GREECE IN THE 21st CENTURY: THE POLITICS & ECONOMICS OF A CRISIS

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Introduction and Acknowledgments

What's in the Greek Cauldron?

Vassilis K. Fouskas and Constantine Dimoulas

I.

The Greek crisis is not as straightforward as many people think. From a scholarly perspective, at least, interpretations vary and even contradict each other. This book does not claim coherence in terms of consistency concerning the argument developed. Economics and politics, after all, are social sciences and, as such, are discursive undertakings: differing arguments and points of view should be welcome. However, what unites all the authors here is that they take issue with neo-liberal explanations of the crisis and neo-liberal solutions to it. In addition, most contributors find that there is an authoritarian/undemocratic core in the Eurozone project and the management of its crisis. But let us take matters from the beginning.

Both of us have, on more than one occasion (Fouskas & Dimoulas, 2012; Fouskas & Dimoulas, 2013), argued that the origins of the present crisis in Greece go as far back as the very foundation of the Greek state in 1830. This act laid out some structural and macro-sociological principles which remained unaltered to the present day, connecting political, cultural and economic instances, internal as well as external factors, in an inextricable way. Thus, the crisis may not just be seen as solely financial, political or economic. As Tolis Malakos sketches out in his contribution, it is deeply moral and cultural, in fact, an identity crisis. In addition, throughout Greece's history, geopolitical and economic developments, ramified with domineering imperial factors, witnessed a unique symbiosis unparalleled for a "Western European" country: as if Greece was more of a "Balkan" and "Near Eastern" social formation in which geo-politics trump economics in determining policy and welfare considerations and issues of war and peace. In such a calculation what matters is the perceived geo-strategic value of the country by imperial powers, rather than the market value of the country as such; or, to put differently, what matters is the Aegean Sea and the air-lanes above it as an international passage, rather than the GDP and the consumer market of the country as such. In this context, the discourse of domestic "bourgeois" elites in Greece was being dominated by the "catch-up" story, that is how to catch-up with the "developed" Western core, whereas the core itself is more interested in power-politics than the sustainable and independent economic development of the peripheral state. We have advanced this line of argument in our joint account on the Greek crisis (Fouskas and Dimoulas, 1913). We have indeed found out that, historically, the creation of the Greek debt is consubstantial with the formation of the Greek state and is thus directly connected to (mainly Western) imperial geo-political advances in the Ottoman space of the Balkans and the Near/Middle East in 19th century.

Founded in 1830 in the very southern cone of the Balkan Peninsula encompassing the Peloponnese, Southern Rumelia, Euboea and the complex of Cyclades islands, the Greek state resulted from an imperial geopolitical accident rather than from an economically-expanding, national industrial bourgeoisie. Instead of reflecting national-revolutionary processes led by industrial capital against a feudal mode of production – as was the case, for example, with

Prussian's Junkers or Italy's Piedmont – a limited Greek state was perceived by Western imperial powers as a geo-strategic asset, as part of an effort to deter Russia and Egypt's territorial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean. Geopolitical factors were paramount to Greece's founding – and today, geopolitical/geostrategic questions are of crucial importance in understanding the historical origin of the Greek debt crisis. Since the founding of modern Greece, the important geographical position of the country has been used by the West, not for the benefit of Greek society, but for the West's own advantage.

In order to conduct the war of independence against the Ottomans, Greek elites borrowed large amounts of money from the West. In the 1820s, Greece received two loans of £800,000 and £2 million respectively. A primitive Greek state apparatus experienced its first bankruptcy in 1824-25, when it could not service the loans received from France and England. In 1832-33 another loan of 60 million (in golden francs) was contracted and entirely consumed for the expenses of the regency and the maintenance of the army. That loan led to another Greek bankruptcy in 1843. Clearly, imperial geo-political necessities trumped economics and the origins/source of the Greek debt is "geo-political" rather than "economic". In the meantime, Western powers took care to turn Greece into a Christian Kingdom, implanting a Bavarian Monarchy in Athens in 1833. The "catching-up with the West" discourse began dominating the country's political spectrum from the very beginning. The elites were split between "populist" and "modernising" factions, the former representing local farming interests and the latter merchant strata tied to the West. This conflict took a very peculiar and partisan turn later in the century, personified in the antagonistic premierships of Charilaos Trikoupis (moderniser) and Theodor Diliyiannis (populist).

Between 1827 and 1877-78, Greece was excluded from western financial markets. During these five decades and beyond, governments resorted (rather unsuccessfully) to internal borrowing while encouraging investment projects from wealthy diaspora Greeks, whose comprador capital, together with that of Jewish and Armenian merchant classes, was prominent in the Ottoman Empire. With low levels of industrial development, and unable to pursue economies of scale due to its small size, Greece was marked by a backward peripheral economy and a deeply-dependent polity throughout the nineteenth century; in 1893, Greece declared bankruptcy once again making the words pronounced in the parliament by the late premier, Trikoupis, "unfortunately, we went bankrupt", a phrase never to be forgotten by any Greek to the present day.

Yet, despite its dilapidated finances and its unsophisticated banking and industrial sectors, Greece was always viewed by Western powers through the prism of their imperial geopolitical interests. As the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires retreated, new spaces opened up for Russia and West European imperialism, now renewed by new actors such as Germany and Italy. Christian Balkan micro-states offered the West splendid opportunities, providing proxies in ongoing wars against the Ottoman Turks. By the end of the First World War, the Ottomans were pushed outside Europe, and the borders of the Balkans/Eastern Europe and the Near/Middle East were re-drawn. This was colonialism at its best: the borders of the Balkans and the Near/Middle East were re-drawn on the map and in secret gatherings, turned into "Treaties", by the general staff and the diplomats of the winning, yet declining, European empires. But whereas Arabic factions, by and large, compromised to Western colonialism, Turkey's response was different.

Conquering land and incorporating populations – not all of whom were Greek – Greece saw substantive industrial activity in the first two decades of the twentieth century under the liberal-nationalist leadership of Eleftherios Venizelos. Under British sponsorship, Venizelos led a losing proxy war against Kemalist-nationalist forces in Asia Minor. The aftermath was a total catastrophe for both Greece and modern Turkey. Although Greece saw the inflow of some 1.4 million Christian refugees, it achieved ethnic homogeneity for the first time in its history while Turkey, having lost its most enterprising merchant classes, relied heavily on a state-led authoritarian form of economic development, and failed to achieve ethnic or religious homogeneity. Cyprus, a majority ethnic Greek island, remained under British colonial control and the Dodecanese complex of islands remained under Italian colonial control.

Without a robust economic-industrial base, and with its ruling political elites closely tied to imperial interests due to their comprador character, the country could not capitalize on its geostrategic advantages and pursue an independent and sustainable economic course. This translated directly into a balance of payment problem which, coupled with constant internal borrowing needed to fund a clientelistic and corrupt state machine, repeatedly produced unsustainable debts. In the wake of the 1929 global financial crisis, Greece suffered a fourth bankruptcy in 1932. Afterwards, dictator, Ioannis Metaxas, pursued an import substitution industrialization policy, substantially improving the country's balance of payments. Having sided with the victors during the Second World War and overcoming a bloody Civil War which the Communists lost, Greece reaped economic and geopolitical rewards: the Dodecanese were given to Greece and the Marshall Plan initiated the transfer of large amounts of money into the devastated Greek economy (Stathakis, 1995). Meanwhile, as the imperial torch was passed onto the new global hegemon, the USA, the Cold War produced dividends: Greece's geo-political importance guaranteed a massive inflow of American capital and loans while marginalizing Greece's domestic left communist forces during "the Golden Age of capitalism" (1950-1970).

Yet, once more, Greece remained peripheral and deeply dependent. Characteristically, in the 1960s, when the Governor of the Bank of Greece, Xenophon Zolotas, went to the US ambassador in Athens to ask for a loan, the ambassador replied by pointing to a geopolitical conflict. Effectively, the ambassador said that if Greece wanted a loan, then it had to accept Dean Acheson's plan for Cyprus – a plan secretly negotiated among NATO powers proposing partition of the island between Greece and Turkey, dispensing with Archbishop Makarios, who was at that time Cyprus's elected leader and a founder of the non-aligned movement (Draenos, 2012). Thus, the geo-political issue and the debt problem were dealt with through a straightforward swap. Such was the importance of Cyprus for NATO and the West that the USA, via the CIA, instigated a military dictatorship in Greece in order to facilitate a Cyprus solution based on Acheson's partition plan (Fouskas and Tackie, 2009). In fact, bourgeois democracy was only restored in 1974, when Cyprus was partitioned followed Turkey's two consecutive advances on the island.

From the 1950s through the mid-1970s, Greece did not manage to catch up with the western core. Yet throughout this period – and in contrast to the demand-led Keynesian policies of the West – Greece, under the influence of its pro-monetarist central banker, Xenophon Zolotas, pursued policies that would later be termed neo-liberal. Its economic development was supply-led and pro-monetarist, largely because of Cold War politics. Greek ruling elites, in coordination with the American Embassy in Athens, had to keep the masses as much as possible outside the corridors of democratic decision-making. Although the pro-Soviet Communist Left had been defeated during the Civil War (1944-49), it still enjoyed widespread popular support, which meant the conservative government feared any attempt to open up politics in civil society. Both political participation and demand-led economic policy remained stalled until 1974.

But after 1974, successive Greek cabinets under right-wing Constantine Karamanlis (1974-81) and socialist Andreas G. Papandreou (1981-89, 1993-96) shifted Greek policy-making to a demand cycle, replenishing the state machine with their party-political personnel, nationalizing major private enterprises and, especially in the 1980s, funding Greece's welfare state through unscrupulous borrowing (both external and internal) rather than through taxation. Even as it entered the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1981, Greece continued to pursue demand-led policies at a time when most of the West was already shifting to embrace neoliberal globalization/financialization. In France, for example, the French socialists under Francois Mitterrand succumbed to the monetarist discipline of the EMS (European Monetary System) and abandoned their programme of nationalisation, welfare spending and high wages. Greece's Papandreou, alone with Scandinavian socialists, continued inflating the economy and without being possible to halt Greece's deteriorating competitiveness within the EEC despite two consecutive devaluations of the drachma.

Time and again, geo-political considerations figure prominently: Greece was admitted to the EEC five years ahead of Portugal and Spain as part of a strategy to stabilize NATO's southern flank, at a moment when US fixed capital investment in Greece was drying out. In the 1980s, German and French capital increasingly dominated the Greek economy, and pushed the country to adopt a neo-liberal agenda so that it could use Greece as a launching pad from which to spread financial services across the "transition" economies of the Balkans and the near East (Fouskas and Dimoulas, 2013).

Over the following two decades, and especially after the country's entry to the Euro-zone in 2001, Greece's competitive position deteriorated sharply. Traditionally profit-making industries, such as textiles, disappeared. Financial and banking services dominated Greece's economy, spreading out to the Balkans and the Near East. Credit became cheap and easily obtainable as the country could borrow on low interest rates. Public assets were privatized one after another. The country's dependence on external and domestic borrowing increased to such a degree that, given the opening up of public assets to foreign capital acquisition and the loss of monetary sovereignty, one wonders whether the term "dependence" adequately describes the country's global economic relation with the core.

When the global financial crisis trickled down to the Euro-zone via the banking sector, the first to suffer were the most financialised economies of the core, such as Germany. The first banks that declared bankruptcies were German banks, followed by Irish ones (Wolfson and Epstein, 2013). Yet, Greece suffered most, because it was and is the weakest link of the neo-imperial financial chain of capital accumulation: Greece did not only have a high current account deficit; it also had, as opposed to Ireland and Spain, a massive budget deficit. Thus, by 2010, it became a hotbed for speculation when its debts matured. But Greece was a member of the Euro-zone and currency devaluation was not an option. A debtor-led default and exit was refused by its entire political spectrum, including its radical Syriza party (Coalition of Radical Left Forces), which capitulated to the creditors in summer 2015 having previously spent seven months in government negotiating in vein a better bail-out agreement than the previous Centre-Right cabinets.

Twenty years of neo-liberal financialization (1996-2016), followed by acute deflationist austerity measures, what rather euphemistically is called "internal devaluation", and bail-out agreements, have solved none of Greece's historical economic problems: industrial backwardness; institutional malaise; high debt to GDP ratios and a qualitatively peripheral position in European and global political economy. Supply-side deflationist policies imposed by the troika (IMF, EU and ECB) brought about no growth, let alone sustainable development, making the social situation unsustainable: the country lost 27 per cent of her GDP; austerity measures lowered minimum wage to poverty levels, yet direct taxation and poll-tax increased; unemployment swings between 22 per cent and 27 per cent; and pension funds are collapsing. In one of our forthcoming contributions to the debates on Greece and the global financial crisis (Fouskas and Dimoulas, 2018) we point out that a key social contradiction in Greece at present that cuts across the fundamental cleavage between capital and labour, and insofar as as the total-sum of pensioners, the unemployed and long-term unemployed is larger than the economically active population, it is between those inside the workforce and those outside it.

II.

What is the policy solution to the current deadlock in Greece and Europe, especially after the Brexit vote of 23 June 2016? From a Greek perspective, two questions are paramount: shall Greece default and exit the Euro-zone re-establishing the sovereignty of its monetary institutions and re-issue a new drachma? Is exit from the Euro-zone good enough, or should exit *also* from the EU be put on the agenda as Stavros Mauroudeas argues in his contribution? Obviously, these questions make sense to the extent that the current economic programme pursued by Greece under the auspices of the troika is unsustainable. From a European, rather than EU, perspective the key questions are more than obvious and, in fact, the first one has already been posed by the IMF, that is, the American Treasury: shall the EU cancel the largest part of the Greek debt so that the negative impacts of austerity could be absorbed in a relative short period of time getting the country outside the troika programme? Or, should the EU abandon its deflationist, supply-side ordoliberal rigidity (see below), cancel the debt of the periphery and move on towards a fiscal and political union democratising its institutions and policy-making apparatuses?

By "democratisation" we do not mean power for the people and by the people. This is not realistic because this is a matter of *socialist* democracy at a complicated supra-national level. European societies have not posed this historical question yet because they cannot pose it. By "democratisation", however, we mean the opening up of the caucuses of European power structures to political and social struggle, that is opening up to negotiation and bargaining so that the disadvantaged position of labour compared to that of financial, banking and industrial capital is improved. This requires courage and realism on the part of ordoliberal elites currently ruling the EU (see below). In addition, we should not forget the avenue taken by other economic and monetary unions, the most conspicuous historical example being that in the wake of the American civil war, when the triumphant North cancelled the debt of the South making the state of the federal union in the USA possible.

The aforementioned issues are only partially economic or political. Importantly, they are also social and geo-political, especially for a country such as Greece, which is surrounded by volatile security zones (ethnic and religious/sectarian conflicts in the Balkans and the Near/Middle East, the refugee crisis, continuous neo-imperialist interventions) and critical geo-strategic chokepoints (the Suez Canal, the Dardanelles). Moreover, Greece, by virtue of the 1960 Treaties, is directly involved in the Cyprus issue. Greece is a passage. Given the situation in Syria, the role of Russia and the crisis in Ukraine, de-stabilisation of the Greek passage would undermine European peace head on. From this perspective, it is not in the geo-political interest of Germany, let alone the USA, to clash with Greece over the debt issue, even though Germany and the USA do not share the same views on how to deal with the Greek debt crisis (Varoufakis, 2017; Fouskas, 2017). By the same token, Greece's negotiating team in 2015 paid lip service to the country by sidelining crucial geo-political and geo-strategic aspects of an eventual official Greek default and exit from the Eurozone and, eventually, the EU. After all, the crises facing Europe and the world today are deeply and primarily geo-political, in the sense that power-shifts in Eurasia and the globe are poignantly and intimately connected to the global financial crisis and the rise of China and Russia in international economy and security (Fouskas & Gökay, 2012).

The present collection of inter-disciplinary essays should be read against this analytical and historical background. Their focus is the crisis period that began in earnest in 2010 extending to the present day, although some of them, such as the contributions by Alexander Kazamias and Tolis Malakos are either far wider in scope or start their analyses, quite reasonably, from 1974. All the authors articulate their own perspective stemming from a variety of disciplines, such as political science, political economy, industrial relations or cultural studies. This is because we wanted to offer an inter-disciplinary and holistic approach to the Greek debt crisis, one that goes beyond economics, that is, without excluding economics.

But even so, as we said above, readers will find in this book views that do not share the same short of analysis of the Greek, European and global crises. As editors, we have done so deliberately. The perspectives here differ in terms of the way in which the crisis is analysed and the causes that lie behind it, because our aim has been and remains to open up a constructive dialogue between all those perspectives and analyses that oppose *neoliberal* and *ordoliberal* economics. Put simply, our effort has been to give to the reader not just an inter-disciplinary and informative understanding of the Greek crisis but also, quite importantly, a *heterodox-pluralist* approach, whose unity is defined by the "other", the "enemy": the *neo-liberal globalization* led by the Wall Street and the City of London and the *ordoliberal* project of Germany that guides the EU-Eurozone process for several decades now.[1] Note, that these

[1] Although not an entirely coherent school of economic and political thought, ordoliberalism is, broadly speaking, the German-Austrian brand of Anglo-American (Thatcherite-Reaganite) neo-liberalism. Its main tenets are: strong state to enhance market competition; price stability; de-politicisation of the policy process and complete independence of the central Bank mechanism; construction and institutionalisation of policy rules based on a strict anti-inflation bias; and, for some of them, anti-trust legislation. On this basis, ordoliberalism, as relatively opposed to neo-liberalism, sees the extension of free market principles in the social economy as an institutional act led by a strong state or, in the case of the EU, a seam of federated states (Bonefeld, 2017). A first original analysis of ordoliberalism comes from Michel Foucault (2010) in his pioneering 1978-79 lectures at the Collège

two phenomena, although relatively distinct, are intrinsically connected, especially through banking and finance. As a matter of fact, the Eurozone crisis was triggered by the global financial crisis of 2007-08 due to the high volume of junk paper (CDS, CDOs and other vehicles) bought by German and French banks in the first place. Ordoliberal rigidity and "protection" proved unable to control the structural movement of globalised finance. The first banks that collapsed in the Eurozone were French and German banks, not Greek or Portuguese banks. And when the German and French executives were asked by their central bankers to find 100s of billions of Euros to compensate for the losses in the banking sectors, those same executives found a way out by disciplining the embattled periphery of Greece, Spain, Ireland and Portugal. In this context, the contributions by Leila Simona Talani and Matthias Kaelberer are quite instructive, as they set out the argument about the structural asymmetries of the EU/Eurozone and the way in which those asymmetries come to penalise the weak, the subaltern and the peripheral.

This book is not the venue to start a debate or discussion about the similarities and differences between German/Austrian ordoliberalism and Anglo-American led neo-liberal globalisation. Also, we do not wish to rehearse a "varieties of capitalism" argument. But all contributions here, whether "pro-" or "anti-" European, make clear their opposition to free market economics and the catastrophic effects of their uncontrollable crises upon the majority of population, especially the socially and economically weakest sectors of society. In particular, the text by Kees van der Pijl, taking Greece as its foremost example, demonstrates the connection between authoritarianism and the neo-liberal/ordoliberal recipes produced by the troika of the ECB, the IMF and the EU in order to arrest the debt crisis. The European project may be heading towards a (permanent) state of exception capitalising upon acts of terrorism in various European capitals in order to impose an even stricter discipline upon labour, the deprived, the less privileged and the poor. This trend also becomes clear and further exemplified in the case of Greece, as shown by Elias Ioakimoglou in his wide-ranging neo-Gramscian/Poulantzian contribution.

Clearly, a most interesting debate on the causes of the Eurozone crisis - to the extent that there is one, as provocatively argued here by Turan Subasat - is that between post-Keynesians and Marxists. Effectively, the arguments rehearsed here by Talani and Kaelberer are post-Keynesian and neo-Gramscian. Also post-Keynesian, for example, are arguments by Costas Lapavitsas or Martin Wolf in their various contributions on the Eurozone and Greek crises, although Lapavitsas has tried to ground them in Marxism, widely perceived, and Wolf in the asymmetrical structure of the EU.[2] But there is an equally powerful argument advanced in this collection by Stavros Mavroudeas, who criticises post-Keynesians in that they interpret the crisis as a mere disequilibrium in the sphere of capital circulation, that is, as a balance of payments crisis. This, Mavroudeas argues, is a cyclical argument dear to social democratic interpretations of the crisis, politically producing pro-capitalist "solutions" in the field of policy, such as a default and exit strategy for Greece. Resembling in many respects a combination of Robert Brenner's and Ben Fine's theses, the root cause of the crisis in Greece

de France on the "birth of bio-politics". In the English-speaking world, the 1979 article in *Socialist Register* by Andrew Gamble (Gamble, 1979), later turned into a book, remains an important contribution.

[2] Lapavitsas's work is heavily influenced by the following sources: Rudolf Hilfreding's work on *Finance Capital;* the Japanese Uno School of Marxism; and the *under-consumptionist* argument put forth by authors of the *Monthly Review* group in the USA, first and foremost by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy.

and beyond, Mavroudeas says, is the falling rate of profit in the real economic sector which, as in other parts of the West, can be traced back in the 1970s. The suggestion is clear: the crisis of over-accumulation that had ushered in across western capitalist formations in the 1970s is still unresolved and so is the case with Greece. From this perspective, the famous "crisis of financialization" which is dear to heterodox economists is but an epiphenomenon of the capitalist crisis of over-accumulation. Thus, default on its debt payments and exit from the Eurozone alone will not cure Greece's problem. What Greece needs is also exit from the EU by way of putting forth a socialist project alternative to the capitalist relations of production. Further, Subasat, in his comparative study, claims that the introduction of the Euro in 1999, although it impacted on the current account imbalances through trade, it constituted neither the only source of malaise nor the deficits occurred by trade itself were the result of trade among Eurozone countries. In fact, large sums of deficits for the periphery countries were caused by trade with the rest of the world. To all intents and purposes, this is an original argument rarely advanced in the vast literature on the Eurozone crisis.

Elias Ioakimoglou's bracing account on the issue of "internal devaluation" stands out because it examines matters from the point of view of *labour*. He shows how "internal devaluation", fruitlessly aiming at boosting competitiveness via austerity under conditions of monetary union, produces a crisis of political hegemony that is a crisis in the ability of the ruling social classes to represent the general interest vis-à-vis the subaltern classes. Drawing on traditional Marxian theories of capital accumulation, unemployment and political power on the one hand, and modern social reproduction theories on the other, his chapter defines an analytical framework considering social reproduction crisis as the intermediate link between internal devaluation and hegemonic crisis. Using this framework Ioakimoglou finds that internal devaluation imposing a dramatic fall in wages and pensions, dismantling social services and leading to massive long-term unemployment and widespread poverty, triggers a variety of processes deconstructing the existing regime of social reproduction. Thus, it generates two opposing tendencies: a strong tendency to hegemonic crisis and a counter-tendency to passivity of subaltern classes emanating from the disorganising effects of massive unemployment and material deprivation on militancy and politicisation. Which tendency will eventually prevail, Ioakimoglou argues, remains to be seen.

As we are writing these lines, Syriza is in office in coalition with a small right-wing party which provides Syriza with the necessary majority in parliament in order to rule. Syriza and its leadership argue that back in summer 2015 did the right thing, namely, accept harsh austerity without debt cancellation and that this was a pro-European, progressive political strategy. After all, what does the recent experience of all those Euro-sceptic neo-Nazi movements across Europe show? It shows, according to Syriza, that the Greek Left is not Euro-sceptic and introvert and, as such, cannot be thrown into the same cauldron with the extreme right. The Greek Left is a progressive and modernising force and wants to reform Europe from within and by way of enhancing European democracy and solidarity. But Markantonatou's and Van der Pijl's contributions to this book seem to suggest otherwise, despite the fact that their accounts are, in many respects, pro-European.

Van der Pijl, assessing Varoufakis's work, argues that Europe, as it stands, resembles an authoritarian coalition guided by predatory neo-liberalism, whereas Markantonatou, reaching out to Wolfgang Streeck via Karl Polanyi and Max Weber, comes to round up the

Greek case as a failed attempt by the European managers of the crisis that, intentionally or not, leave democracy defenceless. This is correct. The authoritarian, nationalist and racist movements from below that have sprung up across Europe over the last twenty years or so are the results of neo-liberal/ordoliberal economic policies from above that have dismantled the welfare state and put downward pressure on wages and incomes in order to offset the falling rate of profit in every economic sector, whether "real" (e.g. manufacturing) or "fictitious" (e.g. financial services).

Political and party systems under capitalism always appear under a facade of democracy and liberal-pluralistic choices, yet they are deeply authoritarian. The bourgeoisie may concede to the subaltern classes and their political representatives some control of its bourgeois state machine, but it will never concede even an inch from the control it exercises over state power and key departments of the state (the military, the central bank, the finance and interior ministry etc.). Syriza, argues Alexander Kazamias in his Poulantzian/neo-Gramscian political analysis, backed by the mass movement of the 2010-2014 period, managed to gain some important positions within the Greek state apparatus, reshuffling the party system and appearing as a hegemonic force capable of achieving socialist change. His wide-ranging chapter offers a splendid account of Greece's changing political spectrum; explains the rise of Syriza; the demise of PASOK and the endurance of the party founded by Constantine Karamanlis in 1974, New Democracy. Reading Kazamias' contribution we come to conclude that, in many respects, Greece can be viewed as a classical case of a party system which melts in face of a sweeping economic crisis, although it reluctantly comes back to rebalance its fundamentals without achieving any consolidation, at least for the time being. In this context, the Greek party system defies typologies, which are dear to political scientists. This said, and given the crisis of each and every single one of the polities of European states, we wonder whether the Greek case is setting the tone for the rest of Europe.

Crisis, in Chinese, means opportunity. In such times all sort of agencies try to take advantage of the fluid circumstances and the opportunities created by the structural and inter-subjective nature of circumstances in order to advance towards positions of power. Harsh conflict is inevitable and if history provides a yardstick is that, in periods of conflict and crisis, the winner, usually, is the one who manages to strike the right political and social alliances at the right time. We have assembled here a number of inter-disciplinary essays and arguments which, despite their differences, they share the strategic aim of a critique of both neo-liberalism and authoritarianism. In fact, as many contributors suggest here, including the opening essay by Kees van der Pijl, neo-liberalism and authoritarianism share more similarities than differences. With this book, we have stricken out a "theoretical" alliance. We hope to see this at the practical-political level too, in both Greece and Europe and, indeed, the world. And if this collection of heterodox and scholarly essays has managed to throw in the collective political sub-conscious such a progressive understanding of present circumstances, then it would be certainly vindicated.

III.

Readers of the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* (JBNES), published by Routledge six times a year since 1998, must be familiar with some of the essays published in this book. The contributions by Matthias Kaelberer, Maria Markantonatou, Tolis Malakos and Leila

Simona Talani have first appeared in JBNES over the last five years, although the authors have re-worked their argument and adapted it to the requirements of the book. We thank Routledge and the journal's team for allowing us to re-produce some of the material that has already appeared in JBNES. We also wish to thank all the contributors to this volume for their excellent essays and cooperation throughout the editorial process. Our special thanks are reserved for Cathy Hartley, Development Editor at Routledge, who persevered with us and after having us missed so many deadlines for delivering the final manuscript.

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