$), whereas no significant difference was found in the results of the centre-left DIMAR. Overall in the special polling stations of Ampelokipoi the left polled significantly worse ($M = 39.3$, $SE = .71$; regular: 48.41, $SE = .69$; $t(68) = -8.77$, $p = .001$, $r = .73$), and the right and extreme right significantly higher: voters in special polling stations voted more for the extreme right (Mdn = 17.76) than voters in ordinary polling stations (Mdn = 9.17), a difference that was significant ($U = 57$, $z = -6.37$, $p = .001$) and represented a large effect size $r = -.76$. The vote for the extreme right and for Golden Dawn more specifically appears

Table 2 Statistical analysis of election results, Ampelokipoi and Kesariani, 6 May 2012

	Ampelokipoi (Elect Depts 27–29, 37–38)						Kesariani (Elect Depts 1–2)							
	Spec (N = 42)			Reg (N = 28)			Spec (N = 25)			Reg (N = 19)				
	M	Mdn	M	M	Mdn	M	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M	Mdn		
Register	695.69	683.50	543.96	540.50	151.73	7.5	.001	628.96	635.00	537.21	535.00	91.75	30.5	.001
Turnout	67.83	68.94	62.71	62.66	5.12	3.50	.001	69.94	66.34	63.41	62.92	6.53	90.0	.001
ND	17.11	16.85	18.15	17.85	-1.04	491.0	.245	10.52	11.11	9.19	9.68	1.33	2.00	.052
SYRIZA	14.23	14.00	18.43	18.13	-4.19	-6.62	.000	21.93	21.45	26.73	26.85	-4.80	-5.06	.001
PASOK	9.21	9.14	10.77	10.76	-1.56	-3.28	.002	9.06	8.62	9.78	9.92	-0.72	182.0	.188
ANEL	10.12	10.30	8.37	8.51	1.75	3.83	.001	9.05	8.83	8.99	8.67	0.06	0.12	.908
KKE	6.20	6.01	8.55	8.52	-2.35	153.0	.001	15.17	14.29	17.55	16.72	-2.37	-2.60	.013
GDawn	14.83	14.58	6.33	6.28	8.50	61.0	.001	12.17	12.48	4.74	5.01	7.43	26.0	.001
DIMAR	5.94	5.89	6.30	6.23	-0.36	-1.00	.322	5.49	5.69	6.16	6.04	-0.67	-1.75	.088
Greens	2.61	2.66	3.01	2.96	-0.40	447.5	.092	2.53	2.36	3.17	3.31	-0.64	-2.77	.008
LAOS	3.40	3.46	2.65	2.72	0.75	3.08	.003	2.92	2.81	2.30	2.56	0.63	2.20	.033
DS	2.33	2.21	2.66	2.41	-0.32	-1.32	.190	1.38	1.23	1.33	1.42	0.04	0.20	.843
DemKs	3.49	3.36	3.80	3.70	-0.32	-1.02	.312	2.24	2.33	2.79	2.73	-0.55	164.0	.082
Drasi	4.27	4.21	4.85	4.73	-0.58	-1.59	.116	1.70	1.63	1.55	1.70	0.15	0.65	.517
ANTARSYA	1.10	1.12	1.35	1.30	-0.25	-1.65	.104	1.22	0.99	1.34	1.24	-0.12	212.0	.546
Other	5.14	5.15	4.78	4.88	0.37	1.10	.276	4.63	4.48	4.39	4.33	0.24	218.0	.644
Left	39.30	40.39	48.41	48.72	-9.11	-8.77	.001	55.40	54.70	64.73	64.71	-9.33	-7.35	.001
Right	55.56	54.53	46.81	46.74	8.75	7.99	.001	39.97	40.98	30.89	30.65	9.09	7.22	.001
XRright	18.23	17.76	8.98	9.17	9.25	57.0	.001	15.09	15.85	7.04	7.08	8.05	27.0	.001

Spec = Special polling stations; Reg = Regular polling stations; Left = SYRIZA, PASOK, KKE, DIMAR, Greens, ANTARSYA; Right = ND, ANEL, GDawn, LAOS, DemKs, Drasi, DS; XRright = GDawn, LAOS

to account for the difference in favour of the right in its entirety since Golden Dawn in special stations polled better by 8.5 %, whereas the result of the right as a whole was higher by 8.7 %.

In Kesariani, where the riot police units are based, similar patterns emerged, with Golden Dawn polling significantly higher in special polling stations (Mdn = 12.48; regular: Mdn = 5.01; $U = 26$, $z = -5.01$, $p = .001$, $r = .76$). Voters in special polling stations also voted significantly more for LAOS (M = 2.92, SE = .19; regular: M = 2.3, SE = .20; $t(42) = 2.2$, $p = .033$). While this difference was significant, it represents a medium effect size $r = .32$. No significant statistical difference existed for the results of ANEL, and of New Democracy. Conversely, voters in special polling stations voted significantly less for SYRIZA (M = 21.93; SE = .58; regular: M = 26.73; SE = .76; $t(42) = -5.05$, $p = .001$, $r = -.62$), and KKE (M = 15.17, SE = .57; regular: M = 17.54, SE = .71; $t(42)$, $p = .013$, $r = -.37$). Again in this district the vote for the Golden Dawn would account almost for the whole the difference in favour of the right as this party in special stations polled better by about 8.0 %, whereas the result of the right in its entirety was higher by about 9 %.

Results on 17 June

While the results in the electoral district we examine were marked by Golden Dawn's emphatic *presence* in May, the results of the much more polarised June 2012 election reveal much about Golden Dawn's remarkable *resilience* (Table 3).

In the special polling stations of Ampelokipoi, where Golden Dawn's percentage of the vote was above its national average (see Table 1), support for the party was significantly stronger (Mdn = 11.66, regular: Mdn = 5.87; $U = 61$, $z = -6.27$, $p = .001$), and this difference represented a large effect size $r = -.75$. Significant differences, but of smaller magnitude, were found for the results of LAOS (special: M = 2.23, SE = .13; regular: M = 1.63, SE = .12; $t(68) = 3.17$, $p = .002$, $r = .36$), whereas we found no significant differences between special and regular polling stations for the other parties of the right, ND and ANEL. Conversely, support for SYRIZA was significantly lower in special polling stations (M = 19.65, SE = .58; regular: M = 25.86, SE = .72; $t(68) = -6.64$, $p = .001$, $r = .63$) and also for KKE (Mdn = 3.09, regular: Mdn = 4.49; $U = 315$, $z = -3.2$, $p = .001$) and PASOK (special: M = 8.27, SE = .30; regular: M = 9.26, SE = .37; $t(68) = -2.07$, $p = .042$), although the effect in these cases was of medium magnitude ($r = .38$ and $r = .24$ respectively).

Overall, the left was significantly weaker in special polling stations (Mdn = 39.66) than in regular stations (Mdn = 48.36) and this difference $U = 139$, $z = -5.38$, $p = .001$ represented a large effect size ($r = .64$). On the right of the political spectrum, the conservative vote, following the national trend, shifted toward the New Democracy party, however, the swing to the right in special polling stations (8.5 %) can again be accounted for almost in its entirety by the strong result of the extreme right and Golden Dawn in particular (8.4 %). The difference in support for the extreme right in special polling stations was significant (special: Mdn = 14.68, regular: Mdn = 7.04; $U = 63$, $z = -6.24$, $p = .001$, $r = -.75$).

A slightly different image emerges from the results of Kesariani, where there was a significant statistical difference between special (M = 23.07, SE = .55) and regular (M = 17.93, SE = .6) polling stations in support for New Democracy ($t(42) = 6.3$,

Table 3 Statistical analysis of election results, Athens A 7th district and Kesariani 17 June 2012

	Ampelokipoi (Elect Depts 27–29, 37–38)										Kesariani (Elect Depts 1–2)																			
	Spec (N = 43)					Reg (N = 27)					test statistic					Spec (N = 25)					Reg (N = 19)					test statistic				
	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M diff	t	Mann-Whitney U	p (2-tailed)	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M	Mdn	M diff	t	Mann-Whitney U	p (2-tailed)						
Register	706.14	699.00	548.19	546.00	157.95	30.5	.001	637.76	634.00	537.58	534.00	100.18	0.0	.001	637.76	634.00	537.58	534.00	100.18	0.0	.001	637.76	634.00	537.58	534.00	100.18	0.0	.001		
Turnout	66.10	68.78	62.76	62.59	3.34	402.0	.031	66.10	63.97	60.58	58.88	5.52	83.0	.001	66.10	63.97	60.58	58.88	5.52	83.0	.001	66.10	63.97	60.58	58.88	5.52	83.0	.001		
ND	33.43	33.14	33.82	33.63	-0.39	-439	.662	23.07	22.84	17.93	17.81	5.14	6.303	.001	23.07	22.84	17.93	17.81	5.14	6.303	.001	23.07	22.84	17.93	17.81	5.14	6.303	.001		
SYRIZA	19.65	20.36	25.86	25.29	-6.21	-6.642	.001	31.08	31.21	39.17	38.60	-8.09	-8.037	.001	31.08	31.21	39.17	38.60	-8.09	-8.037	.001	31.08	31.21	39.17	38.60	-8.09	-8.037	.001		
PASOK	8.27	8.14	9.26	9.34	-0.99	-2.069	.042	8.06	7.92	8.82	8.86	-0.76	-1.268	.212	8.06	7.92	8.82	8.86	-0.76	-1.268	.212	8.06	7.92	8.82	8.86	-0.76	-1.268	.212		
ANEL	6.73	6.71	6.21	6.25	0.51	499.0	.325	6.22	6.07	6.47	6.07	-0.25	-0.503	.618	6.22	6.07	6.47	6.07	-0.25	-0.503	.618	6.22	6.07	6.47	6.07	-0.25	-0.503	.618		
KKE	3.41	3.09	4.45	4.49	-1.04	315.0	.001	9.12	8.35	10.29	10.07	-1.17	163.0	.078	9.12	8.35	10.29	10.07	-1.17	163.0	.078	9.12	8.35	10.29	10.07	-1.17	163.0	.078		
GDawn	13.56	11.66	5.69	5.87	7.87	61.0	.001	10.74	11.22	4.93	4.91	5.81	19.0	.001	10.74	11.22	4.93	4.91	5.81	19.0	.001	10.74	11.22	4.93	4.91	5.81	19.0	.001		
DIMAR	7.19	7.19	7.57	7.42	-0.39	-1.029	.307	5.99	6.07	7.00	6.71	-1.01	-2.190	.034	5.99	6.07	7.00	6.71	-1.01	-2.190	.034	5.99	6.07	7.00	6.71	-1.01	-2.190	.034		
Greens	0.91	0.90	0.82	0.70	0.09	.720	.474	0.69	0.69	0.96	0.89	-0.27	173.5	.129	0.69	0.69	0.96	0.89	-0.27	173.5	.129	0.69	0.69	0.96	0.89	-0.27	173.5	.129		
LAOS	2.23	2.22	1.63	1.51	0.60	3.167	.002	1.82	1.62	1.26	1.28	0.56	131.5	.012	1.82	1.62	1.26	1.28	0.56	131.5	.012	1.82	1.62	1.26	1.28	0.56	131.5	.012		
DemKs	2.62	2.63	2.69	2.59	-0.07	563.0	.833	1.52	1.50	1.60	1.59	-0.08	-0.463	.646	1.52	1.50	1.60	1.59	-0.08	-0.463	.646	1.52	1.50	1.60	1.59	-0.08	-0.463	.646		
ANTARSYA	0.24	0.19	0.39	0.29	-0.16	455.0	.118	0.28	0.25	0.36	0.31	-0.08	198.0	.340	0.28	0.25	0.36	0.31	-0.08	198.0	.340	0.28	0.25	0.36	0.31	-0.08	198.0	.340		
Other	1.76	1.77	1.59	1.51	0.16	1.012	.315	1.41	1.46	1.20	0.99	0.20	165.5	.088	1.41	1.46	1.20	0.99	0.20	165.5	.088	1.41	1.46	1.20	0.99	0.20	165.5	.088		
Left	39.67	41.28	48.36	48.37	-8.70	139.0	.001	55.22	54.74	66.60	66.45	-11.39	-9.223	.001	55.22	54.74	66.60	66.45	-11.39	-9.223	.001	55.22	54.74	66.60	66.45	-11.39	-9.223	.001		
Right	58.58	57.06	50.05	49.84	8.53	144.5	.001	43.38	43.90	32.20	32.52	11.18	9.228	.001	43.38	43.90	32.20	32.52	11.18	9.228	.001	43.38	43.90	32.20	32.52	11.18	9.228	.001		
XRright	15.79	14.68	7.32	7.04	8.48	63.0	.001	12.56	12.94	6.19	6.25	6.37	17.0	.001	12.56	12.94	6.19	6.25	6.37	17.0	.001	12.56	12.94	6.19	6.25	6.37	17.0	.001		

Spec = Special polling stations; Reg = Regular polling stations; Left = SYRIZA, PASOK, KKE, DIMAR, Greens, ANTARSYA; Right = ND, ANEL, GDawn, LAOS, DemKs; XRright = GDawn, LAOS

$p = .001, r = .7$). Golden Dawn also polled significantly higher in special polling stations (Mdn = 11.22; regular: Mdn = 4.9; $U = 19, z = -5.18, p = .001, r = .78$). The right was significantly stronger in the special polling stations ($M = 43.38, SE = 4.43$; regular: $M = 32.2, SE = 3.29; t(42) = 9.23, p = .001, r = .82$) and so was the extreme right (special: Mdn = 12.94; regular: Mdn = 6.25; $U = 17, z = -5.22, p = .001, r = .79$). These results suggest a different composition of the vote on the right of the political spectrum which cannot be merely interpreted as a reflection of the national trend in support of New Democracy in June 2012. On the other side of the political spectrum, all parties of the left were significantly weaker in the special polling stations (see Table 3).

Now, considering our results in their entirety, it is remarkable that the addition of 100–150 voters on average to special polling stations has sufficed to change or distort quite dramatically the profiles of these electoral districts. Overall, the electoral performance of the parties of the right in the special polling stations is a relatively less surprising finding, since prior studies offering a social, political and ideological profile of police personnel in Greece [36] would support well the idea that police officers typically exhibit a significant voting preference for the right.

The significant electoral support for Golden Dawn is a more puzzling finding. The argument we advance in the remainder of this article is that the electoral boost that Golden Dawn received in the special polling stations is specifically linked to the status of these voters as police officers. Before we proceed in this direction, however, a cautionary note is due.

Our dataset does not allow an exploration of the idea that this boost may reflect the wider demographic profile of the Golden Dawn vote among police officers. A large number of police officers voting in the two districts we examine, particularly in Kesariani, are younger males, a demographic group that, according to exit poll data analyses, has constituted the core of Golden Dawn's electoral audience [3]. Women as a demographic group are severely under-represented in the Hellenic Police, comprising just under 13 % of police personnel overall [37]. This characteristic is even more accentuated in front-line units such as the ones we have examined; for example, no women serve with riot police units. Similarly, fast response or riot police units are typically populated with younger officers. Even though we would expect to find, particularly in Ampelokipoi, due to the size and composition of the unit, a more varied mix in terms of age, it is still reasonable to assume that the demographic profile of our sample is generally skewed towards younger ages.

This limitation of our study is also exacerbated by the fact that data allowing the construction of a detailed demographic, social and occupation profile of Hellenic Police personnel are not available. More recent examinations of the demographic profile of the Golden Dawn vote have suggested that age, gender and employment status are not predictors of electoral support for this party ([19], ch. 3). At the same time, it had been found that Golden Dawn had generally fared less well among public sector employees [3]. Given this contradiction, the resolution of the puzzle of Golden Dawn support among the police may arguably lie in the more concrete distributions of age and gender in Hellenic Police units and also the considerable background, income, status and work conditions differentials that are known to exist among categories of personnel. While police unions in Greece have consistently offered ample indications and have been vocal with regard to the existence of such issues [38], there is a genuine knowledge

gap, which would preclude this interesting path of investigation, even if our dataset allowed it.

In light of the above, we must underscore that our data do not, *and could not*, offer support to a sweeping claim that police officers voted *en masse* for the extreme right. This particular view gained much publicity in Greece after firstly appearing in newspapers, such as *To Vima* and *Kathimerini*, which focused precisely on the results of special stations in *Ampelokipoi* [39, 40]. The fact remains that the results leave little doubt that a significant portion of the police vote was directed towards the extreme right and Golden Dawn. In anticipation of the much-needed more detailed empirical examinations of both police vote and far-right vote in Greece, in what follows we develop a tentative general framework for linking the far-right voting preference with particular historical, organisational and political characteristics of the Hellenic Police.

Situating the convergence between the police and the extreme right in Greece

Following from the preceding analysis, it can be argued with confidence that Golden Dawn has successfully established a significant relationship of political representation with the personnel of the Hellenic Police in these key front-line units regularly policing the capital city of Greece, Athens. This view has been reinforced by developments in the months following the elections: both insiders, former officers of the Hellenic Police as well as representatives of the party itself have been quite vocal about the real existence and considerable extent of this relationship [13, 41, 42]. In the contemporary universe of far-right political formations across Europe, Golden Dawn is unmistakably among the most explicitly extremist [43, 44]. That such a party and a large number of police officers serving in the largest and most heavily policed conurbation in Greece are converging politically is cause for grave concern, and would therefore justify further and intensive scholarly investigation.

Unfortunately, despite the emergence of studies that have covered critical ground in recent years [36, 45–49], a noticeable deficit in the scholarly study of the police still exists in Greece and as a result this key state apparatus remains rather obscure and impervious to both academic and thorough institutional scrutiny. As far as the political preferences of police personnel are concerned, the absence of extensive academic scrutiny of the police in Greece entails that even the types of insight regarding the preponderantly conservative worldview of the police, which other researchers have been able to draw on the basis of historical analyses as well as studies of police practice and behaviour elsewhere (e.g., [50–57]), are largely missing in this country. Despite such limitations, it is possible to outline a number of both historical and current factors underpinning the convergence between the police and the far-right.

Role and composition of the police force from a historical viewpoint

From a historical perspective, the robust links between the police and the inter-war and cold-war era authoritarian political regimes in Greece have been well documented. Vidali [49]'s definitive account of the development of the police in Greece has meticulously documented not only their institutional makeup as a highly militarised

apparatus designed to embody the state's territorial and political authority and monopoly of legitimate force. Importantly, it has shown the coordinates of the police within a system of active ideological and physical suppression of the political left, particularly following the end of the Greek civil war in 1949. The police were thus positioned both within the boundaries of formal liberal democracy rules laid down by the amended Constitution of 1952 as the guardian of law and order, and within the grey area of the so-called 'paraconstitution' [58], that is, the system of exceptional rules retained active by provisions of the constitution and aiming to suppress the left, particularly communist party political discourse and activity. The fulfilment of the police's formal remit to enforce criminal law and protect public order was punctuated by a clear and rigid line of ideological demarcation between state personnel and the people, a radical divide between a body of state functionaries expected to adhere to the triplet 'Nation-Religion-Family', which provided the pillars for the construction of the post-war outlook of the political right, and between a general population that was deemed politically suspect and subversive unless able to prove its loyalty to both law and official ideology. Such institutional makeup allowed and sustained an ideological and practical continuum between army, secret services, police, the judiciary and other power centres within and around the Greek state that appears to remain consequential and deep-rooted even today, almost 40 years into the post-1974 period of institutional liberalisation of the Greek state.

The relationship between the political right and the police in Greece at the level of individual officers' belief systems has been considerably less well documented by scholarly research. From a historical viewpoint, this link emerges clearly in light of personnel selection systems that survived until the early 1990s and which tied the police to the relations of clientelism and patronage that have plagued modern Greece and the construction of the post-civil war Greek state [49, 59]. Papakonstantis [36] has offered a more specific, valuable albeit limited, insight into the social origins, organisational experiences and ideological outlook of police personnel. His study has thus outlined the general conditions, which render the police a firmly conservative constituency, yet one that has been well aligned with the established bipartisan regime of the post-1974 changeover period. An examination of the voting behaviour of the police would have been possible in elections prior to 2012 using the same methodology as ours. No such study exists, but it can be assumed with some confidence that the police vote would gravitate around the conservative New Democracy party. In our results, this lineage is only reflected in the ascendancy of the right overall, as the novel element of Golden Dawn skewed the 2012 results. The upshot of this is that Golden Dawn's electoral influence among the police, and more precisely among police front-line units, should be treated as a development, which is well out of the ordinary and calls for explanations that take into account the particularities of the present conjuncture.

Golden Dawn's political discourse and practice as police vote attractors

In light of the right's overall electoral outlook in the special polling stations, an appropriate entry point to an exploration of the link between the police and the far-right would be a consideration of developments on the political scene in the 2000s.

Such an examination would clearly point to a recomposition of forces in the right of the political spectrum in Greece. Golden Dawn would then appear as a consequence of processes uncoupling the populist and far-right from the conservative New Democracy party, which had successfully integrated and represented these constituencies in the post-1974 period. In the late 1990s and after the main vehicle of this development had been the LAOS party, whose political strategy and rhetorics legitimised to a large extent both the discourses and the political personnel of the far-right. With the onset of the crisis and LAOS's parliamentary support of the austerity measures, Golden Dawn exploited the critical representational gap that thus emerged. A more detailed analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper and readers would be well advised to refer to the emerging literature examining the rise of the Greek far right prior to 2012 [1–4, 16, 60].

Yet what is particular about Golden Dawn is its mode of deployment as a political force. The key elements of the party's discourse, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, strong state, are accompanied by an equal emphasis on the use of open and organised violence as means to resolve social and political issues. Apart from a long stream of incidents of political violence [4], which culminated in the judicial procedure initiated in October 2013, other investigations have revealed the role of the party and its membership in the rise of racially motivated attacks in Greece [9]. The extremity of Golden Dawn's positions and practice have allowed a more spectacular presence in everyday life, which possesses a peculiar appeal to an increasingly disenchanted right-wing (and perhaps not only right-wing) audience. The members of Golden Dawn not only identify enemies clearly and threaten them, but also appear to stand for their target group of voters against the real or imagined threats posed by those enemies, for example, by organising food handouts and free medical exams only for Greeks, by intervening in disputes to 'settle the matter' or, most notably, by offering 'protection' to Greek residents in Athens against migrants. Such forms of political intervention are not available to conventional parties of the right, but Golden Dawn's methods have not been denounced by them either. In this sense, Golden Dawn, rather than an isolated and exceptional phenomenon, has arguably been the vehicle of a process of 'mainstreaming' extremist ideas and practices [61], coming to a position enabling the party to appeal to the sensibilities of disaffected constituencies in crisis-ridden Greece [19].

The above characteristics of far-right activism can be linked with a series of contemporary developments in Greek policing, which may have been complicit in amplifying Golden Dawn's influence.

Recruitment and training

Firstly, one should begin by interrogating the fast-track recruitment of personnel aiming to populate the Border Guards and Special Guards units towards the end of the 1990s. The procedures followed at the time prioritised individuals with a military, particularly special forces background and took considerable shortcuts with their training [47]. In the past decade, these categories have been fully incorporated within regular police ranks and are regularly assigned to regular city patrol units, including DIAS. The background, training and career progression path of these individuals differed significantly from those of regular police personnel, who are recruited by means of a national examination and trained in police academies for a longer period of time and on the basis of a more varied curriculum.

As a result, the hybridisation of Greek police personnel composition via fast-track recruitment has reinforced the militarising tendencies of the Hellenic Police, arguably at the expense of training and socialisation into professional policing standards [49]. Recruitment for these new categories of police personnel has capitalised on prior special army forces experience, it has provided fertile ground for Golden Dawn's message. This is because those individuals had been already socialised into a culture of militarism, confrontational styles, and forcible resolution of conflicts; they had also been exposed to the rigidly conservative and nationalistic ideological outlook, which is known to characterise army special forces in Greece (see [14, 15]). Reports concerning Golden Dawn and police complicity on the streets, and, more generally, instances of police prejudice, discrimination and excessive use of force in line with Golden Dawn's political stance and practice have often involved officers originating from this personnel category [11, 62].

Deployment

Secondly, and following from the above, one should not fail to notice the adoption by the political leadership (and the acceptance by police leaders) of a peculiar mix of reassurance and suffocation policing strategy for the inner city. This strategy has defined developments in Greek policing since the turn of the century. On one hand, the Hellenic Police's already heavily militarised presence has gained an ubiquitous character, including the systematic assignment of riot police squads to guard duty in the city centre carrying their full equipment. On the other, organisational approaches such as the formation of DIAS are rapidly proving to be a double miss: on the one hand, as incidents of the kind are not that frequent, the members of the squad are often seen lying idle, or, at worst, inventing their own work by performing stops and searches, particularly of individuals of colour or different ethnic origin [10]; and on the other, when such incidents do happen, the personnel of the squad has proved to be vulnerable when confronting determined opponents.

In short, heightened militarisation and unstructured exposure to street conditions are likely to further alienate an already strained personnel and entrench the stereotypes around which their outlook is already structured. Very recently, research into the relation between the police and various marginalised groups in the context of everyday work has indicated the possibility that police personnel may take recourse to confrontational styles and violence precisely in reaction to their unstructured exposure to the situation of those groups [63, 64]. Such evidence would justify the idea that work systems and procedures of the police in Greece may amplify the possibility of misconduct as a practical solution to police occupational challenges.

Leadership and organisational culture

Finally, the very stance of the political leadership of the Ministry of Public Order may have had an important legitimising effect on the police practices influenced or inspired by Golden Dawn. This idea stands well in line with extant knowledge [65–68] of the considerable effects of police leadership and managerial cultures on rank-and-file conduct and misconduct. Under the coalition government led by the New Democracy party, the Ministry of Public Order came under conservative control, and the heavy emphasis of the political leadership on law and order fostered a regime of tolerance

towards the frequently reported incidents of police abuse, racist or other forms of harassment which typically involve some practical complicity with Golden Dawn. The ministry's leadership has also backed firmly the massive sweep operations against migrants launched by the Hellenic Police, which are ongoing since August 2012 and are code-named 'Xenios Zeus' ('Hospitable Zeus'). In the course of these stop and detain operations, large numbers of individuals of foreign origin are rounded up [69], and those found to be 'undocumented' are then detained at the immigration detention camps, which have been mushrooming in the past decade, particularly since the days of the 2012 coalition government. It is particularly in the context of these operations that serious concerns about police racist and xenophobic abuse have been raised [10].

Is Golden Dawn's discourse legitimising discrimination and violence?

In light of the preceding discussion, Golden Dawn's appeal to front-line police units can be seen as the complex result of the interplay between historical, organisational and situational factors. If both organisational structure and organisational environment matter for the shaping of police culture [52, 66, 68], then all the above developments can be shown as conducive to Golden Dawn's rising influence among front-line units in particular. Let us then offer a synthesis, which, in our view, opens up interesting and concrete possibilities for further empirical exploration.

Within the Hellenic Police, the onset of the crisis in 2010 has exacerbated tensions arising from both what are perceived as operational challenges and the organisational responses to those challenges. The pervasiveness of the crisis is not a simple correlate of the severe fiscal austerity that has fuelled the popular movement of opposition and protest, but also a culmination of other particular issues, such as the degradation of quality of life in urban areas typically attributed by mainstream media and many politicians to the influx of undocumented migrant and rising fear of crime. The Hellenic Police, a force heavily characterised by bureaucratism and militarism [70], has invariably spearheaded the response of the Greek state toward containing popular protest and upholding order in the inner city, while its membership, according to police unions, is itself acutely subjected to a degradation of work conditions, security and general status of the personnel [71].

Golden Dawn, on its part, has conveniently positioned itself on the political scene as a force against both left-wing popular protest and the threat of out-of-control undocumented migration. It has undertaken open action, such as the orchestration of local protests, the persecution of migrants [9, 13, 72] and even the direct confrontation with left-wing activists [73]. As such actions escalated in the period leading to the 2012 elections and subsequently, Golden Dawn has been increasingly seen by the police not only as 'part of the gang', but also as part of the solution. The practical alliances forged with the riot police in the heated environment of street fighting against protesters and activists correspond to the practical alliances forged in the environment of everyday neighbourhood policing, where front line patrol and emergency response police personnel are pressed hard to reassure a worried and agitated public. Golden Dawn's activism, mixing violence against the racialised, vilified and criminalised other with a helping hand and a smiling face towards inner city residents, either in the form of food banks, blood donations or personal protection resembles in practice the actions of police—and in so far as it is received as police action by the general public, Golden

Dawn appeals to the spontaneous ideology of the police personnel as a practical ally and an extension of the police organisation itself [11, 74].

Such practical alliances, of course, should theoretically become less tenable as more police officers join the ranks of Golden Dawn. In fact, the party's actions, far from being a helping hand to the police, pose a direct challenge to the authority of the police and of the state, in so far as they are a substitute for police and state. Yet Golden Dawn's theory and practice, which should be entirely foreign to any modern professional and democratically accountable police force, is capable of having a crucial desensitising and neutralising ideological effect. In so far as it views political dissent as a *μίαισμα* to be cleansed by means of violent suppression of the dissenting individuals, just as the non-Greeks are viewed as subhumans to be humiliated, expelled and, if possible, exterminated,³ it addresses effectively the acute contradictions emerging in the everyday police experience. That is, the experience of a police force sworn, on the one hand, to the protection of a regime that they themselves often view as corrupt and inimical to their material interests and, on the other, instructed to suppress the problems of wide popular dissent and of floating migrant populations living a miserable and pauperised existence in public spaces, problems which, essentially, are not meant to be solved by police means. The rhetoric and practice of Golden Dawn is shrewdly tuned to the spontaneous ideology of the police, which is already predicated upon conservatism [36].

Conclusion

Using electoral data from the twin election of 2012, we have attempted to establish a baseline for the exploration of the extent of the political influence of the extreme right among the major, particularly front-line police units in Greece's capital city. Clearly, while we find compelling evidence that this influence is extensive, our analysis only permits tentative conclusions, and rather raises questions for further investigation rather than settles any. In our view, a consideration of the relation between extreme right and the police through the lens of the ongoing reconfiguration of the political right in Greece seems to us a solid basis for further analysis. Along the lines suggested in the previous section, we see more than a happy transient affair taking place between the extreme right and the personnel of the police, one which could be taken as an aberration and be dealt with by means of reformed standards of service and a tightening of operational controls 'from above'. Consequently, our suggestion for further research, which is acutely needed, would be to relate the far-right's political discourse and practice with the specific determinants of front-line police culture and mentality in Greece.

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³ Reportedly, attacking and even killing an individual of an 'inferior' race is an initiation ritual for Golden Dawn members [4]. Yet many in Greece are slow or unwilling to recognise the connection of such rituals with the dramatic increase of racist attacks, often in plain daylight [9].

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