

Mothers and warriors: Constructing feminine militancy and normalizing violence in Greek neo-Nazi media

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Abstract

Although women's militancy and the image of the woman-warrior are often idealized in the far-right and while the stereotype of men's monopoly in far-right violence has been strongly criticized during the last decades, little attention has been paid on the role violence plays as an ideological element in the construction of feminine far-right identities. However, the question of ideology is crucial for understanding the context of not only broader politicization of violence in far-right movements but also women's particular politicization to violence. Representations of violence in relation to femininity in the far-right can shed light on neglected ideological aspects of the - indeed contradictory regarding gender dynamics - political context in which women (are called upon to) mobilize and take action. The case of Greek neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn and the discourses through which the party and its women have articulated a collective feminine identity is a characteristic example of how far-right femininity can be infused with references to violence. This aspect of Golden Dawn femininity has remained mostly invisible, although women members have not only often invoked hate and violence, but some have been even convicted for participation in or facilitation of violent crimes. Here I ask: how has violence been represented in Golden Dawn discourse and what has its role been in the articulation of gendered and in particular feminine collective political identities? How has potential feminine militancy been constructed in media discourse of the party and its' women?

Analysis of digital media content of Golden Dawn party and mostly its' women's organization, Women's Front, shows that by drawing on national and international, historical and contemporary, racist and nationalist discourses, violence occupies a central position in women's discourse, bearing strong gendered connotations. In specific, femininity is articulated in relation to a narrative of racial wars, illustrated through gendered images of internal and external dangers, while white feminine militancy is constructed as a twofold solution: both reproductive and soldierly. Thus, not only motherhood, but also martial readiness and war competence are praised as *sine qua non* aspects of an 'original' Greek, white womanhood – a dimension of women's politicization and participation in far-right movements and violence often ignored.

Keywords

far-right violence, far-right ideology, far-right women, femininity, nationalism, motherhood, female warriors

Introduction: far-right violence, women and the question of ideology

The relation between violence and women/femininity in the far-right¹ is still a thorny topic, although during the last decades there has been a vivid discussion on the role of women both in historical fascism and in contemporary far-right groups, parties and movements (e.g. Bacchetta & Power, 2002; Passmore 2003; Köttig et al., 2017; Dubslaff, 2022). Focusing on women's overlooked agency, feminist research has strongly criticized the long dominant interpretation of violence as a men's monopole and women's role as victims or only passive bystanders (Bitzan et al., 2003). The trial of Beate Zschäpe, accused for participation in neo-Nazi terrorist group NSU (National Socialist Underground), which committed the murders of nine people of immigrant origin and one policewoman as well as several bomb attacks and bank robberies in Germany from the late 1990s up to 2011, is a good example of how this discussion revived during the last years – the trial lasted from 2013 to 2018. Beate Zschäpe, founding member and held responsible for organization and logistics of the group, denied her central role, representing herself as an innocent, dependent and unhappy woman, basically as a victim of her two basic accomplices, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt². In the meanwhile, and as it became clear that NSU functioned with the support of a broader network, other far-right women who testified in the same trial, represented themselves as ignorant, unpolitical subjects or even caring mothers, as if that was a proof of good citizenship (Dauber, 2014; Köttig, 2017). More recently, several women were among the prosecuted for the violent siege of USA Capitol in Washington D.C., which took place on the 6th of January 2021, following Trump's defeat in the presential election of 2020 (Matfess & Margolin, 2022). The attack, which resulted in several people injured and some dead, was organized and conducted by far-right

¹ I use the term 'far-right' in a loose way to refer to movements, groups and parties inspired by fascist, nationalist and authoritarian forces and ideas of the past, which can however depict different forms of representation and organization today. 'Far-right' can be seen as an umbrella term for 'radical-right', 'extreme-right', 'neo-fascism' and 'right-wing populism' (Mudde, 2019). Especially in relation to fascism, it is strongly debated today to what extent and which contemporary far-right parties and movements could be categorized as 'neo-fascist' (Griffin, 2018). On the one hand, there are political movements and groups that refer to historical fascism in an explicit way and copy narratives and methods from the historical tradition of fascism, like for example Golden Dawn does with Nazis. On the other hand, many far-right parties and groups distance themselves from historical 'fascism' today, although fascist ideas and practices from the past may inspire or influence their ideology and practices.

² In May 2023, Zschäpe admitted some responsibility for NSU crimes, although in a controversial way. During a new hearing in court, she argued that she could have stopped her accomplices but she did not, now regretting about it - without, however, taking the responsibility for her active role in supporting and co-organizing the crimes of the group. See: Vor bayerischem Untersuchungsausschuss: Zschäpe räumt Mitschuld an NSU-Mordserie deutlich ein. 23.05.2023. *Tagespiegel*. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/vor-bayerischem-untersuchungsausschuss-zschape-raumt-mitschuld-an-nsu-mordserie-deutlich-ein-9859592.html>

supporters of Trump during the process of vote-counting by the Congress and formalization of the election result which gave victory to Trump's opponent, Joe Biden. Women, who constituted 13% of the individuals charged with involvement in the siege, participated in the attack in several ways: from violent action on the spot to inciting violence through social media. Although the number of women participants is definitely smaller than that of men, some women took even leading roles in organizing the siege and in breaking into the Capitol, which represents a change of paradigm on women's participation in far-right violence, according to Matfess & Margolin (2022). Still, they denied responsibility in court using their gender as proof of innocence, so as to avoid legal consequences. Considering the legendary trial of neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in Greece, which took place between 2015 and 2020 in Athens and brought sixty-eight members before court - among which all the parliamentary members of the party back then -, five women were prosecuted for partaking in violent or other illegal activities as well as in the constitution of a criminal organization – which was one of the basic accusation the party leadership and members faced, apart from individual prosecutions for involvement in criminal actions, like murders and attacks against immigrants and political opponents (Psarras, 2015). All five of them denied accusations, while two, Eleni Zaroulia and Nicole Mpeneki, partner of the leader Nikos Michaloliakos and ex-partner of the ex-first-henchman Panagiotis Lagos respectively, stated that they were involved in the party only professionally or through their relationship to their partners³. This is a typical example of how far-right women, when in court, resort to gender stereotypes in order to avoid responsibility for their political activity (Köttig, 2017). In 2020, three women were convicted, including the former MP and wife of the leader, Eleni Zaroulia.

Whereas Golden Dawn women's activity and rhetoric has been analyzed in a series of studies (Psarra, 2014; Félix, 2015; Alvanou, 2017; Koronaiou & Sakellariou, 2017; Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022; Kamenou, 2023), the question of violence – in practice or in ideology - has been ignored, although political violence has been a significant practice in Greek political culture (Xenakis, 2012) and despite the fact that far-right violence in specific scores tremendously high in Greece in comparison to other European countries, as Jupskås & Fielitz (2022) explain. This indifference should be no surprise, as there is often a gender-biased (mis)interpretation of far-right women's violence, which results in its invisibility or underestimation (Bitzan et al. 2003,., Köttig, 2017). However, even when investigated, the focus has been mainly on if and how women have been involved in far-right violent activity, and not so much on if and how this relates to their ideological background and motivation (Manthe, 2019).

³ N. Mpeneki: I was not a member of Golden Dawn, I was... a professional member. [N. Μπενέκη: Δεν ήμουν μέλος της Χ.Α., ήμουν... επαγγελματικό μέλος.] 27.09.2019. *Efimerida ton Syntakton*. https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaiosyni/i-diki-tis-hrysis-aygis/212490_n-mpeneki-den-imoy-n-melos-tis-ha-imoy-n; Golden Dawn trial – Zaroulia: Political persecution, foreigners bring diseases. [Δίκη Χρυσής Αυγής - Ζαρούλια: Πολιτική δίωξη, οι ξένοι φέρνουν αρρώστιες.] Sofia Spigkou. 09.10.2019. *Ethnos*. <https://www.ethnos.gr/greece/article/65680/dikhxryshsayghszaroyliapolitikhdiokhoixenoifernoynarrosties>

But, to understand far-right violence in general, we should not only examine acts of brutality alone, as they then often end up being interpreted as isolated cases of aggressive behavior or attacks of mentally unstable perpetrators. To comprehend far-right violence and the context of its manifestation, it is also necessary to take into account far-right ideology as well as the politicization of violence in far-right movements (Ravndal & Enstad, 2021). According to Coester et al. (2023), ideological elements like antisemitism, racism and antifeminism should be seriously considered as political motives when it comes to right-wing terrorism, while recent E.U. working definition for violent right-wing extremism emphasizes the political and ideological motivation behind it, underlining that what qualifies far-right violence as such is ‘a set of particular goals beyond the act itself as opposed to other forms of violence’ (Project Based Collaboration on Violent Right-Wing Extremism 2021, p. 2), with these goals to be ‘classified as political (for example seeking to destroy democracy, overthrow the government, create a state based on authoritarian rule, intense nationalism, and racial purity, or to stop immigration) [...or...] ideological (belief in white supremacy, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, belief in the “great replacement” or upcoming genocide of the white race)’ (Project Based Collaboration on Violent Right-Wing Extremism 2021, p. 2-3).

Here it should be noted that far-right violence covers a broad range of acts and does not refer only to murderous attacks or terrorist actions – although there is an increased legal interest in these aspects and much data collection and research revolves around them. According to Bjørge & Ravndal (2019, p.5), “all violent attacks whose target selection is based on extreme-right beliefs and corresponding enemy categories—immigrants, minorities, political opponents, or governments [...including...] ‘vandalism and spontaneous violence’ should be considered as far-right violence, or as EU working definition for violent right-wing extremism (Project Based Collaboration on Violent Right-Wing Extremism 2021, p.3) notes, “right-wing extremist violence may be defined as any physical or psychological attack, or act of public disorder, whose target selection is based on extreme right-wing beliefs”. Still, such definitions presuppose a common ground of what is understood as violence, that is criminalized violence. Thus, they leave outside authoritarian or racist state violence, often praised or even officially legalized by the far-right when in power. In any case, a definition of violence is per se a tricky issue (Miller, 2021). It should not be doubted that violence is connected to power, force and control and it often refers to causing physical or emotional pain, destruction, deprivation. It may refer to physical action but also to verbal attacks and threats, like hate speech. It can take place off or nowadays even online. Moreover, violence may be recognized and discussed as such or it may be silenced or denied. It may be normalized or even welcomed as necessary and inevitable or as heroic and beautiful, as is the case of altruistic self-harm. As Miller (2021, p.5) notes, although “we probably all agree that its material referents matter”, culturally violence is much of a discursive construction as well, since what is understood and recognized as violence is the product of historically and geographically specific socio-political dynamics and cannot be taken for granted.

This is not at all to doubt the broader political dangers or the harmful consequences of far-right violence from which people suffer – often in invisibility and silence (Köbberling, 2022) –, but thinking of violence in discursive and cultural terms is very much connected to the question of how the far-right represents violence and how this contributes to its’ legitimization and normalization – first for those who exercise it and then for those who accept or support it. Marcks & Pawelz (2022) note that political narratives of threat, more and more mainstreamed today, are only a step away from the exercise of violence and should not be underestimated, since they constitute emotionalized discourses that construct a state of emergency against dangerous enemies, and they can activate palingenetic fantasies and legitimize violence. Such fantasies of collective rebirth, connected to millenarian idealizing of self-sacrifice, can also explain how perpetrators of violence overcome fear of (even their own) death (Griffin, 2003). The question of how such far-right fantasies address women, if at all, remains crucial here, since the dominant narrative represents violence as a men’s issue, while women are supposed to be appalled at violence, naturally not inclined to it.

Here, focusing on the case of Golden Dawn, I am asking what role the discourse of violence has played in Greek neo-Nazi women’s political imaginary and construction of femininity. My intention is not at all to state that ideology is translated one in one in acts of violence; this would be just simplistic and research has shown that the personal stories of members of the far-right scene are often more complicated than we believe (Köttig, 2004; Blee, 2018). However, examination of discourse on violence can shed light in the worldview(s) and identity(ies) articulated for and among women in the far-right, in the space it may open for practicing or accepting violence and can thus contribute to the contextualization of women’s activity, of their potential participation in violent acts, or their support towards violence. Last, examining the relations between femininity and far-right discourses of violence can also contribute to the understanding of what kind of gendered identities and values are propagated towards the broader public at a specific socio-historical moment of neo-liberal transformation and deepening of social inequalities, like the current one, when political forces more or less inspired or influenced by fascist and authoritarian tradition, gain more and more political space, as well as to the understanding of the potential socio-political impact this may have on normalizing and mobilizing exclusionary and harmful attitudes, affect and practices (Krzyżanowski, 2020).

Below, I will first present a short summary of Golden Dawn activity in Greece and the participation of women in it as well as the theoretical and methodological tools that were used in the analysis of party media addressing women, which has highlighted the discursive significance of violence. I will then analyze the gendered dimensions of violence discourse and how they contributed to the construction of a militant feminine identity in the context of Golden Dawn politics, closing with some critical remarks on the discursive politicization and normalization of violence in contemporary far-right politics, problematizing the dominant binary image of the woman-mother and the man-soldier.

The case of Golden Dawn women

Golden Dawn, an offspring of the afterwar Greek far-right, has clearly been a neo-Nazi party. Although it persistently denied its relation to historical national socialism in public after its electoral rise in 2012, its ideological references and practices point directly to historical Nazi movement, whose history and legacy have been of most significant influence on the party organization and ideology – a characteristic that differentiates Golden Dawn from other far-right organizations in Greece. The heritage of national socialism is obvious not only on its open antisemitism, racism, devotion to the supposed racial community and militarism, nonnegotiable discipline to the leader, but also on the direct references to Hitler and Nazis (Psarras, 2012). Golden Dawn exists since 1980, when it started as an ideological, intellectual circle devoted to national socialist theory, and it became a party in the early 1990s, after it mobilized on the streets for the Macedonian name issue. It entered the Greek parliament for the first time in 2012, finding fertile ground in the political unrest and polarization ignited by the debt ‘crisis’ and the consequent austerity politics (Ellinas, 2013), while it intensified its threats and attacks on immigrants and political opponents, until it was brought to court in 2015 with the accusation of constituting a criminal organization (Psarras, 2015). In the national election of July 7th 2019, the party was outseated from parliament, which together with the legal prosecutions against it and later convictions resulted in many high-ranking members abandoning the party and forming new political schemes. In the trial of Golden Dawn, five women – all closely related to the organization – had been charged with accusations. One among them, Themis Skordeli was in charge of the notorious storm-troop of Agios Panteleimon in Athens and she has been convicted as instigator, giving orders in cases of life-threatening attacks to immigrants and political opponents. Nicol Mpeneki, another member who was active in Women’s Front and very close to the leadership, also ex fiancée of Giannis Lagos – one of the leading figures and MP of Golden Dawn, who founded and led the splinter party E.LA.SYN. from 2019 to 2013, and who was convicted in Golden Dawn trial in 2020 while elected in European Parliament –, was questioned in court for photographs showing her illegally holding and pointing with guns. Last, (ex) policewoman Venetia Popori, close informant of Golden Dawn, was accused of – and convicted – for possessing dozens of illegal guns and bullets⁴.

But what has been the role of women in Golden Dawn? Golden Dawn started as a men’s organization back in the 1980s, but it soon included women as members. In late 1990s, when Golden Dawn started to participate in elections, it tried to include more and more women, not only to attract women voters but also because of mandatory gender quotas it had to fulfil regarding election

⁴ Information regarding the trial of Golden Dawn has been drawn from domestic press covering the trial (e.g. Efimerida ton Syntakton, <https://www.efsyn.gr>) as well as the monitoring initiative Golden Dawn Watch - <https://goldendawnwatch.org/>.

candidacies⁵ (Psarra, 2014). In 2007 it initiated a women's organization, named Women's Front, which started its activity with online blogging. Until its withdrawal in 2013 more than one thousand entries were published in the three blogs administrated by Women's Front, that is the blogs 'Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland', 'Ideological Library', and 'Kitchen'. Later, Women's Front participated in rallies and in food distributions, it organized local women's cells and ideological lessons for women. It is important here that Women's Front paid strong attention on ideology – group gatherings organized and managed by high-ranking women were closed to members and ideology was a crucial element in the initiation process (Félix, 2015). Antifeminism combined with nationalism and a Nazi-inspired as well as Nazi-praising racist and anti-liberal perspective have been in the core of this ideology (Psarra, 2014; Koronaïou & Sakellariou, 2017; Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022). Women's Front was rather active in period 2007-2013, closely linked to its leader Evgenia Christou's activity, and then disappeared as a collective women's space from public, although women - and Evgenia Christou herself - continued to participate in Golden Dawn politics. In 2012 and then again in 2015 two women were elected each time as MPs among eighteen MPs with Golden Dawn, while among the four party representatives who were elected in Athens City Council in May 2019, two were women. Although evidently fewer than the men in the party -unfortunately, however, there are no official or other data on the exact numbers of membership -, women's role has not been restricted to presenting a friendly face to the public or taking care of background organizational work, but as Kamenou (2023) points out, they have also claimed a place as 'political soldiers' in the nationalist movement, negotiating the strict patriarchal and masculine norms which dominate the Greek far-right.

Exploring the articulation of a feminine Greek neo-Nazi identity: the emerging element of violence

A first-step exploratory analysis of Women's Front blogs, accompanied by and compared to other party media material, showed that violence is a central element in discourse addressed by and addressing women. It should be noted that Women's Front discourse has been partly produced and signed by women of the organization and much reproduced from other Golden Dawn or broader far-right media. Moreover, although men had the dominant role in leadership and intellectual production in the party - at least in public -, women's active role in supporting and promoting Golden Dawn agenda should not be underestimated, even if it is not clear to what extent women co-determined it (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022). In any case, the emergence of violence during the analysis of women's discourse - as expressed and defended by women and their 'Front' -, raised a series of further questions: what meaning is given to violence in neo-Nazi discourse? What is its' role in the articulation of gendered political

⁵ According to the law in Greece, the gender quota for election lists was a minimum of 30% for men and for women candidates – a quota which has risen to 40% since 2019.

identities, and in particular feminine identities? How (if) is feminine militancy constructed in Greek neo-Nazi ideology? And moreover: how are historical national socialist interpretations of violence interwoven with current local or transnational nationalist narratives in women's discourse?

A qualitative in-depth analysis followed on fifty selected texts of Women's Front blogs, chosen for their relevance to the topic of violence and gender. The analysis, based on discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) and critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2001, Reisigl, 2017) from a feminist (Lazar, 2007) and intersectional perspective (Riegel, 2016), showed that in order to articulate a collective political identity, Golden Dawn women draw on three distinct - distinguished here one from another mostly for analytical reasons - discourses: historical Nazi discourse, contemporary international white supremacist discourse as well as old and contemporary Greek nationalist discourse (the latter to a certain extent widespread in the Greek context and mostly among conservative spaces and actors). These threads of discourse are combined in a women's perspective, producing a feminine radical right identity in the context of contemporary Greek politics, and in specific producing what can be named as a *feminine Greek neo-Nazi identity*. The resultant narrative, represented as the one and only legitimate 'truth', appears as strongly antagonistic to concurrent alternative political discourses, which include feminist, antiracist, left and liberal discourses. 'Violence' is indeed one of the main elements in this narrative, related to a series of significant signifiers, such as 'war', 'threat', 'resistance', '(counter)attack', 'genocide', 'death', 'heroes/heroines', which are here given meaning from a gendered, feminine perspective. It is this feminine (or feminized) narrative perspective on violence and its basic components which emerged in the analysis, that I will present below.

Racial war, enemies and the gendered national body

The journalist and expert on Golden Dawn history and politics Dimitris Psarras (2015) has noted that the concept of 'war' belongs to the core of Golden Dawn leadership's worldview, who copy the historical national socialist rhetoric by depicting themselves as "wolves among the sheep", fighting a 'waging war for countless centuries' and seeking to make true Hitler's vision for an *Endsieg* - in their words fighting 'a total and merciless war and we will not cease until we emerge triumphant' (Psarras 2015, p. 65). Thus, Golden Dawn represents itself as the savior of the imagined community, ready to fight against all its alleged enemies - internal and external -, who supposedly lead a war against the nation and the race. Women's Front adopted the same rhetoric. In May 2012, when the party entered the Greek Parliament, Women's Front republished in its blog 'Ideological Library'⁶ a post from the Youth's organization, which copied its title

⁶ Sources originating from media of Golden Dawn or Women's Front are cited here partially, with reference only to the titles of posts/articles and the names of the websites/blogs/newspapers as well as the date of publication. This choice attunes to recent concerns on how to avoid reproducing direct web-links to far-right media through scientific work.

from Joseph Goebbels speech in Sportpalast in 1943 – ‘Stand up Greek People’⁷ and let the storm burst!’ - and which reproduced national socialist language amalgamated with contemporary racist discourses. The text reads that

Golden Dawn has signaled the Call of War [...and ...] undertakes the protection of our persecuted People. Its protection from both the regime of Zionist loan sharks and the barbarian hordes of Asia and Africa. It is time we remove the redundant fat of this people; it is time we punish the ones guilty of this Treason⁸.

Golden Dawn, like other neo-Nazi organizations, has insisted on open antisemitic and antizionist statements in contrast to other contemporary far-right parties, which avoid explicit antisemitic language in favor of a pro-Israel stance – although they may include antisemitic adherents (Kahmann, 2017; Grimm, 2019). Antisemitic images of Jewish bankers and ‘loan sharks’ have suited well the anti-systemic rhetoric of the party during the recent financial crisis in Greece, when international financial institutions and organizations, such as private banks, the European Central Bank and IMF, played a crucial role in the management of public debt crisis. But Golden Dawn did not just reproduce an old antisemitic rhetoric – its antisemitism was combined with latest racist anti-immigration and anti-Islam discourses, which depict the nation as a biological and cultural unity in danger of degradation due to alien invading elements – those mentioned above as ‘barbarian hordes of Asia and Africa’. Next to outer enemies, Golden Dawn also refers to inner ‘betrayers’. These are its political opponents who need to be combated and exterminated as ‘redundant fat’, i.e. as an unnecessary burden to the national body, who deserve punishment for failing or refusing to protect the nation from outer enemies, be that immigrants, Muslims or Jews.

In Women’s Front discourse the nation and the race suffer also from a domestic ‘decadence’ caused by a moral crisis, attributed to a conspiracy plan. Moral decadence is explained as part of a war plan organized by outer forces and backed up by inner collaborators, aiming at disorientating the people from their devotion to the wellbeing and advancement of the racial/national community, which is depicted as nothing less than people’s natural purpose and duty.

Interestingly, sexual and reproductive practices stand in the middle of this war. ‘Low birth rates’, ‘abortion’, ‘homosexuality’, and ‘miscegenation’ are pictured as practices of the plan that aims at the degradation, if not extinction, of the community. Women’s Front condemnation of such practices does not lie on conservative fears; following the legacy of Aryanism, it results from the belief that such practices do not promote but on the contrary, they sabotage the reproductive survival and advancement of the race and nation, which are envisaged as the greatest cause. In women’s blogs it becomes clear that women are attributed and called upon to play a special role in this mission: it is women who are reminded again and again that they bear the responsibility to reproduce

⁷ Words in translated passages written in whole or often with their first letter in capitals follows the choice of writers in Golden Dawn and Women’s Front media. The choice of the writers signals an attempt to underline the significance or even to ascribe superiority to content of capitalized words.

⁸ *Stand up Greek People and let the storm burst!* [Ξεσηκώσου τώρα Ελληνική Λαέ και άσε την καταιγίδα να ξεσπάσει!]. May 2012. Blog Ideological Library.

the nation and race and to reproduce it right. Drawing on historical fascist ecological thought, which survives until today but often revives in different forms from the past (Forchtner, 2020), ‘Greeks’, the Greek nation, are represented as part of a broader ‘endangered’ white European family, to which other European nations belong too as brother-nations and whose reproduction is women’s urgent duty. In pictures (re)produced by Women’s Front, Europe is portrayed as a female figure: for example, a post titled ‘Racial ecology’, apart from written text explaining racial theory, also includes a picture of a figure resembling a frowning, young white woman on the back of a white Siberian tiger (Pict.1⁹), accompanied by the caption ‘Endangered species. Save the tiger of Siberia and the human of Europe’. Not only does Women’s Front appeal here to and appropriates quite mainstream preservation worries of the environmental movement but it also identifies an alleged race with its women – or better women with the community they supposedly belong to. Thus, women lose any individuality, since their existence obtains meaning only through the community and the ways they relate to it. This is no surprise, since Golden Dawn openly positions itself against human rights and rights of the individual, with women representatives and members publicly defending such political positions even against women’s rights (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022).

The racial war Golden Dawn is devoted to is a *gendered* war between races, conceptualized as a competition of natural, biological terms. In Women’s Front discourse historical national socialist ideology meets contemporary debates on European borders and migration together with debates on gender and sexuality. In the aforementioned text ‘Racial Ecology’, racial theory is used to explain the supposed dangers of antiracism, combined with dangers of homosexuality and abortion. Antiracism is rejected as an ideological distortion of the racial logic by opposing and threatening the ideal of racial purity and homogeneity of the community by allowing racial ‘miscegenation’. Neglection of giving children, termination of pregnancies and homosexual living are also part of the conspiracy against the race, where the race is illustrated as overflowed with ‘alien’ elements and distracted from the responsibility to reproduce itself by giving in in distorted sexual and reproductive practices. The above narrative, diffused in Women’s Front texts, is well summarized in the following passage:

[...] biological foundation - the blood - is the womb of creation. Any preach of antiracism that leads to the cultivation and acceptance of miscegenation is disastrous [...] European races are today more than ever in danger. We are experiencing an intrusion of other-races aiming at the dilution of national coherence and consequently the miscegenation and ultimate and irreversible extinction of races. [...] The social planning entails, not at all by chance, the so-called low birth rate and abortions. But also homosexuality, which is promoted in a sick way towards the European youth as a ‘lifestyle’.¹⁰

⁹ The pictures mentioned are to be found in the picture appendix at the end of the paper.

¹⁰ *Racial Ecology* [Φυλετική Οικολογία]. 06.04.2010. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

The national and the racial¹¹ community under threat is articulated in Women's Front discourse as a gendered body that consequently faces gendered dangers. Women in particular are represented and addressed as victims of the violence exerted by the enemies of the nation/race - but also as an inextricable part of the solution, of the counterattack of the community, as will be explained further below. The representation of women as vulnerable to violence and in need of protection is not at all an original element of Golden Dawn; it is rather a common patriarchal motif and practice, incorporated into Golden Dawn's scheme of war. In contrast, this victim discourse does not apply to representations of masculinities in Golden Dawn and Women's Front discourse. Men are not addressed as victims the way women are – they are mainly depicted as strong and combative and only indirectly represented as victims, as part of the culturally and morally attacked youth and consequently disorientated from its racial/national potential and duties (supposedly false values of individualism, superficial lifestyle, homosexuality, drugs¹²). Moreover, although the myth of rising criminality by 'third-worlders' is a common topic in Golden Dawn discourse, men are not explicitly depicted as suffering from it directly. It is vaguely the 'fatherland' and in more embodied categories the women (being attacked or raped/harassed¹³), or even the animals (stray dogs, cats, doves or pets being stolen, killed and consumed as food¹⁴) that supposedly suffer from immigrants. Women are also addressed by Golden Dawn as victims of gender violence, but gender violence is here instrumentalized from a racist perspective: it is white women and Greek women suffering attacks by men of 'other-race'. As has been noted (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022), Golden Dawn and its women have been pioneers in diffusing into the Greek context this pattern, which has been intensively used by far-right parties and far-right women themselves across borders during the last years, in order to mobilize people against the 'racial other' and to gain members and electoral support, and which becomes more and more dominant in mainstream discourse and politics nowadays (Farris, 2017; Hark & Villa, 2017). Although in Women's Front discourse gender violence can also be exercised by Greek men (to show how much in decline, 'decadent' the living conditions have been) or against 'non-Greek' women (and in some cases also young boys – to show how 'uncivilized' immigrants are in comparison to the 'civilized West'), it is mostly violence against 'our' women by men of 'other-

¹¹ Nation and race are often referred together in this paper, as the logic that constitutes them is common in Golden Dawn's discourse: both the 'white race' and the 'nation' as part of the white race family are understood in biological terms and even references to culture and cultural differences imply or signify natural differences among groups.

¹² *Survival Instinct* [Ένστικτο Επιβίωσης]. 21.05.2011; *Family Table* [Το Οικογενειακό Τραπέζι]. 03.05.2011; *Racial Ecology* [Φυλετική Οικολογία]. 06.04.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

¹³ Some examples from Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland: *England: Rape 'Epidemy' of Underage English Women by Muslims* [Αγγλία: 'Επιδημία' Βιασμών Ανήλικων Αγγλίδων από Μουσουλμάνους]. 24.05.2011; *'Hungry' Illegal Immigrants Everywhere* [Πεινασμένοι Λαθρομετανάστες Παντού]. 28.12.2011

¹⁴ *Hypocritical Selective 'Sensitivity'* [Υποκριτική Επιλεκτική 'Ευαισθησία']. 26.11.12. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

race' that is ascribed special significance as a widespread threat to white women's safety. Thus, we read in Women's Front blog:

[The woman today] is afraid of moving around alone in hundreds of areas of the country, in fear of robberies, attacks and rapes by illegal intruders who overflow the local communities.¹⁵

and

A shocking report [...] revealed that 92% of gang rapes in London come from non-whites. Fifty percent of the victims are white women.¹⁶

In Women's Front narrative, women are also victims of a cultural attack to the nation/race, which disorients them from fulfilling their natural cause and duty to contribute to the reproduction of the national/racial community by mothering and educating the new generation to the proper values¹⁷ (Koroniou & Sakellariou, 2017). Anti-feminism consists a central element in this construction (Psarra 2014; Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022). Feminism is blamed for alienating women from community-centered orientation, resulting in women following individualist values as well as leading a superficial lifestyle, carried away by fashion, consumption and entertainment and caring more about those activities, rather than for family life. Feminism is also blamed for promoting a destructive 'competition' between women and men, in the name of gender equality, instead of cooperation and partnership in a model of heterosexuality and gender complementarity¹⁸. Gender equality and demands or legislation for broader gender rights, together with LGBTQI movement, are also represented as part of the international plan against the nation and the race: homosexuality is represented as an illness and abnormality as well as an element of the outer plan of cultural and consequently biological degradation of the race/nation¹⁹. 'Politicians', the Greek political status quo, - are depicted as betrayers in this war against the nation, as they have supposedly failed to address the above social problems and to suggest policies that should promote births and motherhood, the avoidance of abortions and increase in young couples getting married and making their own families²⁰. Mainstream media are also depicted as playing a

¹⁵ *Propaganda in Women's Magazines* [Η Προπαγάνδα Στα Γυναικεία Περιοδικά]. 07.03.2011. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

¹⁶ *Of Other-race 92% of Gang Rape Perpetrators* [Αλλόφυλοι Οι Δράστες Στο 92% Των Ομαδικών Βιασμών]. 28.05.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

¹⁷ Here culture is constructed as an expression of a racial and national spirit, which allegedly originates directly from nature and is part of the biological potential of the nation/race, while outer enemies conspire to deteriorate the conditions that would allow the nation/race to fully develop its cultural potential and fulfill its natural cause. See *Racial Ecology* [Φυλετική Οικολογία]. 06.04.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

¹⁸ *Woman and the Modern World* [Η Γυναίκα και ο Σύγχρονος Κόσμος]. 29.04.2012. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

¹⁹ *WOMEN VS MEN (PART B)* [ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ VS ΑΝΔΡΕΣ (Β' ΜΕΡΟΣ)], 20.11.2007; *After Establishment of Homosexuality Comes Pedophilia* [Μετά την Καθιέρωση της Ομοφυλοφιλίας έρχεται η Παιδοφιλία]. 27.8.11. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

²⁰ *Women VS Men (Part B)* [ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ VS ΑΝΔΡΕΣ (Β' ΜΕΡΟΣ)]. 20.11.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

hideous role in racial degradation by promoting false models to the population²¹, while other inner enemies, such as the left(ists) and anarchists are depicted as collaborators in the above so-called ‘crimes’ against the race, as they refuse to serve the nationalist project²².

Politicization of women: mothers and warriors in the racial war

But what is the role of women in the war Golden Dawn has declared against all its enemies, in its ‘Counter-attack’²³? Golden Dawn does not represent women only as victims of violence by the enemies of the nation, but it also stands for the politicization and mobilization of women, resembling the ways historical Nazi movement envisioned the involvement of women in its political struggle (Wagner, 2010). Thus, women are encouraged to take action and participate in the nationalist movement, they are called upon to be active and to contribute to its’ struggle. Their victimization serves the legitimization of their mobilization, as a political response to the dangers women and their nation face. Women are addressed as political subjects, but at the same time they are called upon to adopt a very specific model of subjectivity which complements – and does not compete with – men’s social and political roles in and which is devoted to the service of the national(ist) project. When it comes to violence, women are called upon to take action and to free themselves from violence as well as to work for others’ freedom. However, violence – a central signifier in women’s movement discourse – is here redefined as violence against the race and the mythical community, in opposition to competitive political approaches and mostly feminist critiques that address violence as an issue of gender relations and patriarchy (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022).

In Women’s Front narrative, women’s freedom should be accomplished through action as well as through enlightenment and education – an education in alternative, racial values. Women should be educated themselves and they also have a duty as educators, that is as nurturers in the family and as cultural reproducers in society (Koronaïou & Sakelariou, 2017), e.g. as heroic teachers at schools – here a series of contemporary and historical female figures are praised for their nationalist work as teachers, as will be shown below. There is a major contradiction lying in this kind of emancipatory project, which interestingly is not named as ‘emancipation’, obviously because of the term’s strong connotations of historical autonomous feminist movements: women are called upon to become politically visible and active, and to break free from repressive mainstream lifestyles focused, as we read, exclusively on beauty, consumption, flirting and entertainment, but only to follow the norms set by a nationalist movement which

²¹ *Beware of interracial relationships* [Προσοχή στις Διαφυλετικές Σχέσεις]. 02.08.2010. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

Propaganda in Women’s Magazines [Η Προπαγάνδα Στα Γυναικεία Περιοδικά]. 07.03.2011. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

²² *Ag. Panteleimon: Police Provocations to Residents* [Αγ. Παντελεήμων: Αστυνομικές Προκλήσεις Σε Κατοίκους]. 24.11.08; *Woman and the modern world* [Η Γυναίκα και ο Σύγχρονος Κόσμος]. 29.04.2012. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

²³ ‘Counter-attack’ [Αντεπίθεση] is a favorable concept in Golden Dawn discourse and it is also the name of the magazine of the party’s youth section.

praises gender segregation and heterosexual family life as ideals. In other words, women are called upon to be politically active, but not independent: women's action should be devoted to mothering and care, and any other activity, in order to be accepted, should be tuned to the racial, nationalist project, denouncing any kind of women's political autonomy. So, rather than being politically ignored, women are mobilized by Golden Dawn to work for emancipation, be that however not an emancipation from men's power, but an emancipation of the nation and the race from its oppressors. In order to do so, they are proposed a combative political attitude, a militant femininity which combines two – at first sight contradictory – elements, one creative and reproductive (woman as mother and nurturer) and one martial and aggressive (woman as warrior and fighter). The consistency of this scheme can only be understood in the context of Golden Dawn's narrative of racial competition²⁴.

Mothers as reproducers of the nation and race under attack

In Golden Dawn women's discourse motherhood is depicted as a creative practice linked to the biological and cultural reproduction of the community (Koronaïou & Sakellariou, 2017). This means that motherhood is not at all understood – and not even accepted or tolerated – as an individual choice of the mother or the parents. On the contrary, it is represented as the ultimate natural mission of women, with nature identified here with an imagined racial ecology – that is a system of human races competing for survival. Motherhood should offer women self-fulfillment, but only as a contribution to the resurrection of the community. In other words, it is this contribution to the race and to the nation that provides women with self-fulfillment, while motherhood is constructed as the principal means which connects women to the community. As has been noted, in Women's Front media a discursive process of women's 'motherization' takes place (Anastasiadou et al., 2015): women are imagined and praised as mothers – any other identity and activity of women is only accepted if it serves the race and the nation, but even then, it is only secondary in value in comparison to motherhood, which is depicted as women's 'utmost role' and 'highest honor', as for example exemplified in a text titled '*Women's Place in People's Community*'²⁵.

Where does this narrative of motherhood stem from? On the one hand, the pattern and the language used are linked to broader far-right discourse as well as to national socialism – as for example the aforementioned reference to '*people's community*' implies. On the other hand, the motif is also found in the tradition of Greek nationalism, which has long praised the 'mothers of the nation'. This observation points to one of the most important aspects of Golden Dawn Women's Front discourse: the marriage between national socialism and Greek nationalism. Evgenia Christou, in charge of Women's Front, when referring to the natural duty of women to reproduce their race and its culture, resembles -if

²⁴ Although Golden Dawn often follows the ethnopluralist discursive paradigm, racial competition logic is not at all abandoned, but nesting on the core of arguments that want the nation or race under attack of 'foreign' populations or falling behind in comparison to 'others' in reproductive terms.

²⁵ See for example: *Women's Place in People's Community* [Η Θέση της Γυναίκας στη Λαϊκή Κοινότητα]. 26.05.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

not imitates - Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the leader of National Socialist Women's League (NS-Frauenschaft), whose words have been openly reproduced in Women's Front blogs. A passage of a historical speech of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink in New Year's Eve of 1935, translated for the blog of Women's Front, reads

It is thus our duty to arouse again the sense of the Divine, to make the calling for motherhood the way through which the German woman will see her calling to become mother of the Nation. Then she will not live her life in egoism but in the service of her people.²⁶

When asked in an interview for a nationalist website about the aim of Women's Front, Evgenia Christou repeated the above call in almost identical words. Although she did not refer to national socialism openly, the similarity in ideas and language is striking. This is how Evgenia Christou explained the aim of Women's Front in her interview:

We are trying to show an alternative lifestyle to women [...] That they educate their children based on the values and ideals of our race. That they feel proud Greeks and that they love the divine gift of motherhood which Nature gave to them²⁷.

However, it is rather hard and to some extent pointless to distinguish between national socialist and Greek nationalist influences in a passage as the above. It is more insightful to approach such a statement as a point where fascist ideological tradition and local nationalist heritage meet, making it almost impossible to sort the two traditions out, to separate them from one another even for analytical purposes, which shows a striking (at least at first sight) paradox in their intersection: historical fascism with all its brutality in its ideology and practice can remain concealed in contemporary - often mainstream - nationalist discourse and thus become normalized; at the same time, however, it also shows how close these two nationalist traditions are in their narratives and rhetoric – at least where, like in Greece, soil and blood as well as a persistent images of dangers and enemies against the nation constitute the base of national identity. In Evgenia Christou's above statement, the references to race, divinity (in other texts to 'God') and motherhood as a natural gift resemble the ideology of the 3rd Reich, but they also belong to the core of the dominant Greek nationalist narrative, which not only ascribes an important role to women as mothers for the continuation of the 'eternal' - originating from 'ancient Greeks' - nation, but it also attributes characteristics of a collective threat to 'low birth rate' and abortion (Halkias, 2004).

The calling for reproduction is at the same time an urging for participation in race competition. Since the race and nation, constructed in blood terms, are depicted in danger of degradation and even extinction – history is used here to

²⁶ *To Our People's Women* [Προς τις Γυναίκες του Λαού μας]. July 2010. Blog Ideological Library.

²⁷ *Evgenia Christou: We Greek Women are Proud and Fighters!* [Ευγενία Χρήστου: Οι Ελληνίδες Είμαστε Υπερήφανες και Αγωνίστριες!]. 04.12.2012. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

prove the possibility of extinction of races, as the reference to Sumerians shows below -, threatened by other races and nations, which grow and spread over the white race and the Greek nation²⁸, women's contribution to interception of the decline of the community and the onslaught of 'other-races' – here the 'Muslims', since religion is used in Golden Dawn discourse as a racial category -, becomes a main strategy in winning the war of racial survival and domination. Thus, in Golden Dawn's narrative procreation and nurturing are not only creative practices, but they also function as a defensive or even aggressive practice against the racial enemy, whom they intend to fight by outperforming in reproduction – in numbers and in genetic quality. Such an explicit reference to racial competition is noteworthy, since Golden Dawn often uses ethnopluralist arguments in order to argue against the accusation of racism²⁹. Evgenia Christou has offered a good example of this urging towards women to reproduce the nation against the racial enemy, and this way to protect the race from disappearance.

Muslim women have six children on average, whereas the Greek woman barely one. Greek woman has the duty and honor to continue her race [genos]. [...] It is really unheard that we let the Greek race go extinct like Sumerians and other races went extinct in the depths of centuries.³⁰

Moreover, in this generative strategy against the enemy, women are not alone. Although it is mostly women that are assigned the tasks of mothering and care work, responsibilities of ensuring the well-being of the family and the education of the children are also allocated to men. Some writings underline both the role of the breadwinner and that of the instructive father as measures of self-fulfillment for men. Thus, masculinity consists of more than the role of "soldier" for men - at least in Golden Dawn women's discourse. As we read in a text signed by the nickname Telesilla:

Our Race must realize that it can make true what they fear the most: its numerical advantage, its perpetuation. Men will feel that their existence has a purpose in this world, by making a family and having ahead the challenge of educating their children and struggling for covering their needs. Women will accept their nature, the only real emancipation, to give birth and nurture children.³¹

²⁸ *The Constant Question: Why?* [Η Μόνιμη Ερώτηση: Γιατί;] 13.10.11. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

Golden Dawn for our Survival! [Χρυσή Αυγή για την Επιβίωση Μας!]. 16.06.12. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

²⁹ For example, in Ideological Library it has even been stated that Golden Dawn is against colonial exploitation, against globalization, against hatred for the other and pro a humanity consisting of autonomous nations in peace.

Love your Race [Αγάπα τη Φυλή Σου]. October 2012. Blog Ideological Library

³⁰ *Woman and the modern world* [Η Γυναίκα και ο Σύγχρονος Κόσμος]. 29.04.2012. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³¹ *Fatherland is getting old* [Η Πατρίδα Γερνά]. 17.10.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

Combat women (a): the right to self-defense, vigilantism and the re-establishment of state power

Although motherhood has been praised as the highest valued role for women in Women's Front discourse, femininity is not at all articulated as a passive, quiet or suave identity – one that would suit the model of mother and housewife as usually expected. On the contrary, women are called upon to show a strong, combat character, which can even authorize them to direct violent action. Although it is men that are primarily given the role of the fighter and soldier, women are also legitimized to support and to participate in violence, be it impulsive or planned, individual or collective – their potential for violence justified by eternal models of feminine warrior ancestors, and a narrative of a racial and political war emergency.

First of all, a spirit of fighting readiness is key in the representation of female membership in Golden Dawn. Women's Front logo alone proves that well. In the first period of the organization's blogging, it showed some female figures pointing with guns towards the public (Psarra, 2014), while later it resembled a young girl's figure holding a slingshot and pointing again directly towards the reader. The picture, painted in the three typical colors of Nazi and also Golden Dawn flag – black, red and white –, was accompanied by the motto 'always ready' (Pict.2). So, women are not only described as victims of violence, but also as militant political subjects who take action against it. Women's Front called for 'readiness' of women in the war against the enemies of the nation and race, focused mainly on 'other races' and secondarily on political opponents. Women were called upon to be ready to fight against criminal attacks in everyday life, dramatically described as full of dangers, unsafe and provoking insecurity. In 2012, when the party entered the parliament and gained popularity, Women's Front started to organize self-defense classes for women - 'only for Greek women' - against those constructed as criminal intruders, that is 'illegal immigrants', 'Muslims', 'third-worlders', who are accused of threatening women's safety during their daily routines, like for example in their stroll with kids, on the way back home or even inside their houses³². Women were thus encouraged to exercise their physical condition and fighting skills, so as to be able to protect themselves on the streets or at home in case of attack – and not to restrict their movement out of fear or depend on men's protection. Although visibility to the issues of women's free movement and safety in everyday life and the appeal for women's mobilization may at first sight seem as an empowering process, Golden Dawn addressed only a special category of women (those fitting in the category of 'Greek women') and did so in a racist and fanatical discursive context, which constructs racial and political 'others' as enemies who worth punishment, if not annihilation. It is thus a racist, nationalist empowerment, aiming at mobilization in the (limited) lines of Golden Dawn party, away from struggles for women's independence. This is so, because such a 'femonationalist'

³² *From First Self-Defense Seminar* [Απο το Πρώτο Σεμινάριο Αυτοάμυνας] 09.06.12; *Women's Self-Defense Lessons*. [Μαθήματα Αυτοάμυνας Γυναικών]. 09.10.12. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

(Farris, 2017) targeting of the male foreigner disguises and silences universal dimensions of patriarchal power, masculine violence, misogyny and sexism against women and redirects the problem against a vulnerable group, that is (male) immigrants and refugees.

Moreover, the call for women's combat 'readiness' has also an anti-systemic aspect, which delegitimizes (existent) state power and at first sight, calls for people's (controlled) insurgency. Based on images of failed, corrupted Greek state and police, who are blamed as incapable of protecting citizens, here women, from criminals (often meant as immigrants), the narrative says that women cannot rely anymore on institutions and therefore need to take action for their own (and their nation's) good. In a post on Women's Front official blog, signed with the female name 'Veta', the police are scorned for an official announcement advising women to be careful on the streets, e.g. by not walking alone late at night or wearing jewelry. The solution relies on Golden Dawn women who are called upon to address Greek women's problems, to take action and to play the role of catalyst in inspiring women's confidence and empowerment.

I will answer to the police by saying: "No, gentlemen, if you cannot do your job, we do not deserve to pay for your incapability – or your restrictions. We will go wherever we like, we will be out whatever time we want and wherever we want inside our Fatherland, and we will take the law in our hands, if necessary, in order to protect ourselves". (I am appealing to Nationalist Women: We have to finally answer to all the conditions. We are able to raise the morale of all women of Greece with our powerful presence where necessary)³³.

Golden Dawn women oscillate here between vigilantism and legality. In other posts, a self-defense advice was given, paying special attention to what counts as legal defense according to the law, so that women become informed and somehow aware of the limitations posed by law³⁴. This makes sense, if we take into account that the activism and rhetoric of Golden Dawn has often been (far) beyond the rule of law by taking or calling upon taking the law into one's hands. The appeal for women's readiness is illustrated with pictures depicting female figures with guns in their hands, for example a young woman waiting at home for potential inventors (Pict. 3)³⁵, while another picture of a woman pointing with a gun accompanies a post that asks for the right to self-defense against the incapable state (Pict. 4)³⁶. In a post reporting on a case of sexual harassment, lynching is indirectly suggested as the proper punishment, with the picture of a human figure hung on a tree (Pict. 5). Justice is here criticized for prioritizing the protection of human rights of criminals, instead of the rights of the local

³³ *If you cannot, we can!* [Αν δεν Μπορείτε Εσείς, Μπορούμε Εμείς!]. 02.06.11. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³⁴ *Self-Defense Advice* [Συμβουλές Αυτοάμυνας]. 14.05.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³⁵ *Warn Them* [Προειδοποιήστε Τους]. 02.09.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³⁶ *Afghanis Raped Young Woman in Omonia* [Αφγανοί Βίασαν Κοπέλα στην Ομόνοια]. 02.12.2009. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

community³⁷. According to this logic, the state should be stricter in its punishing system, so as to avoid frustration and vigilantism by the people³⁸. Thus, death penalty is suggested as the proper punishment in cases of child molestation³⁹. For example, a post reporting on a case of ‘pedophilia’ and criticizing the punishment of the perpetrator as soft and therefore unfair, the text is accompanied by a picture of a broken mirror and the message ‘Kill them! Boogeymen exist.’ (Pict. 6)⁴⁰. However, although women are depicted as ready to take the law into their hands if necessary, the solution proposed in the long run is not people’s spontaneous or autonomous action of vigilantism, but a state organized and governed by Golden Dawn itself. So, anti-systemic rhetoric is only a means of bringing women (and men) closer to Golden Dawn, so that they trust the power to the party, which can then re-establish the state and its power over people.

Combat women (b): women at war and the legacy of eternal warriors

What does an alternative make-up look like? That is the colors of war on the face of a woman⁴¹ – army women become beauty symbols against what Women’s Front depicts as mainstream, sexist beauty norms. But it is not only an issue of aesthetics, since Golden Dawn women also state their readiness for joining the army next to men. Indeed, women’s military service has been one of the official demands of the party, expressed in parliament for the first time in 2012 by former MP Eleni Zaroulia, during a discussion on Istanbul Convention – military service proposed as an alternative to a convention aiming at preventing and combating violence against women. Eleni Zaroulia, who was the only MP in parliament who objected the ratification of the convention, stated that what constitutes a discrimination against women is their non-enlistment in army and proposed the legislation of obligatory military service for women at the age of 18 – the same as for men⁴². Some days later, in an interview of hers for a nationalist website, Evgenia Christou expressed the same position: she stood for women’s service in the army and explained that Golden Dawn recognizes a manifold potential in women against the stereotype of the soft vulnerable woman, stating that women

³⁷ *Whom does the State Protect?* [Ποιον Προστατεύει το Κράτος;]. 16.1.10. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³⁸ *Children Pornography* [Παιδική Πορνογραφία]. 01.12.2009. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

³⁹ Death penalty is a quite mainstreamed suggestion by the far-right, when it comes to children’s sexual abuse. In 2019, for example, the leader of the far-right party Greek Solution, Kyriakos Velopoulos, has openly proposed the establishment of death penalty for such cases. Giota Tessi. Fascist Solutions [Φασιστικές Λύσεις]. 15.07.2019. *Efimerida ton Syntakton*. https://www.efsyn.gr/politiki/antipoliteysi/203720_fasistikes-lyseis

⁴⁰ *Ridiculous instead of Exemplary the Punishment of the Sick General* [Γελοία Αντί για Παραδειγματική η Ποινή του Νοσηρού Στρατηγού]. 14.04.10. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴¹ *Alternative Make-Up* [Εναλλακτικό Μακιγιάζ...]. 23.05.2007. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴² Protocol of 15th Term of Greek Parliament, 1st Period, 71th Plenary Session, 13.11.2012

are ‘no fragile ornaments’⁴³ – thus claiming an active social role for women, even in fields that have been traditionally masculine in Greece, as the army. However, she added clearly that women’s role in service should be assisting to that of men, who should have the first place as armed soldiers. This reassurance, though, for a secondary role of women in army is not always the case in Women’s Front discourse, at least in the level of the imaginary, as will be explained next.

Women’s Front mythology of women warriors occupy a special place – next to women teachers of the nation. It should be noted that the image of the woman-warrior occasionally appears in Golden Dawn media as well, which indicates its relatively broader acceptance in the movement, but it mostly unfolds in women’s media. Golden Dawn women identify with a series of heroized female figures who are manifested as having fought in warfare bravely and vigorously, sometimes even more than their male comrades. Thus, women’s place is not only in the house nurturing children but also in the battlefield. Although men come clearly first in the role of fighters in Golden Dawn – and this is not doubted in Women’s Front writings – women’s ability and skill in war is not at all undervalued, but rather praised in cases of heroines of the past, even compared to that of men whom women are occasionally depicted as overcoming in combativeness⁴⁴. Such competitive instances, though contradictory to Golden Dawn’s segregated gender model, only little imply gender antagonism by women’s side. References to women’s extra-ordinary strength, described as fighting even better than men, mostly serve the idealization of women warriors – their comparison to men only proving the greatness of women’s courage and power.

But who are these fighting figures praised by Golden Dawn women? Women’s Front heroic warriors come to a good part from the dominant Greek nationalist narrative – reproducing and reconstructing here the myth of the continuation of the nation from Greek antiquity to War of Independence and further to national struggles in 20th century. They also come from the historical fascist movement and the international contemporary ultra-nationalist movement. Other cases of famous women warriors in European history are also praised in Women’s Front – depicted as fighting for a national(ist) cause. As the list of warriors is long, I am going to present here only some outstanding examples.

First, as explained, the Greek nationalist narrative is a privileged field, from which Women’s Front draws in order to construct its national fighting heroines. Starting from the Greek antiquity, Women’s Front introduces women of ancient Sparta as the superior model for women, the ‘eternal models for nationalist women’⁴⁵, to some extent following the idealization of Spartan women by the Nazis. Spartan women are praised for their toughness, independent spirit and at

⁴³ In Greek the French word *bibilot* (ornament) is used to name fragile, small decorative items and metaphorically for small-bodied, elegant women and further for “fragile” femininity, that is one that is inherently vulnerable and needs special care and protection.

Evgenia Christou: We Greek Women are Proud and Fighters! [Ευγενία Χρήστου: Οι Ελληνίδες Είμαστε Υπερήφανες και Αγωνίστριες!]. 04.12.2012. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴⁴ *Laskarina Mpourmpoulina* [Λασκαρίνα Μπουμπουλίνα]. 10.06.2007; *Moscho Tzavela (1760-1803)* [Μόσχω Τζαβέλα (1760-1803)]. 06.08.2007. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴⁵ *Eternal Models of Nationalist Women* [Τα Αιώνια Πρότυπα των Εθνικιστριών]. 03.06.2011. Blog Women’s Front for the People and the Fatherland.

the same time devotion to their community. They are depicted as women of strong character, discipline and excellent physical condition, of high sense of responsibility towards their people, being strict and rigid mothers and partners⁴⁶. Among Spartan women's qualities is their fighting spirit, as explained in the post titled 'Eternal models of nationalist women', which refers to a text from an official Greek school book of 1959 – this interestingly shows the relation of Golden Dawn to historical nationalism in Greece, in which Spartan women have also served as a model for women's devotion to fatherland. Spartan women are here praised for not abandoning the homeland, according to an evacuation plan proposed by Spartan men soldiers, but staying and supporting men's preparation and actual fight throughout the battle. In another post⁴⁷, the fight and victory in the battle of Sparta against King Pyrrhus is credited completely to women (and children), as men's army was away from the city.

Moving forward to time, the war of independence, known as the 'Greek revolution', serves as a source for heroines depicted as having fought with guns and fire for the liberation of the nation. Women warriors are here illustrated as models of courage, strength and even excellence in war skills. So, we read the story of Moscho Tzavela, who fought in Souli battle in 1792 against the army of the Ottoman pasha Ali, leading 400 women with guns – women's contribution to the battle is estimated in the text as crucial for the victory of the army of Souli⁴⁸. The story is reproduced from a book of 1914, collection of folk songs, by Nikos Politis, who is considered the founder of ethnology in Greece. The text is supplemented with a reference to a biographical book on Moscho Tzavela written by Lilika Nakou, a female writer of the first wave of feminism in Greece. These references show that Golden Dawn women's mythology of women warriors is not an innovative construction of Golden Dawn and Women's Front. On the contrary Women's Front draws here on older narratives of women's role in the national history, it reproduces and reconstructs the already existent myths of the dominant national historiography, which to a certain extent has also been produced and used by first wave (and later second wave) feminists for promoting women's rights. As Poulos (2009) has explained, the woman – warrior has been a central element in the articulation of a feminine national identity in Greece all the way from 19th to 20th century with feminists, nationalists and even the left participating in the construction of this legacy of feminine combats. Other examples of heroic women warriors of the nation include the story of Domna Visvisi, depicted as 'the beautiful, the strong, the captain'⁴⁹, who fought with the boat of her dead husband against the Ottomans in 1821 - the year established as the beginning of the 'Greek revolution' – and the story of Margarita Basdeki, reproduced from a local Golden Dawn site, who is depicted as a young, 20-year-

⁴⁶ *Do it like in Ancient Sparta* [Καν' το Όπως στην Αρχαία Σπάρτη]. 07.06.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴⁷ *Women of Sparta* [Οι Γυναίκες Της Σπάρτης]. 10.07.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴⁸ *Moscho Tzavela (1760-1803)* [Μόσχω Τζαβέλα (1760-1803)]. 06.08.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁴⁹ *Domna Visvisi: The beautiful, the Strong, the Chief-Captain* [Δόμνα Βισβίζη: η Όμορφη, η Δυνατή, η Αρχικαπετάνα]. 19.06.2009. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

old shepherdess, who put on the traditional men's kilt, took a flintlock, fought together with men and even encouraged them during the battle of Makrinitza in 1878⁵⁰.

The list of women warriors includes also figures of the struggles for national expansion in 20th century or of the populations that resided outside the borders of the Greek state and who would – at least at a certain historical point - identify as Greeks, while the regions where they lived, would also be claimed as Greek. Thus, a series of women are praised among the fighters who died during the 'Macedonian struggle', that is the war to incorporate the northern part of today's Greek territory⁵¹. Pontiac Greek women of Santa, in Black Sea, are compared to ancient Amazons and also referred to as an example of heroic warriors, who resisted the conquer and assimilation by 'other races' of the region, described as holding guns and ready to fight at any moment the enemies of their people⁵². What is here noteworthy is that such references are not always original, but reproduced from other websites of the Greek blogosphere, which shows the relation of Women's Front nationalist models to broader nationalist narratives produced and disseminated in the Greek-speaking world the same period when Women's Front operated its blogs.

However, Women's Front mythology of warriors does not consist only of Greek heroic women, while political orientation seems also to play a crucial role in women's mythology. This explains why Greek women who fought as soldiers of ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) against Nazi occupation in Greece during the 2nd world war, are omitted from this mythology – ELAS was organized by communists, and communism is articulated as one of the most important political enemies of Golden Dawn, which has been often proved by violent attacks against left activists (Jupskås & Fielitz, 2022). Golden Dawn has not really tried to appropriate the history of resistance against Nazism – neither of the women who took part in it. On the contrary, women's participation (although without frontline fighting) in the nationalist (and anticommunist) organization EOKA in Cyprus, which fought in 1955-56 for independence from the British and for unification with Greece, is glorified⁵³. Moreover, women fighting against communism are idealized in Women's Front. For instance, there is a post referring to the uprising of 1956 in Hungary against Soviet Union – interestingly one of its leaders, Gergely Pongrátz, founded the neo-Nazi party Jobbik in 2003. The post includes a historical photo of the events of the uprising, showing a woman fighter who holds a gun in one of the streets where the battles took place – the picture is captioned 'Better dead than red' (Pict. 7)⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ *Margarita Basdeki* [Μαργαρίτα Μπασδέκη]. 16.02.2009. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵¹ *Women for Macedonia Back Then* [Γυναίκες για τη Μακεδονία Τότε]. 19.06.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵² *Women of Pontiac Santa* [Οι Γυναίκες Της Σάντας Του Πόντου]. 16.06.2010. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵³ *The Woman in EOKA Struggle* [Η Γυναίκα στον Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ]. 01.04.2011. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵⁴ *Hungary 1956: Children of Glory* [Ουγγαρία 1956: Τα Τέκνα Της Δόξας]. 01.11.2009. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

Furthermore, in accordance to Golden Dawn's admiration of Nazism, famous Nazi women are praised for their strength and achievements. Hanna Reitsch, the famous woman pilot of the German air-force during second world war and unapologetic supporter of Nazi regime has a special position in Women's Front discourse. A relevant post in Women's Front blog, which praises Reitsch' extra-ordinary skills in piloting and her bravery during the war – e.g. the fact that she flew over occupied Berlin to meet Hitler - is titled 'Great Hanna Reitsch dies' and it ends with the acclamation 'Immortal!' – 'great' and 'immortal': adjectives that imply nothing but respect and admiration to Hanna Reitsch' s face⁵⁵. Moving to post-war fascist influences, Women's Front finds warrior models in the international contemporary ultra-nationalist movement. Here, there is a detailed report on Asgarda, a nationalist women's group in Ukraine, described as reviving the tradition of mythical Amazons by mastering martial arts and 'training paramilitarily and as a community'⁵⁶.

Last, famous women warriors from European history are also introduced in Women's Front as role models for women nationalists. The focus on European history is no coincidence; it suits Golden Dawn's Eurocentric thought and it also serves the narrative of white, European superiority over 'other races'. Jeanne d' Arc, the famous warrior in the Hundred Years' War, is depicted as an embodiment of the national socialist ideals of 'virtue' and 'honor' for women. Her story is here appropriated from a nationalist perspective, as Jean d' Arc is represented as a proper 'nationalist'. She is depicted as an example of devotion to the nation and a woman fighter: her bravery, we read, was greater even than the knights of her time⁵⁷. In accordance to this representation, in May 2017 Irene Dimopoulou Papa, one of the prominent women of Golden Dawn, participated in a nationalist gathering to pay tribute to Jeanne d' Arc in Paris, where she underlined the need for European nations to fight for their continuation and against multicultural Europe⁵⁸.

Concluding remarks

By examining the discursive patterns of violence in Golden Dawn Women's Front blogs, it becomes clear that despite the strict hierarchical and patriarchal relations suggested in the ideology of the party, white nationalist femininity, as propagated by the women's organization, is articulated in an assertive and rather militant way, combining the ideal of motherhood with a readiness for fighting and for exercise of violence in everyday life and in warfare. Such an aspect of Golden Dawn women's collective identity is usually overlooked, although the

⁵⁵ 24/8/1979: *Great Hanna Reitsch Dies* [24/8/1979: Πεθαίνει η Μεγάλη Hanna Reitsch]. 24.08.2011. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵⁶ *Asgarda, Amazons of Ukraine* [Asgarda, Οι Αμαζόνες της Ουκρανίας]. 10.03.2011. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵⁷ *Jean d' Arc* [Ιωάννα της Λωρραίνης]. 15.10.2007. Blog Women's Front for the People and the Fatherland.

⁵⁸ *Hommage à Jeanne d'Arc. Irène Dimopoulou-Pappa. Paris/France - 14 mai 2017*. 15.05.2017. LDC News Agency Youtube Channel.

woman-warrior is a common pattern in the history of national identity construction (Poulos, 2009) and it is worth asking here how local context contributes to the shaping of far-right identities at the national level, potentially normalizing far-right violence - exercised by women or at the eyes of women -, by referring to an - already normalized - common national imaginary. However, Golden Dawn references to women's militancy do not stem only from the Greek nationalist tradition. They also draw on historical and contemporary discourses of the international far-right, which also provide space for women's involvement in violence – embracing and even exercising it.

The usual binary scheme of soldier man-woman mother, which is usually used to explain the imaginary of gender relations in far-right and neo-fascist ideology, needs to be further problematized. Such a binary approach obscures the understanding of gendered identities and activities of women (and men) in far-right groups – more or less inspired by fascist ideology - as well as our understanding of how far-right movements attempt to involve women and/or how women claim a place inside these undoubtedly male-dominated, supra-masculine movements. Especially neo-fascist ideology seems to be more complicated than the dominant interpretation of how gender roles work in it, which potentially opens more space and opportunities for women's action, even aggressive behavior, and participation in crimes, than it is usually believed - with all the contradictions produced by existent patriarchal social relations and norms, reproduced and negotiated in far-right movements too.

Although studying ideology and discourse alone, the question of how they relate to concrete action and praxis of gendered individuals and groups cannot be answered, what is, however, worth considering here is what orientations discourse creates for practice, what norms and limits it poses, explicitly and implicitly, in the production of gendered subjectivities and how it can legitimize and incite exercise or at least acceptance of violence by certain subjects constructed as 'we in danger' against the ones constructed as 'the enemy others'. By studying far-right media, it becomes clear that - against dominant interpretations of violence as a deviant behavior of the individual - violence is constructed and addressed as a collective issue in the far-right and especially in neo-fascist groups, against which subjects are called upon to take (gendered) positions and action, to mobilize as part of the community, and are thus legitimized to exercise violence in order to bring the social solutions proposed. This way violence is given political meaning, and it is therefore necessary to ask what the implications of this politicization of violence can be in the production of gendered identities and militant practices in far-right movements.

Acknowledgments

Work presented on this paper was assisted by a PhD scholarship from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.







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Picture Appendix	
<p>Picture 1</p> 	<p>Picture 2</p> 
<p>Picture 3</p> 	<p>Picture 4</p> 
<p>Picture 5</p> 	<p>Picture 6</p> 
<p>Picture 7</p> 