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Xenophobic Manifestations, Otherness and Violence in
Greece 1996-2016: Evidence from an Event Analysis of
Media Collections

Ioannis Galariotis, Vasiliki Georgiadou, Anastasia Kafe and
Zinovia Lialiouti

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Abstract

Research on xenophobia in Europe has recently received much attention in various academic disciplines. The existing scholarly debate focuses more on older patterns of xenophobia emerging as forms of ‘non-violent discrimination and segregation’ but pays less attention to xenophobia as a violent practice *per se*. This study attempts to examine xenophobia in Greece by employing an event extraction technique: we track violent attacks by Greek citizens on any kind of ‘foreigners’ by analysing a vast amount of text data available from newspapers and news websites over a twenty-year period: 1996-2015. We explore specific manifestations of xenophobic attitudes – physical and verbal attacks – to identify the actors involved and the targets of these violent xenophobic acts. Our results conform with previous studies in the field, first by highlighting the violent anti-immigrant behaviour of two actors, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party (GD) and the police, and second by identifying the targets of xenophobic violence. Our contribution to the literature is twofold: a) an application of an innovative methodological tool – event extraction analysis – to the study of a significant social phenomenon; and b) a mapping of the actors and targets of xenophobia in Greek society over the last twenty years.

Keywords

Event analysis, xenophobia, violent attacks, media, Greece, Golden Dawn, police

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Introduction

Research on xenophobia in Europe has recently received much attention in various academic disciplines (Achiume, 2014; Brunnsma et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2006; Roemer et al., 2007; Roemer & Van der Straeten, 2006). A reasonable explanation for this scholarly trend could be the rise of populist political formations in most European Union (EU) member states which clearly employ xenophobic rhetoric and represent an aversion to any kind of ‘other’ who is perceived as a ‘stranger’ (Karlsson, 2009, p. 2). One could also mention many other reasons for this upturn in investigations into xenophobia: the repercussions of the severe economic depression and the competition in the job market attributed to the presence of ‘others;’ the exacerbation of the refugee crisis, which has increased the number of migrants in the continent; the Brexit and Trump campaigns, which respectively won the UK referendum and the latest US presidential elections based on a xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant discourse of hate and fear. The ‘economic-insecurity’ and ‘cultural backlash’ theses provide arguments that, from a ‘demand-side’ perspective (Mudde, 2007, pp. 201–231), can explain the rise of right-wing populism and the increase in xenophobia in contemporary Western societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

The existing literature covering aspects of xenophobic manifestations – economic, psychological, historical or socio-cultural – is rich (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007; Roemer et al., 2007; Ray Taras, 2012; Yakushko, 2009). Equally importantly, the literature covers a wide spectrum of geographical areas: transnational xenophobia, eastern and western European xenophobia, xenophobia in the European Union, etc. (De Master & Le Roy, 2000; Taras, 2009). However, one finds an interesting gap in the existing scholarly debate. The focus is more on older patterns of xenophobia emerging as forms of ‘non-violent discrimination and segregation’ (Del Fabbro et al., 1995, p. 141), while less attention is paid to xenophobia as a violent practice *per se*. Xenophobic violence is usually interpreted as “just crime” (Polzer & Takabvirwa, 2014) or as “isolated” manifestations (Karamanidou, 2016) while the existence of xenophobic motivations and racist factors behind attacks on foreigners are ignored. Nevertheless, xenophobic violence has increased dramatically in South Africa, for example, in recent decades and attacks on non-nationals have become a commonplace (Harris, 2002; Solomon & Kosaka, 2014). Following this line of thinking, a recent paper by Benček and Strasheim (2016) focuses on the case of violent xenophobic attacks on refugees in Germany, while a previous one (Rabrenovic, 2007) effectively argues that violence against immigrants is likely to appear when there is no civil society or media response to ‘hate incidents’ and provocations by ‘racial supremacists’ (ibid., pp. 349, 356-8).

This study attempts to examine xenophobia in Greece by employing a method similar to Benček and Strasheim’s event extraction technique: we track violent attacks by Greek citizens on any kind of ‘foreigner’ by analysing the vast amount of text data that is available from newspapers and news websites for the twenty-year period from 1996 to 2015. We explore specific manifestations of xenophobic attitudes – physical and verbal attacks – to identify the actors involved and the targets of these violent xenophobic acts. Our results confirm those of previous studies in the field (Benček & Strasheim, 2016; Bordeau, 2009; Chtouris et al., 2014; Dalakoglou, 2013). They first highlight the violent anti-immigrant behaviour of two actors – the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (GD) party and the police – and second they identify the targets of xenophobic violence.

Our contribution to the literature is twofold: a) we apply an innovative methodological tool – event extraction analysis – to study a significant social phenomenon; b) we map the actors involved in xenophobia and its targets in Greek society over the last twenty years. The analysis is structured as follows. In the next section, we overview the literature concerning xenophobia, with an emphasis on Greece. Following that, we present our research questions, hypotheses, data and methodological approach. We then critically analyse our findings in order to contribute to the study of xenophobia as a violent practice. Finally, the concluding section highlights our findings and proposes further avenues of research.

Theoretical Framework and Research Puzzle

In post-World-War-II and post-Holocaust Europe, the legacy of xenophobia in the ‘dark continent’ (Mazower, 1998) as a set of deeply rooted prejudices, stereotypes and negative constructions of ‘otherness’ remained active. Much scholarly literature on xenophobia has explored its psychological, social, historical and symbolic dimensions, focusing on opinions, sentiments and attitudes towards foreigners (Delanty & O’Mahony, 2002; Hjern, 1998; Reynolds & Vine, 1987; Veer et al., 2013). On the other hand, the issue of behaviour – xenophobic actions and practices *per se* – has attracted less research attention. Xenophobia as a ‘violent practice’ appeared in post-1994 South African society (Harris, 2002), with racial and social tensions escalating into various manifestations of violence and conflict and with dramatic peaks in 2008 and 2011 (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Duncan, 2011; Hayem, 2013; Makgopa, 2013; Oloyede, 2008; Sharp, 2008; Tafira, 2011).

In the European context, violent actions against individuals or groups targeted because of their perceived ‘foreignness’ have been examined in the scholarly context of right-wing extremism (Willems, 1995) and/or in the context of exclusionary practices that have been shaped in European urban centres, as in the case of the French ‘banlieues’ (Laachir, 2007; Moran, 2012; Tshimanga et al., 2009). More recently, several terrorist attacks associated with so-called Islamic State and the refugee waves that have emerged because of the Syrian civil war have contributed to a resurgence of xenophobia in Europe (Howard, 2009). In fact, the arrival of refugees in European borderlands was met with shocking violence in FYROM and Hungary, resulting in injuries to hundreds of migrants and refugees (Gall, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015). In parallel, the Trump and Brexit campaigns have fuelled xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments in the US and the UK respectively, triggering processes whose outcomes remain to be seen (Inglehart and Norris 2016).

The case of Greece is the object of our investigation. The Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) recorded a significant number of violent actions against immigrants and refugees during the period 2011-2016 (RVRN, 2011-2016).¹ In January 2013, a Pakistani migrant worker, Shehzad Luqman, was brutally murdered in what was officially acknowledged by the Greek judiciary (decision No. 398/2014 of the Mixed Court of Athens) as a crime with a ‘racist motive’ according to Article 81A of the Greek Civil Code (RVRN, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 2015, p. 26). Luqman’s murder and attacks on other migrant workers (*ibid.*) have been associated with sympathizers, supporters or even militants from the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party (Dinas et al., 2016; Ellinas, 2013; Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou, 2015). As the implications of the refugee crisis unfolded, Golden Dawn seemed intent on exploiting them as a political opportunity to consolidate its position and manifested its activism in public schools and refugee camps, targeting refugees and their children.² The relative increase of Golden Dawn’s vote share in September 2015, mostly in municipalities with the greatest inflows of refugees, confirms the interrelation among the refugee crisis, anti-immigrant stances and support for the extreme right (Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016).

Taking the above into consideration, we believe that aggression – in its various manifestations – can be deemed an important component in the study of xenophobia. In this vein, the present paper is methodologically oriented towards a conceptualization of xenophobia as an ‘activity’ and as a ‘violent practice’ (Harris, 2002; Kollapan, 1999; Oloyede, 2008, pp. 105–121). Typically in the literature, xenophobia is most commonly defined as ‘intense dislike, hatred or fear of those perceived to be strangers’ (Tafira, 2011, p. 34), who are usually seen ‘as carriers of a different culture with the potential to threaten the integrity of own’s one nation’ (De Master & Le Roy, 2000, p. 425). Our

¹ The Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) focuses on monitoring and recording racist attacks on refugees and migrants in Greece. Every year since its creation in 2011 it has provided an annual report analysing the quantitative and qualitative findings on racist violence and hate crimes recorded by the Network. The RVRN consists of 37 NGOs. All its reports are available at <http://rvrn.org/category/reports/>

² ‘Justice minister slams Golden Dawn over Perama school attack’, Kathimerini newspaper (English edition), <http://www.ekathimerini.com/215453/article/ekathimerini/news/justice-minister-slams-golden-dawn-over-perama-school-attack> (Retrieved: April 18, 2017). ‘Golden Dawn seeks to exploit Greek refugee crisis’, Deutsche Welle, <http://www.dw.com/en/golden-dawn-seeks-to-exploit-greek-refugee-crisis/a-19059975> (Retrieved: April 18, 2017).

approach shifts the focus to a definition of xenophobia as ‘intense tension and violence against its foreigner-victims’ (Kollapan, 1999). Violence in its various forms – physical, social, sexual, verbal or psychological, perceived as an act embedded in the society or as a process – is inextricably linked to xenophobia (Duncan, 2011, p. 261). This does not imply that we ignore other important aspects of the phenomenon of xenophobia such as discursive or institutional practices. As Mikael Hjerm points out, xenophobia is ‘the basis for both overt racist actions and more subtle forms of exclusion hidden in the discourse of society’ (Hjerm, 1998, pp. 335–347).

By addressing xenophobia as a form of violent practice, our contribution attempts to move away from the psycho-pathology approach (Harris 2002) and from interpretations of violent practices against foreigners based on the ‘just crime’ approach that identify ‘criminal elements’ instead of xenophobic motivations in violence against foreigners (Polzer & Takabvirwa, 2014). Moreover, we intend to provide a grounding in the institutional and political legacies of xenophobia and thereby to highlight the importance of its historical contextualization as a necessary background to fragmented and topical approaches related to the current financial or refugee ‘crisis.’ The frame of the crisis has been particularly popular in the study of xenophobia as it is typically associated with a degradation of socio-economic conditions (Billiet et al., 2014; Chtouris et al., 2014).

We build on the conceptualization of ‘political’ xenophobia by Meredith Watts, which defines it as a ‘desire or willingness to use public policy to discriminate against foreigners’. According to Watts, political xenophobia is generated by the coexistence and interaction between prejudice, ideology and threat perceptions. In particular, the outcome of the interaction between ideology and threat perceptions in the context of a (national) political culture is a shaping of a ‘twofold process of motivation and targeting’ (Watts, 1996, pp. 97–126, 1997). Thus, the role of threat perceptions is crucial in the emergence of xenophobic practices which involve discrimination or exclusionary actions. In our approach, we will seek to trace the implications of political xenophobia with reference to the actions of two distinct institutional agents: a) security mechanisms and b) a political party on the fringe of legality. The simultaneous focus on these particular agents is not accidental as research work on right-wing extremism has formulated assumptions on links between the Greek police and Golden Dawn (Christopoulos, 2014; G. Papanicolaou & Papageorgiou, 2016).

However, as already mentioned, this is not a presentist approach. In our effort to reconstruct the violent expressions of xenophobia in post-Cold War Greece, we take into consideration the historical roots of xenophobia in the country and thus emphasize the elements of continuity between the various peaks in the phenomenon. Our starting premise is the assumption formulated by Martin Baldwin-Edwards (2014) that critical historical junctures can create a legacy of xenophobia which conditions a society’s perceptions and attitudes in future situations (see also Collier & Collier, 2002). In particular, as far as Greece is concerned, Baldwin-Edwards goes back to the Asia Minor Catastrophe and to the mass (approximately 1.2 million) influx in the 1920s of refugees into the Greek territory, arguing that the popular hostile response to this migration wave was ‘structurally important’ in the reception of Balkan (mainly Albanian) migration in the 1990s in terms of mass media discourse, popular perceptions and political practices (Baldwin-Edwards, 2014). Baldwin-Edwards’ comments are driven by J. Arango’s ‘generation effect’ hypothesis, which emphasises:

the influence exerted on the course and characteristics of the immigration experience by the historical context in which their initial and formative phases took place... These formative years may shape dominant orientations towards immigration that would have a long-lasting effect, or witness facts or policies that yield results that will condition further developments (Arango, 2009, pp. 37–38).

Emphasis on the historical grounding and on the institutional and political preconditions for the manifestation of xenophobic violence serves the goal of providing a more comprehensive framework for interpretation and does not imply a neglect in tracing discontinuities and crisis-driven effects. Therefore, the empirical material that is presented and analysed in the present paper will also enrich the existing literature on nationalism and xenophobia as elements of contemporary Greek political culture. Although a body of scholarly work has provided valuable insights on popular attitudes and elite discursive practices in the post-1990 period (Kalogeraki, 2013; Karyotis & Patrikios, 2010;

Michalopoulou et al., 1998; Trubeta, 2000; Voulgaris et al., 1995) when Greece became a recipient country of immigration (Triandafyllidou, 2010, pp. 47–48), xenophobic actions or acts of violence targeted at ethnic or religious others remain a somewhat unexplored issue.

To sum up, we argue that the data presented here shed light on the violent manifestations of xenophobia in Greece and highlight the links between the various aspects of the phenomenon. Moreover, tracing the periods of escalation of violent activities in relation to actors and target groups will make it possible to further explore the opportunity structures for the expression of xenophobia in Greece.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses of this paper are driven by our aim to study xenophobia in Greece as a violent practice towards the ‘other.’ We define the ‘other’ as any foreigner whose country of origin is not Greece. Based on this narrow definition of the ‘other’ that refers to the population with a migration background living in Greece, we exclude from our analysis any type of ‘other’ in a broader sense such as possible ‘enemies’ in terms of ideology, sexual orientation, gender, or any other type of social identity. We adhere to this definition because Greece, a typical emigration country for much of the twentieth century, in the 1990s became an immigration country and –despite its low rate of asylum grants and limited opportunities for long-term regular settlement and integration for migrants – has accepted high numbers of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the last two decades (Cheliotis, 2013; Fakiolas & King, 1996; Papadopoulou-Kourkoulou, 2008).³ Following this line of argument, we attempt to shed light on the following research questions:

Who have been the actors and targets of xenophobia in Greece in the last twenty years? Which types of aggressive xenophobic manifestations are more evident in Greek media coverage and reporting? How have the types of aggressive xenophobic behaviour been shaped over time? Have any changes taken place during the period of economic crisis regarding xenophobic behaviour and the specific actors involved?

We build on the hypothesis that during periods of ‘great transformation’ (socio-cultural, political or economic) instances of xenophobic violence accelerate and multiply; if the pattern of attacks does not change during the period under study, it indicates that different social factors (e.g. financial or migration crises) increase xenophobic violence, considering that availability for violence against foreigners already exists. Regarding the actors, we have discovered that the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and segments of the Greek police tend to act violently during periods of crisis.

Golden Dawn gained remarkable electoral support during the crisis. The voters seemed to be attracted by the hyper-nationalistic and aggressive narrative of Golden Dawn (“Greece belongs to Greeks,” “immediate expulsion of all immigrants from Greece” etc.) against foreigners (Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou, 2015, p. 82). Attacks on migrants are part of its standard pattern of activity when it has profited from electoral support. Its electoral breakthrough is a multi-faceted phenomenon. A combination of ‘demand-side’ and ‘supply-side’ factors (Mudde, 2007) contributed to this outcome, among which its racially-loaded anti-immigrant rhetoric and its anti-immigrant violent activities seem to have played crucial roles (Dinas et al., 2016, pp. 83–84). Given all the above considerations, we assume that severe financial crises and great recessions produce fertile ground for the rise of extremist parties that lure the electorate with anti-system messages and (xenophobic) violent acts (Funke et al., 2016; Hernández & Kriesi, 2016).

Additionally, the combination of the second wave of migration into Greece and the electoral upsurge of Golden Dawn (Dinas et al., 2016, p. 89) seems to have contributed to an increase in police violence. This can be attributed to two basic factors: the relationship of police officers with extreme

³ According to the 2011 national census data, the number of third-country nationals living in Greece totalled 713,000, among which Albanians were the largest immigration group (480,000). EU citizens living in Greece numbered 199,000, among which Bulgarians (75,000) and Romanians (46,000) were the largest groups (Hellenic Statistical Authority National Census 2011, data published in September 2013; and Triandafyllidou et al., 2014).

right-wing parties; and their commitment to ‘everyday’ racism.

Data and Methods

Our analysis uses text data stemming from media sources. Newspaper data have proven to be a useful source for social scientists and historians (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 1997; Franzosi, 2004). Nevertheless, it is a data category that has been subjected to criticism, especially for the selection bias that often applies in press articles. Setting aside the methodological issues that have been raised and in many cases have been adequately dealt with, text data from newspapers are a useful and valuable source that can provide sufficient information about many topics covering a broad agenda of events.(Earl et al., 2004; Ortiz et al., 2005). In the case of Greece, there were no official records of racist crime and violence for many decades. The Greek police only started recording crimes with a racist motive a few years ago (Karamanidou, 2016). In order to fill this gap and create a comprehensive list of violent xenophobic events over the last two decades, we resort to using the press.

Using automated content analysis techniques, we collect unstructured data from six daily newspapers (Avgi, Kathimerini, Eleftherotypia, Rizospastis, Naftemporiki and Ta Nea) and one online news medium (www.in.gr). The text media data are stored and are available on PALOMAR, an automated digital journalism platform which was designed for the detection of events from large-scale news collections (Papanikolaou et al., 2016). The selection of media sources aims to cover a broad range of the political and ideological spectrum of the Greek press. Our purpose is to map all possible ideological orientations in the Greek media landscape in order to ensure diversity in the coding of events. Table 1 shows our datasets, their political/ideological orientations and the size of the corpora (number of articles) for each media source. Needless to say, all the text data collected are in the Greek language.

Table 1. Data collections

Media source	Ideological orientation ⁴	Corpus size	Time Period
Rizospastis	Communist left	725,108	1995 – 2016
Avgi	Radical Left	792,715	1996 – 2015
Eleftherotypia	Liberal centre left	429,364	2002-2006 & 2008-2014
Ta Nea	Liberal centre left	330,190	1997 – 2007
Naftemporiki	Liberal	649,259	2000 – 2016
in.gr	Liberal	428,880	1999 – 2016
Kathimerini	Liberal centre right	282,621	2002 – 2006 & 2009 – 2012
Total		3,638,137	

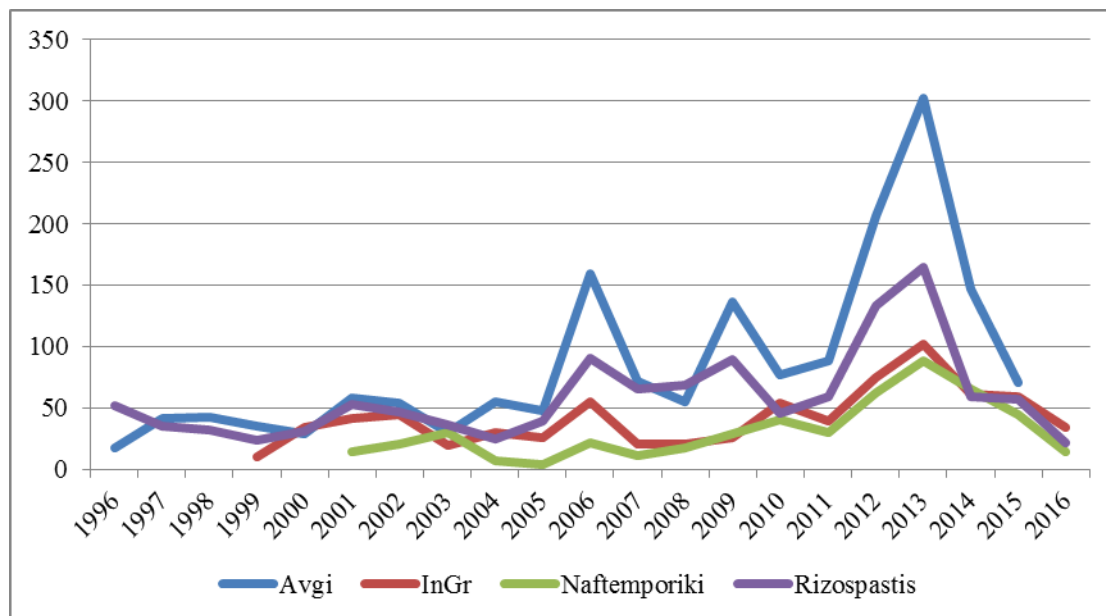
Despite the variety of our media sources, we mainly focus on data from one media collection: AVGI. The basic reason for this choice is that AVGI has a complete text collection which covers the entire timespan under research, from early 1996 to late 2015. In addition, AVGI screens events with many opinion articles, providing a more adequate and comprehensive reporting. The remaining media

⁴ For the ideological orientation of the Greek press, see Papathanassopoulos, 2001.

collections are used to check the outputs from AVGI (Franzosi, 1987, p. 8). Figure 1 displays graphically the numbers of attacks on target groups reported in four out of the seven media collections. AVGI has the most reports of xenophobic violent events, and is followed by Rizospastis. These are the two left-wing newspapers. Naftemporiki and InGr have many fewer reports. This disparity is not only attributable to the ideological differences between the newspapers but also to another ‘technical’ reason: Rizospastis and especially AVGI, as mentioned before, give much more space to opinion articles, while Naftemporiki has many less and InGr has none at all. We can see from the visual representation in Figure 1 that the numbers of events reported follow the same trendline for the four text collections. For example, we can identify equal numbers of reporting peaks and that they occurred at the same points in time: 2006, 2009 and 2013. Despite differences in the numbers of events reported among the collections, the patterns of violent xenophobic attacks are identical. There is a general upsurge in the reported instances of xenophobic attacks after 2005, with brief interruptions between the following waves of xenophobic violence. After 2006, migration flows from Asia and the Middle East to Greece increased substantially. There was then an intensification of the number of immigrants in 2010 (Kasimis, 2012), the year that the country’s debt crisis began.

It should also be clarified that the reported events do not consist of separate violent events, but are reports of events in the press. This means that one event may be reported more than one time in our database. However, our research goal was not to identify unique events or instances of violent xenophobic attacks but to develop a better understanding of their features i.e. to distinguish the actors and targets of xenophobic violence, the attributes of violent xenophobic incidents and the timespan within which the most aggressive type of xenophobic attacks occurred in Greece over the last two decades. The reporting bias of the newspapers selected is thus transformed into an asset since the sensitivity that left-wing newspapers show to xenophobic violence can lead to extensive coverage of these events (ibid, p. 9).

Figure 1. Total number of reported attacks against target groups per source



Event Analysis and the Study of Xenophobia

To address our research questions, we employ the techniques of event analysis. Event analysis, most widely known in the literature as event data techniques, is a method for extracting ‘events’ from diverse sources of data. The method was first used in international conflict and foreign policy research (Doran et al., 1973; Peterson, 1974; Schrodt & Van Brackle, 2013). At the beginning of the development of event analysis, human coding was the basic technique and the majority of projects

made use of human coders. During that period event analysis focused on describing events and producing event data banks (Olzak, 1989, pp. 120–121). The first attempts at systematic automated coding took place during the 1990s, with the US-based KEDS (Kansas Event Data System) and VRA-Reader being the most well-known projects (Schrodt & Van Brackle, 2013). With the proliferation of computer software and their popularity, after the 2000s most event data analyses started using machine-based coding, and from then onwards they concentrated on the causes and consequences of events (ibid.; Koopmans & Rucht, 2002, p. 231). Despite the evolution of machine learning and automated coding techniques, “the overall development of new technology remained relatively small” (Schrodt & Van Brackle, 2013, p. 23).

Over the years, numerous event analysis frameworks have been developed covering a wide range of scholarly fields (see for example a recent attempt at sociological research about protest events by Koopmans and Rucht, 2002). Event analysis is useful as it reduces the dimensional focus of data collection in complex settings and frames an ‘event’ in appropriate social and environmental contexts (ibid.; Koopmans & Statham, 1999). As Olzak points out, event analysis “has an extremely broad scope.” It allows the collection of data according to specific attributes (duration, number of participants, type of action, rate of occurrence, etc.) across different time periods or waves of activity (Olzak, 1989, pp. 119–121). An ‘event’ is any type of information that can be coded according to its form, filtered by actors and targets and accompanied by attributes that provide each event type with more clarity (Bond et al., 2003).

Driven by our principal research questions, which involve studying the phenomenon of xenophobia in Greece via the examination of violent attacks, either physical and/or verbal, we developed a codebook of event types to code material on xenophobic violence. In the conceptualization and operationalization of our codebook we used a combination of concept-driven and data-driven approaches. This was done following a detailed literature review on the subject of violence and the processing of other sources that explore violence, such as the codebooks of CAMEO (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event and Actor Codebook) and the EUROPUB project (The Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres). Moreover, we studied the yearly reports of the Greek Racist Violence Recording Network for information on its reported violent events based on interviews with the victims who were targets of racist violence and hate crimes. Finally, we conducted a detailed explorative analysis of our database in order to detect different types of events of xenophobic violence. For every event that we collected, we annotated its most important components, the type of event, the lexicalization used, the actors and the targets, the location and the time. The following example demonstrates the annotation of an event:

<Dead from the bullet (**event type**) of a Greek border-guard (**actor**) an Albanian immigrant (**target**) who was trying to illegally cross the border from the rough paths of Florina (**location**)>

Apart from the above-mentioned components, the computational linguistics tools assigned attributes to each coded item (for a detailed description, see Papanikolaou et al., 2016). The actors and the targets were assigned a specific status, nationality, sex and age (see the Appendix). The location was also assigned with metadata like the country name and continent. The time of the event was recorded as a date wherever this was stated. If it was mentioned in the article, the victim’s age was recorded as a numerical variable and their gender was also recorded. Finally, after the coding the date and the title of the newspaper article were also made available. For the target groups, apart from their status and nationality, we created a separate group of targets consisting of the most numerous nationalities among the migrant population living in Greece (Albanians and Pakistanis), the most significant religious/ethno-religious affiliations for which we have observed frequent numbers of attacks (Muslims and Jews) and the status of foreign persons (immigrants and refugees). The reason for this classification was that during the explorative analysis process we realized that in many articles the nationality of the targets of attacks was not mentioned but their religion or migration status was. In this way, we were able to capture as many attacks on immigrants as possible, to collect sufficient data regarding their profiles and to construct a comprehensive summary of the events.

Development of a codebook is necessary to train the machine to identify the most relevant events for our research agenda from the wealth of text media data. To do this, we used a combined

human-machine coding approach. In essence, at a first level we automatically coded events using the machine. At a second level, we made a random selection of approximately 150 events, which we annotated by hand. This manual annotation was necessary to identify problems resulting from the use of the machine and to ensure the reliability of the data exploration. Among others, the problems that could arise were: coding events that do not relate to our codebook; coding the same event twice or more; confusing actors with targets; and attaching verbs to actors and/or targets that are not related. The human factor was decisive in this part of the analysis, because we checked a sufficient sample of the corpora to correct and customize the machine's performance.

Results: Event Analysis of Attacks

In order to study the historical evolution of xenophobic violence in Greece from the 1990s onwards and to examine changes that occurred after the outbreak of the financial crisis, we created a large event database of relevant incidents that took place in this timespan. All the entities (people, organizations, institutions) involved in these events were stored and coded in a knowledge network to facilitate exploration, interaction and further analysis of violent xenophobic incidents in Greek society. Such research is traditionally approached by means of small-scale, costly and non-repetitive expert coding of available political documents. Instead, the proposed methodology essentially develops an event database linking the participants involved and the reactions to the events in society (media, authorities, social communities etc.) through the types of behaviour pattern they exhibit.

Elaboration of the news media databases gave us the opportunity to record the evolution of xenophobic violence and the relevant actors and targets. We focused on various types of xenophobic attacks. The most often reported type was the general category of violent assaults. This particular type of attack covers acts of violence like murder, homicide, beatings, abuse, kidnapping, torture etc. There is much less evidence of attacks on immigrants' property. Similarly, attacks on mosques and synagogues, vandalism of monuments and desecration of cemeteries, which also carry symbolic meanings of intolerance, antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiments, are not often reported. However, of these, attacks on Holocaust monuments are the most reported. Although both officials and parties condemn these attacks, the prevalence of conspiratorial beliefs among the public, a deep-rooted antisemitism and the identification of Islam with radicalization and terrorism have created an atmosphere that allows a permissiveness of such violent expressions among some segments of the society. Thus, verbal attacks are even less reported, since they are considered a normality of everyday life that does not draw media attention.

With regard to the targets, during the 1990s Albanians were the main objects of the reported attacks. One reason for this was the increased migration flow from the neighbouring country in that period. Although the flows changed during the 2000s, Albanians have remained the most numerous foreign national group living in Greece today (Lazaridis & Psimmenos, 2000) and are prominent targets of xenophobic behaviour. Between 1990 and 1994, almost 250,000 Albanians crossed into Greece, the vast majority of them illegally. Their lack of legal status affected their position in Greek society and in the job market (Hatziprokopiou, 2003, pp. 1035–1036). Therefore, they became targets of labour exploitation and scapegoats for all types of criminal activity (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999). The fact that Albanians remain an important target of xenophobic behaviour conforms with the stereotypes associated with them. They are still considered subordinates ('helots') and a threat to both Greek society (Iosifides & King, 1998; Kapllani & Mai, 2005; King et al., 1998; Lazaridis, 1999) and the labour market, since they are accused of being economic invaders and are blamed for the high unemployment rate among Greeks (Adamczyk, 2016, p. 56).

Figure 2. Types of reported attack per target group

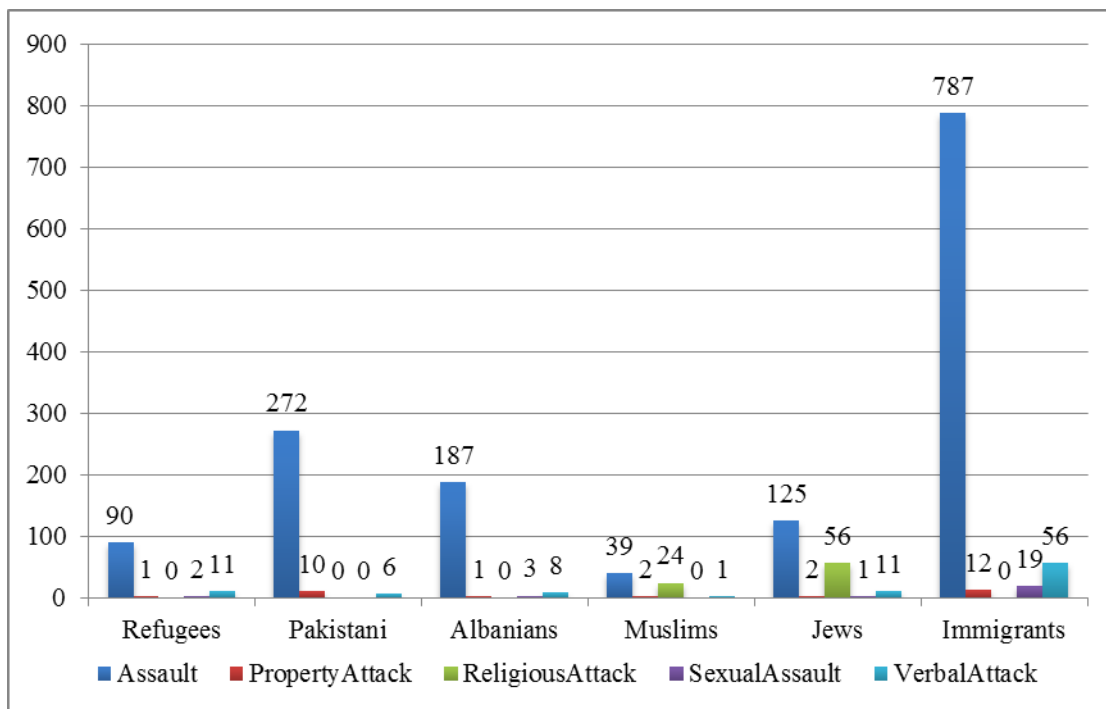
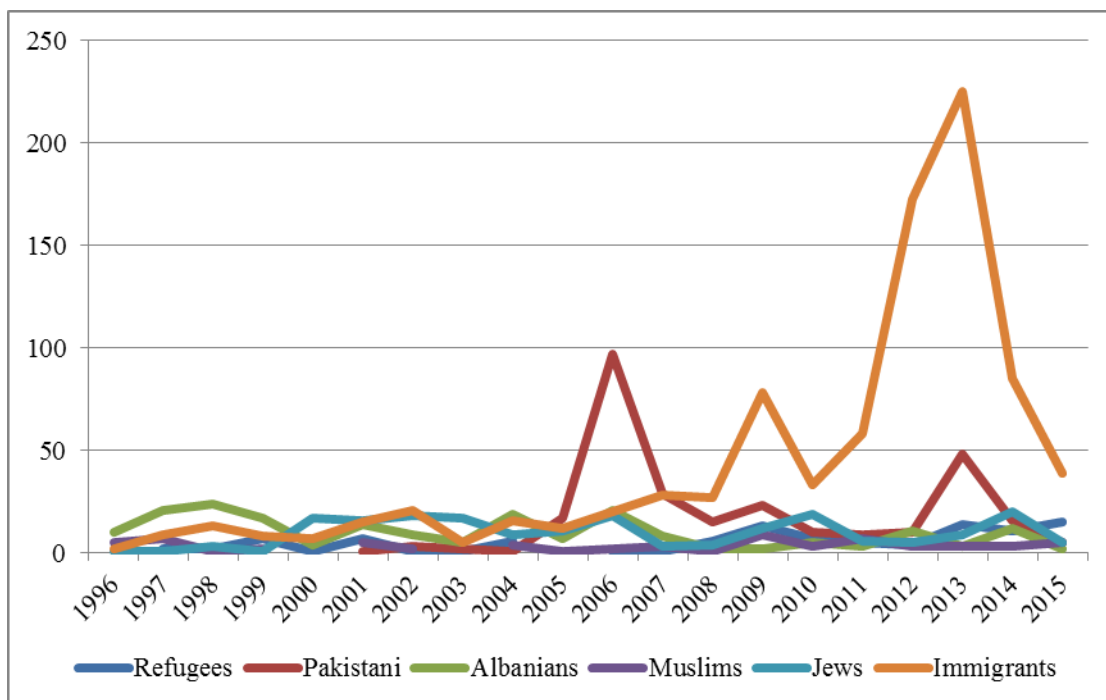


Figure 3. The evolution of xenophobic attacks and types of reported attack per target group



During the first years of the economic crisis in Greece more than 100,000 Albanians left the country, a fact that contributed to the relative mitigation of xenophobic tensions, but the outbreak of the refugee

crisis renewed old prejudices and exacerbated negative attitudes towards immigrants. Albanophobia, ‘an all-encompassing and irrational fear of all things Albanian’ (King & Mai, 2009, p. 123), was established in the perceptions of Greeks despite the fact that Albanians are (considered) the most ‘integrated’ immigrant group in Greece (Kokkali, 2011). Throughout the period under study, Albanians were consistent targets of xenophobic behaviour. This can be attributed not only to the large population of Albanian immigrants, which is estimated at 60-65% of the total immigrant population in Greece, but also to the widespread prejudice of cultural inferiority that the Greek society holds towards them. This stereotype can be contextualized with reference to the historical legacy of rivalry between Greek and Albanian nationalism. This manifested itself in competing territorial claims over the region of ‘Northern Epirus’ (Southern Albania) during the first half of the twentieth century. The status of the Greek Orthodox minority in ‘Northern Epirus’ has also been a source of friction between the two nation states. Regarding the migration flows from Albania, Greek society distinguished between the so-called ‘Northern Epirotes,’ who were perceived as fellow Greeks (‘omogeneis’), and Albanians, who were perceived as ethnic others (Papanicolaou, 2009; Venturas, 2009).

Another important group targeted by xenophobic attacks are Pakistanis, who are today considered one of the largest Asian communities in Greece (they count 50,000 to 70,000 people according to unofficial estimations) (Leghari, 2009; Tonchev, 2007). For many Pakistanis, Greece has served as a transit country. For those who could not cross the Greek borders to the other European countries, Greece became a place to settle down since they could make a living by working in the shadow economy. According to Yousef (2013, pp. 13–14), social networks among the Pakistani community in Greece and legislation for the legalization of immigrants have been key factors in the increase in migration flows from Pakistan since 2003-2004. Pakistanis own shops and small businesses, especially in the centre of Athens (Halkias, 2015; Halkias et al., 2009), where Golden Dawn established its strongholds (Dinas et al., 2016). Attacks on Pakistanis and vandalism against their properties have intensified since 2004, when the numbers of arrivals of migrants from Pakistan to Greece increased rapidly. Like other members of the Muslim community in Greece, Pakistani have been repeatedly attacked. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim stances can be seen as motives for attacks against believers, and assaults on them often take place during their visits to unofficial places of worship to fulfil their religious duties (Shashati, 2011, p. 5). Attacks on Pakistanis are characterized by intense hostility and brutality. These are not only religiously motivated assaults, as Pakistanis and Muslims are identified with ‘a security threat rather than any fear or hatred of Islam per se’ (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010). These attacks represent prejudice against the ‘other’ and a fear of those who are different in religion, culture and/or skin colour. This xenophobic trend has been exacerbated with the increase in radicalization and the rise of Islamic terrorism.

Apart from the ethnicities that constitute the migrant population of Greece, our data guided us to define additional target groups that conform with the image of the ‘other.’ Jews were one of these groups and they became targets of violence at different times during the period under study. According to our results, the most common type of attack that was reported in the press involved desecrations of Jewish cemeteries, vandalism of Holocaust monuments and arson attacks on Synagogues in several Greek cities (also see Droumpouki, 2016). The perpetrators of these desecrations were never arrested but they were usually associated with extreme right-wing organizations. Despite the fact that the 5,000 Jews living in Greece represent only a small minority, anti-Semitism as a set of stereotypes, perceptions, latent prejudices and (religious) attitudes is still alive in Greek society. In fact, acts of violence and verbal aggression against Jews are far from absent in Greece (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2004). According to some experts, antisemitism is ‘embedded in Greek mainstream society’ and it manifests itself in religious, educational, judicial, media and party-political contexts (Altsech, 2004). The alarming rise of antisemitism in Greece came to the fore after the publication of the latest study by the ADL (ADL Global 100, 2015), according to which Greece is the most antisemitic country in Europe. Alarm bells started to ring in Greece in May/June 2012 when the neo-Nazi antisemitic party Golden Dawn first entered the Greek Parliament. What is most distressing is that antisemitism is not only a manifestation of political extremism, but it is embedded in mainstream society, media and politics.

Thanks to recent surveys (Antoniou et al., 2014), we have been able to go deeper into the

different manifestations of antisemitism in Greece. We find that antisemitic attitudes are closely related to conspiratorial thinking and that antisemitism correlates with xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia and the like (Heitmeyer, 2007). An impressive finding from these studies (Antoniou et al., 2015) is that victimization and scapegoating mechanisms are important in interpreting antisemitism in Greece. Among these mechanisms, the first one (victimization) seems to be crucial: collective feelings of suffering generate resentment against out-groups (i.e. the Jews) that have been recognized as victims. Antoniou *et al.* (2015) conclude that antisemitic attitudes are stronger among those who share feelings of suffering and victimization than among those who blame other groups for their misfortunes. After 2009, when the financial crisis started to bite, attacks on Jews started to take place more frequently. Blaming Jews for the financial crisis is a common pattern in antisemitic and conspiratorial perceptions, with Jews being perceived as responsible for any kind of economic crisis. Reports of attacks on Jewish monuments and Synagogues provide evidence of the persistence and lasting legacy of antisemitism in Greek society.

The pattern that emerges from the news reported in the media examined is that ‘immigrants’ are the most often-mentioned targets of attacks. In many cases the nationality of the victim is not explicitly reported or is difficult to understand. This explains why the general category ‘immigrant’ appears as the most common target of xenophobic attacks. The opposite seems to apply when the perpetrator is an immigrant; the media emphasize the nationality of the actor when he/she is a foreigner (Bucerius, 2011). This contradiction fits with the general perception of the immigrant as a criminal or responsible for high crime rates. The group-threat hypothesis suggests that an out-group can pose a threat to a dominant group because it can be a potential competitor on the job market, a cultural threat that violates the traditional norms of a nation, or a criminal threat (Brader et al., 2008; Esses et al., 1998; Quillian, 1995; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). The same seems to also apply to refugees: for many people a refugee is a foreigner and so constitutes a threat (Esses et al., 2013; Louis et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the recent refugee crisis has contributed to a positive shift to a perception of the refugee as a victim who is in need for help. This is most probably the reason why there are not many attacks against refugees (see Figures 2 & 3).⁵ The evolution of xenophobic attacks is not linear; the peaks observed are usually associated with incidents of far-right extremism or aspects of institutional violence against immigrants, which occurred more frequently during the crisis.

Violent attacks attributed to the Police

The use of violence against immigrants and xenophobic violence perpetrated by the police are phenomena that for a long time were not addressed as issues by Greek society and the state authorities. According to a 2013 internal report by the Greek police that provides an overview of racist violent activities carried out by elements of the police and security forces, 142 incidents of policing ‘extreme violent behaviour’ (58 incidents more than in 2012 and 120 more than in 2011) come to the fore. 124 incidents occurred in Attica (mainly in Athens) and 25 in the rest of the country (Amnesty International, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2013a).⁶ The existence of members of the police perpetrating racist violence was an open secret for a long time, although it had been ignored or misinterpreted. According to Antonopoulos (2006) and Antonopoulos et al. (2008), who conducted interviews with police officers in 2002, anti-immigrant attitudes, derogatory references to immigrants and racial or criminal allegations (mainly against Albanians, Roma and Pakistanis) could be detected in a number of them and their violent practices were often perceived as self-defence actions. In the

⁵ According to a diaNEOsis survey conducted in Greece in February 2016, 67% of the respondents expressed positive feelings towards refugees, 58% declared that they had actively demonstrated solidarity with the refugees and 66% did not wish for Greece to close its borders. Details of the survey on ‘Greeks and the Refugee Problem’ are available at <http://www.dianeosis.org/en/2016/02/study-greeks-refugee-problem/> (Retrieved: April 16, 2017).

⁶ A detailed recording of incidents of racist violence in Greece for the timespan between 1 January 2012 and 30 April 2013 exists in the Special Report of the Greek Ombudsman on ‘The phenomenon of racist violence in Greece and how it is combated’, September 2013 <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/eidikiekthesiratsistikivia.pdf> (Retrieved: April 18, 2017).

2012 annual report of the Racist Violence Recording Network, a manifest ‘connection between racist violence and police violence’ was identified.⁷ A report by Amnesty International on Police Violence in Greece (2012) acknowledged the existence of human rights abuses by law enforcement officials as not just ‘isolated incidents:’

Victims, Greek NGOs, representatives of migrant communities, as well as numerous news sources, have all reported cases where police officers have failed to take measures to protect third-country nationals from racially-motivated attacks. In such cases, for example, officers have taken a long time to reach the scene of the attack, despite repeated calls from the victims; or they have been present at attacks but not taken any measures to protect the victims; or have not proceeded with the arrest of perpetrators. In some cases police reportedly transferred the injured victim to a police station to check his/her irregular status instead of to a hospital, or discouraged the victim from lodging a complaint, or failed to treat the complaint as a racially-motivated attack (Amnesty International, 2012, p. 21).

A year later, allegations of potential connections between members of the security forces and Golden Dawn were made by a member of the then Greek government, who admitted in an interview with the BBC that “to some point it is true” that there existed affiliations between Golden Dawn and the Greek Police.⁸ Statistics from the police and other organizations (HRW) support the claim that the police practise discriminatory and stereotyping profiling of immigrants. Only 6% of the total identity checks ended up in detention and arrest (Giannaki, 2015, p. 35; Human Rights Watch, 2013a, pp. 3, 14). These routine police practices are the first indicator of police discrimination and they were first recorded after the so-called ‘Xenios Zeus’ police operation, which was implemented in large urban centres. The operation aimed to apprehend migrants without legal documentation and led to arrests and detentions (Pillant, 2015). Before this operation, the police did not record statistics on their practices and their results. However, human right organizations raised serious concerns about ‘whether the means [used] to achieve those legitimate aims are necessary and proportionate’ (Human Rights Watch, 2013b).

According to the existing literature, police violence can be attributed to two basic factors: the relationship of a few (or some) police officers with extreme right-wing parties and the systemic character of ‘everyday racism,’ in other words, the concept that ‘connects structural forces of racism and routine situations in everyday life’ (Essed, 1991, p. 2). This concept interprets racism as an experience ‘in everyday life’ that through routine, repetition and interactions between structural and practical levels of activity is recognised in many societal and professional practices (ibid.), among which police ‘everyday racism’ is often mentioned (ibid., p. 43-44).

It is argued that these factors can be explained by the so-called ‘communicating vessels theory,’ according to which the “intrusion of the ultra-right” into the police was “systematic and deep-seated” in Greek political history and in the post-war republic (Christopoulos, 2014, pp. 10, 16, 23). Although the ‘communicating vessels theory’ lacks solid evidence and is characterized by methodological limitations in validating its claim that the Greek police is infiltrated by the right-wing extremists of Golden Dawn (ibid., p. 25),⁹ the above-mentioned allegations are not unfounded. They are supported by the fact that Golden Dawn is electorally popular and enjoys ‘police votes.’ The results from the latest European elections in 2014 as well as from the double parliamentary elections in 2012 (May and June) and 2015 (January and September) indicate that the electoral influence of Golden Dawn among police units, at least in the Athens area, where the majority of the relative data come from, is extensive (Papanicolaou & Papageorgiou, 2016, p. 416). Golden Dawn polled much better – up to three times better – in the special polling stations in Athens where members of the police and the army cast their votes than among the general electorate (ibid., p. 404).

⁷ RVRN, *Annual Report 2012*, <http://rvrn.org/2013/04/2012-annual-report/> (Retrieved: April 12, 2017).

⁸ BBC, World News, 25 September 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z60O2QED4c> (Retrieved: April 12, 2017); cited in Christopoulos, 2014, p. 21.

⁹ Avgi, 12/12/2014 ‘Who governs this Police’.

Apart from the indications of Golden Dawn's high electoral popularity among members of the Greek security forces, it is important to explore the existence of possible interconnections between members of the Greek police and Golden Dawn activists since, with the support of the judicial authorities, "police officers assisted, or in the best case tolerated, members of Golden Dawn who were committing criminal offences" (Rose, 2014, p. 98). Police support for Golden Dawn is an area that should be further explored. Another is related to police practices concerning migrants and minority groups. The literature points to two main shortcomings: over-policing and under-policing, especially regarding their treatment of minority groups (Ben-Porat, 2008; Ben-Porat & Yuval, 2012; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2011; Wu, 2014). Under-policing refers to poor police protection of minority and/or immigrant groups and over-policing to aggressive or abusive tactics used against them. Under-policing cannot be revealed by data from the press and this is why it is not included in our analysis, while over-policing can be confirmed from events of police violence reported in the press.

As shown in Figure 4, police violence against immigrants follows the same trajectory as migration. During the first years of the 1990s when the first immigrants from Albania and other Balkan countries came to Greece, a serious number of incidents occurred, mainly *during* search and arrest procedures in the course of police action.¹⁰ This pattern of 'on duty' police violence repeated itself in every migration cycle in the following years, and was assisted by the institutionalization of so-called 'broom operations' (Vidali, 1999), i.e. sudden mass police operations aimed at the forced repatriation of irregular migrants (Vullnetari, 2012, p. 70).¹¹ The climaxes of violent police attacks on immigrants also coincide with cycles of violent radical riots and intense protests. During a radicalised protest against education reforms in 2006 that culminated in the murder of a fifteen-year-old student, A. Grigoropoulos, by a policeman in the centre of Athens in December 2008, the police used excessive force to counter the unrest (Amnesty International, 2012). The same pattern continued in the subsequent intense mass mobilizations that started as protests against austerity measures implemented after the first bailout agreement was signed by the Greek government, the EU, the ECB and the IMF in May 2010. In all these cases, direct police action resulted in violence and over-policing. This pattern of 'on duty' violent police action became apparent in every migration cycle in the following years. Another aspect of police violence against immigrants consists of so-called 'off-duty' police activities. Although it is difficult to verify the motivation for these activities from our data, these violent practices attributed to the police forces are facilitated by their professional activity and the specific knowledge they acquire about immigrants' finances, whereabouts, etc.¹² In cases of both 'on-duty' and 'off-duty' violent police action against immigrants, elements of hostility, superiority, stereotypical beliefs and dominance over vulnerable targets are apparent.¹³

Violent attacks attributed to Golden Dawn

Among racist/extreme right-wing groups (see Figure 5), the group that appears most commonly in newspaper articles is Golden Dawn, which is also categorised as a political party. The reason for this overlapping lies in the twofold status of Golden Dawn. It first appeared on the political scene as a neo-

¹⁰ See, inter alia, *Avgi*, 12/2/1997 'Policeman killed an Albanian kid', *Avgi*, 11/10/1997 'Accidental shooting... in cold blood', *Avgi*, 29/9/2013 '10 people ...attacked Pakistani immigrants', *Avgi*, 29/2/2013 'Explosion of racist violence – Police in the role of "viewers"', *Avgi* 2/9/2014 'MAT (Units for the Reinstatement of Order) attacked migrants in Amygdaleza camp', *Avgi* 11/8/2015 'Police officer who hit immigrant in Kos demoted', *Avgi* 30/12/2015 'We were attacked by Greeks and the Police looked for the perpetrators among the Afghans'.

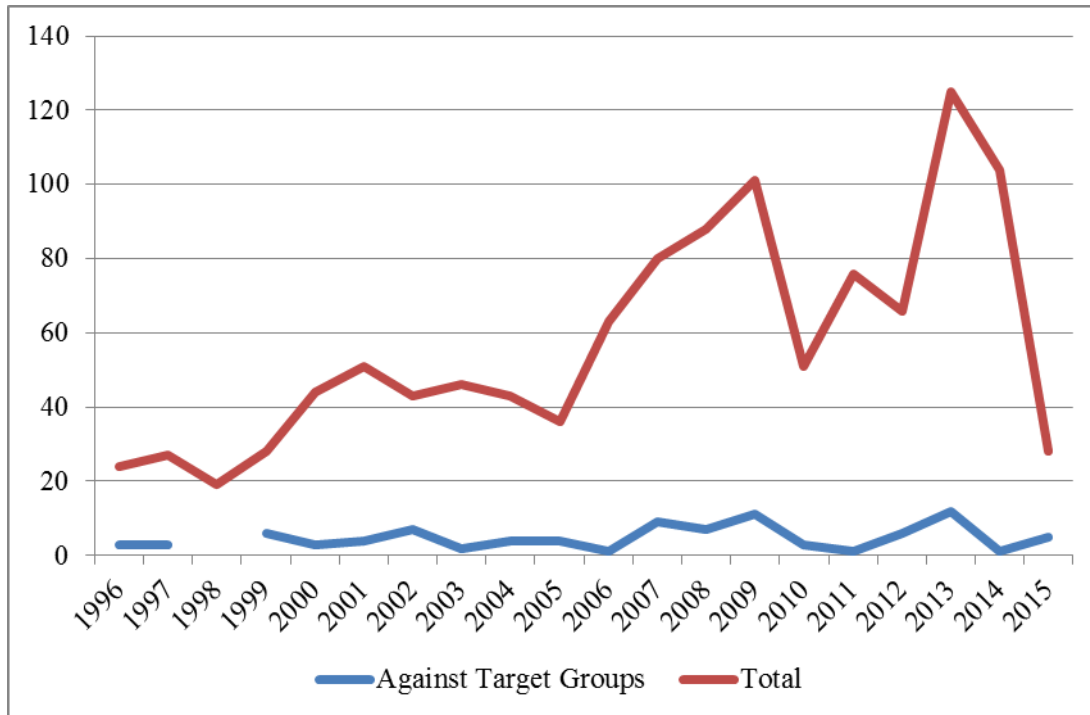
¹¹ *Avgi* 26/7/2014 'Policemen as housemen in (the strawberries farms of) Manolada', *Avgi* 22/8/2012 'Big spectacle, low outcomes from the broom operations of the Greek Police', *Avgi* 17/7/2010 'Anti-racist rally against the broom operations', *Avgi* 31/7/2009 'Operations of no humanity in downtown Athens'.

¹² See, inter alia, *Avgi* 7/2/2002 'Policemen kidnaped and tortured refugees', *Avgi* 27/10/2014 'Police officer cheated migrant.'

¹³ Allegations that police officers indulge in 'race-motivated and abusive use of violence' were made by the Greek Ombudsman, The phenomenon of racist violence in Greece and how it is combated (Special Report), September 2013 <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/sronracistviolencesummary2013.pdf> (Retrieved: April 18, 2017).

Nazi network of adherents to National Socialism that was founded at the beginning of the 1980s (Psarras, 2012). Despite disagreements among its founders, the majority of whom were against mass participation and any form of representation, Nikos Michaloliakos, the leader of Golden Dawn, transformed the network into a political organization. Golden Dawn was recognised as a political party in 1993 and ran in European and parliamentary elections, amid the ‘nationalist fervour’ over the Macedonian issue and the strengthening of “Greece’s ties with Milosevic’s Serbia” (Ellinas, 2013, pp. 547-548; Kalpadakis & Sotiropoulos, 2007; Papadimitriou, 2014). Golden Dawn is an extremist right-wing party that openly advocates racism and antisemitism, admires the German Nazis and engages in violent racially motivated paramilitary practices (Ellinas, 2013; Georgiadou, 2013).

Figure 4. Mentions of Police attacks per year



After its first party congress in 1990, its activists were among the ultra-nationalists of the so-called ‘Greek Volunteer Guard’ (Kostopoulos et al., 2015) who – according to many journalistic sources – were involved in the Srebrenica massacre (Bournazos, 2015; Deliolanes, 2015; Psara & Bintelas, 2015). At the same time, it took part in mass demonstrations against the recognition of FYROM as part of the political dispute involving the use of the name ‘Macedonia’ by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹⁴ and stood up for Slobodan Milosevic and his tyrannical regime (Georgiadou, 2013, p. 87).¹⁵ It gradually shifted the focus of its militant activities from foreign to domestic issues. Topics like immigration, national security and crime became central within Golden Dawn circles. The concentration of immigrants in Athens and in the district of Attica heightened existing tensions between radical left-wing groups and the extreme right in the 1990s and the 2000s. Before the municipal elections of November 2010, Golden Dawn concentrated its daily activities in Athens city centre, where large numbers of ‘illegal migrants’ resided. Central Athens became its stronghold, and it expanded its violent militant activities there against immigrants in cooperation with grassroots right-wing networks and single extremists of the same ideological spectrum (Dinas et al., 2016; Petrou & Kandyliis, 2016; Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2014).

¹⁴ IOS, *Eleftherotypia*, 2/7/1998, <http://www.hri.org/E/1998/98-07-02.dir/keimena/greece/greece2.htm>

¹⁵ <https://bosnienbloggen.wordpress.com/2015/07/05/unholy-alliance-greece-and-milosevics-serbia-revisited/> and Michas, 2002.

During or after severe financial crises, politics takes a ‘hard right turn.’ In the Greek case, the overlapping of the debt crisis and the polarization of the party system facilitated the meteoric rise of Golden Dawn. It implemented organized attacks against immigrants and carried out pogroms against the immigrant populations in the areas around its strongholds, mainly in Athens (Kassimeris, 2013, p. 121). At the same time, it expanded its repertoire of actions with increased mobilization and protests, usually making anti-immigrant and nationalistic claims. These raised its visibility and consequently its percentages in the opinion polls.

The repertoire of violent action developed by Golden Dawn can be divided into two categories on the basis of the targets. The first category can be characterized as direct organised actions against immigrants. ‘Stormtroopers’ and paramilitary groups consisting of party militants attack immigrants, their property or small businesses in order to demonstrate their power to its supporters and to frighten the foreigners.¹⁶ A press release from the Greek Ombudsman (September 25, 2013) stressed the rapid escalation of racist violence in Greece and mentioned allegations that the perpetrators of a serious number of racist incidents were linked to Golden Dawn :

‘Between January 1, 2012 and April 30, 2013, the overall complaints for 281 racist attacks are simply the tip of the iceberg since the phenomenon assumed incendiary dimensions... The complaints include 71 incidents whose perpetrators are alleged as being linked to Golden Dawn...’¹⁷

The second category of violent actions can be characterized as indirectly xenophobic because the targets are solidarity groups or individuals who help immigrants. This category of attacks included violent activities by individuals, usually acting in groups of two or three people who were followers of Golden Dawn, despite the fact that they were usually reluctant to admit it. Several of them had some kind of connection with Golden Dawn and in many cases they knew the victim as an employer or co-worker. It is worth mentioning that the electoral rise of Golden Dawn coincided with an increase in violent incidents in both the above-mentioned categories. Moreover, it is noticeable that violent attacks of both types tended to decrease after the arrest and prosecution of the leader, MPs and supporters of Golden Dawn for founding a criminal organization and for other extremely serious crimes (Melissaris 2015). The “trial of Golden Dawn” affected its activities not so much quantitatively but more qualitatively. Although the numbers of activities remained more or less the same, their ‘nature’ was affected substantially: unable to sustain its so-called ‘social activism’ (Ellinas and Lamprianou 2016, p. 9), the party lost influence among local communities (including in its strongholds) and part of its grassroots dynamic.

Discussion

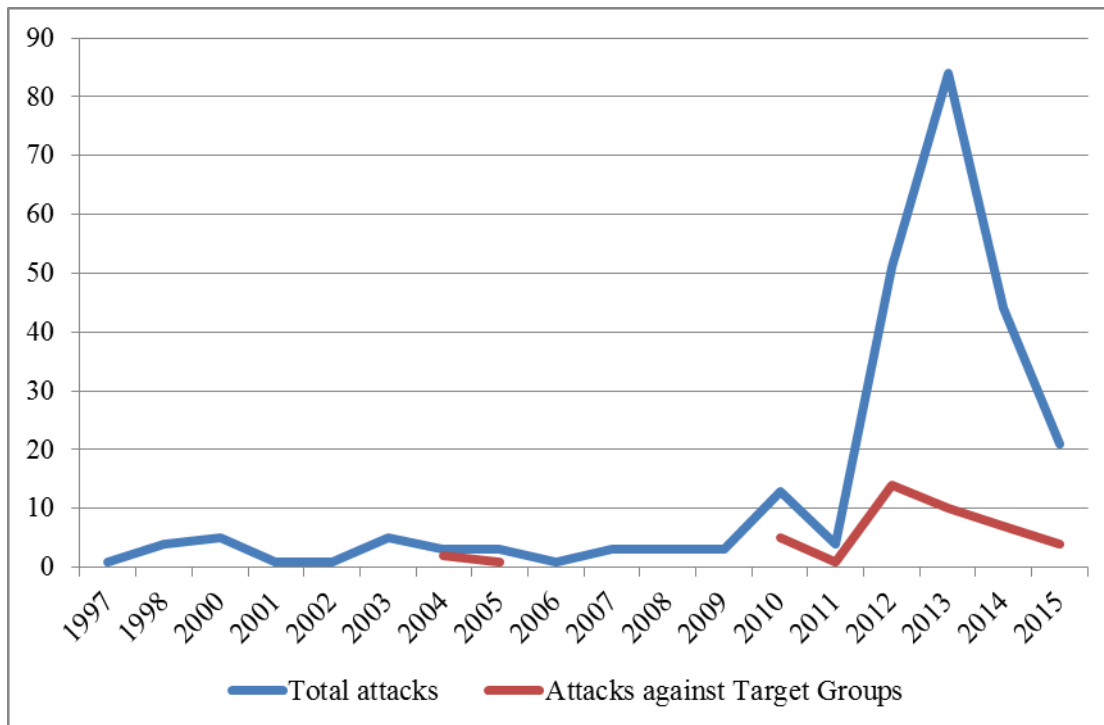
The literature on xenophobia refers to attitudes and emotions of dislike, fear and/or hatred against foreigners or outsiders. The term ‘xenophobia’ is commonly used to describe anti-immigrant stances. However this definition is too simple; xenophobia must ‘embody action or practice’ and include ‘aspects of violence and physical abuse’ (Maina et al., 2011, p. 2). This paper has highlighted this dimension of xenophobia by using original data derived from mass media collections in Greece. Our objective has been to identify the perpetrators of violent attacks against foreigners – with non-native and immigrant backgrounds – in Greece. The results demonstrate that the extreme right-wing neo-Nazi party named Golden Dawn and groups within the Greek police constitute the leading actors in violent attacks against immigrants. Although the two have different positions within the state, activities and social goals, what they have in common is a high ‘social dominance orientation’ and a stereotyping perception of ‘the other’ as being a socio-cultural ‘threat’ because of his/her ‘aggressive,’ ‘unintelligent,’ ‘parasitic’ etc. existence (Yakushko, 2009, p. 47). Rigid hierarchies and practices in the closed systems that are prevalent in ‘paramilitary orders’ like Golden Dawn (Ellinas, 2010;

¹⁶ Avgi, 20/9/1996, “Gkazi, attack by Golden Dawn”, Avgi, 15/5/2011 “Violence and racism: fear replaces hope”, Avgi, 2/11/2012 “Another night of terror for the immigrants in Agios Panteleimon”.

¹⁷ The Greek Ombudsman, ‘The Greek Ombudsman calls for immediate and drastic measures against racist violence’ (Press Release), September 25, 2013 <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/pronracistviolencereport-2013.pdf> (Retrieved: April 19, 2017).

Georgiadou, 2013; Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou, 2015) and the *centralized* authority in organizations empowered by the state to enforce the law (such as the Greek police, Lévy, 2013, p. 354) “help explain how individuals develop and maintain xenophobic attitudes” and behaviour (Yakushko, 2009, p.47). The alleged ‘canteen culture’ of the police (Waddington, 1999) facilitates the consolidation of discriminatory attitudes among some sections of the police.

Figure 5. Mentions of attacks by racist and extreme right-wing groups*



* In most of the news reports, Golden Dawn was mentioned and in some articles if it was not possible to recognize the name of the group it was recognisable from descriptions: racist or extreme right.

Regarding Golden Dawn, an explicitly anti-immigrant platform is evident. Hostility to all immigrants – both unregistered and registered – living in Greece, who according to its exclusionary nationalist narrative must be expelled from the country, and glorification of the idea of racial purity, which functions as a precondition for ‘purifying’ Greek society, politics and the state of ‘parasites’ and ‘social misfits’ of all kinds leave no doubt that hostility and hatred against foreigners is a predominant motive for Golden Dawn’s anti-immigrant actions and practices. Furthermore, its patterns of anti-immigrant violence and intolerance are based on xenophobia and a racist, white supremacist ideology. The charges in the Golden Dawn trial (e.g. the prosecutorial proposal, findings during the pre-trial proceedings, etc.)¹⁸ offer evidence both of anti-immigrant violent activities and of the motives behind these attacks.

The link between agents, actions and targets is more complicated in the case of the attacks against immigrants attributed to members of the Greek Police. Although forms of institutionalized xenophobia are widespread and ‘institutionalized otherism’ is ‘inherent’ in particular key institutions (Burns et al., 2008), the motives behind these attacks are not completely clear in all the incidents in the newspaper articles reporting the events. It is common wisdom that historical, social and institutional factors promote xenophobia and trigger xenophobic violence (Misago et al., 2015). According to Christopoulos (2014, p. 95), the Greek police is “the most infected and long-exposed institution to ultra-right intrusion.” Collusion between the police and Golden Dawn has often been reported (Ellinas,

¹⁸ Available at *Golden Dawn Watch* (initiative to monitor the trial against Golden Dawn), <http://goldendawnwatch.org>.

2013; Human Rights Watch, 2012) and the fact that our data do not sufficiently clarify the hidden motives behind the xenophobic violence provoked by the security forces does not mean that we are in utter darkness concerning this issue. However, we need to increase the coverage of our data in order to improve the veracity and adequacy of the findings using event analysis.

In addition, there is some ambiguity in the scholarly research on the implications of financial crises in the political arena, and especially regarding the rise of far-right-wing parties (Bromhead et al., 2012; Funke et al., 2016; Giuliano & Spilimbergo, 2014). Apart from the econometric models that have been developed to measure the effects of economic performance on politics (see, for example, the literature on ‘economic voting.’ Anderson, 2007; Dorussen & Taylor, 2002; Lewis-Beck, 1988; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011), in many cases the argument evolves around chronological comparisons of specific variables (e.g. vote share, party system fragmentation etc.) before, during and after the crisis (Funke et al., 2016). In the study at hand, we decided that besides studying the actors of xenophobic violence and their motives, it is equally important to examine the timespan of the attacks to explore fluctuations and any triggering factors. Figures 4 and 5 in the previous section illustrated the evolution of attacks by the police and racist extreme right-wing groups. For the attacks attributed to the police, the trend follows the migration flow, an outcome expected since most of the attacks happen during ‘search and arrest’ procedures. Nevertheless, it is also evident that during the period of economic crisis, namely from 2009 onwards, attacks by Golden Dawn increased significantly. Moreover, the overall upward trend in violent xenophobic events coincides with the rise of Golden Dawn during the crisis period. Therefore, the direction of causality among these three factors/variables needs to be scrutinized. The case becomes more complicated when we assign dependency among the variables. Is the dependent variable xenophobic violence or the rise of Golden Dawn? Although it cannot yet be argued that there is a causal relationship between the economic crisis and xenophobic violence, it is a significant relationship that needs further investigation.

Concluding Remarks

Using computational methods and automated content analysis techniques, we have studied the phenomenon of xenophobia as a violent practice in Greece, focusing on the timespan from 1996 until now. In order to understand the current state of xenophobic violence, we have examined the phenomenon from a historical perspective trying to discover its symptoms, causes and patterns. Although the numbers of xenophobic attacks vary over time, stereotypes, prejudices and motives for behaviour towards ‘foreigners’ tend to remain stable. This does not mean that beliefs about people and reactions to them based on the sense of belonging to particular socio-cultural settings are static. Levels of stability differ with actors’ motives and the general circumstances that prevail in a particular period of time. Economic scarcity, polarization and uncertainty alter perception “in ways that exacerbate discrimination” (Krosch & Amodio, 2014, p. 9079), although if out-groups are not held responsible prejudices or stereotypes against them do not change substantially. Our findings suggest that the overall patterns of xenophobic behaviour did not change significantly in the period under review. Similarly, stereotypes and prejudices against certain out-groups (Jews, Albanians) are characterized by continuity, in spite of spikes or remissions.

Focusing on the types of xenophobic events, we have observed a significant increase in the numbers of physical attacks after 2009, which is a sign of increased xenophobic activity during the era of the Greek crisis. Attacks on immigrants are related to the rise of far right and extremist parties that typically have anti-immigrant stances. Moreover, anti-immigrant practices by the police trigger assumptions about the existence of Golden Dawn enclaves within specific areas of the institutional apparatuses of the Greek state. Institutional forms of xenophobia are a ‘commonplace’ in Europe, where discrimination against immigrants or minorities and the rise of the far right are considered interrelated phenomena (Burns et al 2008). In the Greek case, cultural and ideological components within segments of the state apparatus (police) on the one hand and a mechanism of ‘communicating vessels’ between segments of the state apparatus and the extreme right political arena on the other hand make the ground fertile for the strengthening of xenophobic beliefs and availability for xenophobic violence. We have focused on xenophobic behaviour and revealed the main actors and

targets of xenophobic violence in the last two decades in Greece. We hope that our research will contribute to a deepening of knowledge about the most aggressive manifestations of xenophobia and to motivating policymakers to deal with right-wing extremism, which fuels fear and hostility towards immigrants among the electorate.

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Appendix

Table 2. Attack codebook

Assault	Assault against life: an act that either intentionally or recklessly may cause or attempt to cause a person's death.
	Violent Assault: causing injury and/or complicity in physical damage from beating, torture, kidnapping, abuse, etc.
Property attack: assault against any kind of property (houses or businesses). The attack can be from simple damage to arson and destruction.	
Religious property attack: attacks aiming at the destruction and desecration of formal or informal places of religious worship, monuments, cemeteries, etc.	
Sexual attack: forced intercourse or other lewd acts or tolerance of such acts or infringement of an adult's or minor's sexual dignity.	
Verbal attack: insults, threats, extortion, intimidation, devaluation, humiliation, derision, taunting, etc.	

Table 3. Status of actors and targets

Anarchist leftist organizations	Organizations of pensioners and the elderly
Central banks	Police and military security forces
Churches and religious groups	Political parties and organizations
Economists and financial experts	Employees in primary and secondary education
Education professionals	Prisoners
Employees	Racist extreme right-wing organizations
Employer organizations	Refugees
Environmental organizations and groups	Relatives
Ethnic minorities	Social security executive organizations
Farmers	Solidarity and human rights organizations

Firms	State executives
Friends	State-owned enterprises
Government executives	Students
Higher education and research institutions	Students and schoolchildren
Judiciary	Teams
Parliament	Terrorist groups and rebel forces
Journalists	Tertiary trade unions
Migrants and asylum seekers	The general public
Municipal authorities	Trade unions
Greek NGOs	Transport
Other	Unknown/unspecified
Other state executive agencies and supranational institutions	Whole countries/polities

Table 4. Nationalities of Actors and Targets

Other	Jew	Mexican	Jamaican
German	Cyprian	Serbian	Bulgarian
Kenyan	Romanian	Austrian	Spanish
Palestinian	American	Indian	Norwegian

British	Swiss	Moldovan	Turk
Georgian	Lebanese	Somali	Brazilian
Chinese	Russian	Afghan	Israeli
Polish	Armenian	Iraqi	Ukrainian
Egyptian	Greek	Bangladeshi	Tunisian
Danish	Libyan	Syrian	French
Croatian	Saudi	African	Italian
Portuguese	Australian	Iranian	Pakistani
Albanian	Japanese	Nigerian	Chilean

