

A Party of Fascist Mentality: The National Popular Front of Cyprus

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In recent years ‘a spectre is haunting Europe’ – the spectre of fascism. Far right parties have achieved notable breakthroughs in national and local elections across the European Union. In the period between June 2009 and March 2011, right-wing parties obtained 155 of 3,066 seats in 13 parliaments, which represents approximately five per cent of the electorate, leading to the entry and or reinforcement of nationalist and right-wing populist or extreme right-wing parties in national parliaments (Baier, 2012). Their impact was marked by disenchantment with the major social and political institutions and profound distrust in their workings, the weakening and decomposition of electoral alignments, and increased political fragmentation and electoral volatility. Their rise poses a growing challenge to European societies and to mainstream political parties. In this regard, West European right-wing extremist parties have received a great deal of attention in the academic literature over the past two decades.

In Cyprus, the respective extreme right party, the National Popular Front (ELAM), was founded in 2008 and in April 2011 acquired the status of a political party that allowed it to contest the national elections in May 2011, polling 1,08 per cent of the vote. The research question the article tries to address is twofold. At first, it addresses the issue of extreme right resurgence in Cyprus political landscape after 34 years of silence. The aim is to understand the wider trends that have created favourable conditions for its emergence. In this regard demand-side variables will help the analysis- i.e. economic conditions, unemployment, the crisis of the political system, the fear of losing out, the lack of trust in established parties and the frustration in large parts of the electorate. It is argued that extreme right is an outgrowth of capitalism in crisis. Secondly, the interest lies in the form of extreme right mobilization in Cyprus. In this direction, supply-side factors can provide plausible answers on far right mobilization- i.e., ideology and political program.

Drawing on the foresaid discussion I will try to classify the political program of ELAM, along two established classifications put forward by two of the most prominent scholars in the field that have more or less come to a similar taxonomy. Betz (1993) has distinguished contemporary far right parties between neo-liberal and national populist parties. National populist parties espouse a radically xenophobic and authoritarian program, which includes a strong emphasis to law and order and call for an end to the confrontation with the past. Neo-liberal parties appeal to a mixed social constituency and tend to stress the market oriented, libertarian elements of their program over xenophobic ones. Kitschelt (1995) distinguishes between three forms of new radical right parties and a fourth type that he labels as neo-fascist; right authoritarian parties, populist anti-statist parties and racist authoritarian and welfare chauvinist parties. Based on their classifications I will analyze the appeal of ELAM in order to place it along these lines.

The article is a country-specific case study but addresses the wider phenomenon of right-wing extremism. It uses data from government official publications and other secondary sources in order to elaborate on the demand-side variables. When analyzing the supply-side, party documents, as those were published by ELAM or retrieved from its web page, are employed so as to account for the political actor itself and its program. In this analysis some of the internal supply-side factors are omitted, i.e. organization and leadership. This is due to three reasons: lack of space, shortage of the data available since not too many things are written or made public about these aspects of ELAM

activities and finally because organization is usually associated more with persistence than with breakthrough.

Why is the subject of the paper of interest for scholars beyond Cyprus? Firstly, because it is a completely virgin ground for research given the complete lack of any study on the issue. While numerous studies have set the extreme or radical right at the focal point of research across Europe, the corresponding literature on the Greek Cypriot version of extreme right is inexistent. The present article aims to fill in this research gap. Secondly, because of the recent developments in Greece with the meteoric rise of the fraternal to ELAM, *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn) which polled 6,97 per cent in Greece's April 2012 elections and 6,92 per cent on 17 June 2012. Developments in Greece have historically influenced Cypriot political developments. Some of the most authoritative studies on the extreme right have attributed the marginality of the Greek extreme right to a developmental 'lag' of recent Mediterranean democracies (Kitschelt 1995) and to the bitter memories of authoritarianism (Ignazi 2003). Indeed, until recently these analyses went some way to accounting for the failure of the Greek Cypriot extreme right as well. But the recent advances of the extreme-right ELAM and their first ever participation in elections (May 2011) necessitate the re-examination of the conventional wisdom. This constitutes the third reason that prompts interest in the topic. In addition, in most cases far right parties tighten immigration and integration legislation and enforce a stricter law and order agenda. In the case of Cyprus this can be suited to Turkey's application for entering the EU.

The article is comprised of six sections. At first, I engage with two issues that feature prominently in the literature of extreme right: terminology and the causal mechanism of extreme right emergence. The second section places the Greek Cypriot extreme right in historical perspective and sketches the trajectory of its organizations in the 20th century. These organizations shared a notable attachment to an intransigent line in the Cyprus problem and a strong antithesis towards the Turks and the communists and to a lesser extent towards the British. The third and fourth sections seek to account for the rise of the party, examining both demand and supply-side factors. With regard to the demand factors, it points to the existence of favourable socio-economic conditions for the rise of the extreme right. On the supply side, it notes that the way the mainstream party of the right-wing, Democratic Rally (DISY), and other established parties have treated 'national' or national identity issues in the last few years, as well as matters of history, created opportunities for the rise of ELAM. It also highlights the communication resources made available to the party by the mainstream and the new media. The fifth section uses party documents to discuss the ideology of ELAM. The article concludes with a discussion about the future of ELAM and right wing extremism in Cyprus. Does the rise of the extreme right reflects merely a temporary resentment and single issue protest (i.e. immigration) or does it represents a response to structural problems of Cyprus Republic (i.e. unresolved ethnic problem) and the crisis of the political system?

Extreme rightists or national populists?

In the literature on far right two themes single out. The first one refers to the terminology adopted by the various scholars to define the phenomenon. The second regards the controversy over whether the extreme right represents an abnormal situation or a problematic phenomenon but still part of the normal. The latter discussion touches upon the issue of cause and effects of extreme right emergence. With regard to

terminology, different authors employ different concepts: radical populist right (Mudde, 2007), radical right (Norris, 2005), extreme right (Carter, 2005; Ignazi, 2003). The implicit assumption in these categorizations is the question of whether the party under study accepts or rejects western democracy. According to Kitschelt (2007: 1178) 'radical right parties either explicitly reject democracy (regardless of their stance on xenophobia and racism), or they embrace democracy, but make xenophobic mobilization against immigrants and insistence on a dominant national cultural paradigm obligatory for all residents the central planks of their policies'.

Mudde (2011: 12) rejects the term extreme right and believes that the best description of the phenomenon goes under the term radical populist right. He argues that the radical populist right is essentially democratic; in that it accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule and that it also tends to accept the rules of parliamentary democracy. Its key themes (nativism, authoritarianism and populism) are not unrelated to mainstream ideologies; they should be rather viewed as a radicalization of mainstream values, he argues. Hainsworth (2004: 55) on the other hand, believes that formal commitment to the constitution should not be perceived as an indication of these parties actual perceptions. Their views against the political parties, against the 'establishment', against pluralism, essentially aim at subverting the liberal, representative democracy. They share a severe criticism of the disconnect between the elite and the people, leading to opposition to a representative democracy that has lost its way.

Both explanations have their merits. It is true that visible proximity to traditional right extremism is not common for all the parties who are today making their mark on the right-wing margins of the political spectrum. While some of them are but transformations of, or splits from, parties of the rightist mainstream, another section represents veritable new foundations. That is why traditional anti-fascist rhetoric and forms of mobilization, as necessary as they still are, are no match for today's far right challenge. The far right in Europe is revising its political software. The most extreme realized that they would remain beyond the pale if they did not make at least some concessions to the democratic way of doing things. As a result, a new subset of political families has been born, consisting of rightist populists and radicalized xenophobes.

Many of the parties under scrutiny have in fact modernized both their agenda and their vocabulary and therefore cannot be labelled, in their entirety, easily as traditional right extremists. Those parties also reject the term extremist for themselves. They usually prefer to be named as radicals or nationalists. That is why some contemporary political scientists use the notion of 'right-wing populism' to characterize them. This means we are not dealing with dangerous yet sectarian groups at the margin of the society but with parties who are succeeding in pushing themselves into the centre of societies and influencing the political agenda even of moderate mainstream panics. These movements need to be examined more closely, in order to discern important innovations in the views and militancy of this subset of the right in Europe.

Solving the issue of terminology is not an easy task. Terminology issues frequently cage the mind of scholars instead of helping them. I believe that terminology varies according to the number and the specific parties (cases) that are studied. Given that definitions are usually case and country-specific, it is something that should follow the examination. Some of the parties are definitely not fascist in character. Some others, though, are. However, what they all have in common is a political discourse, which is essentially subversive of democracy itself. Therefore, I find more convincing the approach adopted by Hainsworth. Far right parties seem to utilize democracy in an instrumental and electoral way in order to avoid being labelled anti-systemic or anti-

democratic. I am sceptical about the way a significant portion of the existing literature has attempted to define extreme right parties as new populist parties which have moved away from their neo-fascist past, a form of rebranding, which these same parties very much welcome. To label them as radical populists, to a certain extent vindicates these parties. A more moderate image is what they need to enhance their political legitimacy and improve their electoral performance. What we could be referring to instead, is parties of fascist mentality. They do not oppose democracy overtly simply because they cannot afford to do so. They are 'forced' to pursue a covert approach in order to gain popular support.

With regard to the pathology thesis, Mudde (2010) analyzes the two opposing approaches in the study of far Right. According to Mudde, the study of the far Right has been dominated by the normal pathology thesis, i.e. the belief that the far Right is a pathology of contemporary western democracies, which has only limited support under 'normal' circumstances (Bell 1964; Betz 1994). It is assumed that under 'normal' circumstances far right will appeal to only a tiny portion of the population. The idea behind this thesis is that during the fundamental and rapid transformation of contemporary societies a division between winners and losers is created. Those who are left behind will vote for extreme right out of protest or support. Mudde questions the validity of the normal pathology thesis. For him, in this approach the political actor- the party- is usually left out, while the key features of the far right ideology- nativism, authoritarianism, and populism- are not unrelated to mainstream ideologies and mass attitudes. Hence, the extreme or populist radical Right should be considered a pathological normalcy, not a normal pathology.

In my opinion it is not a question of either, or. Both approaches can be used either in combination or in isolation depending on what the research tries to explain. Both approaches can be very useful in the understanding of the phenomenon of right-wing extremity or radicalness. Both conditions are at work. Extreme right ideology and capacity in terms of public support exist in hypnosis in societal subcultures or within other political parties of the right-wing, in all societies in 'normal' conditions. What is usually the case is that in 'abnormal' or in crises situations, they acquire political momentum and dynamics that reflects on their electoral fortunes. Extreme right is to a large extent a product of systemic crisis of capitalism and at the same time a factor that sharpens the crisis itself, by elaborating acts of violence or by decanting its core issues in the political agenda of other mainstream parties as well. Kitschelt (1995) argued that the third wave of contemporary far right is actually the result of the complete domination of the ideas of the neo-conservative Right in a large section of mainstream political parties over the last decades. The absolute faith in the total supremacy of the market has deprived the state from essential mechanisms to effectively intervene and rebate the effects of the economic crisis and at the same time it has provided contemporary far right with new political tools.

Historical evolution of extreme right politics in Cyprus

Extreme right in Cyprus has historically been linked with anti-Turkish, anti-communist and to a lesser extent to anti-British feelings and brutal violence against its opponents. It has also been inherently associated with the various phases of the Cyprus problem. In other words, its presence has been depended upon the Cyprus problem whose solution was always perceived within a narrow perspective that did not include or accept the

Turkish Cypriots as part of it. Consequently, extreme right organizations were associated with a hard line towards the solution of the Cyprus problem and, prior to 1974, this was usually translated into an uncompromising struggle for union with Greece (*enosis*).

The first incident of radical right organized presence was the National Radicalist Union of Cyprus (*EREK*), in 1931 (Katsiaounis, 2004; Katsourides, 2009: 342-347). For the most part of the 1920s, modesty and compliance with the law were the principal traits exhibited by the traditional Greek Cypriot leadership towards the British. This signalled a vigorous and pernicious critique from several personalities that constituted the most radical part of right-wing politics. They strongly advised for disobedience to the laws, boycotting of British products, refusal to pay taxes and the withdrawal of the elected members from the Legislative Council (a quasi parliament given by the British to Cyprus). The *EREK* aimed to fight for the union with Greece in all possible ways, armed not excluded.

In the second part of the 1940s the Greek extreme right organization 'X' (from the Greek letter χ), led by Colonel Grivas made its appearance in Cyprus (Papageorgiou, 2004; Alecou, 2012: 105-111). This was the second occurrence of an extreme right organization on the island. The Greek organization was stigmatized as collaborators of the Nazi's during the years of occupation. It was an organization characterized by extreme nationalism, anti-communist and royalist feelings. The organization was mostly concerned with the anti-communist struggle in the midst of an intense class conflict in the late 1940s in Cyprus and was associated with the football club Olympiakos in the capital city of Nicosia. However, it did not manage to establish itself in Cyprus.

The third instance of right-wing extremism came during the *EOKA*'s (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) armed struggle for union with Greece in 1955-59. The *EOKA* was not an extreme right organization but its leader Grivas and a number of its leading cadres were both extremists and fanatic anti-communists. Grivas excluded the communists from the uprising advising them to refrain from any action. In 1957 and 1958 a series of left-wing cadres were assassinated by *EOKA*, as well as Turkish Cypriots, under the accusation that they cooperated with the British, thus creating conditions for Civil war (Poumbouris, 1993). However, the organization or its vindicators never succeeded in producing any type of evidence to support their claims. This episode of right wing extremism was largely related with Grivas admission that they had to deal effectively with communist *AKEL* so that the latter could not be a considerable force in the future (Grivas, 1984: 198).

The fourth occasion of right-wing extremism took the form of paramilitary organizations in both Cypriot communities immediately after the achievement of independence in 1960. Their intention was to provoke tension between the two communities and enforce the *de facto* separation of the people in two immiscibly national territories. Giorkatzis and Sampson were the most prominent leaders of these paramilitary organizations in the Greek Cypriot community (Drousiotis, 1994). In 1969 the National Front was founded with the aim to fight for union with Greece under the guidance of the Greek Central Intelligence Service and the military in Cyprus. The organization proceeded with a number of terrorist attacks against the elected President of the Republic, Archbishop Makarios and his followers, only to be declared illegal by the President for their actions. The most militant of its members went on to found the most extreme of right-wing organizations that ever existed on the island, the *EOKA II* in 1971 under the leadership of Colonel Grivas (Drousiotis, 1994). The *EOKA II* represented the last and the ultimate expression of the historical extreme right in

Cyprus. Being a paramilitary, terrorist organization it employed bombings, abductions, assassinations and intimidation practices in order to undermine the state machinery and the President. In the years between 1972 and 1974 the organization plotted several plans for arbitrary seizure of power and union with Greece (Graikos, 1991: 117). The illegal activity of the EOKA II led to the July 1974 coup d'état executed in cooperation with the military junta in Greece and the subsequent invasion of Turkey in Cyprus eight days later.

In the years that followed the 1974 events the extreme right and the unionist line were discredited to an almost absolute degree. Their ability for autonomous presence was impaired and therefore, they were forced to find shelter in the newly founded (1976) right-wing party of DISY. The stigma for its role in the coup of 1974 was so intense that the extreme right was forced to go to hibernation for more than three decades. However, as the distance from 1974 grew bigger the conditions for its resurgence were once again mature. This was already evident in the mid-1990s with the founding of the New Horizons party which professed an extreme position on the Cyprus problem but most importantly after the 2004 referendum on the solution of the Cyprus problem (see below). The most extreme elements within DISY found themselves in a vacuum and felt that the time was ripe for an autonomous presence.

Once again the Cyprus problem, anti-Turkishcism and anti-communism provide the cornerstones for extreme right mobilization and the context that better explains its resurgence. In contemporary times the hard line on the Cyprus problem, which is usually encapsulated by the extreme right, is associated with the rejection of the bi-zonal, bi-communal federation as the form of solution to the long lasting ethnic division because it implies a rejection of co-existence with the Turkish Cypriots. However, the Cyprus problem was not the sole source of political mobilization. What is qualitatively new in this new era of right wing extremism in Cyprus is the incorporation of new issues in their agenda, most prominent among them anti-immigration rhetoric and activism.

Contemporary Cypriot Extreme Right: the National Popular Front (ELAM)

At the moment there are 24 nationalistic and extreme right organizations and movements operating in Cyprus (anonymous interview). However, the majority of them have a very small membership base and they are very marginal and unknown. Their reappearance and proliferation seems to coincide with the election of the communist candidate in the 2008 presidential elections. Anti-communist and nationalistic feelings revive among parts of the population mainly with reference to the President's rhetoric for the need for a solution and co-existence with the Turkish Cypriots. Originally, they infiltrated the lines of the organized supporters of right-wing and nationalist football clubs, the ultras. The latter provided a pool for these extreme organizations to draft members and supporters. In a subsequent stage they appealed to high school and university students and tried to organize factions and purposively infiltrated the state's suppressive mechanisms, i.e. the army and the police. Some of these extreme right organizations are ideologically and politically guided by respective ones in Greece who provide them with resources crucial to their operation. A number of former EOKA II activists are also linked with these organizations and deliver lectures or write articles for them. These activities have multiplied in the last few years.

The most prominent among these organizations is the National Popular Front (*Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο*, ELAM). The ELAM was founded in 2008 but prior to that it existed under the name of *Chrysi Avgi* Cyprus branch before being rebranded to the ELAM, indicative of their association with the homonym, neo-fascist organization in Greece. The ELAM claims for itself to be a nationalist movement. It describes its ideology as ‘popular and social nationalism’ and promotes Greek nationalism (ELAM, 2011a). The press describes it as an ‘extreme right-wing party’,¹ and as ‘ultra right-wing’.² The Antifascist Initiative uses the words ‘far right, nationalist and racist organisation’ and ‘neo-Nazi gang’.³ The party has been the subject of controversy in the Cypriot media and the broader political scene. It has been repeatedly accused of promoting racism and being involved in acts of violence.

The article will proceed by examining those factors that have determined the resurgence of right wing extremism in Cyprus politics in the form of the ELAM. Analysis will be broken down between demand and supply-side factors since they explain different things but taken together they can account for the breakthrough of extreme right in Cyprus. As Mudde (2007: 202) soundly points out, researchers must distinguish between electoral breakthrough of a far right party and persistence since they cannot always be explained by the same combination of factors. What I am mainly interested in, is the breakthrough of Greek Cypriot extreme right and this is what the article is vying to explain.

Demand-side factors

The demand-side of far right politics tries to identify the most conducive circumstances for the emergence or persistence of these parties. In line with the now voluminous literature on this topic, an attempt to understand this phenomenon needs to begin with a consideration of these factors. This necessitates an examination of the basic socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions that are often thought to affect electoral behaviour and voter support for the extreme right. The majority of demand-side theories of far right party politics are concerned with macro-level theories of crises (Mudde, 2007: 202) and these factors are mostly addressed in the current article.

Economic crisis

Sustained economic growth, growing individual affluence, and the expansion and perfection of the welfare state in the post 1974 era each contributed to a social and political climate conducive to political stability, while eroding support for extremist solutions. Therefore, beyond the political discredit of the Greek Cypriot extreme right in the aftermath of the 1974 events, the economic and social environment on the island was far from encouraging and favourable for such a party to break through. However, the cumulative effect of the economic crises that Cyprus experienced in the 1990s (e.g. the Gulf War in 1991) that reached a climax in 1999-2000 with the collapse of the stock market and most importantly the unprecedented current economic crisis have reshaped fundamentally the social and political landscape.

¹ *The Cyprus Mail*, 13 July 2011.

² *The Cyprus Mail*, 25 May 2011.

³ KISA, retrieved 16 May 2011.

The Cypriot economy is experiencing a downward turn in the majority of economic indicators and seems to be captured in a period of recession (table 1). Debt, as a percentage of the GDP is growing, the growth rate of the economy is diminishing, public and private spending are diminishing (taking into account the effect of inflation). The basic component of economic performance that is most closely linked to the success of extreme right-wing parties is unemployment; it provides the optimal conditions for mobilizing protest (Jackman and Volpert, 1996: 507-508). Higher rates of unemployment epitomize uneven economic performance that fosters support for the extreme right by providing the pretext for mounting the xenophobic political appeals that characterize these political movements. Since 2008 the levels of unemployment have risen substantially in Cyprus. Where average levels of unemployment in the Cyprus hovered between two and five per cent in the post 1980 era, they had risen dramatically to approximately 10 per cent by 2012.⁴

Table 1: Data on economic figures

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
Inflation (%)	3,3	2,4	0,3	4,7	2,4	2,5	2,6	2,3	4,1	2,8	2	4,1	1,7	2,2
Government Consumption (mns euro)	3.452	3.482	3.392	3.086	2.763	2.656	2.410	2.240	2.307	1.984	1.813	1.578	1.569	1.396
Private Consumption (mns euro)	11.899	11.527	11.153	11.975	10.637	9.342	8.681	8.112	7.483	7.055	6.785	6.350	5.756	5.470
Debt as a % of GDP	71,6	61,5	58,5	48,9	58,8	64,6	69,1	70,2	68,9	64,6	60,7	58,8	58,9	58,6
Growth Rate (%)	0,5	1,1	-1,9	3,6	5,1	4,1	3,9	4,2	1,9	2,1	4	5	4,8	5
Unemployment (%)	7,7	6,2	5,3	3,7	3,9	4,5	5,3	4,7	4,1	3,3	4	5	3,5	3,3

Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus 2012

The worsening economic conditions are reflected in the public's opinion. Cypriots are already manifesting a growing disaffection towards those who run the economy and share an embedded perception that their country's and personal condition will worsen: 90 per cent believe that the economy will get worse and 71 per cent say that their personal economic condition has already worsened; 50 per cent are afraid that they will not be able to meet family expenses and 50 per cent consider unemployment as the most significant economic problem (University of Nicosia Research of Public Opinion, in Politis, 17 June 2012, pp. 16-17). The economic situation (58 per cent) and unemployment (25 per cent) are the two of the three most important issues that they face according to Cypriots (Eurobarometre, 2010). For those viewing voting behaviour as a function of economic interests, the combination of high unemployment and high immigration (see below) would seem to make Cyprus an ideal candidate for extreme-right advances.

Political crisis

The ideological nature of extremism can only be studied through its anti-elitist or anti-establishment aspect. As the literature on political apathy has argued, growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system (Betz, 1993: 413). The last three decades were marked by disenchantment with the major social and political institutions and profound distrust in their workings, the weakening and decomposition of electoral alignments, and increased

⁴ Preliminary results of the Ministry of Labour for the period ending on 31 May 2012.

political fragmentation and electoral volatility. The same trends are making their way into Cyprus as well in the years following the country's accession to the EU. Prior to EU accession the Cypriot society was characterized by high politicization and party loyalty (CIVICUS report, 2005). This was very much attributed to the unresolved national problem of Cyprus (Mavratsas, 2003: 121).

Indications of party dealignment are looming. Of those asked in the European Social Survey (ESS) (2009), 37 per cent replied that they did not feel any affiliation to any party. The level of citizens' participation, in its most important manifestation, voting, has not yet reached the unsettling figures of other European countries. The omens, however, are self-suggestive and worrying. Abstention rates reached a massive 41 per cent in the Euro elections of 2009 and 21.3 per cent in the latest national elections of May 2011, something not common in Cyprus politics. In addition, some polls (CyBC1, 17 March 2011) revealed a very worrying message for the entire political establishment: 64 per cent are disappointed with the way the President exercises his duties and another 66 per cent by his internal administration; 68 per cent of the population believes that the country is heading in the wrong direction; 69 per cent are disappointed by the Parliament and 68 per cent feel the same about the opposition. Related figures were reproduced by other surveys during the campaign for the national elections (*Phileleftheros*, 5 April and 1 May 2011; *Simerini*, 1 May 2011) and afterwards (ANT1, 5 June 2012).

The public's trust in political, social and representative institutions and the politicians is reaching a historical low with only one unexpected exception: the Church (CyBC1, 17 March 2011). The contrast with the figures of the corresponding 1996 survey is suggestive (Table 2). Similar figures were extracted by a survey by *Phileleftheros* (1 May, 2011) in which 76 per cent of the sample exhibited no confidence or a very small level of confidence in the political parties, *Kathimerini* (15 May 2011) where 40 per cent expressed distrust towards politicians and the Eurobarometre (2010), which found that 50 per cent do not trust the Parliament, 49 per cent do not trust the government, 76 per cent do not trust the political parties, and 45 per cent do not trust the trade unions.

Table 2: Level of trust in various institutions (%)

Institution	1996	2011	Variation
National Council	93	73	-20
Church	58	69	+11
Education	82	67	-15
Police	62	56	-6
Trade Unions	72	46	-16
Government	60	44	-26
Parliament	79	41	-38
Parties	42	23	-19
Politicians	34	21	-13

Source: CyBC 1 Poll, 17 April 2011

Another aspect that comprises the puzzle of political crisis relates to the heritage of clientelism that runs through the political and party system of Cyprus (Faustmann, 1998; 2010; Choisi, 1995; Mavratsas, 2003). Patron-client relations are condemned by Cyprus's political personnel and the majority of the citizens but they are essentially pursued. The Cypriots' concept of the political process as a rivalry between the 'ins' and the 'outs' over who is to run the bureaucracy further alienates them (*Phileleftheros* poll, 17 July 2011). This attitude of political impotence is reinforced by the traditional

distrust of the politician as a dispenser of worthless promises (*Kathimerini* poll, 15 May 2011). The political activity in Cyprus is largely performed, according to the public's assertion, by people who are in political life because of the rewards it offers them, material and non-material. Again the landscape seems fertile for an extremist and populist discourse to grow.

Immigrants and asylum seekers

It has become commonplace to attribute the growing appeal of extreme right to the recent explosion of hostility towards immigrants and asylum seekers in much of Western Europe. Not only the sheer numbers but also the changing composition of refugee and immigrant populations has contributed to the rise of xenophobia. Whereas in the past the large majority of foreigners in Western Europe were other West Europeans, the majority of recent arrivals come from the Third World. As a result, in many West European countries the proportion of West European foreigners has remained fairly stable, while the non-European population has increased (Betz, 1993: 415-416). Against the background of a growing influx and increasing visibility of non-Europeans, the success of extreme right parties marks the revival of racism in Western Europe.

The data on immigration and asylum seekers in Cyprus (table 3) indicate that 10 years ago their numbers did not pose a threat to anyone and therefore it was a non-issue at the time. The population census of 2001 (Statistical Service, 2004: 13-21) revealed that the total number of foreign citizens who were usual residents of Cyprus at the time, was 64.810 accounting for 9,4 per cent of the total population. Their main countries of origin were Greece with 17.459 and the United Kingdom with 11.871, followed by Russia (4.952), Sri Lanka (4.939), Philippines (3.245), Bulgaria (2.411), Romania (1.778), Syria (1.436), and India (1.313).

Table 3: Figures on asylum seekers

Year	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	Total
Applicants	510	1770	2882	3199	3922	6789	4545	7746	9872	4407	952	46594
Decisions	645	2963	2785	7017	7912	7184	5601	5805	5345	411	143	45811
Recognised	45	53	31	49	64	36	37	41	30	0	0	386
Refugees												
Humanitarian Status	13	15	25	33	163	191	151	123	56	10	0	780
Subsidiary Protection	0	1	370	1287	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1658
Withdrawals	88	284	203	285	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	860
Rejections	476	2559	2032	3325	4001	2316	1779	3133	2734	274	143	22772
Pending	1067	1203	2390	1797	5833	9823	10218	11274	9332	4805	809	-

Source: Ministry of Interior, Asylum Service

However, a number of factors combined have gradually changed the social setting: (1) the accession of Cyprus in the EU that made possible the free circulation of people and rendered Cyprus an attractive destination for EU nationals as well as immigrants from third countries, (2) the relative economic affluence of the population in the 1990s and 2000s allowed Cypriots to employ growing numbers of citizens from countries of the so called Third World both for domestic and cheap labour, (3) the opening of the barbwire that separates the occupied areas of Cyprus from the areas controlled by the government of the Republic in 2003 opened up the Greek Cypriot labour market to Turkish Cypriot

workers that entered certain sectors of the economy. These changing conditions were reflected in the figures.

In the most recent population census of Cyprus in October 2011, 179.547 foreign citizens were registered, thus tripling the figure of 2001. Of those enumerated in the Census, 112.424 (62.6 per cent) originate from EU countries and the remaining 67.123 (37.4 per cent) from third countries. The data indicate that the biggest number of foreign nationals comes from Greece, 31.044; the U.K. coming second with 26.659, Romania is in the third place with 24.376 and Bulgaria with 19.197 coming fourth. Among those coming from countries outside the EU the majority originates from Asia: Philippines 9.744, Sri Lanka 7.350 and Vietnam 7.102. A big number of immigrants come from Russia (8.663). Immigration is distributed between the five major cities of Cyprus as follows: Paphos 34,9 per cent, Limassol 20,6 per cent, Larnaca 20,4 per cent, Famagusta 20,3 per cent and Nicosia 18,9 per cent.⁵

The figures in the Census of 2011 indicate that the distribution of immigrants among the population is uneven since the two smallest towns of Cyprus, Paphos and Larnaca, share almost half of immigrants between them. It is no surprise then that anti-immigration feelings are higher in the habitants of those two cities. Not surprisingly ELAM's higher polls came in Paphos during the parliamentary elections of May 2011, while in the local authorities' elections in December 2011 the party contested the elections only in two occasions: one in the village of Letympou in Paphos where it scored 16,25 per cent and in the municipality of Ipsonas in Limassol where it polled 3,72 per cent.

With regard to the Turkish Cypriots, the data from the Social Insurance Services of the Ministry of Labour (table 4) indicate that approximately 3.500 Turkish Cypriots have been legally working in the Republic. However, an unidentified number is also estimated to be working illegally, i.e. without paying social insurances. Again, the data reveal a diminishing trend in the last three years which reflects the downturn of the economy and increased levels of unemployment.

Table 4: Turkish Cypriots working in the Republic of Cyprus

Year	2011*	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Number of employed TC	1843	2458	3143	3473	3456	3470	3772	3639	2444

* The number refers to the first semester of 2011.

Source: Ministry of Labour web page retrieved on 10 June 2012.

The increase in the number of immigrants was reflected on the public's stances as well. Accordingly, the Eurobarometer (2010: 6) revealed that 18 per cent of Cypriots consider immigration as one of the two most pressing issues facing the EU, while 43 per cent believe that the EU has to deal with immigration and criminality immediately. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that these citizens are motivated by feelings of economic competition from immigrants and minority groups, feelings of cultural threat are the most important driver of their support (Chatham report, pp. x-xi). For these citizens, the decisive motive is the feeling that immigration and rising diversity threaten their national culture, the unity of their national community and way of life. Populist extremist parties' supporters share one core feature: their profound hostility towards immigration, multiculturalism and rising cultural and ethnic diversity. The Eurobarometre (2010) revealed that 11 per cent of the Cypriots responded that the EU

⁵ Cyprus News Agency, 29 December, 2011.

means to them loss of their cultural identity, while another six per cent identified immigration as one of the two most important issues he/she is facing. The figures indicate that the capacity from which extremist right can draw support is yet to be exhausted.

Supply-side factors

A fertile breeding ground is a necessary but not sufficient condition for extreme right mobilization. Consequently, supply-side factors matter. The supply-side translates demand into practical party politics (Mudde, 2007: 202). The supply-side refers both to the strategies of established political actors to address the demand for extreme right parties and the strategies of the latter to seize the opportunities provided to them by the environment. The supply-side factors are divided into two aspects: external and internal (Mudde, 2007). The external factors relate to the political opportunity structures and include the institutional context, the political context and the media. Internal factors refer to party dynamics, whether activists, leadership, strategies, or programs. Such approaches are anchored in the belief that the party plays a significant role in its own breakthrough and is not simply blown around at the whim of demand-side forces. The rest of the section discusses the institutional and political context of party competition and the rise of the media. These features, although they are considered as part of the supply-side factors they are essentially beyond the political entrepreneurs' ability to influence, at least substantially.

Institutional context

The institutional context is usually related to the electoral system. While smaller parties are underrepresented everywhere, the extent of this underrepresentation increases with electoral disproportionality. In highly disproportional systems, voting for minor parties becomes a rather futile act; 'the electors soon realize that their votes are wasted if they continue to give them to the third party, whence their natural tendency to transfer their vote to the less evil of its two adversaries' (Duverger, 1954: 226). The wasted vote phenomenon, by the same token, deters political entrepreneurs from mobilizing electoral support through the channel of a minor party (Blais and Carty, 1991). Electoral disproportionality (through the mechanism of thresholds) increasingly dampens support for the extreme right as well (Jackman and Volpert, 1996: 516).

Institutional development in Cyprus in the 1980s offered opportunities for increased political mobilization. Elections became more meaningful since the number of seats in the House of Representatives rose from 35 to 56, while over 2.650 local authority posts became elected offices in 1985 (Christophorou, 2006: 514). In addition, the electoral system for parliamentary elections changed in 1981 from the initial plurality block vote to a reinforced proportional distribution of seats, with a threshold of eight per cent and compulsory voting. The electoral competition rules changed again in 1995, with the adoption of a system of pure proportional representation and the threshold set at one 56th of the vote (for the 56-member chamber). The voting age in all elections was changed from 21 to 18 in 1997.

In addition to institutional transformations, the EU accession process has been a major factor for change. Cyprus' accession to the EU in 2004 has made obligatory voting redundant and the voter felt free to change its traditional voting behaviour. Within this volatile setting and given the low threshold for achieving representation, the Greek

Cypriot extreme right does not face this type of institutional obstacle on its way to establish itself.

Political context

Socio-cultural attitudes and economic conditions provide the structural setting for the recent advances of the extreme right, but the electoral spurt of ELAM cannot be fully understood without a consideration of the broader political environment within which the party operates. 'The interaction between radical right populist parties and other political parties as well as the dynamics among parties within the system, to a large extent create or foreclose opportunities for the former' (Mudde, 2007: 237). Consequently, the structure of party competition and the strategies of mainstream parties are essential in understanding extreme right emergence and endurance. When these parties and especially right-wing parties or other important institutions (e.g. the Church) place issues like immigration, crime, history and collective memory on the political agenda, then far right parties can easier find a niche market to enter and profit. The availability of opportunities in the political environment is an important determinant of extreme-right performance (Kitschelt, 1995). In Cyprus, the availability of such opportunities relates (a) to the Cyprus problem, (b) the alleged convergence between mainstream parties and, (c) the way the established right-wing party as well as other institutions address the signatory issues of the extreme right.

The Cyprus problem. With regard to the first factor, the entire political life has been prescribed by the existence of the 'Cyprus problem' (Christophorou, 2007: 114). The ethnic division of Cyprus was in large part the result of the colonial legacy of the island that divided the population in an institutional and all-embracing way. As a result, two party systems emerged, with the ethnic cleavage often invoked in and affecting intra-community politics. Due to the late achievement of independence, Cyprus was given little chance to develop a civic and democratic culture: it suffered sporadic inter-communal violence and has been *de facto* divided since the Turkish invasion of 1974.

The net result of this action was the partition of Cyprus and the total alienation of the two communities, a situation that lasted until 2003 when the Turkish authorities decided to relax the restraints on communication between the two communities amidst intense negotiations and UN involvement for a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. The new historical context of the Cyprus Problem, as reshaped in the Annan Plan (2004) and post-Annan Plan period, which saw a failed referendum and a socially dividing campaign around it, brought to the surface an additional underlying reason for social and political antagonism. This essentially revolved between those who called for a rejection of the Plan (DIKO, EDEK, New Horizons), those who called for a positive vote (DISY) and those who were unsure but eventually tilted towards a 'soft no'-AKEL- (Ioannou, 2008; Trimikliniotis, 2006).

The Cyprus problem brings to the fore the issue of convergence between political parties. Some argue that it is not so much the convergence of all mainstream parties, but rather the centrist position of the largest mainstream right-wing competitor that is crucial. The more a right-wing party takes a centrist position the stronger the extreme right party becomes. With regard to the Cyprus problem, this was translated into the acceptance of the bi-communal, bi-zonal federation and the need of co-existence with the Turkish Cypriots by the majority of political parties including the right-wing DISY and with regard to the Annan plan, a positive vote by the DISY. As a result of the Annan referendum new political formations and alliances materialized (Faustmann,

2008: 35). The DISY's acceptance of the plan, stressing the need for a 'realistic' solution to the problem and preparing the ground for political compromise, left various extreme rightists defending a maximalist position with a relatively high public resonance. This created an opening for other right-wing formations. The EVROKO, the party that was formed when a number of the DISY leading members split and joined forces with the nationalist right-wing New Horizons, was now a political actor polling five per cent of the vote in the 2006 parliamentary elections.

Regardless of the context of the Annan plan it was the first time that the Cypriots in both communities came face to face with the idea of coexisting with each other. This came as a shock to most people and brought about tremor, fear and insecurity. Being a 'collector' of fear and insecurity, the Greek Cypriot extreme right found itself in a beneficial situation. According to many authors extreme right parties are first and foremost supported by insecure people (e.g. Christofferson 2003). Behind the discussions about the future of Cyprus lies the question of the future of Cyprus' social and national security and, broadly speaking, all the elements that make up its social and political system. That means that there were a lot at stake through this plan.

The election of a communist president in 2008 saw a climax of anti-communism rhetoric and an inclination to nationalism on various occasions especially with regard to the Cyprus problem. The majority of parties either in the government coalition or in opposition united in many occasions against the President and the AKEL. The immediate resume of the negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots, amidst the President's solid attachment to reach a compromising solution, once again resurfaced sentiments of insecurity and fear towards both the Turks and the unknown. In addition, some of the President's proposals during the negotiations that provided for a system of rotating presidency between the two communities, the legalization of 50.000 settlers from Turkey based on humanitarian criteria and a mixed voting system between Greeks and Turks that is thought to be beneficial for the left-wing parties, were met with severe criticism from the parties beyond AKEL. The majority of political parties demanded their immediate withdrawal and called the president as a pro-Turkish. These reactions elevate high in the political agenda some of the most important issues of extreme right political discourse, i.e., nationalism, anti-Turkishism and anti-communism.

Anti-government rhetoric has united, in the last three years, the entirety of political parties against the AKEL and the President. At the same time, this unity was based on extreme right's preferential issues on the Cyprus problem and it has contributed to the increase of their salience. In addition, the majority of political parties displayed tolerance towards extreme rightists. On 1 October 2008 and during the military parade in honour of the establishing date of Cyprus Republic a group of nationalists distributed flyers against the federal solution of the Cyprus problem. Those people were prohibited from distributing their flyers by the police and when they reacted some of them were arrested. The following day the entirety of political parties, AKEL excepted, condemned the government for not allowing them to freely express their opinions, which was their constitutional right (*Phileleftheros*, 3 October 2008).

Convergence. Another conducive, strategic configuration of party competition for extreme right parties' breakthrough is when conventional mainstream parties have converged in their policies (Kitschelt, 2007: 1184-5). The centripetal shift of the political parties and the offloading of ideological propositions intensify the perceived pattern of homogenization. The constant degrading of the distinct political identities of the left and the right by their respective political parties and the blurring of the related social classes and segments each one stands for makes it harder for the citizen to make a

clear judgement on their differences. The parties' political discourse and their political manifestos deliberately brush aside any references to social interests, social conflicts and social visions. This was reflected in all Cypriot parties' manifestos in the latest parliamentary elections. Social visions hold symbolic and historic but no current value. On the contrary, the manifestos choose to focus on administrative and technocratic issues. In addition, consensus has become a prominent feature in Cypriot party politics. Consensus politics prevail mostly in the process of deciding on policy (Charalambous, 2008) and forming government (Christophorou, 2008: 97; Faustmann, 2008: 27-28; Mavratsas, 2003: 184-192). Consensus politics was astonishingly reflected during the harmonization process of Cyprus before accession, where 614 out of the 620 bills concerning harmonization were voted unanimously by the parliament (Katsourides, 2003). This demonstrates the highly homogenizing force of Europeanization on party politics (Mair, 1997: 133; Ladrech, 2001: 5).

Strategies of other parties. Beyond convergence, what is probably more important in explaining the rise of extreme right parties is the way mainstream parties, namely of the right and centre right, deal with the signatory issues of far right. Indicatively, I will point to three such areas beyond the Cyprus problem that has been already addressed: immigration, nationalism, and issues relating to history and collective memory. With regard to immigration, anti-Islam and anti-immigration discourse as well as the rejection of multiculturalism constitute common points of reference between the far right and the right-wing parties of the mainstream. One such occasion was demonstrated by the attitudes of a small number of state officials (MPs and municipal councillors) from two mainstream parties (DISY and DIKO) that took part in a march organized by a group of nationalistic organizations (including the ELAM) against immigrants in November 2010 in Larnaca (*Phileleftheros*, 7 November 2010). Similarly, intentions to impose stricter laws on immigration and asylum seeking were highlighted in the manifestos of all political parties (except AKEL) in the latest parliamentary elections. It was mostly reflected, though, in the decision of the majority of political parties in December 2011 during the discussions on the state budget of 2012, to block the allowances provided for asylum seekers.⁶ In this way the ground is laid for broad legitimization of extreme right-wing ideas and demands on the issue of immigration.

With regard to nationalism, both the 10-year Clerides administration (DISY) and the last three years of Papadopoulos presidency (DIKO) contributed to the rise of nationalistic feelings among the population. Clerides administration was characterized by an emphasis on militaristic issues and cooperation with Greece within the context of the so called 'united defence dogma'. At the time, President Clerides, had stated that Cyprus would press for a solution to the Cyprus problem with all means, armed not excluded. Statements like these roused nationalist feelings among the population. During Papadopoulos administration the so-called rejectionist forces (i.e. those that object solution) acquired momentum (Charalambous, 2009). All these taken together had laid a favourable ground for extreme right issues to penetrate the political agenda in the years that followed.

Finally, issues of history and collective memory and the way these are dealt with by other actors are essential in our understanding of extreme right resurgence. In this regard, the matter of EOKA II and its leader Grivas, as well as the so-called President of the arbitrary government established after the military coup in 1974, N. Sampson, are of great significance. During the 10-year of DISY administration (1993-2003) an effort

⁶ Proceedings from the Parliament, 16 December 2011.

was made to revise history aiming to de-stigmatize the right-wing party for giving shelter to those that executed the coup against the legal government of Cyprus. Both DISY and government officials at the time, started attending the memorials of Grivas, while an effort was made immediately after coming to power, in Autumn 1993, to reinstate 62 former public employees that were sacked from their jobs due to their active participation in the military coup. DISY officials continue to take part in Grivas memorials up to date, while the son of Sampson is being elected for the last 10 years under the ballot of DISY. Another long standing MP and MEP of DISY (P. Demetriou) had served in the 8-day arbitrary government in 1974, as well. In addition, the former deputy commander of EOKA II (S. Syros) was employed by DISY in the early 1990s. As will be shown below, these are some of the themes that ELAM picks up.

In another vein, extreme right in Cyprus found an unexpected ally in the face of the Archbishop. The latter, stated in an interview last year that 'ELAM's views especially with regard to immigration issues, express my own personal views as well' (*Kathimerini*, 25 December, 2010, p. 9). He went even further to characterize ELAM members as 'educated persons who are sincerely interested for their country'. Given the high esteem that the religious institution traditionally enjoys in Cyprus (see table 2), such declarations render extreme right views, issues and organizations more acceptable among the public.

Media

Many commentators have linked the success of far right parties to the alleged nativist and populist campaigns of parts of the media. This section of the media discusses issues and use discourses very similar to those of the far right. For example, Ellinas (2010) argues that the media choose to tout nationalism either by following in the footsteps of mainstream parties or by providing them or other purely nationalist parties with an audience they can politically exploit. Consequently, they are setting a public agenda highly favourable to these parties, which raise similar issues and present solutions in line with those offered in these media. Even when the media are not openly sympathetic towards the populist radical right, they can still provide them with a highly favourable forum (Mudde, 2007: 251).

The agenda of the Cypriot mass media draws attention on issues advantageous associated with extreme and populist right. Immigration, the economic crisis and the Cyprus problem are placed high in media rankings and present a great deal of opportunities for extreme right, since it corresponds with their preferred agenda. Furthermore, they often invite people who represent extreme right or nationalistic views to discuss these issues. On several occasions the president of the ELAM was invited to high publicity TV shows and programmes, usually following acts of violence by the party members organized marches against Turkish Cypriots and immigrants on 28 December 2010. On 8 May 2012 he was also invited to a high publicity talk show to discuss the tremendous success of the ELAM's sister party, *Chrysi Avgi*, in Greece. In this line of argument any type of publicity either positive or negative, is good for the party.

The spurt of the so called new media, i.e. the internet, has created another favourable condition for their public presence and the promotion of their policies and positions. According to ESS (2009) 32.7 per cent of Cypriots uses the internet on a daily basis or several times a week, while the respective figure in the ESS (2011) rises to 36 per cent. A recent study sponsored by the Youth Board of Cyprus (*Politis*, 31 May, 2012: 42),

revealed that 86 per cent of students at the age of 15-16 years uses the internet and the various social networks on a daily basis for the past two years. The various bloggers are thought to be the new opinion leaders in Cyprus (Toumazos interview). According to him, the various Cypriot blogs are viewed by more than 50.000 persons on a daily basis. The ELAM's web page in the Facebook, in November 2011, numbered 4.185 friends, a figure that approximates the number of their voters in May 2011 national elections (4.354 voters). Six months later the number of the ELAM's Facebook friends rose to 4.694. However, this does not imply that all these people share the party's views or that they vote for the party. But it means that they are daily subjected to the party's propaganda. The ELAM utilizes the resources provided by this new media terrain, especially the internet. The party has a web-based radio (Counterattack) and an e-newspaper (which is now published as well in hard copies) titled 'Hellas of the South' in an effort to highlight their 'Greekness'.

Irrespective of how favourable the breeding ground (demand-side) and the political opportunity structure might be to new political parties, they merely present political actors with a series of possibilities. In the end, it is still up to party itself to profit from them (Mudde, 2007: 256). Among the most important internal supply-side factors is party ideology and political programme.

Ideology (political programme)

According to Mudde (2010), the core features of far right parties are nativism, authoritarianism and populism. I will use this pattern in the analysis of ELAM's ideology, taking into account that the optimal mix of appeals for each extreme right party depends on its political context (Karapin, 1998: 223). The ELAM mostly duplicates the political discourse of the Greek *Chrysi Avgi* and shares many of the basic attributes of the West European extreme right. However, it also has distinct characteristics that reflect Cypriot particularities and it has capitalized on the systemic crisis that (not only) Cyprus is going through.

Nativism (nationalism)

Nativism entails a combination of nationalism and xenophobia (Mudde, 2011: 12), i.e., an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that alien elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation. There is considerable agreement in the literature regarding the important role played in the formation of these extreme right groups by a new exclusional nationalism, which is in sharp opposition to any argument in favour of multi-culturalism as the basis for a state. Nationalism has special significance, for understanding the Greek Cypriot extreme right.

ELAM fully embraces nationalism as the supreme value and the essence of its ideology. Like most extreme-right parties in Europe, the ELAM is explicitly nationalistic, seeking to protect 'the Nation, the Genus, the Faith, the History and the cultural identity' of the Greeks of Cyprus (ELAM, 2011a). Group and class interests are not accepted and should subordinate to the national interest (Aristides in *Politis*, 19 December 2010). According to the president of the party, 'nationalism means believing in the Greek nation, its history, its culture. It also means respect towards the struggles and the sacrifices of our ancestors and the effort to be worthy of them' (Christou in *Machi*, 7

December 2010). The slogans of the party are indicative of their nationalistic fervour: 'Cyprus is part of Greece', 'Race, blood, decent', 'Foreigners out of Cyprus', 'No to Turkey's accession to the EU'. In the party's perception, non-native people pose a threat to the nation's homogeneity. They charge the two main parties, AKEL and DISY, with seeking to establish a multicultural society which promotes the extinction of the cultural identity of the Greeks (ELAM, 2011a). Reproducing an article from the web page of the Greek *Chrysi Avgi*, the ELAM considers globalization as the major enemy of the state and acclaims the nation soul as the main element that would preserve the Greeks in their father land (ELAM, 2011b).

Their nationalism is manifested in two directions: (a) the solution of the Cyprus problem and the Turkish Cypriots and (b) the dark colored immigrants. With regard to the Turkish Cypriots, the ELAM rejects the agreed solution of federation because this implies that both communities will have a say in the affairs of a reunited Cyprus. When referred to the Turks of Cyprus the ELAM puts the word Cypriots in quotation marks (ELAM, 2011a) in order to make clear not only the belittle way in which they treat the Turkish Cypriots, but mainly to highlight that they do not consider them as Cypriots and therefore as equals to the Greek Cypriots. They accuse the left governing party of having sold out the national interest in the ongoing negotiations because of its proposals for a unified voting system between the two communities and the legalization of 50.000 settlers from Turkey. These demands correspond with and are legitimized by the other parties' campaigns during the last three years. In addition, the party opposes Turkey's admission to the EU because they do not consider it to be a Christian, European country.

The party paid close attention to developments in the rest of Europe, where extreme rightists started making significant electoral advances by capitalizing on anti-foreigner sentiments. Following the example of the Greek *Chrysi Avgi* - with the leaders of which ELAM has a long-standing relation - Greek Cypriot extreme rightists immediately extended their nationalistic appeals to immigration. Its ethnocentric world view is the basis for the party's anti-immigrant appeal. Cyprus accession to the EU and the consequent increase in the numbers of immigrants laid a favourable ground for extreme right position on immigration. The problem becomes more serious, according to the party, because the majority of immigrants originate from Muslim countries with devastating effects on Cyprus demographic, religious and cultural identity (ELAM, 2011a); a false conclusion however, given the actual data, if not deliberately twisted to fit their arguments. They deliberately secrete from their discourse the percentage of Greek immigrants in Cyprus. This is to be anticipated of course, since, for the ELAM, Cyprus is part of Greece.

The ELAM argues that the vast majority of refugees only claim to be political refugees. In reality they are driven by economic motives and they are in essence 'false' refugees. This hurts the Cypriot society in two ways. Political refugees (and immigrants) not only burden social services with new expenditures, but they also take away scarce jobs from the native unemployed. Their nativism is explicit in the way they perceive the functioning of welfare state. The party's official theses are characterized by welfare chauvinism. For the ELAM the Turkish Cypriots and the immigrants should not be allowed any treatment by the state health system and they should not enjoy any financial privilege (e.g. allowances). According to the ELAM, illegal immigration is the biggest 'wound' in Cypriot society and they see (illegal) immigrants as culprits for an allegedly growing process of criminality and unemployment.

Therefore, ‘illegal immigration and asylum tourism’ should be stopped as the only way to eliminate unemployment (ELAM, 2011a). Instead of privileging immigrants, the Cypriot government should give preference with regard to employment, housing, and social assistance to natives. They cry for expelling the immigrants and political refugees or at least contain them through drastic administrative measures including hermetically closing the borders to illegal immigrants, the immediate eviction of refugees not recognized as political refugees, the creation of a special police unit to track illegal immigrants and return them to their home countries and militia groups to patrol certain dangerous areas. They also call for a re-negotiation with the EU as to set a ceiling of EU national workers in Cyprus and a fixed number of immigrants from third countries according to the needs of Cypriot economy.

The ELAM does not limit itself to verbalism but they take firm actions as well. In this direction, they have set up a national employment agency for ‘Greeks only’ (ELAM, 2012e), which is assigned to help Greek Cypriots to find jobs and they offer help and protection to elderly people and shop-keepers in areas with increased immigrant presence (anonymous interview) following in the footsteps of *Chrysi Avgi* in Greece. In addition, they are occasionally organizing marches and other activities to demonstrate their objection to immigration. On December 28, 2010, the ELAM organized a march against Turkish Cypriots and illegal migrants.⁷ Another such march took place on 29 June 2012 under the slogan ‘No to pseudo political refugees’.⁸

This type of authoritarian nationalism in essence promotes xenophobia, if not racism (Betz, 1993b: 680). The extreme right has become the champion of growing resentment and hostility towards foreigners. Their generic approach to immigration differentiates between legal and illegal immigrants but this is just a formality. In essence, they consider all immigrants as illegal. They have no problem to declare that they seek to capitalize on the issue of immigration (Aristides in *Politis*, 19 December 2010).

Though limited in quantifiable references anti-communism comprises a vital part of their ideological arsenal. In the past they have organized classes and lectures of anti-communism for their members with speakers from Greece (anonymous interview). Their anti-communism goes way back in the Stalin era where the ELAM attacks the communists for taking active part in the genocide of the Greeks of Pontus in 1937 (ELAM, 2012d). The ELAM (2012f) accuses the left-wing AKEL for not participating in the EOKA struggle in 1955-59 but mostly because the party betrayed the EOKA fighters to the British according to their claims.

Populism

Like most of its European counterparts, the ELAM combines its nationalist ideology with strong populist and anti-systemic appeals. The party rejects the term extreme right, insisting that the placement of parties on a left-right scale is outdated. The established political parties are accused of having constructed, to the detriment of the average citizen, an all-encompassing system sustained by interventionism, clientelism, and favouritism (Christou in *Machi*, 7 December 2010). Undoubtedly, the general malaise towards politics and political parties and a growing crisis of political representation has benefited far right populist parties (Kitschelt, 1995). Against the widespread alienation from the political process, and to growing resentment against the prevailing political

⁷ George Psyllides and Poly Pantelides, ‘ELAM members attack lottery seller’, *The Cyprus Mail*, 20 March 2011.

⁸ ELAM’s blog retrieved on 6 June 2012.

system, the ELAM presents itself as the true anti-party party and considers itself as the main advocate of the concerns of the ordinary citizen. The ELAM does what all populist parties do according to Betz (1993a: 413): ‘they instrumentalize the sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense’. Indicative of their mentality is the title of their broadcasts in their web-radio: ‘Show Red Card to the System’, ‘The People’s Voice’. Part of this type of discourse includes calls for reduction in political parties’ public funding, and drastic reductions to higher public servants and the deputies wages (ELAM, 2011a). The money saved in this way must be directed to utility services.

The ELAM positions on the economy point to state intervention in the economy although in a balanced way. They demand a cooperative economy that would respect and protect individual property but the state should also protect society against the peremptoriness of the capitalists (ELAM, 2011a). Given its position on the issue of private property someone could validly argue that the ELAM is a bourgeois party and that its anti-capitalist rhetoric is aiming to elicit part of the working class towards its positions. The party also calls for incentives for the agricultural sector and medium-sized companies, balanced taxation on capital to compensate for fiscal shortages, the preservation of the semi-governmental organizations (e.g. the Electricity Authority) under state ownership and against privatizations for national security reasons. They also oppose the privatization of the health care system. Education ought to be free for all natives in the elementary and secondary level, while they accept the existence of private academic institutions in higher education. Regarding social welfare policy, the party believes that incentives for increasing birth rates are to be prioritized because they reflect the state’s will to preserve the nation. Consequently, allowances to families with many children should increase. All these, taken together, point to the traditional ethno-socialism version of extreme right.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is defined as the belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely (Mudde, 2007: 23). It also includes strong emphasis on law and order (Betz, 1993: 680). A strong state with effective repressive mechanisms substantiates these proposals. The ELAM is in line with these pillars. The army is considered one of the cornerstones of the state (ELAM, 2011a). Any sign of desertion from military obligations is ‘a criminal act that could lead our country to disaster’. Cooperation with the military forces of Greece is a necessary precondition given their perception that Greece and Cyprus are the same. The party calls for fighting off desertion and the mentality of ‘defeatism’, as well as building up of the people’s national morale.

Although an organizational feature, the strict military-type discipline they enforce to their members is another indication of their authoritarianism. The ELAM declares blind faith and obedience in their leadership because this is the only way for great things to happen (ELAM, 2011a). In their public appearances, party members march in triads and they are all dressed in similar clothing: usually military trousers and black shirt. This was evident for instance in a march against illegal immigration in Larnaca in July 2010. The praise of military forces explicitly reveals militaristic perceptions which are reinforced with their mode of organization and relates with the need for strengthening public order and national security.

Attitudes towards democracy comprise an important aspect of their level of authoritarianism. Karapin (1998: 217) says that party positions concerning the Nazi regime and Nazi organizations is probably the best evidence of German extreme right parties' orientation toward democracy. An analogy can be drawn for Cyprus as well. Given the lack of any explicit references on the type of polity they embrace, a good indicator of right-wing extremism within the Cyprus context would be the treatment of the EOKA II issue and its leader, Colonel Grivas, in their political discourse. A number of people they use in their internal activities were former members of the EOKA II (e.g. Papaphotis on 12 October 2010). At the same time, the president of the ELAM stated in an interview that, 'as far as the EOKA II is concerned, we believe that it was targeted after the coup of 1974, while some of its members were pure patriots [...] We believe that the organization's activity until 1973 was justified' (Christou in *Simerini*, 3 January 2008). The party honours year after year the leader of EOKA II claiming that they are the true hold-overs of his legacy, contrary to the DISY that has opted to strive against him (ELAM, 2012a). In addition, the way the party deals with other extreme right instances of the past is crucial. In this regard, the ELAM's memorials of the founder of the Phalanx in Spain, Jose Antonio (ELAM, 2011c), and the denial of the occurrence of deaths in the uprising of the students in Greece, in November 1973, against the junta, indicate once more the party's extremism.

Authoritarianism and extremism are also related with inclination to violence. When analyzing the extreme right we must always keep in mind the relation between the specific party family and violence (Hainsworth, 2004: 53). This is largely due to the fact that its political discourse is characterized by intolerance which demonizes certain groups, usually immigrants and communists. The ELAM has been repeatedly accused of being involved in acts of violence. In July 2010 it was reported that after the condemnation ceremonies against the Turkish invasion of 1974, people with ELAM t-shirts had attacked a Nigerian student in Makariou Avenue in Nicosia.⁹ On 19 March in 2011, eyewitnesses reported that members of the ELAM beat up a lottery seller in Ledras street in Nicosia after a disagreement in political views but that had never been proved in the court.¹⁰ On 6 December 2011, the ELAM members beat up left-wing students during the student elections at the University of Nicosia (*Haravgi*, 7 December 2011). However, the ELAM has officially opposed its association with the incidents mentioned, noticing that no ELAM member has been convicted for the specific crimes, further accusing the media for intentionally connecting the movement with the beatings.¹¹

Internationalization

In these globalizing times no country is immune to developments outside of its borders. In this regard, developments with respect to one far right party in one country can have significant effects on the opportunities for other far right populist parties in other countries, especially within the European domain (Mudde, 2007: 274). The internationalization of this party family success can occur in three ways (Schain et al, 2002: 16-17, cited in Mudde, 2007): (a) assistance and support from like-minded parties

⁹ Panagiotis Hadjiapostolou, 'The racism went to the streets', *Politis*, 22 July 2010; Racial Violence from ELAM. KISA calls for the condemnation and the isolation of the nationalists- racists, KISA (Movement for Equality, Support, Antiracism), 22 July 2010.

¹⁰ Chrysta Ntzani, 'We are warm the egg of the snake', *Politis*, 23 March 2011.

¹¹ 'Reply to a new defamation of Politis', ELAM's blog, 26 March 2011

across borders, (b) providing models for other parties to follow, and (c) a successful radical right party in one country can make the programme of a fellow party more acceptable in another country. All these seem to correspond with the case of Greek Cypriot extreme right as this is substantiated by the ELAM and its relations with *Chrysi Avgi* in Greece. In addition, the ELAM's relations with other sister organizations beyond Cyprus can provide a crucial indicator of the party's ideological placement.

The ELAM is liaised with a number of organizations and parties abroad. Their web page lists 11 such links with like-minded organizations, among them *Chrysi Avgi* in Greece, *Forza Nuova* in Italy and NPD in Germany. All of these organizations are listed as extreme right wing formations. The most important linkage is with the Greek *Chrysi Avgi*; after all the ELAM was initially founded as *Chrysi Avgi* Cyprus branch. The entirety of the party's ideological positions is extracted by *Chrysi Avgi*'s ideological declaration making the necessary adjustments to fit the Cypriot context. In this regard, it congratulated *Chrysi Avgi* for the latter's success in Greek parliamentary elections of 6 May 2012 (ELAM, 2012b). Moreover, a delegation of the party was sent to Greece to help the sister party in its campaign and a number of ELAM members celebrated in Nicosia after their success in the elections. The President of the ELAM, C. Christou, became a member of the Political Bureau of the Greek organization while in Greece for his studies and he remained in his position until very recently. *Chrysi Avgi* in Greece is considered as a neo-Nazi organization whose members salute in the old fashioned Nazi way and they praise Hitler as a great nationalist leader. The ELAM (2012c) went on to justify an assault of a *Chrysi Avgi* MP against two women in a chat show¹² accusing the media and other parties that they want to discredit the party.

When the Cypriot party attracts publicity from abroad, this is considered an award for its struggles. One such reference was made, for instance, by the broadcasting station of the Russian PDNI that hosted an interview with a cadre of ELAM (2010) and in the same vein the Polish NOP made a positive reference about ELAM's newspaper (ELAM, 2012g). They also participate in common events with these parties. In November 2011 the Italian nationalist part of *Forza Nuova* hosted an event especially devoted to Cyprus and the island's occupation by the Turks (ELAM, 2011d). The same party issued a statement a few months ago and saluted ELAM for the march they organized in Cyprus in favour of Cyprus union with Greece (ELAM, 2012h).

A party of fascist mentality

Contemporary Greek Cypriot extreme right is not a single-issue phenomenon that can be solely understood as a response to economic crisis or the rapid influx of immigrants. Nevertheless, these two developments can ease the emergence of an extreme right party provided that the political entrepreneurs (i.e. parties) can mobilize along these lines. The party takes advantage of the systemic crisis that Cyprus is going through and plant their seeds in a fertile soil, while they also benefit from the fact that their signatory issues have been more or less elevated in the political agenda by other parties of the mainstream and the media.

Given its programmatic focus, the ELAM resembles Kitschelt's (1995) 'racist authoritarian, welfare chauvinist party' and Betz's (1993) 'national populist party'. These parties are socially conservative, culturally xenophobic and strongly nationalist

¹² BBC News, Greek Far Right Golden Dawn MP wanted for assault', retrieved on 8 June 2012

but defend welfare programs rather than advocate neo-liberalism. Immigrants, of course, are to be excluded from welfare state protection. The party's nationalist criticism of ethnic minorities, its populist attacks on the political class, and its advocacy of stronger authority resemble the appeals of parties that fall under these two categorizations, As Karapin (1998: 221) notes, these types of parties are somewhat closer to fascist parties. With regard to controversial aspects of the past within the context of Cyprus, the party subtly attempts to defend the EOKA II paramilitary organization that aimed for state dissolution in the early 1970s. It also liaises with extreme right-wing organizations abroad and especially *Chrysi Avgi* in Greece of which it essentially continues to be a Cypriot branch. All these references demonstrate that the ELAM is closer to the neo-fascist type of parties.

In the past few decades, parties like the ELAM have consolidated their presence across a number of European countries, changing the basic contours of the political discourse and, in some cases, bringing about important policy changes. Will the extreme right become a permanent and sizable force in Cypriot party politics or will its recent breakthrough prove short-lived? The electoral breakthrough of the ELAM in 2011 can potentially transform the Cypriot political landscape in the sense of exercising pressures on established political formations positions beyond its sheer percentages.

Much will depend on the salience of the issues that brought the party to existence, namely the developments regarding the Cyprus problem, the huge economic crisis swiping southern Europe and immigration flows as well as other parties' political strategies. The ability of the DISY as the mainstream party of the right to recapture the political space and win back most of the constituencies lost to the ELAM and other similar-minded organizations is also crucial. This could be hampered by the DISY's strong presidential aspirations in the forthcoming presidential elections, in February 2013, and the turn to the middle space that this course dictates. If the DISY is elected in government, it will find it difficult to effectively address the signature issues of the ELAM, without alienating its more moderate constituencies. A third factor relates to the party itself and its attachment to fascist characteristics and rhetoric. Ideological continuities with fascist and paramilitary organization (i.e. the EOKA II) and discourse might simply replicate the short trajectory of other extreme right organizations. Nationalism can provide a favourable factor for the party since it represents a unifying theme for its electorate and a continuous force in Cypriot politics.

The present article does not address the entirety of issues related to extreme right mobilization in Cyprus. Future research agenda on the subject could focus in the study of extreme right-wing organizational infrastructure and leadership in order to account for their type and influences on effective or fruitless electoral campaigns. Another avenue of research relates to the survey of the party voters on what they actually stand for before making solid judgements on the party.

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