

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Reading		
Unit of Assessment: UoA19 Politics and International Studies		
Title of case study: Equipping society to assess the far-right challenge by promoting awareness, understanding and engagement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013–19		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Daphne Halikiopoulou	Lecturer; Associate Prof. Professor	2012 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The progressive entrenchment of far-right parties raises questions about the future of democratic politics. Halikiopoulou's research assesses the challenges posed by this phenomenon. It promotes understanding, learning and participation by exposing far-right populist parties disguised as benign democrats, and alerting decision-makers to the key economic and institutional dimensions of their support. Specifically, it has: (1) informed public attitudes through extensive communication with opinion-shapers; (2) stimulated debate among key stakeholders through engagement in formal and informal partnerships; and (3) contributed to efforts to widen political participation by supporting initiatives to enable Greek citizens based in London to vote in relevant elections in Greece. The impact is evidenced by the exponential reaction to Halikiopoulou's work, which has transcended geography, political persuasion and language. The result has been an increase in awareness, understanding and engagement, as the public and policymakers are better equipped to disentangle the far-right phenomenon and assess its challenges.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Halikiopoulou's research classifies European far-right populist parties and systematically compares their programmatic agendas and voter constituencies in order to understand their electoral support. The research contributions may be summarised in two themes:</p>		
<i>Tracking far-right populism: Which parties and why?</i>		
<p>Halikiopoulou has carried out extensive research on party classification and terminology. Carrying out qualitative comparisons of Golden Dawn (GD) [Section 3, ref 5] and other party materials [ref 6], as well as using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project [ref 1], she has contributed to the classification of over 80 European far-right populist parties. Her classification focuses on the advantages of the term "far right" over alternatives such as "right-wing populism", "radical right" and "extreme right". This term can be used, on the one hand, to identify the overarching similarities that make these parties comparable, and on the other, to distinguish between extreme and radical variants, allowing researchers to take into account the idiosyncrasies of specific cases. Halikiopoulou's framework departs from the commonly used definition of the far right as "nativist, authoritarian and populist" to stress instead that what unites these parties is their use of nationalism to justify their positions on all socioeconomic issues. They differ, however, in terms of their relationship to democracy. The extreme right includes both vigilante groups and political parties that are openly racist, have ties to fascism and employ aggressive tactics. These groups tend to oppose procedural democracy and often operate outside the realm of electoral politics. Radical right variants, on the other hand, adopt moderate narratives, distance themselves from fascism and reject the far-right label.</p>		
<p>Halikiopoulou's research distinguishes extreme and radical variants on the basis of the type of nationalism they adopt [refs 1, 3, 5 and 6]. This is novel and draws on her expertise in the field of nationalism studies, which, despite its relevant theoretical insights, has rarely been systematically applied to the field of far-right party politics. The "Civic Zeitgeist" [ref 6] uses</p>		

Impact case study (REF3)

advanced qualitative techniques to show that the most successful European far-right parties are the radical variants that adopt civic nationalist narratives to frame their exclusionary policies. By excluding on ideological rather than biological rationalisations of national belonging, these parties redefine the boundaries between national communities and others in seemingly liberal terms. The success of GD, which adopts ethnic nationalism, is an exception to this pattern, as illustrated by Halikiopoulou's 2015 co-authored article [ref 5], which codes over 1,500 GD materials.

Thus the research demonstrates that the far right's "civic normalisation" strategy challenges democracy because it allows these parties to permeate mainstream ground by appearing legitimate to a broad electorate. This means that, contrary to conventional wisdom, civic cultures, which emphasise institutions and liberal values, are not immune to the far right. Instead of shielding societies from right-wing extremism, civic nationalism paradoxically, offers it a platform through which it can attract voters.

Who votes for the far right? Economic insecurity and institutional dissatisfaction

Using both aggregate and individual-level data from a range of sources, including the European Social Survey, and employing quantitative and qualitative comparative methodologies, the works cited in refs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 challenge conventional wisdom that the rise in the far right is the product of primarily cultural grievances. "Risks, costs and labour markets" [ref 4] explains how the economy affects cross-national patterns of far-right party support by focusing on European Parliament election results. The key argument is that labour market institutions – specifically unemployment benefits and Employment Protection Legislation – lower the risks and costs of unemployment, thus mediating far-right party support. A similar argument is posed in her co-authored article "Does unemployment matter?" [ref 2], but with a focus on national elections: the article develops a framework that links unemployment to far-right party support, while taking into account both of the heterogeneity of the workforce and of the role of labour market policies. Finally, her co-authored article "Breaching the social contract" [ref 3] carries out a small-N controlled comparison between Greece, Spain and Portugal to show the impact of trust in political institutions on voting behaviour. This research suggests that the rise of the GD should be understood as the product of a crisis of democratic representation, which resulted in a rapid and dramatic decline in voters' levels of institutional trust. Her 2019 article in *Nations and Nationalism* [ref 1] collages this research into a coherent overall theory of far-right party support. At the voter level, this is the product of multiple- and overlapping- insecurities, not just cultural ones; at the party level, these parties have been successful in capitalising on these insecurities by putting forward a civic nationalist narrative that has broad appeal. These findings have significant policy implications as they suggest that targeting single policies such as immigration, which is often recommended as a remedy to the far right, is not enough to address the source of the discontent that prompts far-right party support.

3. References to the research

The outputs referenced below are of at least 2* quality and meet the three international quality criteria of originality, rigour and significance as outlined by the REF. All six outputs carry out original empirical research using a range of sophisticated qualitative and/or quantitative techniques, and put forward novel arguments about the demand and/or supply-side dimensions of far-right party support.

1. Halikiopoulou, D. and Vlandas, T. (2019) '[What is new and what is nationalist about Europe's new nationalism? Explaining the rise of the far right in Europe](#)' *Nations and Nationalism*, 25 (2). pp. 409–434. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12515>.
2. Vlandas, T. and Halikiopoulou, D. (2019) '[Does unemployment matter? Economic insecurity, labour market policies and the far-right vote in Europe](#)'. *European Political Science*, 18 (3). pp. 421–438. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-018-0161-z>.
3. Halikiopoulou, D. and Vasilopoulou, S. (2018) '[Breaching the social contract: crises of democratic representation and patterns of extreme right party support](#)'. *Government and Opposition*, 53 (1). pp. 26–50. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2015.43>.

Impact case study (REF3)

4. Halikiopoulou, D. and Vlandas, T. (2016) '[Risks, costs and labour markets: explaining cross-national patterns of far right party success in European Parliament elections](#)'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54 (3). pp. 636–655. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12310>. Winner of 2016 American Political Association (APSA) European Politics and Society Section Best Paper Award.
5. Vasilopoulou, S. and Halikiopoulou, D. (2015) '[The Golden Dawn's 'nationalist solution': Explaining the rise of the far right in Greece](#)'. Reform and Transition in the Mediterranean. Palgrave Pivot, London, pp96. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137535917>.
6. Halikiopoulou, D., Mock, S. and Vasilopoulou, S. (2013) '[The civic zeitgeist: Nationalism and liberal values in the European radical right](#)'. *Nations and Nationalism*, 19 (1). pp. 107–127. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2012.00550.x>.

4. Details of the impact

The entry of far-right populist parties into European political systems has sparked debate about the threats these parties pose to democratic politics. Beyond their ability to influence policy through parliamentary means, their entrenchment in the political system has also helped legitimise openly violent forms of extremism. Halikiopoulou's research promotes **understanding, learning and participation**, by helping equip the public and policymakers with the tools necessary to assess the challenges and risks posed by the far right. This is explained below.

Informing public attitudes [sources 1 and 3]

Halikiopoulou's research has raised awareness among global audiences. By challenging the view that the rise of far-right populism is a healthy democratic corrective, and exposing parties presenting themselves as benign liberal democratic alternatives, it has met the public need to understand and assess the challenges posed by this phenomenon. In sum, the work has been exposed to a monthly global audience of over 120,000,000, reaching 30 countries worldwide through 100+ media engagements and 40 blog posts and newspaper articles [Figure 1].

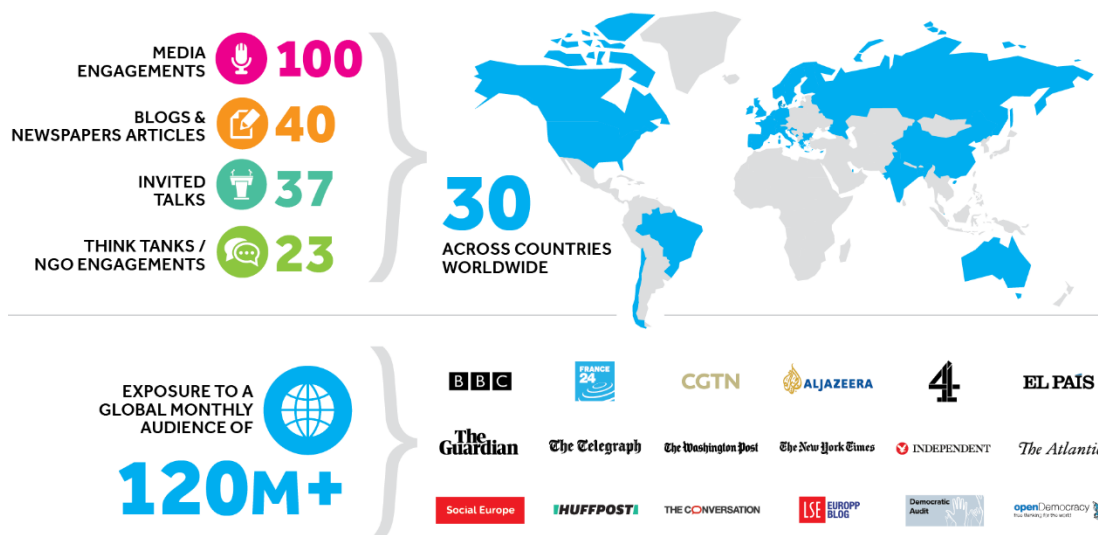


Figure 1: Global reach of Halikiopoulou's research on the far right

Halikiopoulou's engagements have been viewed around 20,000 times on YouTube, generating over 1,000 comments and 800 social media reactions. Her participation in a Channel 4 debate on populism (2018), illustrates deep understanding of the research findings; some viewers left comments such as "economic insecurity leads to social insecurity, which leads to political polarisation". Similarly, as a response to her *Conversation* article on party classification, readers commented that "nationalism, while positive in many ways, becomes perilous when it turns to ultranationalism". In contrast, negative comments from far right organisations such as US-based Stormfront just hours after the publication of her article on the GD for the Greek *Kathimerini* also demonstrate the speed and global nature of the response to her work. These engagements have

Impact case study (REF3)

in turn resulted in invitations for more articles, interviews and talks. For example, blog posts in *Political Quarterly* resulted in an invited contribution for *Social Europe*, subsequently re-published as a feature by the Spanish *El Pais*. Similarly, an *LSE Brexit* blog post resulted in an interview for the *Sunday Times* and the *Brazilian O Estado Sao Paolo*.

Stimulating debate among key stakeholders [sources 1, 3 and 5]

Halikiopoulou's research and engagement activities have informed and stimulated political debate by alerting key stakeholders, such as think-tanks and NGOs, to the institutional and economic dimensions of far-right party support. Organisations whose visions centre on safeguarding and promoting democratic values, and those who advocate for welfare state institutions, have been offered a platform on which to justify their policies on political, in addition to economic, grounds. As a result, these organisations are better equipped to assess the far-right challenge, and by extension devise their policy platforms.

To inform and stimulate debate Halikiopoulou has delivered 30+ talks (by invitation) to such organisations, with large audiences. For example, she spoke at the Goethe institute's cultural symposium in 2019; the International Journalism Festival also in 2019 (the largest annual media event in Europe, with 50,000 attendees), the Delphi Economic Forum in 2017 and 2018, the SympoSymposium, SolidarityNow as well as Government funded foundations such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung foundation in 2015. These engagements have resulted in Halikiopoulou's research being frequently cited in policy outreach papers and communications for government officials, policymakers and/or the broader public. For example, the German-based Jacques Delors Centre and Belgium-based Robert Schuman Foundation have both referred to Halikiopoulou's work on political parties in their policy papers warning about the rise of euroscepticism and the difficulties facing the European Union; the Greek Hellenic Foundation of European and Foreign Policy has cited Halikiopoulou's work on labour market policies [Section 3, refs 2 and 4] in its "Crisis Observatory" series; and the Institute of Modern Russia has cited Halikiopoulou's far-right classification in a report on Putinism and the Far Right.

In 2013 she wrote a policy chapter on Greece for the Brussels-based Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), which was followed by a keynote address (2020) during an online event when FEPS launched their Populist Tracker. In 2015 she produced a working paper for the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) [source 4] based on her research on labour market institutions [Section 3, ref 4]. This was the beginning of a series of requests on both sides of the Atlantic to serve as a consultant in developing strategies for addressing the rise of the far right. Also in 2015, she contributed to a policy report by the Peace Research Institute Oslo PRIO (Cyprus Centre) on the European Far Right. In 2017 she was commissioned by the Rosa Luxembourg Institute (New York) to assist in developing solutions for addressing the far right internationally. A consultation with the US-based Centre for a New American Security in the summer of 2019 led to the publication of a "Toolkit for Liberal Actors to combat populism". Subsequently, collaboration with the Brussels-based Centre for European Policy Studies resulted in the presentation of a policy paper at the thinktank's annual conference and its publication in early 2020.

Halikiopoulou has also reached thinktanks and NGOs through the PopuList. She is part of an eight-member team of academics and journalists who have developed this project [source 2], which classifies European far-right and far-left populist parties. As a result, think tanks and NGOs from across the world [Figure 2] have used this classification to warn of the dangers and ideological roots of populism and inform policy. For example, as stated by the Sweden-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), "the spread of populist parties (helped by the classification) has informed our strategies, global and regional priorities.... and will inform our policies to support democracy, globally and in specific regions, such as the wider Europe" [source 5].

Impact case study (REF3)

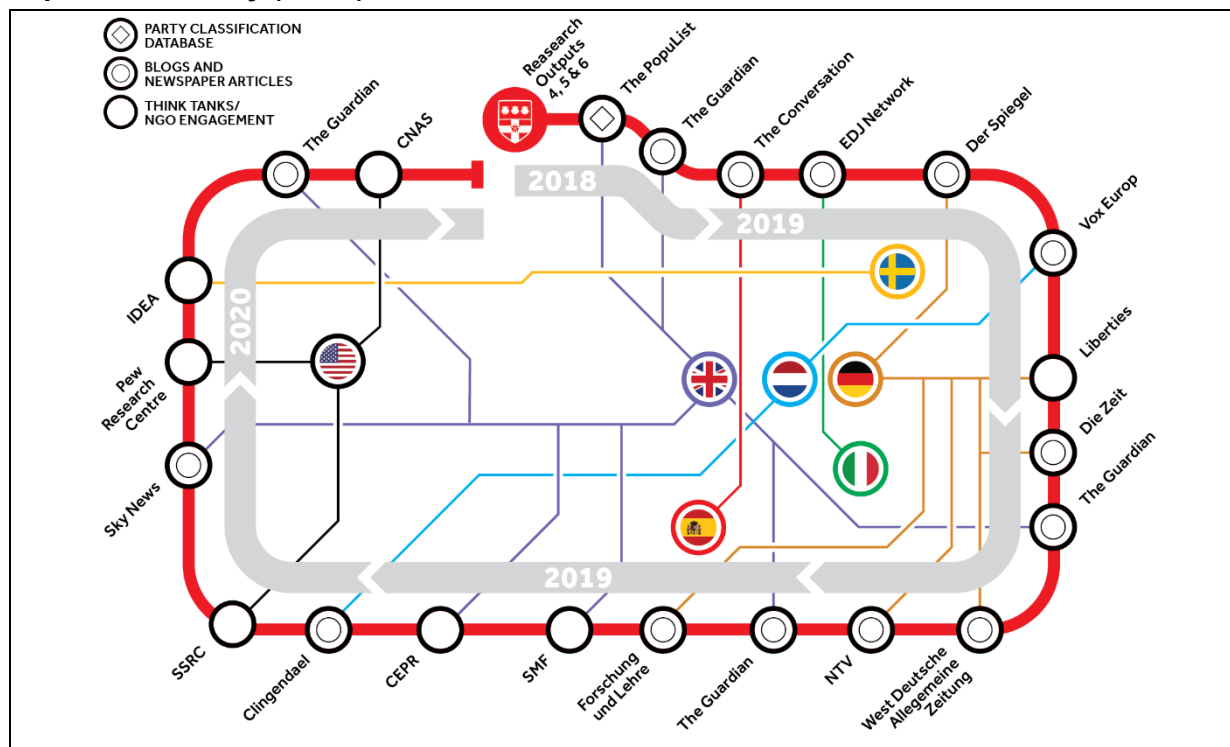


Figure 2: Tracking the uptake of the PopuList

Contributing to efforts to widen participation in the political process

Following the publication of her book [ref 5], Halikiopoulou was approached by Greek left-leaning and centrist political parties to offer consultation on how to address the rise of right-wing extremism and the entry of the GD into the Greek Parliament. In light of her research finding that the rise of the GD was the product of a crisis of democratic representation and a rapid decline in political trust and participation in the democratic process [refs 3 and 5], Halikiopoulou emphasised solutions that aimed at widening citizens' participation in democratic procedures at all levels. Forging a formal partnership with the progressive movement Forward, which was subsumed into the Movement for Change (KINAL) in 2017/18, she helped devise various party strategies aimed at restoring citizens' trust in political participation. In 2017 Halikiopoulou led KINAL's London Electoral Commission initiative. This enabled the participation of London-based Greek citizens in the party's 2017 leadership election [source 6], with the aim of facilitating the possibility of remote voting for Greek citizens based abroad in other types of elections, including national.

In summary, the research findings highlighted above uncover the economic and institutional reasons behind the rise in far-right populism. The international reaction to the research also indicates that society and policymakers are now better informed of the dangers hidden within the seemingly benign nationalistic rhetoric of far-right parties. Uptake of this research is therefore significant, in that it enables countries to be alert to the threats posed, and to consider strategies which will support and protect democracy.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1]Media and Engagement log

[S2]PopuList log

[S3]Responses from members of the public (examples from social media/digital platforms)

[S4]Halikiopoulou, D. and Vlandas, T. (2016) *Why Far-right Parties do Well at Times of Crisis: The Role of Labour Market Institutions*, [ETUI Working Paper](#), Brussels.

[S5]Thinktank citations and email from IDEA

[S6]London Electoral Commission and KINAL