

Feminism Hijacked: Women, Gender and Political Agency in the Golden Dawn and the National Popular Front

Dr. Nayia Kamenou (kamenou.nayia@ucy.ac.cy)

Abstract

Research on the gender dimension of far-right politics has highlighted the increasing role that women and gender have come to play in these politics. However, knowledge about far-right women's perspectives on gender and on their roles within far-right parties remains limited. This article builds on research concerning the role of women and gender in the far right and argues for the use of an empirical, close-up and intersectional approach in this research. It examines interviews with female politicians and seasoned activists of the Greek Golden Dawn and the Greek-Cypriot National Popular Front, focusing on these women's understandings of gender and political agency. A qualitative analysis informed by a feminist perspective on the role of women and gender in far-right politics shows that, by hijacking elements of feminism, far-right women with diverse backgrounds construct a flexible and versatile gender discourse that troubles some of the essentialisms commonly associated with far-right gender ideology. Moreover, they articulate and enact various forms of political agency that challenge some feminist delineations of women's political agency. The article complicates monolithic interpretations of far-right women and of their political agency and highlights the importance of the contextualisation of the women–gender–far right relationship. It argues that this gender discourse and these forms of political agency may increase the far right's appeal among women with diverse backgrounds and views on gender, feminism and politics, who seek opportunities for political self-confidence, professionalisation and actualisation. Therefore, beyond contributing to discussions about the role of women and gender in far-right politics, it demonstrates the importance of studying far-right women on their own terms for gaining a reliable understanding of this issue. In doing so, it concomitantly reveals some of the perils that feminism's hijacking by the far right generates for feminism and pluralist democracy.