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# The Economic Crisis and the Rise of Far-Right Parties in Europe

How the Economic Crisis generated more far-right movements and created more Euroscepticism

Bachelor's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Anna Brigevich

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Historical and Classical Studies



Kunnskap for en bedre verden



## Sammendrag

Økonomikrisen (2008-2012) skapte store politiske og sosiale problemer i Den europeiske union (EU). Problemer hvor folk stoler mindre på EU og man har observert en høyrepoltiskbølge skylle over Europa. I denne oppgaven tar jeg for meg økonomikrisen og hvordan dens påvirkning har skapt en høyrebevegelse i Europa. Gjennom i oppgaven presenter jeg ulike viktige begreper som høyreradikale partier, populisme, euroskeptisisme og globalisasjon. For å kunne gå dypere inn i forskningsspørsmålet mitt har jeg også tatt i bruk teorien «winners and losers of globalization», senere er to europeiske høyrepartier, Golden Dawn (GD) Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) presenter og diskutert og har brukt forskjellige variabler hentet fra Eurobarometeret og Hellas og Tyskland sine nasjonale hjemmesider. Dette var for å vise hvordan de fikk populariteten sin. Jeg har funnet ut at begge partiene har brukt økonomikrisen til sin fordel for å bli mer populære og skape mer euroskeptisisme.

## Abstract

The economic crisis (2008-2012) created substantial political and social problems in the EU. Problems where the trust in the EU decreased, and a radical right has become more prevalent in the EU. In this project, I will explain the economic crisis and how it affected the radical right in Europe, basing this on two right parties, GD and AfD. In the project, I present important terms, radical right parties, populism, Euroscepticism, and globalization. I also use the theory “winners and losers of globalization” to gain a deeper understanding of the people voting for these parties, giving them political power. I found that both the political parties have used the economic crisis as a tool to their advantage in order to gain voters and create more Euroscepticism.

## Table of Contents

Sammendrag .....	i
Abstract .....	i
Abbreviations .....	iv
1 Introduction .....	1
2 Literature review .....	1
2.1 Terms.....	1
2.2 Theory .....	3
2.3 Winners of Globalization .....	5
2.4 Losers of Globalization .....	5
2.5 The economic crisis.....	6
3 Method .....	8
3.1 Comparative Case Study .....	8
4 Cases.....	9
4.1 Golden Dawn.....	9
4.2 Alternative for Deutschland .....	14
4.3 Similarities and differences .....	18
5 Conclusion.....	20
Sources .....	21

## Figures

Figure 1: GDP per capita in selected economies, p. 9

Figure 2: Trust in the EU and GD national election results over time, p. 12

Figure 3: Financial situation of your household % answer “bad”, p 13

Figure 4: Trust in the EU and AfD votes in the Bundestag, p 14

Figure 5: Financial situation in your household % answer bad, p 16

## Abbreviations

AfD – Alternative for Deutschland

ECB – European Central Bank

EMU – Economic monetary union

EU – European Union

GD – Golden Dawn

IMF – International Monetary Fund

MEP – Member of European Parliament

RRP – Radical right party



## 1 Introduction

Through its relatively short existence, the EU has faced many controversies, crises, criticism, and scrutiny. One such crisis the EU had to face was the economic crisis in 2008, and it hit Europe hard, especially the smaller economies that were part of the common currency, the Euro.

The global economic crisis of 2008 was instrumental in changing many different systems all across the world. It showed how easy the world could crumble after the housing market in the USA crashed and created a domino effect that rolled over to the world as a whole. Countries worldwide could feel the consequences, and Europe was no exception. This event is often regarded as the failure of the European Euro, and trust in the EU's financial system lessened.

A surge in radical right parties (RRP) has also been on the rise in Europe for some time, as they stand as one of the primary opponents of European integration (Vassilopoulos, 2018, p. 122). Given their views on the EU, they have gained some popularity across Europe due to different reasons, where they have managed to polarize the political landscape in their countries. Some explain that the RRP traction mainly uses immigration as their main issue, where crime, corruption, and European integration also are characteristics of these (Mudde, 2012, p. 6). I, however, would also argue that an essential factor for the rise of RRP parties in Europe is the use of monetary concern, thus leading to the research question. How did the economic crisis in 2008 generate more far-right movements in Europe and create more Euroscepticism?

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Terms

Cas Mudde (2016) defines what the popular media often refers to as RRP or extreme RRP. His definition calls these parties "populist radical right parties". These kinds of parties do not, per Mudde's definition, self-identify as populist or radical (Mudde, 2016, p. 295-296). Parties like this usually have a core that contains three or more features. These are nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Mudde, in his definition, combines these at the center to identify parties that he describes as "populist radical right parties". Nativism combines nationalist and xenophobic views while seeing other cultures and practices as threats (Mudde, 2016, p. 296). This element also extends to the belief that the native people of that state should inhabit it and exclude any form of "other", external people from that state. The second element is authoritarianism; Mudde defines it as a state having strict control over its society.

If citizens do not follow strict rules, severe punishment will follow (Mudde, 2016, p. 296). Mudde writes that authoritarian parties tend to criminalize social problems. Examples of social issues that these parties tend to restrict include but are not limited to abortion, drugs, and prostitution.

Mudde defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups” the two groups are called “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” by Mudde. With the splitting of society, the natural course of the party is to blame the corrupt elite, and the politicians for the populist radical right party will be “the voice of the people”. In Mudde’s definition, populism is an ideology. Other explanations have also been used and described as a political style. Øyvind Østerud views populism as a political style rather than an ideology. In his definition, he connects populism to three core features. These features are “the increasing threat from immigration, a rise in inequality, and a decrease in support for political and economic elites” (Østerud, 2017, p. 246 & 247). Cas Mudde admits that populism as a style has become more dominant in European politics. Instead of having it ingrained as an ideology of the party, elements of the populist ideology are used as tools (Mudde, 2007, p. 111). Mudde found that the core of populism is turning mainstream ideas radical. This kind of radicalization trust that is lost towards the political elite with populism includes “protest against the already established”, and rebelling against the cost of globalization, the loss of employment, increasing inequality, and an unsure situation of life, according to Østerud.

The media first used Euroscepticism to describe Margaret Thatcher’s position on the EU (Guerra & Trenz, 2019, p. 220). Later it has been popularized in academic communities where a usual definition is “doubt and distrust of the subject of European integration” (Guerra & Trenz, 2019, p. 220). This term also connects heavily with the extreme left and right for political parties, where a surge in support for anti-EU political parties has been increasing in 2014 (Guerra & Trenz, 2019, p. 220). The people who tend to fit into the description of Eurosceptic are those who identify less with the “European identity”.

The European identity is powerful as “it is the strongest factor preventing skepticism” (Wessels, 2007, p 305). Most who identify with it are more usually pro-EU, and here a multi-layered identity is present where the European identity can either proceed with the national identity, which is less likely, or co-exists with a state’s national identity (Leconte, 2010, p. 186). Eurosceptic nature usually stems from the people who still use their own national identity instead of the combined described above, where a detachment from the EU exists

(Leconte, 2010, p 185). The people who reject the European identity are also those who usually want to either stop or halt European integration, such as the Euro, can be described as Eurosceptic (Leconte, 2010, p. 185).

Globalization is quite comprehensive as the world becomes increasingly more connected. It is described as “one of the most fashionable words for politicians, businesspeople, union leaders, and economists alike” (Dehesa, 2006). It is further described as a “Dynamic process of liberalization, openness, and international integration across a wide range of markets [...]” (Dehesa. 2006, p. 1). Further globalization is defined by freedom, where states and people can trade with one another. This effect means the active members of globalization could invest their capital wherever they would like or build a business wherever one would like (Dehesa. 2006, p. 1).

In the non-economic perspective, can globalization be seen in a less opportunistic view than the economist suggested. Here have people collected fear spoiling of the social and environmental standards, where poverty may rise in developed and underdeveloped countries, creating higher risks of financial crises, such as the global economic crisis in 2008. This in turn can lead people to suffer and protest (Dreher, 2006, p. 1091). These fears are of course not irrational as just two years after Dreher’s article was published the housing bubble in the USA burst and the economic crisis started.

## 2.2 Theory

As globalization has many different meanings and, as the literature shows, there are an extensive number of views on it, a theory called “winners and losers of globalization” has been created, and it analyzes the individual people and groups of people that are affected either negatively or positively by globalization. Winners and losers of globalization theory stems from research done by Guillermo de la Dehesa. Many other theories have also been written about winners and losers of globalization theory. These include, (Teney, lackwell and De Wilde, 2014 ; Lamp, 2019 ; Petterson, 2017).

Teney et al. (2014) defines the winners and losers of globalization theory. Their introduction summarizes the theory: “Losers of globalization are citizens who see their life chances reduced by the effects of globalization while winners are those who consider themselves to have benefitted from globalization (Teney et al., 2014, p. 575). This simplified explanation is the core of the theory. There is, of course, a more extensive definition of the theory, which offers more depth to it. From what Teney and his co-authors gathered, much of the focus is on

Europeans in this theory. They use various sets of variables to define the people affected by globalization. These variables also put individuals into groups and where some of the attitudes towards globalization show themselves. Examples of the variables and characteristics to find the winners and losers of globalization are subjective perceptions of globalization, whether globalization is a threat or if it will affect the collective identity of a specific nation. Generally, they use many characteristics of whom, and how people identify themselves, and combine their socio-demographic status and other societal factors to define the losers and winners (Teney et al., 2014, p. 576).

Teney et al. defines the objective attributes of winners and losers should include “both age, immigrant origin, place of residence”, they also take the identities of the winners and losers in order to see who they are and their attitudes to the EU, where they look at “gender, age, age at which respondents stopped full time education, [...] internet use, [...], and socio economic status” (Teney et al., 2014, p. 581). These variables are used to understand if the individuals or groups in question are winners or losers of globalization.

Lamp (2019) sees globalization as beneficial it, however, creates both winners and losers. Highly skilled workers will “win”, and their counterparts will see a decrease in demand for their work, where companies get access to cheaper low-skilled labor from other countries due to globalization (Lamp, 2019). This, in turn, suggests that the level of education of the losers is of a lower degree as the individuals are less skilled. His approach to the theory emphasizes the economic prospects of the theory instead of integration and immigration. Lamp also acknowledges the loss of protected businesses that previously were protected due to national operation, where the world sees steadily more connected economies. There is also an argument that the losers of globalization would decrease in numbers where there is a strong welfare state in place (Petersen, 2017, p. 23). This is due to the protection this can lead to, where “economic and social policies can compensate for the income losses of those persons who lose their jobs due to international competition” (Petersen, 2017, p. 23). This is important, but if a robust welfare system is threatened by external factors, such as a recession in the global economy, the point of a strong welfare state point might not hold.

Teney et al. found that the people who perceive globalization as an opportunity were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the EU, which goes for more or less the entire EU. Also, those with a multi-layered identity, such as combining a European one with a national identity, usually will have a more positive attitude toward European integration and globalization (Teney et al., 2013. p 587).

According to Teney and his co-author's research, the losers and winners of Globalization are focused on two main key factors. The two factors are attitudes toward immigrants and meanings of the EU (Teney et al., 2013, p. 582). As I will focus on the economic crisis in this project, the factor of immigration is deemed less important for this project.

### 2.3 Winners of Globalization

Combining the literature gathered, I conclude that winners of globalization are generally of a higher socio-economic status, where it is easier for the individual to identify with a European identity. Other characteristics that generally identify one who can be called a winner of globalization view globalization as opportunistic. As for their morals, they are not xenophobic and generally see an open culture as positive. Other important characteristics of the winners of globalization are that they have a secure financial status, and the increasing level of globalization does not threaten their income.

There are many different definitions and elements to explain who the winners of globalization are. It will include the characteristics where they also often, in contrast to losers, have a safe financial environment where they are not threatened by either external companies, states, or cultures. These individuals also often live in suburban/metropolitan areas and are therefore more in contact with other cultures, opening them up to new views of the world around them. Because of this, I would argue that this implies the winners are pro-European integration. A tendency also observed of the people who view globalization as positive are usually young, living in urban areas, and usually possess a degree from higher education (Teney et al., 2014, p. 578).

### 2.4 Losers of Globalization

The characteristics of individuals who can be considered "losers of globalization" are usually Eurosceptic and often vote for a RRP. Such as Teney et al. suggest that the individuals who are generally affected negatively by globalization, either if they perceive an adverse effect of globalization or are affected, have an identity that aligns more with a nationalistic identity than a European one. These are also usually the people who would be driven to vote for a radical right-wing party. It is also observed that whatever could potentially challenge the traditional values, such as a national culture or anything out of the norm in that community or the safety these individuals feel like they have (Aasjord, 2020, p. 104). This makes their view of globalization negative, effectively making them "losers of globalization."

In contrast to the winners, losers of globalization often have a negative view of globalization and, by extension, European integration. The type of integration that the EU offers, for example, the Euro currency, will be regarded as a threat rather than an opportunity. They often have an unstable financial situation and live in more rural areas where they are not too much in touch with other cultures and generally feel threatened by globalization, which might affect their jobs and culture, and are also a part of the older generation.

## 2.5 The economic crisis

The economic crisis of 2008 started in the USA with the collapse of the American housing market. The housing market collapse created a domino effect causing a relapse in the global economy. The economic crisis and its aftermath showed itself to affect the EU more than it affected the USA (Verdun, 2019, p. 354). European economies were affected to various degrees, but the ones that suffered most from the crisis were mainly the tourist-based economies such as Spain, Portugal, and Greece (Thompson, p. 71).

The economic crisis displayed a considerable shortcoming in the Euro and EU's lack of control over the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) they created for it. The EU institutions were not ready to react appropriately to avoid the crisis, resulting in a late and fragmented response (Stijn, 2019, p. 132). The Maastricht treaty defined the stages the EMU would go through to create their common currency, the Euro (The European Union, n.d.). The three stages it would go through is "liberalization of capital movements," which happened in 1990. The second stage would converge national economic policies in 1994, and in the third stage, the Euro would be created and a European bank with it in 1999 "at the latest" (European Union, n.d.). The EU set up different criteria for member states to join the EMU and adopt the Euro with these three phases. These were important to fulfill as they would protect the more homogenized economies and were put in the Maastricht treaty. The criteria were generally stringent, with a heavy focus on debt, budget deficit, stable exchange rates, stable inflation rates, and long-term interest rates (Verdun, 2019, p. 348).

What was instrumental that the countries had to meet was the budgetary criterion. This criterion stated that "budget deficits should be no more than 3% of the GDP of that country" (Verdun, 2019, p. 348). Many of the countries that joined the EMU did not meet all the proper criteria that were initially put in place. This was especially true for Greece where they displayed a consistent deficit rate proceeding the 3% limit (Kitonis et al. 2011, p. 264). In a report that came out in 2017 done by the European Central Bank (ECB), all of the member

states inside the EMU, except for Germany and France, exceeded the 3% criterion (Creel, 2018).

The EMU was heavily criticized for its inefficient design and control in, and after the crisis. (Verdun, 2019, p. 353). The lack of control and the failure to meet the criteria set up to protect the EMU would affect the EU's economy more than the USA (Verdun, 2017, p. 354). In the crisis, many banks were on the brink of collapsing across the EU. There was little to no credit available for the banks, and stock exchanges fell. What seemed to happen in the crisis was that governments across the EU were panicking where the Irish government, for example guaranteed their banks, which caused people from the UK to move their capital into Irish banks resulting in even more chaos (Hodson & Puetter, 2019, p. 391). Several banks followed in the same suit creating more chaos and uncertainty around Europe (Hodson & Puetter, 2019, p. 391).

In 2009 nearly all the economies of the member states of the EU showed either a negative growth or being in a recession (Verdun, 2019, p. 354). Due to the recession many banks in the EU were unwilling and unable to give out loans to consumers and other banks (Hudson & Puetter, 2019, p. 391). The situation also intensified when many member states' governments increased their borrowing, which put them in larger debts, causing more significant deficits and putting their citizens in more unsure financial situations (Hudson & Puetter, 2019, p. 399).

The aftermath of the financial crisis showed that the EU needed to put more secure policies within the EMU. The EU now has gained the power to limit member state's national budgets with their fiscal policy as a result of the financial crisis, which they previously did not have, leading to member states having to give away more of their sovereignty for the ECB to exert more control over the members inside the EMU (Smismans, 2019, p. 138).

The support for EMU and ECB during the financial crisis hit a dip in the three largest euro area countries, France, Italy, and Germany (European Central Bank, 2020). The ECB also added that in Germany, the skepticism has lingered. As many smaller economies were hit more severely by the economic crisis, such as Spain, Ireland, and Greece, skepticism rose more in these countries towards the EMU, ECB and the EU (European Central Bank, 2020). The economic crisis stands as a reminder today that globalization, while it may offer economic growth, can also have a negative side to it.

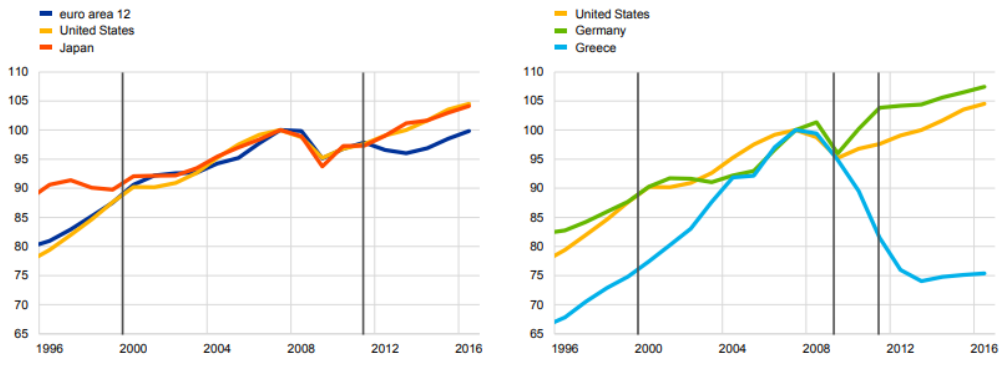
EU's failed response to the crisis laid ground for the emergence of populist movements and RRP (Smismans, 2019, p. 138). States had increased taxes, cutting spending to reduce budget deficits. Countries like Greece and other struggling economies with a lot of debt feel like the EU imposed these cuts upon them, which led to radical political movements in Europe.

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Comparative Case Study

As the economic crisis caused complete chaos in the EU, many of the less robust economies were heavily affected, and thus the citizens within these kinds of economies had an unsure financial future. I will do a comparative case study for this project, where I first present the Greek RRP GD and the German RRP AfD. The economies and cultures of Greece and Germany are different, and in the economic crisis, they were vastly unequal. Figure 1 shows how Greece's GDP was affected by the economic crisis compared to Germany's. Therefore, my assumption here is that I expect to see a difference in attitudes toward the EU and the rhetoric used by the RRP.

Figure 1, GDP per capita in selected economies



Sources: European Commission and ECB.  
Note: The euro area 12 includes West Germany data before 1991.

A good portion of the statistics presented in the case study are gathered from the standard Eurobarometer survey, and the national government sites of Greece and Germany. The variables will be presented are citizens of Germany and Greece that have been asked, their trust in the EU, their financial situation, and attitudes towards globalization to understand if these kinds of parties used the economic crisis to their advantage. Other variables are the votes the RRP got in their national elections to see if there is any correlation between the popularity of the political parties and trust in the EU.



Through the different cases, I will try to find out if the losers of globalization were part of why the RRP parties rose to power, and how they created Euroscepticism by blaming the EU and globalization, to understand if the economic crisis was a reason for RRP to gain voters. For Greece, I expect that trust in the EU will decrease and see a surge in popularity for GD when the support is low. I will also make the same assumption for AfD. I expect to see more support for the GD and less trust for the EU in Greece, as this was an economy that lost way more to the economic crisis than Germany, which remained relatively stable, as shown in figure 1.

My assumption for GD is that it will gain much popularity when the economic crisis reaches Europe due to how unpopular the EU was under the economic crisis. However, I assume GD will lose popularity over time as the Greek society tries to fix its society and the economy becomes more stable compared to what it was. For AfD I expect their popularity to rise. As they now are a largely anti-immigrant party, their support will probably rise in popularity even after the economic crisis. I also assume that the voters could be described as losers of globalization for both parties, as the theory would suggest that the losers of globalization would be drawn to RRP.

After the cases are defined and discussed, I will compare the cases to differentiate and see similarities, see if my assumptions were correct, and understand if the economic crisis created more far-right movements in Europe.

## 4 Cases

### 4.1 Golden Dawn

Greece was a notable victim of the financial crisis, where the economy received a large amount of money to secure it from defaulting, which means it was on the brink of not being able to pay off the debt that was accumulated. The economy received funds from the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The financial help was widely unpopular in Greece as it led to the EU and IMF exerting more control and cutting public spending. The support, however, was in the interest of the EU because having a country that was included in the EMU using the Euro as a currency to default might have brought about the fall of the Euro and made the economic crisis even worse in the EU. Both the IMF and the EU supported Greece financially, but at the cost of Greece having to do strict structural reforms and cutting in spending, as was the wishes of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who contributed most

to the financial help to Greece (Hudson & Puetter, 2019, p. 393 : Angouri & Wodak, 2014, p. 541).

As seen in figure 1 Greece's GDP plummeted around 2008, at the start of the economic crisis. At the start of the crisis, Greece's government debt was in excess of 100% of its GDP. For comparison, struggling economies such as Ireland and Spain began the crisis with government debt below 40% of their GDP (Hudson & Puetter).

During the financial crisis, Greece almost went into default, Greece was in other words not able to pay the debt it had accumulated (Hudson & Puetter, 2015, p. 441). Debt was not the only problem that faced Greece at the time where a report from the European Court of Auditors made a report called The Commission's intervention in the Greek financial crisis (2017) reporting on the issues concerning Greece at the time. The report stated that

*the 2008-2009 global financial crisis exposed the country's vulnerabilities: growing macroeconomic imbalances, large stocks of public and external debt, weak external competitiveness, an unsustainable pension system and weak institutions. These combined with revelations about misreporting of official statistics impacted international confidence. The price which Greece had to pay to borrow on the financial markets became unsustainable and in April 2010 the country requested financial assistance from the Euro area member states and the IMF.*

The issues that Greece had was more than just debt. Generally, their economy was bleeding and as a result Greece reluctantly had to request financial help from the members of the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

GD is an extreme-right wing, neo-Nazi, RRP political party from Greece that recently got banned from the parliament as the party was deemed a criminal organization in 2021 (Kitsantonis & Magra, 2021 : Elinas, 2013, p. 549 ). They gained their main popularity in the 2012 Greek elections, during the economic crisis, but they started their political activity in 1993 (Elinas, 2013, p. 547). Their ideological position aligns with neo-fascist, anti-democratic, and anti-immigrant (Roumanias, Skouras & Christodoulakise., 2022, p 111). They have also been described as “fundamentally incompatible with EU membership”, showcasing their anti-EU, Eurosceptic stance (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p. 319).

The party was established in the, 1980s and GD's leader Nicos Michalolaikos was active in right-wing politics already from the start of the establishment of the Greek democracy in the

1970s (Sakellariou, 2015, p. 6). GD's rise to popularity started with the economic crisis that affected a large amount of the Greek population. There was also little trust in the Greek political system and the EU, which GD generally used to gain voters (Romanias et al., 2022, p. 107). Lastly GD viewed the EU as a total failure, holding Eurosceptic views.

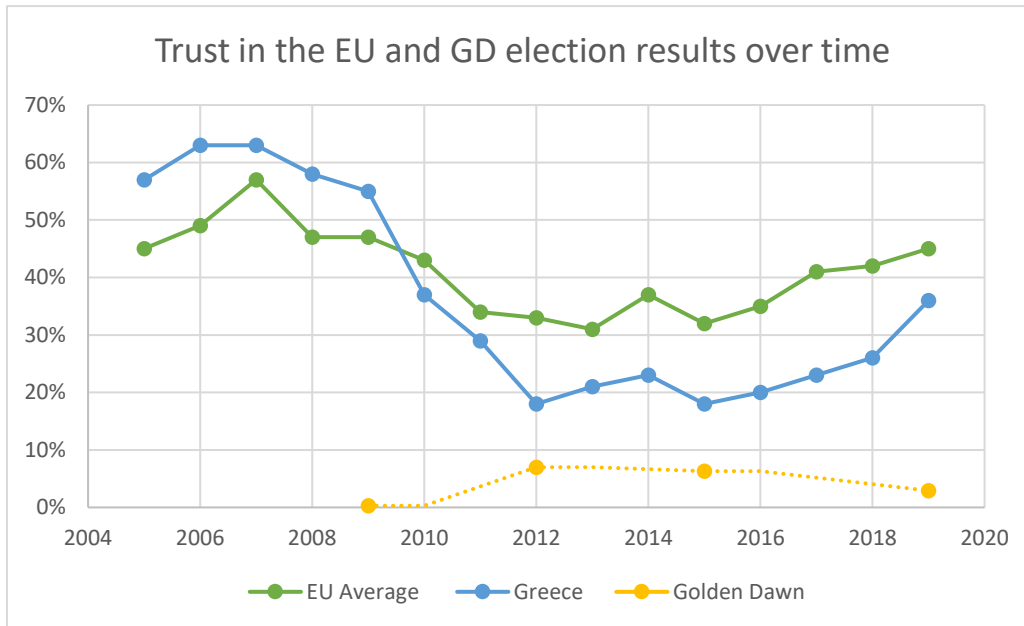
After the economic crisis hit, Greece suffered from a colossal employment crisis. In 2014, the unemployment rate was 27,8%, whereas the same rate in the Eurozone area was around 12% (Angouri & Wodak, 2014, p. 540). It was previously thought that Southern-European states, like Greece, were done with the authoritarian politics after democratization and setting up welfare states, so it was a surprising fact that a party this extreme, falling into the categories of neo-fascism, had come to gain an influx of voters (Ellinas, 2013, p. 544). They were good at using their rhetoric, which is ultra-nationalistic, and framing it to seem harmless (Angouri & Wodak, 2014, p. 542).

Votes that came in for a party that were primarily considered an extreme far-right party was interesting as the main votes for GD's entrance into the Greek parliament was retrieved in a period when immigration was generally at the same level it would have been before 2012 (Roumanias et al., 2022, p .108). This can display that, it was not an apparent anti-immigrant attitude that GD used to gain voters, suggesting there could be other factors to its popularity.

As for the actual votes, the popularity of GD, and the trust in the EU are displayed in figure 2. Here it is evident that the general trust for the EU fell across all of the member states. Greece, however, went from being well above average to way below average, and just when the lowest point hit, GD gained its highest spike in popularity. Here I would argue that due to the Greek loss of GDP and high debt caused by the economic crisis, a political landscape was created that GD could use as a tool to gain voters.

GD's voter demographic is described as similar to any other RRP in Europe (Ellnias, 2013, p. 554). This means they usually have nationalistic identities. They are, however, also somewhat unusual as they are generally young, and moderate in terms of education. GD voters are also usually either self-employed, private sector, unemployed, rural, and university students, in other words many of the most vulnerable to an economic crisis (Ellnias, 2013, p. 555, : Roumanias et al., 2022, p .117).

Figure 2

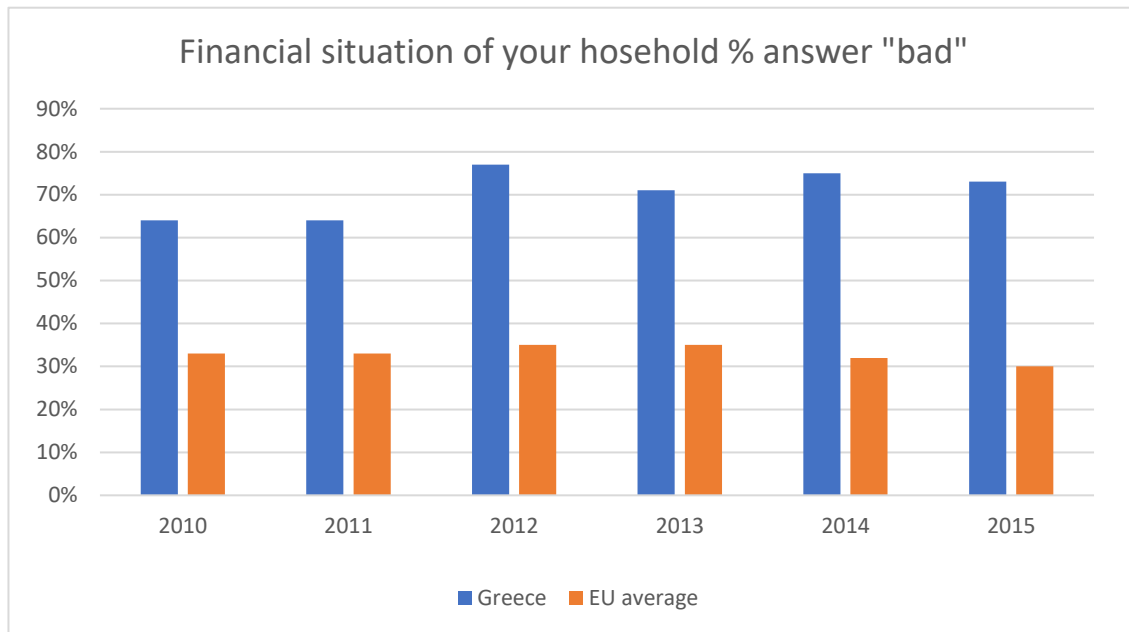


Sources: Eurobarometer, 64, 65, 67, 70, 71, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 93, 95 & Ministry of Interior

Looking at it through the lens of winners and losers of globalization theory it cannot fully explain the voter base as it does not extend to young, and moderately to higher educated people, which GD's primary voters were. Where losers are often described as undereducated, older or less skilled. Another point of the theory can, however, explain how GD gained voters by appealing to the losers of globalization, and that is due to what I argue to be the most important factor in the case for GD and Greece. This is the financial insecurity that the economic crisis created. This is the point where individuals of Greece felt genuinely hit by the economic crisis, and many would no doubt only feel like they lost to the integration globalization causes, leading to them not only being able to perceive themselves as losers of globalization but also living as examples of actual losers of the globalized world.

The nature of a crisis, such as an economic crisis, can motivate groups or parties to construct stories or imagery to create uncertainty or conflict (Angouri & Wodak, 2015, p. 544). As GD has been described as neo-fascist, the party undoubtedly used the economic landscape, and then transferred it into other realms of politics to gain popularity using populist techniques (Roumanias et al., 2022, p. 112). GD also blamed the EU for their fall and later called for a return to the national currency that preceded the Euro after the crisis had hit (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p. 323).

Figure 3



Sources: Eurobarometer 74, 75, 78, 80, 82, 83

The winners and losers of Globalization theory confirm that GD voters are the losers of globalization, as they are put in an uncertain financial situation by the effects of the economic crisis. To further prove this, have Greeks from the financial crisis reported that many of them were in a bad financial situation in their household; this can be observed in figure 3, where the economic uncertainty was at a peak in 2012, the turning point after the economic crisis. The welfare state in Greece at the time was also showing little to no results in supporting citizens, at the same time depriving the national economy and cutting pensions (Matsaganis, 2011, p. 5). Winners and Losers of globalization would suggest that a weaker welfare state creates more losers, and as the situation in Greece was that of a weakened welfare state, the Greek voters would be more likely to vote for GD.

Angouri and Wodak pointed out that the nature of a crisis can motivate groups or parties, such as GD is constructing stories and imagery to reduce or increase uncertainty and conflict (Angouri & Wodak, 2015, p. 544). GD created new stories and imagery by offering a new narrative to the Greek public. The prime minister of Greece in 2009 announced that the previous administrations had hidden the scale of how much the government was borrowing (Hudson & Puetter, 2019. P. 392). In contrast did GD, like many populist radical right parties, create a narrative for the voters where GD could conveniently put the blame of the state of Greece's economy on the EU, instead of the old Greek administration, as that would probably not fit the Eurosceptic narrative as well.

With the Eurosceptic views and call to return to their national economy and financial security, losers of globalization would probably have seen GD as a good option. Especially as the arena for Eurosceptic views steadily increased up until 2012. The Greek view of globalization was also on GD's side, when in 2009, 81% of Greeks reported that they agree to the statement "globalization creates social inequalities" (European Commission , 2009).

Here I conclude that GD used the economic crisis as a tool to gain voters by mobilizing what can be described as the losers of globalization, where they saw that economic suffering among Greek citizens was prevalent. GD created an arena for people who both are and perceive themselves as losers of globalization. At the same time GD managed to create a Eurosceptic view for their voters as the trust in the EU was at an all-time low in Greece.

Romanias et al. use the argument that GD's support was due to abrupt changes in voting behavior rather than the changes in the socioeconomic conditions of Greece. Here I would like to counter their argument and suggest that it would not have been possible for GD to gain as many voters if not for the abrupt change in the socioeconomic world to make such abrupt changes, thus making the Economic crisis GD's primary tool for gaining voters and creating Euroscepticism.

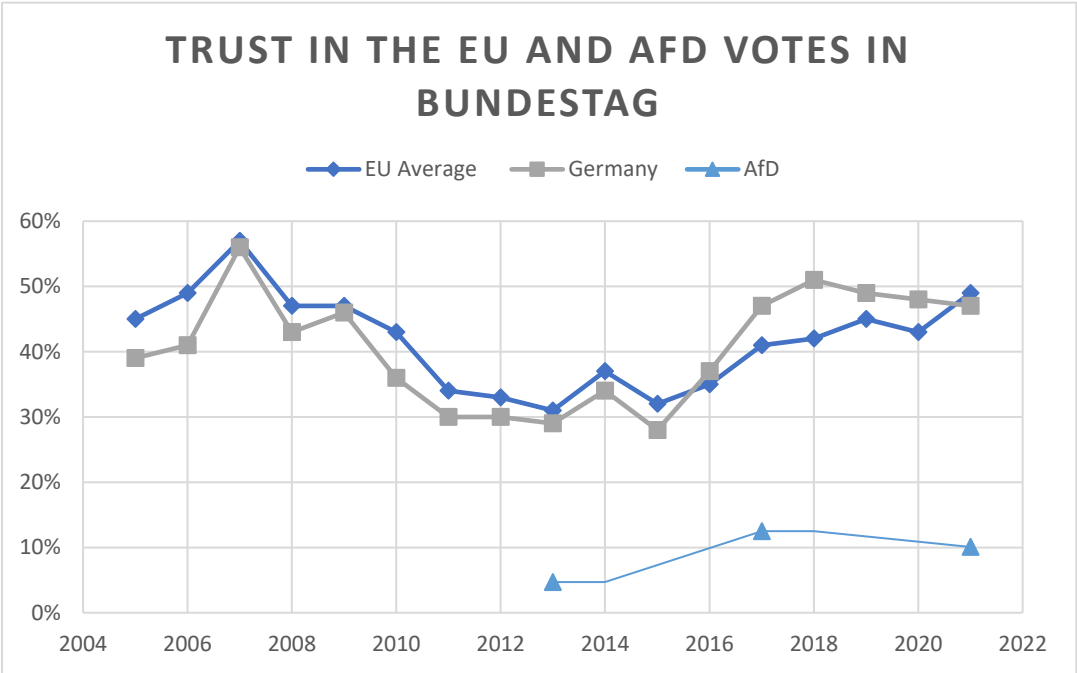
#### 4.2 Alternative for Deutschland

In figure 1 Germany's economy shows not hurting as bad as many countries did at the time and coming out of the economic crisis relatively well. They did not experience the same hardships as Greece did. Germany did comparatively well, and in figure 4, the trust in the EU remains close to the EU average. During the financial crisis German companies experienced a decline in sales and profit, but in general German did well as unemployment was only moderately affecting the German economy, and they were way better off than many other European countries at the time (Endenich, 2014, p. 124).

Germany under the economic crisis was under much pressure, where the bailout checks for Greece, Ireland, and Portugal in order to save the Euro put significant strains on national domestic budgets (Kickert, 2012, p. 302). Then sitting German Chancellor Angela Merkel also opposed assisting Greece and, as earlier observed, only gave financial aid through the IMF and EU combined after a long period refusing to let Germany pay the bills for failing Euro-members, but ended up paying a significant portion of them anyways (Kickert, 2012, p 302).

AfD started as a website in 2013, in the aftermath of the main part of the financial crisis. It was constructed by a professor of economics called Bernd Lucke. The website had Eurosceptic values, which can be called rather eurosceptic than Eurosceptic views (Art, 2018, p. 80). The website’s main goal was to promote the dissolution of the common currency in the EU at the time, but not the union itself (Art, 2018, p. 80). As it came in the wake of the financial crisis and after Angela Merkel’s monetary policy response “alternativlos” to the struggling economies in Europe named under the economic crisis lead directly to the creation of AfD according to Art.

Figure 4



Source: Eurobarometer, 64, 65, 67, 70, 71, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 93, 95 & the Federal Returning Officer

Since its founding in 2013, AfD has gained a lot of traction in German politics, from the party’s creation in 2012, when the party polled 4,7% in its first national election to getting 12,6% of the national vote in 2017 and gaining 94 seats in the Bundestag, Germany’s federal parliament.

After the party’s creation in 2013, it was described as more of a conservative/liberal party, “which may be a right-wing populist movement in the making” (Berbair, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 173). Even with this AfD had some RRP attributes, such as the use of populism and Eurosceptic views, while immigration was not the main concern in their party program in the first election. Bernd Lucke, the spokesperson, and creator of the party website, now sits as

a Member of the European Parliament, held a speech in 2013 about AfD and its views, and I argue that it could only be seen as populist and Eurosceptic.

None [of the other parties] has the courage to name the reasons. Let's see what they have to say about the Euro crisis. Let us first have a look at the opposition: their essential task is to formulate alternative proposals to the politics of the government. Far from it, ladies and gentlemen! The federal government has failed as a government, but the opposition has failed as an opposition more than an opposition could possibly fail. The SPD and the Greens obediently support what Ms Merkel orders. [ ... ] It does not occur to them that it is unfair when the Greek people suffer for what the Greek government and the banks botched. Ladies and gentlemen, when things go on like this, then there is something rotten about the opposition, not to say, the opposition is rotten!

This passage is translated by Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri. Here Lucke uses standard populist rhetoric, ending the passage with boxing in the opposition as rotten, and strengthening their moral views by calling out the opposition. The way Lucke here focuses on what he calls the “rotten opposition”, rather than blaming Greece for the state of their economy in 2013. The victimization of the Greek people and then using that as a tool to display populist, anti-politician/anti-elite, views that are usually characteristics of an RRP.

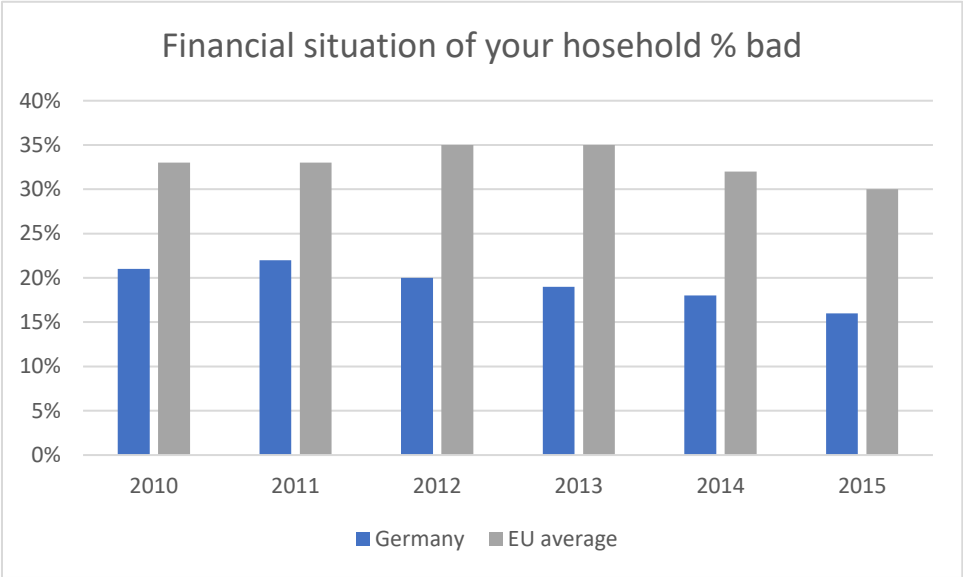
I would argue that this is a display of how the AfD used the economic crisis to its advantage to gain voters in 2013., Lucke saw his chance with the state of Greece, managing to create a somewhat Eurosceptic view by blaming inadequate cooperation between EU member states, and gathering voters who thought the leading politicians in Germany were at fault for the crisis and not to be trusted. AfD got voters using the economic crisis by blaming the political elite's response is also evident in figure 4. AfD's popularity in the Bundestag election was gained where the trust in the EU was some of the lowest it had been in years, under the average of the EU, and this is when AfD gained its footing in German politics.

Losers of globalization theory can explain how the AfD mobilized its voters in the first election in 2013. The AfD did not present itself as a RRP right away, where one of the party speakers posted on their website, “all voters are welcome to us, no matter if they voted left or right before” (Berbuir et al., 2014, p. 163). The actual sympathizers of the AfD, however, are predominantly male, relatively young, or middle-aged, and around half of them have gotten a university degree, with a relatively stable net income from 2500 – 5000 euros a month, which was around the average in Germany at the time (Berbuir et al., 2014, p. 163 : Clark, 2022).



Losers of globalization may not be able to explain the rise of AfD as there was no significant surge in what could be considered losers of globalization in Germany under the economic crisis. This is further supported by the fact that a low percentage of Germans felt less economic despair than their European counterparts. In figure 5, this is displayed as German citizens are well under average in having a bad situation. While AfD gained popularity, the financial situation in many households improved in that period, even though the improvement was slight.

Figure 5



Source: Eurobarometer, 74, 75, 78, 80, 82, 83

I previously assumed that people who would vote or sympathize with the AfD would be older, less educated, and live in rural areas. However, the evidence suggests that the demographic that AfD has gathered is predominantly male, young or middle age, and around half hold a degree from university while having a reasonably stable income source around the average of Germany (Berbuir et al. 2014, p. 168). In other words, showing voters of AfD share characteristics with winners of globalization, rather than losers, who seemed more plausible to vote for a party like AfD.

While many of the voters of the AfD share characteristics with winners of globalization contradicts my assumption about AfD voters. One crucial variable still stands, and that is the opinion on the EU among the sympathizers of AfD. Berbuir et al.'s study found that sympathizers heavily agree with abolishing the Euro, where AfD has called for wishes to relaunch the Deutsche mark. They also found that these people stand as skeptics of European

integration, and lastly Lucke viewed the Euro as the main reason Germany got “roped into the financial crisis”. Voters would then choose, I would argue, the AfD as more of a preventative vote of the same crisis affecting their economy again. So instead of AfD voters being losers of globalization, they are voting in order to protect themselves from the possibility of becoming a loser of globalization.

Later in AfD’s political existence, they started focusing more on immigration issues to gain votes, but they did not start as a xenophobic party (Art, 2018, p. 80). I would therefore conclude with the evidence reviewed here then that AfD used the economic crisis to gain a foothold in German politics. AfD blamed the current political leaders and the Euro for gaining support for the party and then used it as a steppingstone to integrate more xenophobic, anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic views gaining their popularity after the main part of the economic crisis had subsided in later elections.

Germany offered a much more secure financial situation during the economic crisis as the welfare state remained operational (Andersen et al., 2012). Unemployment also stayed low during the crisis causing the German state to not cover people’s unemployment. Which would, in turn, by the logic of winners and losers of globalization theory, create fewer losers and therefore keep “winners” within the German society at the time.

Because of this, I conclude for the case of AfD that although they managed to mobilize winners of globalization as their main voters, they used rhetoric that could appeal to winners of globalization who feared becoming losers by using the failure of the Euro in the economic crisis as a point for creating Euroscepticism and gaining voters.

#### 4.3 Similarities and differences

After going through both the cases of GD and the AfD, it is apparent that both parties have interesting similarities and differences. A considerable part of their similarity is due to their political popularity. At the end of the economic crisis, several voters voted for them as they were both parties offering Eurosceptic views on European integration. While the AfD managed to stay within the politics of Germany, GD fell off and lost its voters. As they are from different cultures, countries, and have different financial situations, this could make sense, but it is also important to understand that the voters had different identities and contexts. As the main voters of GD were young and in an unstable financial situation, they might have been more susceptible to the influence and narratives GD created to gain its supporters, where the economic crisis had created deep financial uncertainties for the Greek

public at large. AfD, on the other hand, had more voters that came from much safer financial situations and were educated to a greater extent. AfD created the anti-EU, anti-Euro narrative by blaming the financial crisis to not get into another financial crisis.

How the political parties managed to use the financial crisis to their benefit was also different as the reactionary party AfD used the economic crisis to establish themselves as a political party and later used that foothold by embedding more of a core around what an RRP is into the party, such as anti-immigrant values. This was not the case for GD as they fell off, and while they had gained popularity by the uncertain situation the economic crisis created, it was not able to hold their stance in Greek politics, especially not after being banned.

Both parties used the financial crisis as a tool to spread Euroscepticism views and gain voters. Both used cores of what RRP parties are, populism and nationalistic beliefs, where both parties made a call to return to their previous national currency. They were both different in what to blame, and their voter bases were different demographics, but two constant similarities are apparent between the two parties: the use of populism, and using the economic situation to gather support for their parties.

In the sense of whether winners and losers of globalization can explain how the two parties got votes, I conclude that both parties, to some extent, mobilized voters who identified as both winners and losers, while my original assumption was that the voter base of both parties would be considered losers.

As AfD was created as a reaction to Merkel's politics of the Euro, it still holds anti-Euro rhetoric. However, in its party policy in the newer elections, its main focus is now on immigrants and is not as focused on the monetary challenges the economic crisis caused. The winners and losers of globalization theory would suggest that one of the main reasons for the "losers" who would vote for a populist radical right party, such as AfD, would have a poorer constructed welfare state set in place in order for that many to vote for a party like AfD. The case of a poor welfare state might be valid for Greece's GD as the reforms cut spending from the state and affected much of the population's pensions, weakening the welfare system for Greece in the wake of the financial crisis. In the case of Germany, the same argument does not hold up as employment was virtually not affected, and welfare systems were still functioning correctly. What AfD used was showing the situation of other economies such as Greece, creating fear for the voters becoming what essentially could be called losers of globalization in Germany.

## 5 Conclusion

Based on what I found was that my assumptions did not hold. For GD, I assumed they would gain support under the threat of the economic crisis and found that this was mainly correct as the party had an anti-Euro, Eurosceptic view, in the combination of skyrocketing uncertainty of the financial situation of private households, finally mobilizing what can be called as losers of globalization. For AfD, I assumed that they would retain their popularity over time, which they did. What I did not assume, however, was the fact that many of the AfD voters can be considered winners of globalization who subscribed to the narrative AfD created of them potentially becoming losers later if they stayed with the Eurocurrency.

My research question was: how did the economic crisis in 2008 start more far-right movements in Europe and create more Euroscepticism? I found that the economic crisis has been used as a tool by emerging RRP to gain more political support and create more Euroscepticism. I found that GD and AfD used the unsure situation the economic crisis caused, combined with the trust lost in the EU, to gain support for the parties' radical right movements. When the support was at an all-time low for the EU under the economic crisis, these parties rose and mobilized voters whom I conclude to be considered both winners and losers of globalization.

Both parties created Euroscepticism and gained more popularity due to one key aspect both used. The economic crisis was the dominant issue of that time, and both parties, while using different techniques to appeal to the parties' voters, both had one constant: twisting the economic crisis narrative to their side gather collect voters.

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