

Does crisis produce right-wing extremism? Nationalism, Cultural Opportunities and Varieties of support

Dr Daphne Halikiopoulou, University of Reading, d.halikiopoulou@reading.ac.uk

Dr Sofia Vasilopoulou, University of York, sofia.vasilopoulou@york.ac.uk

Abstract

Under what circumstances is economic crisis likely to be associated with the rise of the far right? We address this question by focusing on the four PIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) and Hungary, which have all experienced comparable crisis conditions. However, only Greece and Hungary are experiencing the rise of an extreme right-wing party. This paper employs the most similar systems research design in order to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions that are likely to facilitate the rise of extremism in some cases but not in others. Through a controlled comparison, we primarily focus on Greece and Spain and use the remaining Hungary, Portugal and Italy as shadow cases. We argue that an extreme right-wing party is more likely to perform well during an economic crisis if it is able to capitalise not only on political opportunities, but also on cultural opportunities. We understand these cultural opportunities in terms of nationalism which we categorise between two types, concentrated and diffusive, depending on the presence of an identity cleavage. We argue that the potential for right-wing extremism at times of crisis is greater in cases where there is no identity cleavage and nationalism is concentrated.

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Introduction

Societal crises tend to be associated with the rise of right-wing extremism. Loss of faith in politics, as a result of the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, became associated with the rise of Nazism and fascism. More recently, the European crisis and the severe austerity measures that have accompanied it have often been associated with political disenchantment, instability and civil unrest. In some cases the crisis has been blamed for the rise of right-wing extremism, for example the recent success of Jobbik in Hungary and the Golden Dawn in Greece. However, if we accept the proposition that crises lead to right-wing extremism, then we should expect this phenomenon to occur in other European countries which are facing similar crisis conditions, such as Portugal, Spain and Italy. Despite the crisis however only Greece and Hungary are experiencing the rise of right-wing extremism, while there is no comparable success of an extreme right-wing party in the other cases.

Under what circumstances then is economic crisis likely to be associated with the rise of the extreme right? This paper addresses this question by focusing on the four PIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) and Hungary. These countries have all experienced comparable crisis conditions and severe economic breakdown. They thus constitute the most likely cases for the rise of right-wing extremism. However, only two (Greece and Hungary) have experienced the rise of an extreme right-wing party. This paper employs the most similar systems research design in order to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions that are likely to facilitate the rise of right-wing extremism in some cases but not in others. Through a controlled comparison, we primarily focus on Greece and Spain, which are taken as two similar cases exhibiting a variation in the dependent variable; and use the remaining Hungary, Portugal and Italy as shadow cases. The use of shadow cases allows us to address the issue of negative degrees of freedom and further eliminate potential variables. We proceed by process tracing the causal mechanism in all five cases, which allows us to unpack the relationship between the variables and illustrate the causal link, thus addressing the issue of reciprocal causality. Our overall research design allows us to yield results with internal and external validity.

This paper argues that an extreme right-wing party is more likely to perform well during an economic crisis if it is able to capitalise not only on political but also on cultural opportunities. We understand these cultural opportunities in terms of nationalism which we categorise between two types, concentrated and diffusive, depending on the presence of an identity cleavage. We argue that the potential for right-wing extremism at times of crisis is higher in cases where there is no identity cleavage and nationalism is concentrated. In such circumstances, the crisis serves as a unifying factor and reinforces state-wide nationalism. Because state-wide nationalism is defined by a dominant ethnicity, this means the opening up of cultural opportunities for a party that stresses nationalism at the state level. When there exist one or multiple identity cleavages and nationalism is diffusive, the crisis serves as a divisive factor because the relationship between the various identities is conflictual. This may serve to reinforce the sub-national identities at the expense of the core. This in turn constrains cultural opportunities for a party that stresses nationalism at the state-wide level.

This paper proceeds as follows: section 1 unpacks the puzzle and discusses our research question and design. Section 2 eliminates potential explanatory variables identified in the literature through a controlled comparison of primarily Greece and Spain, using the remaining Hungary, Italy and Portugal as shadow cases. The final section poses the argument and traces the causal mechanism across all five cases.

The Puzzle and research design

The impact of the European economic crisis is varied, as some countries have been affected more severely at the economic, social and political levels than others. The so-called PIGS, as well as countries such as Ireland, Hungary and Cyprus, have been unable to withstand the external shock. These countries have all experienced severe austerity measures and public sector cuts, resulting in high levels of unemployment, political disillusionment and social unrest. Such crises, and the discontent that they generate, represent a significant challenge to democratic stability (Diamond & Linz 1989; Przeworski & Limongi 1997) and tend to be associated with the rise of right-wing extremism. For example the rise of Nazism and fascism has been attributed to the inter-war economic crisis (Lipset 1960). More recently, in Greece the crisis has coincided with the significant electoral rise of the Golden Dawn, an extreme, ultra-nationalist and racist party. Over 400,000 Greek citizens supported the Golden Dawn during the May and June 2012 elections, granting it 21 and 18 parliamentary seats out of 300 respectively. More recent polls estimate its support at over fourteen per cent, placing it at third place. This is a significant electoral breakthrough for a party that has never received more than 0.5 percent of the vote since its establishment in the 1980s. Similarly, in Hungary, the extreme right-wing Jobbik party received 47 seats out of 386 during the 2010 elections, making it the third biggest party in the Assembly. Jobbik had not previously enjoyed parliamentary representation since its establishment in 2003. If we accept that the dramatic rise of the Golden Dawn and Jobbik may be understood in terms of economic crisis, then we would expect a similar phenomenon to occur in other countries that are also experiencing financial breakdown, including Ireland, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain and Italy. However, only Greece and Hungary are experiencing such a phenomenon. This puzzle may be addressed methodologically through a systematic comparison between those cases that exhibit a presence and those that exhibit an absence of the dependent variable, i.e. the rise of right-wing extremism.

The first step towards a meaningful comparison is case selection. From the universe of cases noted above, Ireland and Cyprus are the least appropriate cases for a comparison. This is because they differ fundamentally in terms of two historical variables, which entails they are not comparable to the other cases. The first is that unlike Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain and Italy they lack a legacy of right-wing authoritarianism, which tends to indicate increased likelihood for the development of right-wing extremism given the existence of a historical propensity. And the second is the issue of ethnic conflict. This adds a new variable, indicating that any comparison with the other cases could lead to potentially skewed results. The rise of right-wing extremism may be considered as the least relevant alternative for these countries because of the historical conditions that they share. The likelihood, however, of the emergence and growth of right-wing extremism associated with economic crisis is high in the remaining Greece and Hungary, Portugal, Spain and Italy. They all face similar crisis conditions; and they all have similar historical experiences, including a legacy of right-wing authoritarianism: Spain during the Franco regime (1939-1975); Greece during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941) and the Colonels junta (1967-1974); Hungary during the Horthy regime's (1920-1944) alliance with the axis powers (1939-1944); Portugal during the 1926-1933 military dictatorship followed by the Estado Novo period (1933-1974); and Italy during Mussolini's leadership (1925-1943).

The next step is to establish the variation in the dependent variable. Despite the crisis and their authoritarian pasts, Italy, Portugal and Spain are not witnessing the rise of right-wing extremism. Interestingly, in Italy the reverse has taken place. Although the country witnessed consistent support for right-wing extremism since the end of WWII, for example in the form of various parties including the Lega Nord, the National Alliance and the Social Movement/ Tricolor Flame, support declined with the onset of the crisis. During the 2013 elections the Lega Nord halved its electoral support from 8.1 in 2008 to 4.3 percent. In Portugal the nationalist Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR) received 0.2 percent of the votes cast in 2009, which it raised marginally to 0.3 percent in 2011 indicating consistent low levels of support. Similarly, there is little support for right-wing extremism in Spain. Possibly the only exception is the regionalist/nationalist Platform for Catalonia.

Although its support has increased at the local level, during the 2011 national elections the party received a mere 0.2 percent of the vote.

We are thus left with five potential cases for comparison, three negative and two positive. In order to understand why we are witnessing the rise of right-wing extremism in some crisis-ridden countries with conducive pasts, but not in others, the next logical step is to employ the most similar systems research design. In order to keep the comparison parsimonious, we primarily focus on Greece and Spain, which are taken as two paradigmatic cases exhibiting a variation in the dependent variable; and we use the remaining Hungary, Portugal and Italy as shadow cases. The goal of our paper is not to explain the rise of the extreme right as an individual outcome, but rather to explain variation in terms of extreme right-wing party performance at times of crisis.

This research design allows us to rule out competing explanations, and identify the independent variable on this basis. As such, its strength lies in ‘its theoretically informed combination of control and variation’ (Slater & Ziblatt 2013: 8). We choose our control variables in terms of existing explanations in the literature for the rise of the extreme right. Through a controlled comparison of demand and supply side explanations in Greece and Spain, this paper is able to generate both internal and external validity. Internal validity stems from the ability to control for competing hypotheses, as identified in the literature, and therefore to identify the independent variable causing the outcome. In addition to the comparison, we provide a detailed process tracing mechanism in all five cases which traces the link between the dependent, intervening and independent variables, thus strengthening the internal validity further. Rather than claiming universality, this paper puts forward a middle range theoretical proposition allowing for different patterns that account for variation. Because our cases constitute patterns, we expect our theory to be generalisable across a wider universe of cases which meet similar case selection criteria.

Rival hypotheses: Demand and Supply

This section addresses the research question by primarily comparing Greece and Spain, and using the remaining Italy, Hungary and Portugal as shadow cases. Through a comparison of Greece and Spain we examine potential explanatory variables identified in the literature and eliminate those that are similar across the two cases. We are able to isolate those that differ across cases in order to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for the rise of right-wing extremism at times of crisis. The key to the comparison is the variation in the sample, which ‘broadly mirrors variation in some broader and explicitly defined population of cases’ (Slater & Ziblatt 2013: 12). The precise causal mechanism at work will be illustrated in the next section.

Explanations for the rise of the extreme right may be categorised in terms of *demand* (Bell 1964; Golder 2003; Lipset 1960; Ramet 1999) and *supply* (Koopmans & Statham 1999; Halikiopoulou et al 2013; Mudde 2010). Demand related explanations refer to bottom up theories that focus on the voters themselves and the favourable socio-economic conditions facilitated by a crisis. Supply- side variables refer to top-down explanations and focus on institutional factors (Political Opportunity Structures). These refer to the historical and institutional context within which parties operate (Mudde 2010; Kitschelt & McGann 1995).

Both sets of variables may be held broadly constant across both our primary and shadow cases, as table 1 below indicates.

-----Table 1 about here-----

Demand variables

Demand -side explanations postulate that the rise of right-wing extremism may be explained by “structurally determined pathologies”, which are triggered by “extreme conditions” (i.e. crises) (Mudde 2010:1171). Extreme right-wing party support may be understood as a ‘psychological strain associated with uncertainties produced by large-scale socioeconomic and sociocultural changes’ (Betz 1998: 8). By creating this pathology, crisis affects voters in two ways. First, the social cleavage approach (Bell 1964; Kriesi et al 2008; Lipset 1960) posits that economic crisis creates a social pathology and facilitates extremism because it creates a society of winners and losers in which the dispossessed and unemployed will express their protest by opting for an extreme right-wing party. The main drivers for extreme right-wing support are either economic (traditional cleavage), when extreme right-wing parties are able to capitalise on the insecurities of downward social mobility (Lipset 1960); or identity-based (new cleavage), when extreme right-wing parties are able to capitalise on fear of the ‘other’ and immigration. Second, the partisan dealignment approach emphasises the declining significance of cleavages as voting determinants and focuses on the politics of resentment, voter volatility, the importance of policy, overall disillusionment with the system and voter cynicism as a product of dissatisfaction with democratic politics. According to this model, class and partisan identities are no longer able to anchor voters onto mainstream parties, therefore enabling the extreme right to capitalise on protest (Betz 1998; Norris 2005). Extreme right-wing party support is fuelled by resentment, alienation and lack of trust with the political system as a whole.

Both Greece and Spain fulfil the demand-side conditions in terms of currently experiencing economic crisis, which has resulted in rising unemployment, frequent demonstrations (often violent), popular disillusionment and deep societal divisions. For example, both Greece and Spain have unemployment rates at above 25 percent. Although the figures are not identical, they are certainly very close. In Greece the overall level of unemployment is 27 percent while in Spain it is 26.8 percent. Youth unemployment is at 62.5 percent and 56.4 percent respectively (BBC 2013). Both countries also share very high levels of immigration. Therefore there is the potential for immigrants to be seen as competitors for the collective goods of the state in both countries. This allows us to rule out demand-side variables as potential explanations for the presence of the extreme right in Greece but not Spain.

Supply variables

This set of variables focuses on the opportunities and constraints offered by the political-institutional context within which parties operate (Political Opportunity Structures). Supply institutional explanations postulate that the core factor that may explain extreme right-wing party success is party competition. These factors are not necessarily inherent to the parties themselves but refer to the degree of permissiveness of the system. Therefore it is party system dynamics and potential domestic competitors that are most likely to shape extreme right-wing party electoral performance. Party system dynamics may be determined by either the electoral system (Duverger’s Law) or existing social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Majoritarian electoral systems, such as the British FPTP, are by default more exclusive of smaller parties because of their winner takes all nature. However this does not entail that PR systems are necessarily conducive to the rise of extreme right-wing parties (Carter 2002). There are a number of proportional systems with majoritarian effects, depending on various attributes of the system, for example district size, electoral formula and threshold. Societal cleavages also affect the structure of the party system. The predominance of one societal cleavage, for example left-right, may produce a system of two party dominance, i.e. a system in which parties compete on one major dimension, even if the electoral system is to a degree proportional. In such systems, two mainstream parties, usually a centre-left and a centre-right are the two most relevant actors and they tend to alternate in power, even if in minority government or a coalition with a smaller party. This limits political space for smaller

parties. It could also mean that the mainstream party will be able to attract radical voters, thus constraining the political opportunities for extreme parties. Any potential demand for extreme right-wing ideals will be catered for through the more radical elements of a mainstream party (Ellwood 1995; Chhibber and Torcal 1997). This is particularly the case if extreme right-wing supply is fragmented (Marchi 2013).

Political opportunity structures are similar in both Greece and Spain and may thus be held constant. In both cases the electoral system has a majoritarian effect creating a party system where power alternates between two main competitors (Hopkin 2005; Pappas 2003). In Greece the post-dictatorship era has been dominated by the centre-right New Democracy and the centre-left PASOK which, until recently, together occupied the vast majority of the 300 parliamentary seats. In Spain, state-wide vote has been concentrated around the centre-right Partido Popular (PP) and the centre-left Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). In both cases the mainstream right has been catering for extreme right-wing ideals- in the Greek case ND and in the Spanish case PP. In both countries, the political space was even further constrained because of the fragmentation of the extreme right. In Greece a number of extreme right-wing parties competed for elections during the 1990s and 2000s, including Front Line, the Hellenism Party, the Hellenic Front, the National Coalition, the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), the Patriotic Alliance and the Golden Dawn. In Spain, a number of extreme right-wing parties also exist, including Democracia Nacional, Alternativa Española and Falange Española.

Political opportunities were also constraining in Hungary and Portugal. The former adopts a form of mixed and the latter a proportional system, but in both the concentration of the vote in the two major parties has been conducive to bipolar politics. This has entailed an alternation in government between the centre-left and the centre-right parties which have constituted the main political actors in the system. In Hungary, the right-wing Fidesz and the centre-left Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) which although were not always able to secure a strong majority government, have together occupied a large proportion of the parliamentary seats and alternated in power. Fidesz is a national conservative party, which offers supply for a broad margin of mainstream ideas. In Portugal, the Socialist Party (PS) and the centre-right Social Democratic Party (PPD) have been the predominant political forces alternating in government (Freire 2005). In addition the extreme right has been historically fragmented entailing limited opportunities for electoral success. Similarly to these cases Italy adopts a proportional system and despite the existence of many parties, competition has tended to take place around two main blocs, a centre-right and a centre-left, indicating a bipolar party system. However it is a more complex case as the extreme right has been historically successful in the form of a number of parties including the Lega Nord, the National Alliance and the Tricolor Flame. This is largely due to features that are domain-specific, for example the 'Mani pulite' scandal that erupted in the 1990s which affected most parties in the system thus allowing the Italian Social Movement (precursor of the National Alliance) to legitimise itself because of its lack of associations with the scandal. In any case, what is interesting about Italy is that the current economic crisis closed political opportunities for the extreme right, as will be shown below.

Although in most cases party system dynamics disfavoured the emergence of political opportunities for extreme right-wing parties, following the most recent elections in each case, this has changed. A variety of factors including party discourse change, shock factors such party scandals and trust issues, party schisms, the emergence of new parties, changes in policy salience and systemic weaknesses are likely to alter party system dynamics. Greece, Hungary and Spain have all experienced changes to their party systems and a degree of fragmentation that have opened up political space for smaller parties. In all three countries the respective centre-left party witnessed a substantive decrease in its support. The Greek PASOK received a mere 33 seats during the June 2012 elections, a sharp decline from the 160 seats it had received in 2009. The Spanish PSOE

received 110 seats in 2011, compared to 169 in 2008, lowering its support from 43.9 percent to 28.8 percent. The number of parties in parliament in both Greece and Spain has risen, from five to seven parties in the former and 10 to thirteen in the latter. The Hungarian MSZP received 59 seats in 2010 vis-à-vis 186 in 2006 and 178 in 2002. In the remaining two cases this has not taken place.

In Portugal and Italy this has not taken place. In Portugal the dynamics of the party system have remained broadly similar to previous years. In 2011 the PPD/PSD received 105 seats and the PS 73, compared to 78 and 96 in 2009 and 72 and 120 in 2005. The number of parties in Parliament remains the same and no new major competitor has entered the party system. In Italy it is the centre-right rather than the centre-left bloc that lost substantial support during the latest elections. Although the election of Pepe Grillo has meant the introduction of a third bloc in Italian politics and the number of parties in parliament has increased from 7 parties in 2008 to 10 in 2013, the Right has been challenged limiting opportunities for parties belonging to the Right coalition, including the Lega Nord.

We may therefore identify a variation in terms of political opportunity structures post -2010. In Greece, Hungary and Spain, political opportunities for extreme right-wing parties arose thus opening up a political space; while in Portugal and Italy, this did not take place. Therefore, Political Opportunity Structures may pose a satisfactory explanation for Portugal and Italy although an extreme right-wing party does exist, i.e. PNR and Lega Nord, this has had limited opportunities for success given the dynamics of the party system. However, while in the remaining three cases, the political opportunities are favourable, we may observe a variation in terms of extreme right-wing party performance. While in Greece and Hungary the Golden Dawn and Jobbik have experienced an electoral breakthrough, in Spain there is no comparable support for a similar party. This indicates that POS is a *necessary* but *not sufficient* condition for the rise of right-wing extremism. We need to thus identify an additional condition which in conjunction with the necessary POS will explain the rise of right-wing extremism at times of crisis.

Explaining variation: Nationalism and cultural opportunities

This paper argues that an extreme right-wing party is more likely to perform well during an economic crisis if it is able to capitalise not only on political but also on cultural opportunities. It is the simultaneous existence of favourable political and cultural opportunity structures that facilitates the rise of extreme right-wing parties during times of crises. Drawing on literature on Discursive Opportunity Structures (DOS) (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013; Halikiopoulou & Vasilopoulou 2010; Koopmans and Statham 1999), we focus on the ability of a given party to mobilise support through its discourse, organisation and leadership. We differentiate ourselves from this literature by arguing that this ability is not confined to the party itself, its organisation and its discursive choices; but mainly depends on the cultural opportunities available to it. We understand these cultural opportunities in terms of nationalism, and theorise that culture provides the structural context for the rise of extreme right-wing parties at times of crises.

We begin from the main assumption posed in nationalism theory that economic crises are likely to reinforce nationalism. For example the current economic crisis which erupted in 2008 has been met with a flourishing of nationalist rhetoric and an attempt to shift responsibility to external actors. Economic crises tend to be perceived domestically as an external threat because they serve to compromise the institutional, societal, political and economic status quo. The nationalist response to this perceived external threat is to 'privilege or protect national or ethnic *insiders* in the face of putative economic threats from *outsiders*' (Brubaker 2011: 94). Therefore nationalism serves as a cohesive factor vis-à-vis a threat to the national way of life (Halikiopoulou 2011). We argue that this nationalist reaction to the crisis may depend on the specific type of nationalism that exists in a given case. This in turn provides different cultural opportunities for extreme right-wing parties.

Nationalism may be understood as a political movement or ideology seeking the attainment and maintenance of the unity, autonomy and identity of a deemed nation (Breuilly 2005). It is not however a monolithic concept, as it has often been described as a Janus-faced (Nairn 1975), or double-faceted ideology (Hechter 2000), encompassing either those nations characterized by organic membership, ethnic descent, language and/ or creed (ethnic) or those defined by voluntary membership and inclusive characteristics such as territory and the law (civic) (Smith 1991; Kohn 1944; Brown 1999).

Building on these theories, we argue nationalism may take one of two forms, i.e. concentrated or diffusive, depending on whether there is an identity cleavage in a given country. Concentrated nationalism is one where there is one dominant identity and little potential for alternative nationalisms. In other words, there is one, undisputed state-wide identity. Diffusive nationalism on the other hand is one where multiple and/ or layered identities exist. There is a co-existence of multiple identities, state-wide and peripheral, usually defined by a conflictual relationship with each other. What differentiates these two types of nationalism is the existence or absence of conflict of identity.

We argue that the potential for right-wing extremism at times of crisis depends on whether there is an identity cleavage. When there is no identity cleavage and nationalism is concentrated, the crisis serves as a unifying factor and reinforces state-wide nationalism. Because state-wide nationalism is defined by a dominant ethnicity, this means the opening up of cultural opportunities for a party that stresses nationalism at the state level. When there exists one or multiple identity cleavages and nationalism is diffusive, the crisis serves as a divisive factor because the relationship between the various identities is conflictual. This may serve to reinforce the sub-national identities at the expense of the core. This in turn constrains cultural opportunities for a party that stresses nationalism at the state-wide level.

The Causal Mechanism

To recapitulate, this paper has (a) eliminated potential explanatory variables through a systematic comparison of Greece and Spain, with the use of Hungary, Italy and Portugal as shadow cases; (b) identified Political Opportunity Structures (POS) as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the rise of right-wing extremism at times of crisis; (c) has put forward an argument emphasising the role of nationalism as an additional necessary condition providing favourable cultural opportunities. The simultaneous presence of POS and COS is more likely to facilitate the rise of an extreme right-wing party at times of crisis. More specifically, we may identify three patterns of extreme right-wing party support as a result of the economic crisis within a universe of cases: the *conducive*, the *partially conducive* and the *constraining*. Extreme right-wing parties are more likely to succeed under the conducive pattern, i.e. in circumstances where both political and cultural opportunity structures are open (Greece and Hungary). Under the partially conducive pattern, political opportunities are opened up by the crisis but cultural opportunities are limited (Spain). In these circumstances, smaller parties have the potential to enter the political system, but these are not likely to be extreme right-wing as it is cultural opportunities that open space for such parties. Under the constraining pattern, political opportunity structures at the time of crisis are not permissive (Portugal and Italy). Therefore extreme right-wing parties are constrained and unable to capitalise on potentially existing cultural opportunities.

We illustrate this in figure 1 below through process tracing the causal mechanism. We do this for all five cases. Our rationale is to differentiate between the different trajectories followed by the cases under investigation and show how these trajectories change at specific critical junctures, employing a counterfactual logic.

----Figure 1 about here----

The crisis has opened up political opportunities for Greece, Hungary and Spain, but not for Portugal and Italy. In the latest national elections in Greece (June 2012), Hungary (2010) and Spain (2011), the centre-left party experienced a substantive decrease in its support and the number of parties in parliament increased thus altering the dynamics of the party system.

In Greece and Hungary which have been characterised as ‘populist democracies’ (Pappas 2013 forthcoming), the political system was one vulnerable to external shock. While Greece maintained a democratic institutional system following the restoration of democracy in 1974, it did not progress beyond the entrenched and rent-seeking networks that characterise the Greek socio-political system (Pappas 2013). The crisis revealed the systemic weaknesses of Greece’s clientelism and served to de-legitimise the main actors in the party system, and especially the centre-left PASOK which was in power for most of the period between 1981-2011. This explains why smaller parties in Greece were able to enter the political system, but does not specify which parties, for example why an extreme right-wing party rather than a left-wing party. In Spain PSOE also lost support, and the number of parties elected in parliament increased. In Portugal the crisis did not have a similar effect, as it did not alter the dynamics of the party system as of the most recent elections in 2011. Given the absence of POS, the rise of the extreme right is the least likely scenario for Portugal. In Italy, the reverse took place. Because it was the right wing coalition that lost support in the 2013 elections, POS became constrained. Although therefore, the absence of POS in Portugal and Italy indicates that without favourable political opportunity structures the rise of the extreme-right is highly unlikely, it also indicates that it is not sufficient in itself to explain this outcome, as there is variation across the three remaining cases.

The additional condition necessary may be found in the cultural opportunities defined by the type of nationalism present in a given case. In Greece nationalism is centralised and concentrated with little potential for diffusion. It is ethnically defined and there is one dominant narrative of national identity. It is the nationalism of a seceding group from the Ottoman Empire defined by organic and ethnic characteristics. Greek identity has no sub-national competing form of identity to challenge it. In Spain nationalism is civic, not centralised and is characterised by a multiplicity of discourses and nationalist sub-cultures. It is the nationalism of a former imperial metropole and can be characterised as a ‘coming together’ nationalism, i.e. a civic variant. Spain is characterised by a variety of nationalist discourses which can be described ‘as a dialectical struggle between the centre and periphery’ (Muro and Quiroga 2005: 9). An external shock such as economic crisis serves as a divisive factor because it weakens state-wide nationalism and strengthens the nationalist sub-cultures. This increases the cultural propensity for separatism but decreases the propensity for parties with an overall state-wide Spanish nationalist ideology.

Conclusion

In June 2012 over 400,000 Greek citizens voted for the Golden Dawn, an extreme right-wing party, granting it 18 seats in a Parliament of 300. Two years earlier the Hungarian electorate had granted 47 seats to the extreme right-wing Jobbik, making it the third most powerful actor in the Parliament. These results are not necessarily surprising. They may be seen as the product of economic crisis as both countries are experiencing severe financial breakdown. If this proposition were true, then we should expect to witness similar phenomena in other crisis-ridden countries. And yet, Portugal, Italy and Spain, which are also facing similar crisis conditions, have not developed similar support for an extreme right-wing party.

Why has the current economic crisis become associated with the rise of right-wing extremism in Greece and Hungary but not Portugal, Italy and Spain? This paper has addressed this puzzle through the employment of the most similar systems research design. We have primarily focused our analysis on Greece and Spain and used Hungary, Portugal and Italy as shadow cases. Through the comparison we have controlled for similarities and isolated differences that according to literature on the extreme right may constitute potential explanatory variables. This has allowed us to derive the argument that an extreme right-wing party is more likely to perform well during an economic crisis if it is able to capitalise not only on political but also on cultural opportunities. We have defined cultural opportunities in terms of nationalism, which we categorised between concentrated and diffusive, and showed that economic crisis is more likely to lead to the rise of the extreme right-wing parties in cases where nationalism is concentrated at the state-wide level.

Our argument challenges conventional wisdom that a crisis is likely to lead to the rise of right-wing extremism, by illustrating that in fact, it is the rarest outcome among crisis-ridden countries. In order for an extreme right-wing party to experience a rise in its support, two simultaneous conditions must be present, one political and one cultural. From our sample of five cases, only two, Greece and Hungary meet the necessary criteria, while the remaining three, Portugal, Spain and Italy do not. Our theoretical contribution is threefold. We illustrate empirically and methodologically that the rise of right-wing extremism is the least likely outcome of an economic crisis. We establish that the Political Opportunity Structures approach, treated in most of the literature as an explanatory variable is not sufficient in itself to explain the rise of right-wing extremism. We illustrate that treating political opportunity structures as the sole explanatory variable constitutes a methodological bias: (a) it forms the basis of circular reasoning, because while POS explains the rise of small parties, it does not explain which parties unless the end point is already known; and (b) selection bias, as cases that have conducive POS but lack a rise of extreme right-wing party support do exist. Pointing on these methodological and theoretical gaps, we show the importance of nationalism, often overlooked in studies of party politics, as an interactive condition necessary and sufficient for the rise of right-wing extremism at times of crisis. We posit that there is a need to conceptually disentangle political from cultural opportunity structures in order to understand the rise of right-wing extremism.

We pose our argument in terms of two necessary and sufficient conditions in order to facilitate falsification. If, for example, we are right, then Portugal would be a likely case for the rise of right-wing extremism if POS became favourable. This is because permissive COS do exist as there is no identity cleavage (Freire 2005) but rather a dominant national narrative prominent at the state-wide level. If future research identifies cases where POS and COS exist but there is no extreme right, then our sufficient argument can be considered falsified. If research shows cases of extreme right-wing party support but no simultaneous presence of POS and COS, then the necessary argument can be falsified.

There is a trade-off between universality and falsifiability: in order to ensure the internal validity of our results, we need to maximise comparability by limiting our universe of cases. As such, we have omitted Cyprus and Ireland from our analysis which we confine to crisis-ridden countries with some historical experience of right-wing authoritarianism that are not partitioned through involvement of ethnic conflict. However, we still retain external validity in that (a) our results are applicable to all cases that meet our selection criteria, theoretically outside our chosen sample, until illustrated otherwise; and (b) our overall finding, i.e. that a particular type of nationalism is more conducive for the rise of right-wing extremism under certain conditions, opens up avenues for future research and may be relevant to a broader universe of cases. In other words, so far this article has posited a middle-range theoretical proposition applicable to a specific universe of cases that meet certain conditions. Future research could identify the relevance of our results outside this sample.

Our findings are significant at a time when economic crisis is affecting most of Europe and is fuelling political disillusionment. Our contribution is that we treat nationalism as the main explanatory variable for the rise of right-wing extremism. The progressive entrenchment of extreme right-wing parties in their national political systems raises a number of important issues that have significant implications for the nature of democracy and policy-making. If our argument is correct, then crisis maybe understood as a trigger factor not enough in itself to facilitate the rise of right-wing extremism. Rather pre-existing structural conditions must be present for this to occur, indicating that the prevention of right-wing extremism lies in long-term policies.

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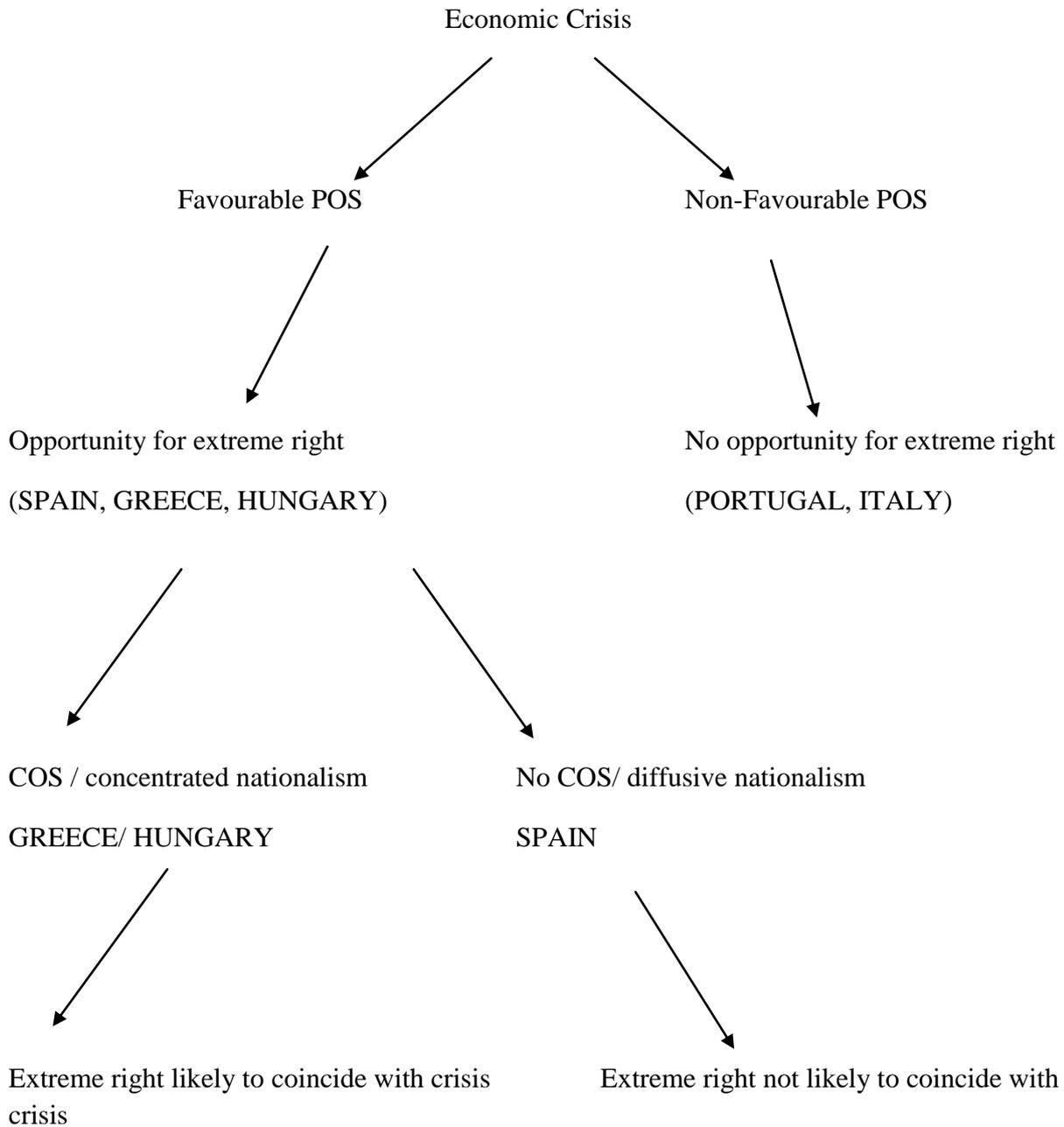
Table 1: Case selection criteria

	Greece	Spain	Hungary	Portugal	Italy
Legacy of right-wing authoritarianism	1936-1941 (Metaxas Regime) 1967-1974 (Colonels' Regime)	1939-1975 (Franco Regime)	1920-1944 (Horthy regime) 1939-1944 (Alliance with Axis powers)	1933-1974 (Estado Novo)	1925-1943 (Mussolini Regime)
Economic crisis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
External financial assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (potential bailout in 2013)
Economic performance pre-crisis	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Dependent variable: support for the extreme right	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak/moderate

Table 2: Primary and shadow cases in comparative perspective

	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Spain</i>	Hungary	Portugal	Italy
Demand					
Severe economic breakdown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Latent support/ favourable social base	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Levels of unemployment	High	High	High	High	High
Supply					
Electoral system	PR -Open list	PR- Closed list	Mixed	PR-Closed	PR-Closed list
Party system	Bipolar competition/ centre-right and centre left block				
Mainstream right-wing competitor	Highly Conservative				
Fragmentation of the right	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
<i>Favourable POS post-2010</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

Figure 1: The causal mechanism



A guide to the advance of right-wing nationalist parties. Nationalism has always been a feature across Europe's political spectrum but there has been a recent boom in voter support for right-wing and populist parties. It is visible from Germany, where the AfD has become the biggest opposition party in the Bundestag, to Spain, where Vox has become the third largest force in parliament. In part, voters are frustrated with the political establishment, but they also have concerns about globalisation, immigration, a dilution of national identity and the European Union. In the European Parliament, nine far-right parties have formed a new bloc, called