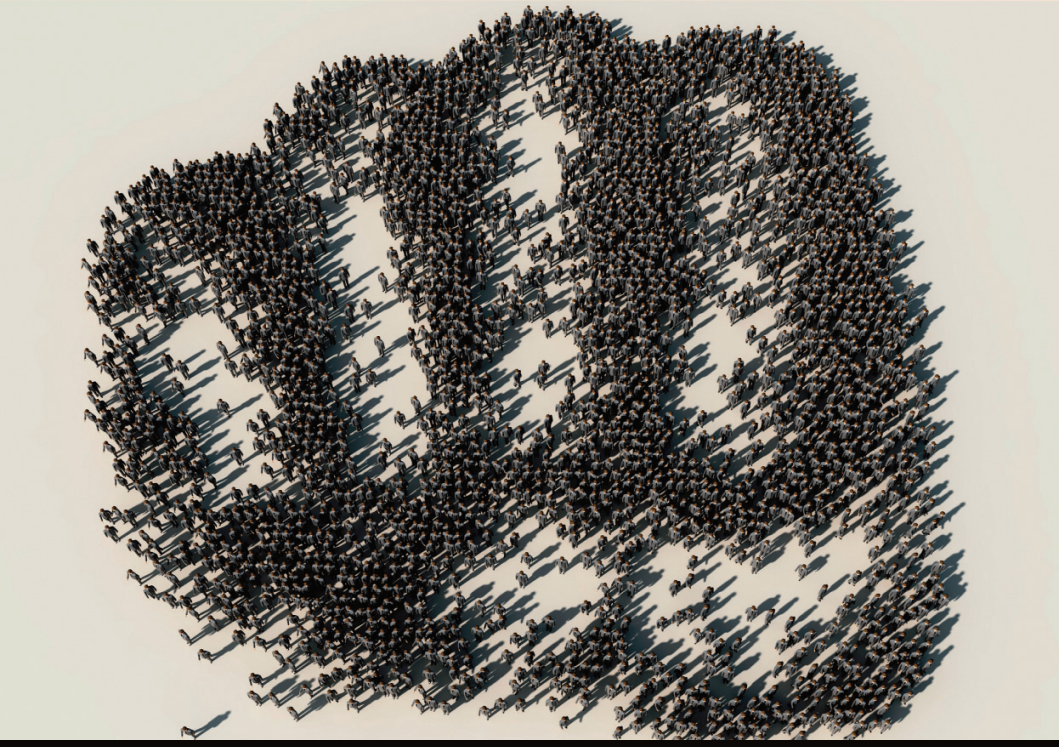
Populism, Political Ecology and the Balkans



green institute greece

© GREEN INSTITUTE GREECE

Eleutherias Square 14, 105 53 Athens, Greece
Tel. (+30) 210 3242861, Fax: (+30) 210 3834390
E-mail: info@greeninstitute.gr
http://www.greeninstitute.gr

Populism, Political Ecology and the Balkans

All articles of this book are contributions at the Conference on "Populism, political ecology and the Balkans", organised by the Green Institute in collaboration with the Greek Ecologists Greens, which took place during 23.05-26.05 of 2013 at the Social Center "Oikopolis" in Thessaloniki, Greece.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to a number of people whose help and support was appreciated during that project. First and particularly to the Greek Green Institute (GGI) for the financial and moral support during the project. Second to the participants of the conference for their enthusiasm and commitment. Third, thanks should go to the translators of the articles, Ntorka Finopoulou, Sofia Tzelepi, Maria Karavaltsiou, who did their best to convey messages from one language to another. We are indebted to Olga Kikou, vice president of the GGI executive committee for editing the introduction of the English version of the book and the chapter on Golden Dawn. Last but not least, we want to thank Kakia Karadiamanti and Giorgos Blionis who looked after every single detail (and they were a lot of them) concerning the organization of the conference, which was proved to be a rather multifaceted event.

CONTENTS

Introduction
by *Kyriaki Karadiamanti, Alexandros Georgopoulos, Georgios Blionis*.....*9*

Populism and the Balkans.....*21*

Reclaiming the democratic heritage of early populism.....*23*
Daniela Bozhinova

Oligarchy, Populism and Greens in Bulgaria.....*29*
Vasil Kadrinov

Populism in Balkans: A Historical Evaluation.....*39*
Murat Belge

"Populism" against democracy or Europe against itself?
Challenging conceptual orthodoxies.....*43*
Giorgos Katsambekis

The End of Globalization as we knew it?:
Perspectives for Balkan Countries.....*57*
Ahmet Atil Asici

Populism, Greece, and Europe.....*67*

Populism - Nationalism: values and policies.....*69*
Michalis Tremopoulos

Populism, nationalism and neo-nazism, seriously hurt European unity....*85*
Nikos Chrysogelos

Populism and post-democracy.....*93*
Petros Theodoridis

The neo-nazi Golden Dawn (GD) party in Greece.....*99*
Alexandros Georgopoulos

Populism in Europe.....*115*

Populism, anti-populism and European democracy:
a view from the South.....*117*
Giorgos Katsambekis and *Yannis Stavrakakis*

Left vs. Right, North vs. South. The Populist Challenge to Europe *127*
Dick Pels

About the authors.....*139*

Introduction

Kyriaki Karadiamanti, Alexandros Georgopoulos, Georgios Blionis

Populism and the Balkans

There are two kinds of populism, **Daniela Bozhinova** argues: Populism which serves as a vehicle through which ruling elites maintain their supremacy, that is, the populism of charismatic and Machiavellian leaders who use progressive rhetoric while actually undermining the interests of their passive followers[1], and the kind of populism which is related to the authentic popular movement emerging out of genuine citizens' activism demanding social and economic justice and citizens' checks over unchecked government. In her article it is noted that the early form of populism in the late 19th century USA could install the triad of direct democracy: initiative, referendum and recall. She further highlights that the present situation in the Balkans/ South-East Europe has many similarities with the social and economic conditions of late 19th century in America that brought about reformist populism. Under the economic crisis, which also constitutes a crisis of governance and of the legitimacy of representative democracy, populism today has effectively reconstructed the Liberal-Conservative dichotomy (right-left) for many Europeans. It has been replaced by another conflict dimension - the conflict between "them" and "us", between the political elite and common citizens, a conflict between the "command" and "obey" classes. She argues that the fundamental problems of democracy and this new dichotomy between entrenched political elite and oligarchy on one hand and common citizens on the other, was clearly demonstrated by

1 As Zizek writes, "Nicolae Ceausescu was asked by a western journalist how he would justify the fact that Romanian citizens could not travel freely abroad although freedom of movement was guaranteed by the constitution". He answered that of course the constitution guaranteed freedom of movement, but it also does for the right to a safe, prosperous home. Consequently, there was a conflict between the right of Romanian citizens to be allowed to leave the country and the prosperity of their homeland which potentially would be threatened by that right being satisfied. In this conflict, one has to make a choice, and the right to a prosperous, safe homeland enjoys clear priority! http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/16/west-crisis-democracy-finance-spirit-dictators (28-1-2013)

the Occupy Movement, Iceland's 2009 "revolution", the Indignados in Spain, the carnation-wielding Portuguese protestors, the protests and general strikes in Greece and the February 2013 upheaval in Bulgaria which toppled the government and brought about extraordinary elections. Her article focuses on a number of examples of various citizens' initiatives across Europe that present the democratic crisis at European and national levels. Daniela Bozhinova refers to the citizens' pact initiative, and to the new convention initiative, as a response to the deepening democratic deficit. Today, citizen mobilization against the structures of power, is a bottom-up drive for increased democratic rights, popular control of the institutions and a demand for economic and social justice. She also suggests that empowerment of citizens so that they'll be able for direct decision making and law enacting can provide a major way of remedying the flaws of post-totalitarian, post-authoritarian and post-capitalist democracy; it will reduce corruption, improve accountability of public institutions, increase the representation of under-represented groups, contribute to the quality of political decisions and finally make people happier. The article concludes by stating that it is typical for any call for the empowerment of the people to be labeled as "populist". However, the type of "populism" described above, is nothing else but democratic activism. Greens believe in grass roots democracy and are called upon by history to respond to this need for democratic development in the Balkans and in Europe. Commitment and action will make the real difference between parties of social change and parties of Machiavellian populism.

The totalitarian regime in Bulgaria before 1989 is described by **Vasil Kadrinov**, along with the characteristics of the post-1989 ruling oligarchy: secret networks; economic control; pseudo political pluralism; populist parties and movements; weak and pseudo trade unions; media control; corruption; and interaction of the ruling oligarchy with the EU. He further stresses that the economic, social and environmental crisis are generated by branches of mafia disbalancing the economics in favour of the oligarchy and goes on to analyze the links among energy, deforestation, construction, and mining-mafia in Bulgaria, concluding that the outcome of the mafia invasion in economics is poverty for the rest of Bulgarian citizens. Bulgaria is the poorest country in the EU, with 12 % unemployment, 38 % youth unemployment[2] and limited prospects for Roma integration.

2 The author obviously didn't take into account the data for Greece where youth unemployment

Populism is one of the main tools of the oligarchy to keep its power and until now it has given birth to several mainstream populist parties and movements. This phenomenon in Bulgaria has various faces: grassroots populism and populist beliefs, fanatic nationalism, racism and xenophobia, populist strategies of the left or right wing politics and populism of the green political parties. As a response to the aforementioned forms of populism, he proposes the strengthening of democracy by the introduction of a democratic election law, the reduction of subsidies to political parties, the strengthening of the green parties in Bulgaria, and the replacement of the left-wing, right-wing and green populism by serious and concrete green and social-democratic policies.

Vasil Kadrinov concludes by highlighting that the European Union can assist the Balkan countries towards avoiding populism and moving to a sustainable green economy and social solidarity by much greater control on the fulfilment of their obligations according the EU law.

Murat Belge begins by stating that he comes from a Marxist background. His basic feeling about "populism" is like a medallion. The word "populism" is engraved on it. On the other side you find the word "elitism". He further asks the question whether Marxism was a much more formidable version of "elitism". Marxism was born in the Western world and had to cope with the realities of the Western social realities. Consequently, a mechanical application of this theory to non-Western societies (which are enormously different) may easily lead to misleading results. In order to strengthen his points, he goes back to the Ottoman Empire era, where society was not primarily organized according to class. The Ottoman formation naturally allows for more populist politics and political language, compared to the Western European cases. But the Ottoman model is not confined to present-day Turkey alone and there is a feeling that all Balkan societies share the Ottoman heritage, only to varying degrees. He adds that the newly-founded Democratic Party in Turkey, without any previous social or political ideology or any study of Italian politics, immediately embraced the Italian style clientelist-populist political approach. His reservations about "populism" stem out of its inherent "elitism". But then, the name derives

skyrocketed at 55% (for the young people aged 15-24) against the average rate at 25% (August, 2012), https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/444525-eurostat-employment-report-for-august-2012.html . Today, figures are worse as Greek sources report: http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO02_DT_MM_02_2013_01_F_GR.pdf

from the word “people” and is closely tied to “popular”. It is difficult to think of a form of politics which is successful without being popular. A political activist has to learn how to address people, how to draw their attention, how to persuade them, etc. All this requires and involves a certain dose of theatricality; let’s say, some “political acrobatics”. Maybe this is the kind of populism that politics can’t be without. He challenges Laclau’s and Mouffe’s “popular-democratic interpellations” and underlines that a democratic-progressive movement must be able to find the language to address various problems, as well as plausible remedies to overcome them. All this involves populism in some degree. There is a distinction between left-wing and right-wing populism. Popular ideology is full of contradictions and does not and cannot have theoretical consistency or clarity. Right-wing populism makes use of all these ambiguities and has to reproduce them adding new elements, in order to prolong its ideological hegemony over the masses. For left-wing politics, populist discourse is the efficient instrument to reach out to the masses. But then, this politics must act as an ever-active mechanism of a kind that can re-shuffle all those ideological elements into a coherent understanding of a struggle for democracy, for the necessary balance between social justice and unpolluted nature, for the elimination of the contradiction between theory and practice.

Although the term “populism” is used in a wide a variety of cases[3], that it ends up devoid of meaning, nevertheless it is worthwhile for somebody to attempt to construct a list of common features attributed to it, which are usually subject to criticism, argues **Giorgos Katsambekis**: the naive / manichean dichotomy between the elite and the people, that the populist leaders draw attention to and the inescapable contradiction of views between different political groups which is fiercely opposed by the “consensus” orientated political establishment of today’s European elite. The

3 Krastev refers to the striking feature about the current use of the word “populism“, which is the huge diversity of policies and actors it attempts to cover. Lumping together Hugo Chavez's leftist Bolivarian revolution and the ideology and politics of the current anti-communist government in Warsaw or describing the politics both of Silvio Berlusconi and Mahmoud Ahmedinejad as populist might be a contradiction to common sense and confusing enterprise. But, on the other hand, only a vague and ill-defined concept such as "populism" can enable one to grasp the radical transformation of politics which is taking place in so many different countries around the world. More than any other concept currently circulating, "populism" captures the nature of the challenges that liberal democracy faces today. These emanate not from the rise of anti-democratic and authoritarian alternatives, but from dangerous mutations within liberal democracies themselves (Krastev, 2008) http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-18-krastev-en.html

collective political passions for which the populists are accused of stirring up, but which are bound to emerge given that the affective domain of human behavior is an organic part of ours, intrinsically intertwined in our psyche, where all political entities and activities are immersed in[4]. Irrationality and moralism are also attributed to populism, nevertheless, showing that rationality is a very contested term, meaning-what else?- that which the dominant ideology and values are claiming it to be.

His last part is dedicated to Greek anti-populist discourse, pointing to the fact that during the current economic crisis, the previously mentioned consensus took the form of a ruthless suppression of any discussion of alternatives to the "troika" imposed moratorium. He also referred to the double standards applied when the far right xenophobic neo-populist LAOS was invited to participate in the governing alliance in order for that government to be able to continue the austerity program, although later on, the left wing party of SYRIZA was openly condemned as populist by European leaders[5] who called upon the Greek public not to support it.

The article titled "the end of globalization as we knew it? Perspectives for Balkan countries" by **Ahmet Atil Asici** is a penetrating discussion about the financial crisis and the way to confront the current predicament. He defends the Green New Deal policies and considers them a bridge towards the ecological society, tracing the history of the current financial crisis back into the Bretton Woods conference and the foundation of IMF, World Bank and GATT (evolved into the WTO). Those agreements which allegedly have set to supervise the international financial transactions, were used to subjugate the whole planet and bring it under the yoke of the free market, the last stage of it being the bilateral free trade agreement between EU and USA (TAFTA). He seems to suggest that instead of ecologically destruc-

4 It might be argued though that what is "wrong" is not the collective passions per se, but the excessive expression of them, overcoming the threshold of agonism towards the field of antagonism, which might be too much of a challenge for holding society together, eg. Golden Dawn. Those passions pave the way for populist leaders to defy the democratically expressed opinion of social institutions "in the name of the people". See for example the passionate and arrogant allegation by the ex-prefect of the Thessaloniki prefecture Panayiotis Psomiadis, that he doesn't have any obligation to give an account of his administrative work relative to the prefecture, for the only reason that he was directly "discussing with the people"

5 This fact should not contribute to any anti-European feeling in wrongly relating the structural adjustment measures as imposed by a monolithic Europe. Some of its leaders were advocating that disastrous for the Greek economy and society procedure, whose legitimacy is being questioned by the European Parliament itself.

tive projects (usually accompanied by populist rhetoric and an emotional appeal to nationalist feelings of common folks, especially in the Balkans today) an alternative way forward might be the revitalization of the local economies in combination with the realization that we simply cannot go on consuming resources which correspond to 1,5 planets. The solution to that unprecedentedly unsustainable way forward might be the Green New Deal, defended against the accusations equaling it to "green capitalism". At the same time, we have to bear in mind "the ability of the capitalist system to domesticate every alternative and find a way to make money out of it" as he very eloquently and accurately described it.

Populism, Greece and Europe

The 50 000 people strong Jewish community of Thessaloniki was the one which was literally exterminated during the Second World War, being the victim of Nazi Germany. **Michalis Tremopoulos**[6], traces the community's history back to the 13th century and points to the fact that it was always the target of fascist ideology which emerged in the city of Thessaloniki between the 1930s and 1940s period. That ideology continued to have a conspicuous presence with at least 7 political assassinations after the war, the higher echelons of the local hierarchy of the Greek clergy/church showing a disappointingly xenophobic stance, contacting and promoting populist figures like the former head of the prefecture of Thessaloniki, Panayiotis Psomiadis, and administering/performing religious rites in the Golden Dawn offices. The ultra right wing populist parties emerge as marginal political groups after the War; by the 1970s, they start to play some role in European politics and during the last decades, the collapse of communist states, globalization and the entry of immigrants, catalyzed its evolution into a major protest-vote pool, claiming disillusioned voters from old age people, the working class, young people worried about their future and professionals working in precarious and uncertain sectors of the economy. They were able to exploit anger, fear, insecurity and prejudices and bringing them together into nation-centered and xenophobic politics everywhere in Europe, from Scandinavia to the Balkans. Although they expressed a nostalgia about the pre-war totalitarian regimes (in Greece the ultra right wing populist LAOS used to stir feelings about the "good old days" with the

6 He was the first Greek Green MEP (2009-2012) and was succeeded by Nikos Chrysogelos (2012-2014) due to the rotation procedure applied.

"honest" colonels of the 1967-74 junta period) they don't seem to have any aspirations to abolish parliament and impose straight forward dictatorships. Nevertheless, this fact doesn't make PASOK's responsibility of inviting LAOS into the coalition government socially and politically more acceptable. The left wing populism, which was recently and alarmingly expressed in a protest against the 2006 Israeli government and ended by desecrating the Holocaust monument of Thessaloniki with photographs of the -then- Lebanon war pasted on it, wields a 60 year radical patriotism, whose narrations nurture/nourish young left wingers with stories of their fathers' sacrifices and US intrigues and plots against "our" motherland.

The European Union, while not disputed during the "fat cows" period of economic growth, is questioned nowadays partly because the "gaunt cows" years and the crisis caused a retreat into national egoisms. This happened, **Nikos Chrysogelos** argues, partly because of populist political parties which blame Europe, in its entirety, instead of specific political groups, the European Commission or the specific European policies which were responsible for increasing numbers of poor and unemployed. The same populist arguments keep presenting the European North or South as compact and homogenous entities and even perceive the German society or the British one in the same way, thus, oversimplifying the political situation and ignoring/forgetting the difference of opinions, values and behaviors in the same country, leaving ample space for the European populists to ask: are all Greeks lazy? Are all Germans fascists? and so on. Nikos Chrysogelos' contribution is a passionate urge to think and perceive things in a European mentality, instead of looking at our continent through the Greek, Italian or Spanish eyes, otherwise all of us will suffer. He deplores the fact of the meager European budget for boosting youth employment and relieving poverty and points to the repulsive yet attractive for some people, anti-semitic, xenophobic and openly propagating Neonazi ideology Golden Dawn, whose political character is populist, by declaring themselves as an "anti-systemic" party while at the same time not proposing any alternative solutions apart from providing, occasionally food for some poor (Greek) people. More Europe is the answer to the crisis, therefore participation in the elections for the European parliament should be supported and propagated by all means in order to elect the "right" political parties which are going to change the "wrong" policies imposed on us. That should be our first priority.

After 2001, the liberal democracy transforms itself into what is called post-democracy: the majority of the population is apathetic towards politics, the media make a big fuss out of unimportant aspects of politicians' private lives, the state surrenders more and more power to the entrepreneurial and corporate world, etc. This is the argument that **Petros Theodoridis** uses to introduce his contribution. That is the substratum on which the emotional urge of populism tries to exploit the underpriviledged "people", through the warlike rhetoric of its demagogues who supposedly address themselves directly to the people, defend the national identity in a pretentious way, exploit collective feelings of resentment in an instrumental way by denouncing the current social decay and juxtaposing it to the glory of the past etc. The emotional basis of "national populism", a specific version of populism, was a resentment which evolved into plain nationalism and racism, aided by the current financial crisis and the immigration. He then proceeds to discuss the "fossil fuel ethno-populism" allegation, about an abundant amount of oil under the Greek sea, which is not extracted (which would save Greece from the debt crisis) due to the fact that the Greek political elite is corrupt and has betrayed "us".

The basic argument **Alexandros Georgopoulos** puts forward in his article concerning the Golden Dawn (GD) neo-Nazi party, is that anger prevents people from "listening" its leaders denying publicly that there was any Holocaust at all (!), alleging that Hitler is not yet conclusively judged by History (!) and openly endorsing the country's 1967-1974 oppressive military dictatorship[7]. It also prevents them from "seeing" them use the swastika as their emblem or beating up a left wing MP in front of TV cameras. That anger is triggered by the notoriously ineffective and unjust ways the today's Greek government is trying to confront the financial crisis and the deep seated structures" of nationalism, racism, anti-semitism and sexism, endemic to the Greek society. He goes on analyzing the present GD's ideology and practice, along with Greek political life features favouring the emergence of the neo-Nazi entity. A reference to its electoral base is made and a description of the Greek political landscape after the assassination of Pavlos Fyssas by a GD activist is attempted.

Populism in Europe

The cunning manipulation of the masses by the populist leaders who unleash

7 http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/02/14/mazower-warns-greece-on-golden-dawn/

explosive passions and in that way pose a danger for democracy, is a social construct, behind which lurks the danger of oversimplification. **Giorgos Katsambekis** and **Yiannis Stavrakakis** argue that political commentators and politicians who share this analysis, fail to distinguish the multiple variations and think as if populism was a compact, coherent and homogenous "it". They proceed to deconstruct the "populism versus Europe" argument which holds that the European Union was always the quintessence of democracy, tolerance, humanism etc whereas populism was intrinsically undemocratic and extremist. They do so by reversing that picture and claiming that the European Union deviated from its fundamental values, became undemocratic and, in the eyes of the people of the South, evolves towards an authoritarian political entity by "brutally implementing draconian austerity measures and neoliberal adjustment policies" under the guise of "rationality"[8]. They go on denouncing this extremism which is camouflaged as moderation. The Greek predicament of recent years is a typical example of the latter, where every proposal for a different alternative is condemned as irresponsible populism, even if it comes from political parties which incarnate the "inclusionary" (left wing) version of it. Finally, they set to deconstruct "the theory of the two extremes" by analyzing the different meaning that the concept of "people" has for the right and the left wing political entities, showing the extreme right wing discourse attributes to the "people" an exclusionary and passive-waiting to be saved- character, whereas the left discourse addresses to an inclusionary and active political subject.

---

8 To the degree that this specific rationality claims to incarnate a form of superior knowledge being hold by the political elite and the "specialists" of the economy, Zizek argues that the least one can say is that the current financial crisis offers proof that "it is not the people but experts themselves who do not know what they are doing. In western Europe we are effectively witnessing a growing inability of the ruling elite – they know less and less how to rule". The way they try to confront the Greek crisis is typical of their inability to understand the crisis: they put more and more pressure on Greece to repay debts, but they seem to not be able to accept the fact that at the same time they ruin its economy through imposed austerity measures and thereby making sure that the Greek debt will never be repaid. Although IMF itself confessed that the economic damage from aggressive austerity measures may be as much as three times larger than previously assumed and admitted that forcing Greece and other debt-burdened countries to reduce their deficits too quickly would be counterproductive, they don't seem to be able to invert/reverse the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs because of such "miscalculations". Moreover, Zizek goes on, if the majority of the population resists the necessary structural changes in the economy, "would one of the logical conclusions not be that, for a decade or so, an enlightened elite should take power, even by non-democratic means, to enforce the necessary measures and thus lay the foundations for truly stable democracy? http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/16/west-crisis-democracy-finance-spirit-dictators (28-1-2013).

Populism is neither a European political ingredient by accident or coincidence nor another expression of the conventional fascist or Nazi version of politics[9], but it is a brand new political entity in its own right. As such, **Dick Pels** writes that its leaders started to converge to a common political direction-at least in Northwestern Europe- the common characteristic of it being the anti-European attitude, which during the 2014 elections might produce "the most anti-European parliament" ever. But that populism is not homogeneous at all. After presenting a "thin" definition of populism as an ideology which considers splitting society in two parts, a social group with almost no differences, monolithic and homogeneous, called the people and the "elite", also viewed as one solid bloc, he goes on to describe and discuss briefly what he calls the "threefold differentiation" of the European populist parties characteristics: leftwing versus rightwing; first as opposed to second generation of (postwar) populist movements, and Northwestern juxtaposed to Southeastern varieties of populism.

Concerning the first differentiation, the horseshoe two dimensional model can successfully accommodate the affinities between right wing and left wing denunciation of the "political elite" in general and explain the same vocabulary used by the left and the right in order to object the current "moratorium", i.e, the agreement between the Greek government and the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission or the call on the "people" to defend the country. We should avoid blurring the different ways in which "people" is ideologically constructed: the right wing populists try to rally ethnic Greeks of all classes versus alien immigrants, the leftwing elite and Europe, whereas the radical left calls upon Greek workers and middle class to unite against the rightwing elite and Europe. In expressing more than clearly his sympathies with the left, Pels insists at the same time that we should be wary towards the ardent incitement of the left wing discourse to a social model equalling that of the "direct rule of the people"[10].

The second bifurcation he ascertains is related to the first and second generation of populist European parties. Because of the financial crisis there is

9 Unlike the extremist parties of the 1930s, the new populist movements do not aim to abolish democracy: quite the opposite, writes Ivan Krastev. What we are witnessing is a conflict between elites suspicious of democracy and increasingly illiberal publics (Ivan Krastev, 2008) http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-18-krastev-en.html

10 That argument is reminiscent of the extremist but influential nineteenth-century liberal François Guizot (1787-1874) and his colleagues, "the doctrinaires", who used all their eloquence to argue

a focus shift from the anti-parliament, anti-semitic, radical nationalist and homophobic totalitarian matrix of the 1930s and 1940s towards a more meek and liberal pro-parliamentary, cultural racism. That new type of political discourse proclaims that the generalized "other", simply cannot be integrated into an imagined national community-if that "other" is a minority-and urges the "people" to save their national identity from being corrupted and swallowed into the Leviathan like, European Union.

The third differentiation has to do with the North/South divide. The European North with its strong liberal tradition tends to infuse the populist parties with homologous political parameters and it is quite interesting that some of them came out as offshoots of more traditional liberal parties[11]. At the same time, in the European South, populist parties' records and performance follow more collective and reactionary patterns.

References

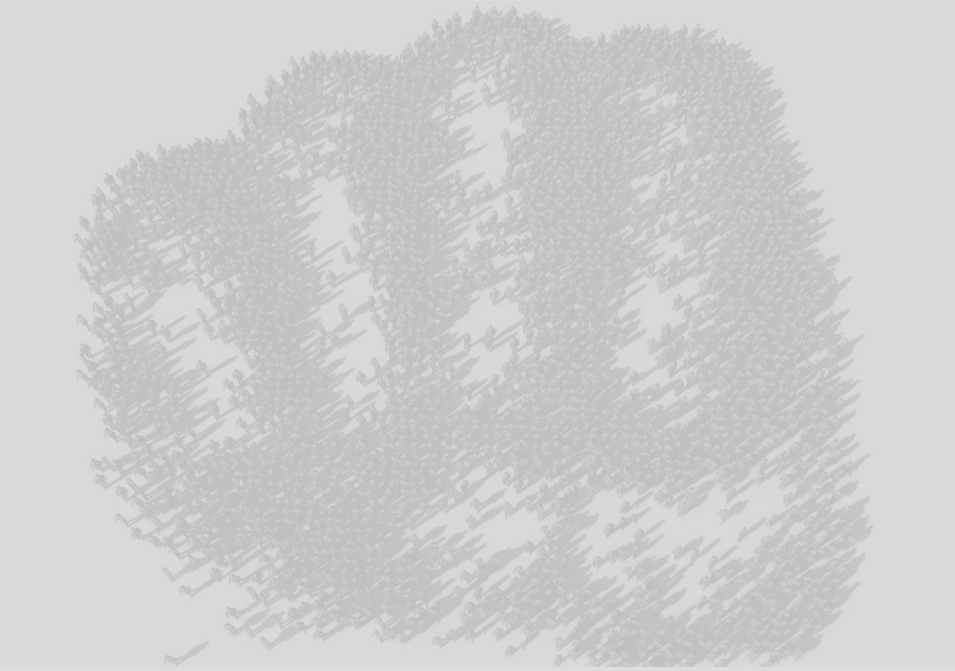
Cohn-Bendit, Daniel & Gaudot, Edouard (2011) The Temptation to Oversimplify. Why Populism Poses a Danger to Europe, in Erica Meijers (editor) Populism in Europe, Planet VERLAG and Green European Foundation, pp. 15-24

Pels, Dick (2011) The New National Individualism. Populism is Here to Stay, in Erica Meijers (editor) Populism in Europe, Planet VERLAG and Green European Foundation, pp.25-46

that democracy and good governance couldn't necessarilly co-exist. In their view, the real sovereign is not the people but reason (Krastev, 2008)) http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-18-krastev-en.html

11 See more on that issue in Cohn-Bendit and Gaudot (2011: 18) where they claim that Pim Fortuyn or Marine Le Pen would fight against islam, "identifying themselves with political liberalism and secularist principles". Also Pels in his article with the telling title The New National Individualism, argues that a new form of nationalism is emerging in Europe, "which sets the individualistic values and lifestyle of the autochthonous majority against the "backward" collectivist traditions perpetuated within migrant communities" (2011: 31)

Populism and the Balkans



Reclaiming the democratic heritage of early populism

Daniela Bozhinova

The dominating take on the term "populism" today is mainly pejorative. "Populism" is used to denote "demagogy", "catch-all" politics or just political rhetoric appealing to "the people".

But we need to distinguish between two tendencies in populism:

1) populism as a vehicle through which ruling elites maintain their supremacy, populism of charismatic and Machiavellian leaders who mouth progressive rhetoric while actually subverting the interests of their passive followers and
2) authentic popular movement from below, genuine citizens' activism demanding social and economic justice and citizens' checks over unchecked government.

The latter is early populism reborn. Originally "Populism" was the philosophy of the People's Party, established in the late 19thc. in the USA. Its social and economic background was the industrialization of America (the "Gilded Age" following the Civil War), when a handful of businessmen, bankers and especially railroad owners (Stanford, Vanderbild, Evans etc.) amassed huge personal fortunes and totally dictated rules and direction of political life. The political landscape was characterized by the rein of plutocracy, rampant political corruption, bossism in the big cities, bribery and government inefficiency at large. The populists challenged the corrupt representative institutions and entrenched parties and demanded political reform. A centerpiece in their political platform (voted by the Congress of the People's Party in Omaha 1892) was direct democracy. They wanted to break the political machines by empowering the ordinary people with instruments for direct decision-making (to arm the common citizens with the "guns" of direct decision-making according to Woodrow Wilson's expression).

Unlike populists of today populists of the 19th and early 20thc. did what they preached. They were able to reform representative government in many American states by installing the triad of direct democracy: initiative, ref-

erendum and recall. Over time direct participation became the fourth tenet of constitutional democracy in the USA. Nowadays the triad of the initiative, referendum and recall is in use in 24 American states, some of them use it intensively to the extent of hybrid democracy.

Why the retrospective look back to the origins of populism?

The reason is in the stunning parallels we see today with the social-economic environment of late 19thc. America. A similar situation at present produces a similar social upheaval against the structures of power. We see also strong drive for more democracy, for citizens' empowerment, citizen's control and direct decision-making, a call to re-invent democracy – nationally and on the EU scale.

Nowadays we see in the Balkans/ South-East Europe a plentitude of phenomena – the same that brought about reformist populism once: the dictate of monopolies and banks, oligarchy, non-representative legislature, soaring political corruption, election fraud, paralyzed judiciary, silenced media, mainstream parties which nobody trusts, economic crisis, poverty and social exclusion. The crisis we have been living through since 2008 is not a financial and economic crisis only. There is a deeper crisis underneath and it is a democracy crisis, crisis of governance, crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy.

Like the popular currents of the early 20thc, populism today has effectively retooled the Liberal-Conservative dichotomy (right-left) for many Europeans. It has been replaced by another conflict dimension - the conflict between "them" and "us", between political elite and common citizens, a conflict between the "command" and "obey class", as philosopher Ralf Dahrendorf put it (in his interpretation of Conflict Theory and Marxist class struggle theory).

The fundamental problems of democracy and this new cleavage between entrenched political elite and oligarchy, on the one hand and common citizens, on the other, was clearly demonstrated by the Occupy Movement, Iceland's 2009 "revolution", the Indignados in Spain, the carnation-wielding Portuguese protesters, the protests and general strikes in Greece, the February 2013 upheaval in Bulgaria which toppled the government and brought about extraordinary elections.

An article on public opinion I have read lately tells about a curious experience of a pollster with a focus group. The pollster asked the people in the

focus group to write down the first name that comes to mind when they thought of parliament. An elderly man wrote, "Satan". When asked why, he said, "Because I wasn't sure of the correct spelling of "Beelzebub".

This is an anecdotal example of the utmost public disenchantment with the political establishment reaching as far as the stage of cynical rejection of the entire political class as inevitably venal. The breakdown of confidence in authority creates space for populist movements of all stripes.

One of these stripes or one of the directions today's populism has taken (named also "anti-politics") is truly democratic. The rejection of the political class is transforming itself into a belief in self-government – the idea that we, ordinary people are capable of governing ourselves – we can directly decide on policies and issues as well as find better and more efficient ways of keeping our elected representatives accountable. New found solidarity and local decision-making sprung up from people's gatherings in city squares, local neighborhood assemblies and work committees addressing people's needs, occupations of factories etc.

In February 2013 Bulgaria witnessed the biggest protests for the last 20 years. Citizens' unrest has been set off by high electricity prices, but along with economic demands, people in the streets have also been chanting: "Direct democracy!", "Recall!", "Referendums!", "Citizens' control!". These recent events have thus sparked increased interest in direct democracy instruments among various stake-holders. Some of the political parties picked up the issue to produce more appealing election campaigns several months later. A couple of them declared they would improve the referendum law, another one promised they would introduce recall mechanism for elected politicians, 2-3 parties demonstrated commitment to calling a Grand National Assembly to re-write the Bulgarian constitution.

Speaking of constitutions, we have to emphasize that in a number of countries there exist a strong drive bottom-up to re-invent the constitutional model, so that the sovereign will reclaim the power to legislate and partake in policy-making. Following the revolt against the bank bail-out in 2008, the citizens of Iceland have re-written their constitution in a completely interactive manner using crowd-sourcing. Ireland is following suit. A constitutional convention has been started in which 60% of the members have been randomly selected from the voters' lists.

Further to re-writing the "social contract" citizens are demanding to have

a final say on vital issues. They are initiating referendums wherever this mechanism is available and not hard to use:

- 73% of the Germans demanded a referendum on the Fiscal Compact (the demand resulted in filing a complaint by 12000 citizens to the Constitutional Court in 2012);
- Swiss citizens voted in March 2013 to impose some of the world's most severe restrictions on executive compensation - an overwhelming majority of 68% gave shareholders a binding say on the overall pay packages for executives and directors of companies listed in Switzerland;
- a purely representative democracy such as the United Kingdom has put to the popular vote a reform of the election law, more referendums are in the pipeline in the UK (on the Scottish independence and in-or-out referendum on EU membership).
- Austrian citizens' groups are pressing for legislative improvement of the national referendum law so that referendum results are considered binding in the future, binding and not just consultative.

A democratic crisis at the European level is a counterpart to the democratic crisis at national levels. The division created between and within European societies (North-South, core-periphery, old-new member-states, debtors-creditors) fracture the perception of a common interest and disempower citizens from exercising real political agency over the future direction of Europe. Latest developments in European affairs have employed exclusively the intergovernmental manner of decision-making. New unaccountable and unelected institutions are being created, there is a domination of the executive troika, which is also not elected by the European citizens. There is a further decreasing of democratic decision-making, exclusion of citizenship, bypassing public debate, further limitation to the power of the European parliament to decide on key economic and political choices.

To overcome the deepening democratic deficit, a number of NGOs, civic and political leaders are coming up with specific proposals such as:

THE CITIZENS PACT Initiative - a Europe-wide coordinated (by Euro Alter - Italy) debate on the institutional structure of Europe whose final aim is the participatory drafting of a Citizens Pact by all those who suffer the effects of decisions made without participation (local government, trade unions, social groups, NGOs). Once drafted the Pact shall be approved by the European citizens by transnational referendum

THE NEW CONVENTION Initiative - about to start in late 2013, lead by Democracy International, it is a campaign for calling an European Convention as per the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty (Article 48 of the EU Treaty) so as to allow for a broad and structured public debate on the future of the EU. The Convention will take charge of the further development of the EU treaties. The Convention would advise on the best suggestions and design ensuring sustainability and solidarity, as well as more democracy and citizen participation in Europe.

The Convention must:

- have the greatest possible democratic legitimacy,
- reach its decisions in plenum according to fully democratic rules,
- have adequate time for serious and thorough deliberation,
- operate with full transparency, have all its meetings open to the public, and include in its deliberations proposals from civil society,
- subject its proposals to approval by the citizens of Europe in a referendum - not merely to the heads of state and government.

To conclude, we see today citizens' mobilization against the structures of power; bottom-up drive for increased democratic rights and popular control of the institutions, demand for economic and social justice. Voting in elections and protesting, while remaining vital modes of citizens involvement, do not suffice. Going to the polls every four years seems like a part-time democracy. Citizens everywhere are increasingly aware that the right to chose between political parties is just a basic democratic minimum and are pressing for more democracy – for meaningful participation and final say over policy-making in between elections – a full-time democracy. Bulgarian protestors have put it best "No more DEMOcracy, we want the full version".

Empowerment of citizens for direct decision and law-making can provide a major way of remedying the flaws of post-totalitarian, post-authoritarian and post-capitalist democracy – it will reduce corruption, improve accountability of public institutions, improve representation of under-represented groups, raise the quality of political decisions and finally make people happier.

Formally any call for the empowerment of the people could be labeled "populism". The "populism" I have described above, however, is democratic activism per se. Greens believe in grass roots democracy and, I think, are

called upon by history to respond to this need of democratic development in the Balkans and in Europe. Commitment and action will make the telling difference between parties of social change and parties of Machiavellian populism.

"Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come", said French writer and humanist Victor Hugo. Maybe time has come for the citizens of the Balkans and Europe to reclaim the power of law-making and decision-making and keep their representatives truly accountable through the referendum, initiative and recall, time to reinvigorate the democratic heritage of early populism.

Oligarchy, Populism and Greens in Bulgaria

Vasil Kadrinov

1. The totalitarian regime in Bulgaria before 1989

In September 1944 Bulgaria was occupied by the Soviet Army and a totalitarian rule was forced upon the country. The members of the Communist party apparatus and the secret service became a new ruling class, which imposed its will with terror and exploited the workers, the peasants and the intellectuals. The people of Bulgaria were deprived of their civil, economic and political rights. Nevertheless in 1989, under the influence of the internal opposition, and the popular democratic movements in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and in the USSR, and hindered by huge debts to western banks the Bulgarian totalitarian communist regime collapsed. After this collapse things gradually started to change: a multy-party political system was established, the planned economy was reformed to a free market one, human rights were violated to a lesser extent. The „red" oligarchy however gradually restored its power and influence. Even though its pretext for ruling was no longer the "shiny communist future". It was replaced by the bright and shiny laissez-faire capitalistic and democratic future.

2. The ruling oligarchy after 1989

a. Secret networks

A main tool for the restoration were the secret networks of the many thousands secret service officers and collaborators of the communist political police, Darzhavna Sigurnost ("State Security"). In the years before 1989 these men had been draining money from the central state funds to companies of their own in the West – about 2 billion US dollars. This money, taken from the Bulgarian people, as well as cash, gained from secret drug and gun sales was used by the secret agents later during the 90s as a startup capital for the privatization of key banks, previously state-owned factories, mining facilities, hotels or agricultural land.

b. Economic control

In this backstage manner the former communist apparatchiks and State Security officers have become the greatest "legal capitalists" and "entrepreneurs" full of confidence and financial means, ensuring them advantage over others in the restarted market economy. During the 90s these men founded some well-known mafia groups too, by means of which they have the grey economy in a firm grip. Noteworthy is the deliberated by them 1996 bankrupt of the biggest Bulgarian banks, followed by hyperinflation. Through this order of events the savings of the Bulgarian citizens were drained by few chosen men, who had received bank credits prior to the bank system collapse and had to pay the credits back in devaluated currency. As result of these events people sank into poverty which brought them under the control of the ruling oligarchy.

c. Pseudo political pluralism

Over 300 parties are registered in the Bulgarian political system. However only four or five of them usually achieve parliamentary representation. The new and small anti-status quo parties are stopped by an artificial 4 % electoral barrier, which is included in the election law, although it contradicts the constitution of 1991. The parliamentary represented parties are initiated, grown, supported and hiddenly funded by the oligarchy, which owns the mainstream media and ensures a safe media environment and advertising for their front stage puppets. These puppets take their turn in power but despite the theatrical discussions between them, no significant political differences are obtainable. Their economic policies are mostly neoliberal, satisfying the interests of a small, rich and powerful oligarchic caste. If an anti-status quo party is founded, then it is neutralized and marginalized - by creation and funding of several "duplicate" parties, and also by compromising the party leaders or by media isolation.

d. Populist parties and movements

Populism is a main tool of the oligarchy to keep its power and until now it has raised several mainstream populist parties and movements.

- The Bulgarian Socialist Party / BSP / is the supposedly "reformed" former totalitarian party BCP. Without admitting any kind of guilt for the half a century terror, this party now claims to be "left", "social", "a defender of the poor". Nevertheless the party did legislate a flat income tax of 10% during its 2005-2009 rule.
- The Movement of Rights and Freedoms /MRF / is a party, supposedly

standing for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The MRF declares itself as a liberal party, but there is not any sign of internal party democracy. Since 23 years its authoritarian leader is Ahmed Dogan. The party actually functions as a well organized clan and defends only the business interests of its leaders and not the interests of the Turkish minority.

- *The National Movement Simeon the Second / NMSS /* was founded by the former and last tzar of Bulgaria Simeon II with the kind aid of the former communist State Security. To become a prime minster in 2001 Simeon promised in a populist style to solve the problem with poverty for nor more than 800 days. This did not happen. After the 800 days the image of Simeon however was not tarnished severely in the eyes of many Bulgarians, who have faith in the autocratic decision making and expect that their problems will be solved by the "good tzar".
- *Citizens for European and Developed Bulgaria / CEDB /* is a party, which came to being with the unification of former communist militia-men. Its leader is Boiko Borissov, former tutor at the State Security school in the 80es and bodyguard of the former dictator Zhivkov in the 90s. His party was in power for the last four years. Borissov got famous with his authoritarian manners, he ordered the surveillance of all of his ministers and actually stated in the press, that the highways and the sport halls being under construction in Bulgaria were built by him. After his mandate as prime minister the citizens are still poor, his closest allies though are richer.
- *"Ataka"* is a nationalistic party of populist promises and open hatred against Turks, Roma and Jews. It is instrument for lobbying for the interests of the Russian oligarchy of Putin in Bulgaria and it seems supported financially by it. The leader of the party Volen Siderov often leads nazi-like parades and promises to tripple wages and pensions.

e. Weak and pseudo trade unions

After a short revival of the syndicate movement in the early 90s today the trade unions in Bulgaria are passive and frequently dominated by corrupt leaders, paid by the new capitalists. Trade unions have no one to partner with on the political stage, because Bulgaria lacks a real leftist, social democratic or labour party. The Greens have not shown any interest in cooperation with the trade unions so far.

f. Media control

The Bulgarian media are subordinate to several economic groups. Auto-

censorship or pre-ordered one-sided publications are widespread in current Bulgarian journalism. The last report of „Reporters without borders" about the freedom of press lists the country in 87th place.

g. Corruption

According to the 2012 report of „Transparency International" Bulgaria is the second most corrupt country in the EU, following Greece. However Bulgaria occupied the first place in 2011. Governments and public prosecutors try to fool their European partners by imitating fight against corruption. No progress is to be seen, because the borderlines between oligarchy, mafia and judiciary are barely distinguishable.

h. Interaction of the ruling oligarchy with the EU

Recently an official of the European Commission described Bulgaria (and Romania) as „The Wild West"of Europe. The optimism from 2007, that the EU-membership will lead to social and economic progress has been forgotten. In the eyes of the Bulgarian oligarchy the transparency regulations of the EU and appeals for the equality before the law seem like a tedious engagement, which however is the price for laying hands on the EU funds. Nevertheless the civil society perceives the slow and sporadic EU control on the funds and the EC recommendations for improvement of the judiciary in the country as some factor for fighting domestic corruption and for the establishment of civilized rules of economic and political life.

3. The current economic, social and environmental crisis

a. Energy -, deforestation- , construction-, and mining-mafia in Bulgaria

The economic, social and environmental crisis are generated by the branches of mafia disbalancing the economics in favour of the oligarchy. The energy-mafia insists on public funding for a new nuclear power plant worth around 10 billion euro. The forest-mafia has been stealing precious state-owned lands in forest and mountain areas by receiving them in exchange for less attractive lands by corrupt swap deals. Dirty cash is being laundered in the mountain and Black Sea resorts by the construction-mafia, while natural landscapes are being drastically destroyed. Mining corporations are stealing underground precious metals and coal through concessions very profitable to them, a terrible bargain however for the public. The gold, copper and coal mining barons, among who former agents of State Security, are feudalizing and oppressing local communities. River polution caused by the dirty mines are a common environmental issue.

b. Poverty, youth unemployment and brain drain

The result of the mafia invasion in economics is poverty for the rest of Bulgarian citizens. Bulgaria is the poorest country in the EU, with 12 % unemployment and 38 % youth unemployment. The brain drain is a great problem. Every single year 25000 – 30000 educated young people leave the country in order to study or work in the West. In the years after 1989 over 1.5 million have emigrated. In 2012 pensioners were 24 % of the whole population.

c. Roma "integration"

Illiteracy has gained dangerous proportions among the Roma minority, which currently constitutes about 8 % of the total population. This percentage is rising and Roma will constitute 23 % of the population in working age in 2020. The efforts for improving the education of Roma are far from enough.They emigrate to Western Europe and sell their votes during elections. Green parties have not proposed any Roma integration policies so far.

4. The faces of populism:

a. Grassroots populism and populist beliefs

Populism in Bulgaria is not just a propaganda tool for oligarchical power retainment. It is deeply rooted in the mass beliefs. Wide disseminated typical mass beliefs in Bulgaria are:

- "They ("the communists", "the oligarchs") are in power and this can not be changed".
- "It's not good, that many parties are present".
- "At least 40 years must pass away after Zhivkov's fall so that something can change".
- "Under Zhivkov's rule there was security and no unemployment".
- "All politicians are bad men, it is however not my job to save the world".
- "We, Bulgarians can't manage with it alone. Hopefully the EU forces our statesmen to stop with the stealing".

b. Fanatic nationalism

The fanatic nationalism contains many stereotypes. Greeks are supposed to be "lazy", Turks are suspected for "planning to invade Bulgaria", Serbs are blamed for "our loss of Macedonia". In the same time the owners of such attitudes like to go for holidays in Turkey ("where everything is cheaper")

or to envy the Greeks "because they know how to protest".

c. Racism and xenophobia

In the country the object of racial and xenophobic appeals are mostly the Roma. Extremists appeal for their deportation ("on the planet Saturn"). Jews are blamed for not being grateful for the rescue during World War II. The responsibility of the Bulgarian government for the deportations of Jews from Macedonia and Trace to death camp Treblinka is stubbornly denied.

d. Populist strategies of the left-wing politics:

- Wage rises are often promised without any kind of explanation where the money will come from.
- Hundreds of thousands new jobs are promised.
- Higher pensions are always promised (including by the nationalization of the gold mines).
- Promises of cheaper electricity, if the Russians build a new nuclear power plant which will bring many new jobs.
- Reminding of the "equality" under communist as a "lost heaven".
- Using of the words "justice", "social responsibility" and "solidarity" without any specific statements, policies or engagements.
- The jobs (even in dirty mines or in construction of concrete jungles of ski "resorts" like Bansko) are always seen as more important than the protection of public health, rivers and forests.

e. Populist strategies of the right wing politics:

- Praising of "the strong leader", who will solve all the problems, if only him will be provided enough power – Tzar Simeon, Ivan Kostov, Boyko Borisov, Volen Siderov .
- Promises for reduction of the taxes of the rich (the oligarchs), which will help them to freely develop their enterprises and to "pull all of us out of poverty".
- Praising of the foreign "investors" even if they are registered in offshore zones.
- Declaring of the criminal privatization of the 90es as fully legal, just and timely.
- Use of right-wing phraseology ("entrepreneurship" , "small business", "middle class") without any concrete engagements.

g. Populism of the green political parties

- Use of green phraseology ("sustainable development", "energy inde-

pendence" "food independence" , "alternative tourism") without any specific engagements.

- Promises about thousands of green jobs.
- Use of NGO – phraseology ("We are party, but we don't want be in the government, we will be in the parliament as corrective") – critic without readiness for taking responsibilities.
- Use of paid staff of environment protection NGOs for simulation of "mass citizens' protests".
- Dominance of PR methods over the content and the ideas (" We are a party of the young people", "We are new").
- Self-closing of the party in "green sect" of 20-30 activists, jealous of new members which could eventually replace them from the role of "prophets".
- Lack of interest to the problems of the people and concentration first of all on the "nature", because it is easier to defend the nature, this defense can hardly meet an opposition. The result is "a green infantilism".
- Tabling first of all proposals for strengthening the direct democracy (which are often difficult to be implemented) and ignoring possible measures for strengthening the representative democracy.

5. Confronting populism in Bulgaria is possible by:

- Strengthening the democracy by introduction of democratic election law (first of all - removing the 4-percent barrier) and political parties-law (requiring strong intra-party democracy).
- Reduction of the subsidies for the political parties. The high amount of these subsidies is the reason for the sustainability of the oligarchic parties. It also causes parties-ghosts coming on the stage only during the elections (contributing for the show of "political pluralism") and aimed to gain 1% of the vote (and the related 4-years subsidy of about 1 million euro), and to disappear after that. The result of these improvements will be a really pluralistic and responsible parliament.
- Strengthening of the green parties in Bulgaria, members of the European Green Party, by their unification, improvement of the intra-party democracy and their „social-democratization", this means more focusing on the problems of the people and not only care for the nature. That way the concepts of sustainable development and Green New Deal will be filled with a real content.

- Replacement of the left-wing, right-wing and green populism by serious and concrete green and social-democratic polices.

6. Political actions at EU level

The European Union can assist the Balkan countries towards avoiding populism, sustainable green economy and social solidarity by much greater control on the fulfillment of their obligations according the EU law.

Balkan civil society can force the process by demanding serious, specific and justified legislation and other political plans by the domestic political parties.

The Greek Greens, as most experienced green party in the region, can facilitate this process and support the junior green parties in the Balkan countries to avoid green populism and play greater role for progress of the Balkan societies.

References

Дичев И. Екопарадокси // Дневник. 2013 Г. 15.06.2013 Г. - See at: http://www.dnevnik.bg/analizi/2013/01/31/1993174_ekoparadoksi/

Balkaninside.com: *Germany, France ask from Bulgarian Government to Cut Ties with Oligarchy* - See at: http://www.balkaninside.com/germany-france-ask-from-bulgarian-government-to-cut-ties-with-oligarchy/

Beekman R., Sofia Echo: *Bulgaria has no oligarchy - Prime Minister* - See at: http://sofiaecho.com/2009/03/14/689865_bulgaria-has-no-oligarchy-prime-minister

Cherneva I., Interview at Euronews: *Bulgaria "has had enough of mafia-oligarch-government's triple toxic cocktail"*- See at: http://www.euronews.com/2013/07/11/bulgarian-society-has-had-enough-of-the-mafia-oligarchy-government-s-triple-tox/

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: *EU Should Clamp Down on Bulgaria's Oligarchy* - See at: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=152360#sthash.d62gv5J6.dpuf

Gahrton P. Ed., *Is There a Need for a Green Ideology?* COGITO- The Swedish Green Think Thank, 2008. – 112 p.

Krasimirov A., *Tens of thousands join electricity protests across Bulgaria* -

See at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/17/us-bulgaria-protests-electricity-idUSBRE91G0C520130217

Minchev O., *Bulgaria: where western democracy meets Russian-style corruption* - See at: http://www.publicserviceeurope.com/article/3169/bulgaria-where-western-democracy-meets-russian-style-corruption

Mulvaney D., Gen. Ed., Robbins P., Series Ed., *Green Politics, an A-to-Z Guide*. SAGE Publications, Inc. 2011. – 503 p.

Novinite.com: *Thousands Join Fresh Anti-Govt Protest in Sofia* - See at: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=151857

Novinite.com: *Reding Urges Bulgaria to Deal with Corruption, Oligarchy* - See at: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=152262#sthash.mYgPNfGb.dpuf

O'Brennan J., *Bulgarians confront the oligarchs* - See at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/john-obrennan/bulgarians-confront-oligarchs

O'Brennan J., *The spirit of protest in Brazil and Turkey has now swept into Bulgaria* - See at: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/25/turkey-brazil-bulgaria-protest

O'Hear A., Ed. *Philosophy and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press. 2011. – 277 p.

Populism in Balkans: A Historical Evaluation

Murat Belge

Let me begin by saying that I come from a Marxist-socialist background where the concept of "populism" does not enjoy a prestigious status.

I have been a Marxist in a constant theoretical fight with Marxism and consequently I did not join those leaving the boat after the Berlin Wall. I did not feel betrayed but confirmed and remained where I was — in the position of an unorthodox Marxist.

Now, my basic feeling about "populism". . . It is like a medallion. On it, is engraved, "populism". You turn the other side; there you have "elitism".

I still think this is the case. But what about Marxism. Wasn't it a much more formidable version of "elitism"? The party hegemony and the "*politbureau*" hegemony, the scientificity, the ability to foresee who would end up in the garbage bin of history, etc. We must all be more modest about our predictions, directions, and also our theoretical-ideological formations.

Marxism was born in the Western world and had to cope with the realities of the Western social formations. I do not mean to say that it is not relevant for non-Western societies (there are people who claim that but I'm not one of them). However, a mechanical application of this theory to non-Western societies (which present an enormous scale of differences) may easily lead to misleading results

For instance, Ottoman society was not primarily organized according to class. There was no serfdom in the countryside. In the cities, space was shared according to ethnicity and not according to class. It was not, technically speaking, a ghettoized society, with strict rules and limited freedom, etc., but sense of community, especially religious identity was very important. The rich and the poor and of course the middle class, all lived in the same neighbourhood, if they came of the same ethnic background. Celebrations, public and private, were common. They laughed at the same jokes, sang the same songs, shared the same "wisdom". . . Consequently, separate

"class culture" did not develop. This is very unlike England, for instance, where class culture is quite dominant. The Ottoman formation naturally allows a more populist politics and political language, compared to the Western European cases. I think most "Third World" societies are closer to the Ottoman model.

But the Ottoman model is not confined to present-day Turkey alone. I have a feeling that all Balkan societies share the Ottoman heritage, perhaps to varying degrees.

I remember the apprentice of the greengrocer who brought us vegetables when I was a child of eleven. He was a young man, with a mustache and all that, but he called me *"abi"*, which means "elder brother" in Turkish. I was his "abi" because of my class. He was showing me his respect. But at the same time, he was using this term of kinship, "getting familiar", literally speaking! "We are all of the same family"! If I were elder, he would call me "uncle" — and nowadays there are those who call me "granddad"!

This is the dominant culture and, naturally, it has its political implications. I don't know if it is "better" or "worse" (whatever those qualifications mean), but it is *different* than what we have in Western Europe.

We can define a more or less homogenous and universal concept of "democracy". But his "universal" democracy is planted on different soil in each social formation and has to develop from its own roots.

Let us take "clientelism". Western democracy took shape in Italy in the form of "clientelism". We can read quite brilliant analyses of this system, "trans-formismo", in the writing of Gramsci.

We had our multi-party parliamentary system in 1946, in the wake of the Second World War and the defeat of Fascism. The newly-founded Democrat Party, without any previous social or political ideology or any study of Italian politics, immediately embraced the clientelist-populist political approach.

I'm sure that these diagnoses about Turkish politics would not sound entirely unfamiliar in Greece where the political left as well as the right have developed their own versions of populism.

As I said in the beginning, I have my reservations about "populism" because of its inherent "elitism". But then, the name derives from the word "people" and is closely tied to "popular". It is difficult to think of a form of politics

which is successful without being popular. A political activist has to learn how to address people, how to draw their attention, how to persuade them, etc. All this requires and involves a certain dose of theatricality; let's say, some "political acrobacy". Maybe that "acrobacy" is the populism, that politics can't be without.

Laclau and Mouffe have spoken about "popular-democratic interpellations" and claimed that there can't be a successful socialist program which offers no solution for the democratic problems. These problems that we call "democratic" will necessarily take different forms in different societies, according to their historical development. In one case religion, in another ethnicity may be source of the problem (and countless other possibilities). But a democratic-progressive movement must be able to find the language to address such problems, as well as plausible remedies to overcome them. All this involves populism in some degree.

One problem or question I have not really paid attention to is "right-wing populism". I have assumed populism to be a desirable or undesirable component of left-wing politics. This is not true, by any means. In fact, the right has often been more successful by far, on wielding populism, compared to the left. And there are reasons for that.

Mussolini and Hitler, among others, demonstrate to us the great potential of right-wing and nationalist populism.

Here, at this point, I would like to make my concluding distinction between left-wing and right-wing populism.

Popular ideology does not and cannot have theoretical consistency or clarity. It is full of contradictions. Right-wing populism makes use of all such ambiguities and has to reproduce them and add new elements, in order to prolong its ideological hegemony over the masses.

For the left-wing politics, populist discourse is the efficient instrument to reach out to the masses. But then, this politics must act as an ever-active mechanism of a kind that can re-shuffle all those ideological elements into a coherent understanding of a struggle for democracy, for the necessary balance between social justice and unpolluted nature, for the elimination of explosion in theory and in practice.

"Populism" against democracy or Europe against itself?

Challenging conceptual orthodoxies

Giorgos Katsambekis

Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser introduce their recent volume, entitled *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, as follows: "One of the most used and abused terms inside and outside of academia is undoubtedly *populism"* (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012: 1). It wouldn't be an exaggeration to maintain that statements like this one have become cliché among academics discussing populism, reflecting an urgent need to seriously engage with populism's meaning, implications and ambivalences. Indeed, the label "populist" is persistently utilized across the western world to signify a vast variety of policies, ideas and practices, to the extent that for some academics and intellectuals it has become misleading, if not useless (Roxborough 1984; Marlière 2013)[1]. Especially within the European context, "populism" is often treated by scholars, politicians and commentators as a democratic *malaise* or a social disease and definitely a *threat* to democracy and the future of the European project. Most of the times viewed with repugnance, it is supposed to be an irrational, radical, Manichean and anti-pluralist view of society that misguides the "immature" and "uneducated" masses, releases uncontrolled social passions, erodes democratic institutions from within and thus threatens to tear society apart (Karalis 2010; Fieschi 2013; Swoboda & Wiersma 2008; Meijers 2011; Morris 2012; Abts & Rummens 2007; Kampfner 2005; Stephens 2013).

Taken in this manner, it shouldn't come as a surprise that most of the European media saw the impressive rise of Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement in the recent Italian elections as an alarming "populist flood" (Padovani 2013)

1 Roxborough goes as far as to challenge populism's analytical value with reference to one of its historical birth places, namely Latin America between the 1930s and the 1970s, where one can find the paradigmatic cases of Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina) and Lázaro Cardenas (Mexico). Roxborough distinguishes between two broader approaches to populism, the "classical" and the "discursive" one, to conclude that "[t]he utility of the notion of "populism" as a description for a particular stage in the development of Latin American societies is [...] open to serious question", since "this notion fail[s] to describe accurately the nature of political processes in the Cardenas, Vargas and Peron governments" (Roxborough 1984: 14, 24).

and a real threat to the Italian democracy. A few months earlier, similar concerns were voiced by European media on the occasion of the Greek elections. In the Greek case the "populist danger" was incarnated mainly by the radical left SYRIZA, led by Alexis Tsipras, and its intention to go against the austerity agenda, radically opposing the hegemony of neoliberal policies. Thus, both Grillo and Tsipras were often described by top European media (like the German weekly *Spiegel*) as the "most dangerous men in Europe". To be sure, Europe has found its "bogeyman"; or "bogeymen": the "bad populists", sometimes also described as "reluctant radicals", the anti-European, "masters of simplification" that should be driven back to an idealized "moderate politics" (Fieschi 2013).

But is this really the case? In what follows I intend to challenge this orthodoxy, that seems to be dominant both inside and outside the academia, and underline the dangers that such a narrow-minded and unhistorical take on populism entails. After all, recent theoretical elaborations and historical experience have clearly shown that populism cannot be a priori perceived as good or bad, democratic or antidemocratic, progressive or reactionary as such (see Canovan 1999; Laclau 2005; Panizza 2005; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). Populism and democracy seem to be "inextricably linked" (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008: 10) and historically we have witnessed a vast variety of populist hybrids; populist movements that were progressive and democratic and other cases that were authoritarian and antidemocratic, populists of the Left and populists of the Right, populisms in power and populisms in opposition, populisms in the streets and populisms in office. Would anyone ever suggest that movements like the OWS and the Tea Party, both branded populist, represent a similar set of values and an equal threat to democracy? Is Hugo Chávez the same with Jörg Haider? Or Alexis Tsipras the same with Marine Le Pen? The answer is obviously *no*. Nevertheless, I do not imply though that there exists a "good" populism of the Left and a "bad" populism of the Right. Such a biased simplification would not only be unhistorical, but also scientifically obsolete. What I merely imply is that each historical case, each specific manifestation of populism should be studied in its specificity, in a comparative perspective and without *a priori* dismissals.

Therefore, against the "anti-populist" common places, that tend to lump together anything that is perceived or stigmatized as "populism", overseeing significant ideological and political differences among the various cases,

what I will suggest is that the deeply post-democratic turn of today's Europe poses an often underestimated danger to democracy; a danger equal, if not even greater than the scarecrow of a loosely defined "populism". Indeed, what today's anti-populist hysteria unintentionally reveals, is the marginalization of the very "people" as the subject of democratic politics (d' Eramo 2013; Rancière 2006). Moreover it is this post-democratic consensus that by negating disagreement and democratic dissent ultimately nurtures not only the worst and most antidemocratic variations of populism, but also the various new nationalist extremisms, giving them ground to appear as the only true alternatives against an elitist and "blocked" system.

My argument advances in two steps. First, I will deconstruct the most common arguments against populism, that often appear in both political and academic/journalist discourses. And second, I will try to demonstrate the consequences of an instrumentalised "anti-populism" through a brief examination of the Greek crisis and its discursive administration by the Greek and European elite(s).

Deconstructing the "anti-populist" common places

1. So what is it that makes populism so dangerous for democracy? One of the most common characteristics that comes up as particularly threatening in the relevant discussion is populism's Manichean view of society; a view that by simplifying the complexities of social relations separates the social between two broader camps, "*us*" and "*them*", "*people*" and the "*establishment*", "*power*" and the "*underdog*". We can understand this as the element of *oppositionality*; an element that admittedly is crucial in the articulation of a populist discourse. Such "Manichean" views of society are often perceived as particularly threatening since they introduce sharp cleavages and dividing lines within a society that according to the hegemonic strand of thought should be fully reconciled. But one should still pose the question: could there be democratic politics – or politics at all – without adversaries and without identity/group formations? This kind of argument takes us back to the classic elaborations of Carl Schmitt on the nature of "the political", namely that the specificity of "the political" lies within the distinction between friend and enemy (Schmitt 2007: 26).

Chantal Mouffe's re-reading of Schmitt stages this antagonistic relation-

ship within an agonistic and pluralist conjunction transforming the Schmittian *enmity* to a politicized and "tamed" relation between political adversaries (Mouffe 2005: 16); a relation that is vital for democratic politics to flourish. The difference between raw antagonism (in the Schmittian sense) and pluralistic *agonism* (in Mouffe's sense) is that in the second case the opponents are conceived of as sharing a common symbolic ground, a ground of common principles and values (like liberty, equality, tolerance, and so on) and accept each other's legitimacy to doubt and disagree (Mouffe 2000; 2005; 2013). Even if we manage to achieve a broad consensus on this common symbolic ground, "there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented" (Mouffe 2013: 8). Hence, the *ineradicability* – if not necessity – of antagonism and division within a democratic society. After all the basic novelty of democratic modernity lies in the recognition and legitimization of political disagreement, of doubt and of struggle as parts inherent to the political process (Rancière 2010a: 37-38). So when negating antagonism in the name of "democratic moderation", the critics of populism also negate politics in its democratic perspective. For what is politics without the formation of an "us" as opposed to "them" and without deciding on concrete contested issues; without the ever present possibility of new subjectivities that challenge a fixed constellation of meaning? Thus, as Mouffe would say, our task in democratic politics can be better conceived as a constant effort to transform antagonistic relations to agonistic ones and "tame" "raw" antagonisms in ways that can be dealt with *politically*.

I believe that the key notion in understanding this objection to populism is *consensus*. "Consensus" has been indeed one of the key signifiers of the West's liberal democratic tradition at least for the last twenty years (Rancière 2010a; 2010b). What "consensus" signifies is the desire for a fully reconciled society that is devoid of conflict and division and ultimately beyond antagonism (Mouffe 2000). But a society beyond antagonism – as I already implied – means a society without politics, which ends up meaning a democracy without the *demos* and its discord; finally, a democracy without "the people" (Rancière 2006; Feinberg 2008). I believe that it is this post-democratic prejudice (Rancière 2006; Crouch 2004; Mouffe 2005) that has become hegemonic, that leads to this kind of simplistic arguments against populism which ends up lumping together almost anything that

stands against the dominant model of politics. Dare to protest against the politics of austerity and you will surely be renounced as a "populist enemy of democracy"! Furthermore, to reveal anti-populism's selective, if not hypocritical, sensitivities, this kind of "anti-populist critique is usually articulated in a very populist and Manichean manner: through the drawing of strict dichotomies, evident both in academia, journalism and politics. Such dichotomies include: "Democracy vs. Populism", "Pluralism vs. Populism" or even "Europe vs. Populism" (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis 2013). Indeed, the hegemonic discourse is overwhelmed by such polarizations.

To put it in Ernesto Laclau's words, what today's rejection of populism seems to entail is "the dismissal of politics *tout court*", and "the assertion that the management of community is a concern of an administrative power whose source of legitimacy is a proper knowledge of what a "good" community is" (Laclau 2005: x). "Proper knowledge" or "expertise" can be seen here as metonymies of the pre-democratic logic of the *arkhè*, that entails a "normal" distribution of positions that defines who exercises power and who is subject to it' (Rancière 2010a: 30-31). Today, the logic of the *arkhè* can be better described in terms of post-political technocracy, expertocracy, or even neo-aristocratism (d' Eramo 2013).

2. A second standard line of critique against populism entails the objection of *collective passions* as opposed to a strictly rationalist, passionless and "moderate" politics. The question to ask here could go like this: Aren't political passions a key ingredient in group formation and identification and thus in (democratic) politics? Again, what this line of critique entails is an indirect dismissal of democratic politics itself, for what it envisages is a society in which politics is reduced to a neutral field of competing individuals, driven by their rationally calculated interests; what could elsewise be described as a society of robots. But we know from Freud's theory of identifications and Mouffe's rendering of Freud that "one cannot understand democratic politics without acknowledging passions as the moving force in the field of politics" (Mouffe 2002: 8). Collective forms of identification around specific objects always entail something more than mere calculation, namely, *affective investment*. By denying the affective dimension of politics and by suppressing the signifiers of political passion in public discourse we are bound to witness a "return of the suppressed" and a "displacement of affective energy" (Stavrakakis 2005: 80) probably in ways

"which cannot be contained by the democratic process" (Mouffe 2000: 104). The recent neo-Nazi emergence in Greece faces us with such a challenge.

So, instead of eliminating passions from the public sphere, what the task for a vibrant democratic project should be is "to "tame" these passions by mobilizing them for democratic ends and by creating collective forms of identification around democratic objectives' (Mouffe 2002: 9). To be sure, an inclusive and pluralist democratic populism could very well do the job; at least certainly better than a purely "rationalist" project devoid of affective content. Bringing the discussion back to Europe, one can recall here the famous words of a great Europeanist, Jacques Delors: "you don't fall in love with a common market; you need something else" (Delors in Bideleux, 2001: 25). That is exactly the case for crisis-hit Europe today, only now things are much worse than in the eve of the new millennium. Paraphrasing Delors' statement, today one could say that *it is impossible to fall in love with structural adjustments and fiscal austerity; especially when you are starving*.

3. A last pair of negative features attributed to populism would involve *irrationality* and *moralism*. Again it is a really slippery terrain to cross and several questions arise: a. who is to determine what is rational and what is irrational, except maybe the dominant ideology?, and b. isn't today's hegemonic discourse that demonizes populism as an absolute evil a predominantly moralistic one? Dealing with issues of what is and what isn't "rational" is never beyond the context of specific correlations of power. We know from Foucault's both archeological and (especially) genealogical writings that a claim to "truth", and thus "rationality", is always a crystallization/fragment of a specific "regime of knowledge" or "regime of truth" (see Foucault 1980; Phillips & Jørgensen 2002: 12-16)[2]. In other words, "rationality is constituted in and through discursive power struggles" (Torfing 2005: 8). The claim to one's "rationality" against the enemy's "irrationality" thus serves as a convenient discursive device for the displacement of disagreement from the field of politics and its placement on the "neutral" field of mere "necessity", *a-political* "capacity" and technocratic "know-how".

2 In Foucault's words: "Each society has its régime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault 1980: 131).

Ironically enough, the claim to "rationality" also operates in the field of morals that it supposedly seeks to oppose. This happens because it often generates an absolute and moralist dismissal of the political adversary's claim(s), reducing him/her to a mere unworthy *enemy*, with whom there is nothing to discuss due to the lack of the common symbolic ground that is necessary for a rational confrontation to unfold. Mudde and Kaltwasser offer again some useful insights concerning this kind of objections to populism. They show that critics of populism usually proclaim themselves as "good democrats", while reducing at the same time the populists to "evil forces". Ultimately "this reaction is quite similar to the populist language, since it assumes that the political world should be seen as a moral battle, which is (almost) impossible to solve through democratic channels" (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012: 2013).

Anti-populism and post-democracy: lessons from the Greek crisis

Having deconstructed the main common places of anti-populist critique I can now move to the Greek case and the way the European elites have dealt with it. To be sure, this is a case where the most common objections to populism, as described above, were in full operation in public debate, leading to the articulation of a predominantly anti-populist discourse.

Where to begin? Maybe from the outbreak of the crisis in 2009. When Greece found itself in the eye of the storm, the administration of the crisis was immediately elevated by the government to the status of the *ultimate national issue*. Anyone that opposed the austerity agenda and the so called "troika", was simultaneously branded *populist* and certainly "irrational". Discussion around possible alternatives was systematically suppressed, and whenever it was brought up it would immediately deteriorated to a monologue around mere economic necessity and logistics, around which the "uneducated" and "immature" masses of the people were considered inadequate. The undeclared "state of emergency" would cast ever since its long shadow over any possible alternative, paving the way for all kinds of deviations from democratic "normality" (the continuous violation of the Constitution, the effective suspension of social welfare and civil rights, assaults on freedom of speech and an unprecedented rise in police brutality paint the picture of an outright authoritarian shift in late post-democratic Greece).

The mixture of this "state of emergency", with the desired "consensus politics", gave life to what I would like to call *"emergency consensus"*. Let's make this a bit clearer. The European Commission – operating as the executive arm of the EU – right from the start demanded that all Greek political parties consent on the bailout terms and pledge to continue on the same track; it even asked from the Greek opposition to provide written support to the country's bailout plan, for the flow of emergency borrowing to continue. "Consensus", that usually appeared in European leaders' discourse as an advice or wishful thinking appeared now as *raw blackmail*. The EU's "threat" could be formulated as follows: "either you all consent to the policies dictated by the "troika", or you do not see another installment and you go bankrupt". But this was not enough. Europe's post-political – and ultimately antidemocratic – cynicism would yet again be clearly revealed when the Greek Prime Minister, George Papandreou, would express his intention to call a referendum on the bailout deal on October 2011. A few days after his announcement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, along with other European officials would publicly humiliate him at the G20 summit in France and force him to cancel the referendum, which was described as a dangerous "populist" and "opportunistic" move.

The Commission's pleas for consensus would soon be fully realized as PASOK and ND, along with the marginal far-right neopopulist party LAOS would form a coalition government under the unelected ex-central banker, Lucas Papademos. It should be rather striking in this case that the EU strongly encouraged such a political alliance with a xenophobic extreme right party, while some years earlier it imposed diplomatic sanctions on Austria, reacting to the participation of the extreme right-wing populist Freedom Party in the Austrian government. LAOS is a political party that belongs to the broader family of far-right xenophobic neopopulist parties in Europe. And yet it became overnight a "reliable political partner" and a "responsible ally", as long as it would support the austerity agenda. What this case teaches us is that "populism" appears to be dangerous only under certain conditions: *only as long as it poses a threat to the established power bloc*.

It was around the same days that the EU encouraged the formation of a similar government in Italy, under the unelected technocrat Mario Monti, in order to "*calm the markets*". This blatant disregard for popular sovereignty in the service of the "markets" in Italy and Greece and the subsequent impo-

sition of an "emergency consensus" was very likely among the crucial factors that fueled the major political realignment in both countries when the time for national elections came. The choreography that led to the critical elections of 2012-2013 in both Greece and Italy can be described as follows: After the first austerity measures, barely legitimized governments tried to suppress popular dissent. Then, when popular unrest seemed beyond control and the notorious "markets" were sounding the alarm, popular sovereignty was effectively bypassed and unelected technocrats imposed further harsh austerity measures with no popular/democratic legitimization. Finally, when the people were given the chance to voice their disagreement through national elections they did it with a rather spectacular, and in the case of Greece also very alarming, way, voting against the current administration of the crisis.

It is crucial to briefly recall here the anti-populist hysteria in the Greek and European media right before the Greek elections of May/June 2012. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, urged the Greek electorate not to vote for parties that are "ostentatiously populist" (Lagarde, 2012). Angela Merkel would make similar statements, while EU officials also voiced their concerns against the irresponsible "populist" political parties that threatened to tear the "Memorandum" apart and oust the "troika". The editorials of German newspapers like the *Bild* and the *Financial Times Deutschland* would openly call the Greeks not to vote for the dangerously "populist" SYRIZA, even addressing them in their own language (Bild 2012; FTD 2012). The *Bild* would go so far as to warn the Greek electorate – in the most genuinely Thatcherite manner that – "Tomorrow you might have elections. But *you don't have any alternatives*" (*Bild* 2012; emphasis mine). Needless to say, such agonising warnings against the "populist danger" among Greek mainstream politicians, commentators and intellectuals had already become a constant.

Such attempts to influence the electoral outcome in an otherwise democratic sovereign state were bound to strike a nerve. And while everybody seemed to worry about "populism" the real shock came from *neo-Nazism* and the extremist party Golden Dawn. Maybe this can serve as a clear illustration of the consequences of the European elite's stubborn sticking to a "consensus politics" that *behind the mask of moralistic anti-populism dismisses any social reaction and any political opposition to the dominant agenda, thus truly radicalizing disagreement.*

Concluding remarks: returning to the rough grounds of "the people"

To sum up, we can say that European anti-populism, during the years of crisis, operated as a proper Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1971). As an (initially) effective technique for disciplining a public sphere on the lookout for alternatives and constantly seeking a better way out of the socio-economic impasse. But the "anti-populist" strategy seems to have a backfiring effect. The people in Greece and the European periphery are found caught in a deadlock: on the one hand, there is an *austerity agenda* which is only bound to inflict more pain on the already aching social body; on the other hand, the available *anti-austerity alternatives* are effectively excluded from the public sphere, stigmatized as "destructive populism". So, by not giving ground to popular dissent to unfold in a political way through an open and agonistic public sphere (Mouffe 2005c), by suppressing collective passions as archaism that should be eliminated, and by demonizing any anti-austerity alternative, the "emergency consensus" seems to push frustrated subjects to radically oppose the political system and express themselves in more radical and often a-political –if not anti-political– ways. It is in this context that the recent developments in both Greece and Italy should be assessed.

There are some last conclusions to be drawn from the picture I have sketched out above. First, the research on populism should drop its moral biases and stop approaching populism as a threat or illness of democracy. Indeed, significant steps towards this direction have already been taken and this should be acknowledged (see Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2013: 123; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2012; 2013). Second, "anti-populism" needs to be studied in its own right, as a distinct discursive repertoire and probably as part of the on-going post-democratic turn of western democracies.

***

Maybe today the task for Europe's progressive political forces isn't to merely "fight populism", as if it were a concrete ideology or political movement, but rather *to work towards the radicalization of European democracy and the re-activation of the egalitarian and libertarian imaginaries that lie at the heart of democratic modernity*. No doubt, such a process would call for an unbiased critical engagement with populism's egalitarian and democratic features/aspects; an agonistic engagement with its radical democratic prom-

ise and its claims for inclusion. Such a radicalization, such a re-activation of democratic agonism would probably counter today's post-democratic and antidemocratic tendencies of/within Europe; tendencies that aren't to be found only in marginal nationalist or populist parties, but also in European governments – that is at the heart of the "mainstream", or what others like to call "moderate politics"[3]. And of course, as Étienne Balibar recently noted, this re-activation of democracy in Europe is something that "can only come from the bottom up" (Balibar 2013), that is *by returning to the rough grounds of "the people"*.

References

Abts, K. & Rummens, S. (2007) "Populism versus Democracy", *Political Studies*, 55(2), pp. 405-424.

Albertazzi, D. & McDonnell, D. (2008) "Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre", in D. Albertazzi & D. McDonnell (eds) *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-11.

Balibar, E. (2013) "A new Europe can only come from the bottom up", *openDemocracy*, May 6, http://www.opendemocracy.net/etienne-balibar/new-europe-can-only-come-from-bottom-up.

Bideleux, R. (2001), "What Does It Mean to Be European?", in M. Smith and G. Timmins (eds), *Uncertain Europe*, London: Routledge.

Bild (2012) "Liebe Griechen, macht jetzt keinen Fehler", June 6, http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-krise/liebe-griechen-macht-jetzt-keinen-fehler-24686922.bild.html.

Canovan, M. (1999) "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies*, XLVII, pp. 2-16.

Crouch, C. (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambrige & Malden: Polity.

d' Eramo, M. (2013) "Populism and the new oligarchy", *New Left Review*, 82, pp. 5-28.

Fieschi, C. (2013) "Who's afraid of the populist wolf?", *openDemocracy*,

3 One of the best examples nowadays is the Greek coalition government between ND and PASOK under the right-wing Antonis Samaras; a perfect example of what one might call "extremism of the centre".

June 25, http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/catherine-fieschi/who%E2%80%99s-afraid-of-populist-wolf.

FTD (2012) "Αντισταθείτε στο δημαγωγό - Widersteht den Demagogen", June 6, http://www.ftd.de/politik/europa/:wahlempfehlung-antistatheite-sto-dimagogo-widersteht-den-demagogen/70050480.html.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, 1972-1977, New York: Pantheon Books.

Kampfner, (2005) "Interview - Jose Manuel Barroso", *New Statesman*, June 6, http://www.newstatesman.com/node/150780.

Karalis, V. (2010) "The Socialist Era in Greece (1981-1989) or the Irrational in Power", *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand)*, 14, 254-270.

Katsambekis, G. & Stavrakakis, Y. (2013), "Populism, anti-populism and European democracy: A view from the South", *openDemocracy*, July 23, http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/giorgos-katsambekis-yannis-stavrakakis/populism-anti-populism-and-european-democr.

Lagarde, C. (2012) "Interview to the tv-show "60 Minutes", CBS April 8, http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7404670n.

Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso.

Marlière, P. (2013) "The demophobes and the great fear of populism", *openDemocracy*, June 4, http://www.opendemocracy.net/philippe-marli%C3%A8re/demophobes-and-great-fear-of-populism.

Meijers, E. (2011) "Introduction", in E. Meijers (ed.) *Populism in Europe*, Vienna: Green European Foundation, pp. 5-12.

Morris, M. (2012) "European leaders must be wary of rising Eurosceptic populism from both the right and the left", *EUROPP blog*, March 26, http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/03/26/eurosceptic-populis/.

Mouffe, C. (2000) *The Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso.

Mouffe, C. (2002) *Politics and passions. The stakes of democracy*, London: Centre for the Study of Democracy.

Mouffe, C. (2005) *On The Political*, Routledge: Abingdon

Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics*, London: Verso.

Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2012) "Populism and (liberal) democ-

racy: A framework for analysis", in Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (eds) *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-26.

Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013) "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America", *Government and Opposition*, 48(2), pp. 147-174.

Padovani, M (2013) "L' Italie submergée par une vague populiste", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, February 25, http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/monde/20130225.OBS0031/l-italie-submergee-par-une-vague-populiste.html.

Panizza, F. (ed.) (2005) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, London: Verso.

Jørgensen, M. & Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage.

Rancière, J. (2006) *The Hatred of Democracy*, London: Verso.

Rancière, J. (2010a) *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London: Continuum.

Rancière, J. (2010b) *Chronicles of consensual times*, London: Continuum.

Roxborough, I. (1984) "Unity and Diversity in Latin American History", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 16(1), pp. 1-26.

Schmitt, C. [1932] (2007) *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Stavrakakis, Y. (2005) "Passions of identification Discourse, Enjoyment and European Identity", in D. Howarth and J. Torfing (eds) *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 68-92.

Stephens, P. (2013) "A race between growth and populism", *Financial Times*, 30 May www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/2bb5c128-c79d-11e2-be27-00144feab7de.html#axzz2ZxonSvVZ.

Swoboda, H. & Wiersma, J. M. (eds) (2008) *Democracy, populism and minority rights*, Austria: Renner Institute, http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/democracy-populism-and-minority-rights-pbB23008392/.

Torfing, J. (2005) "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges", in D. Howarth and J. Torfing (eds) *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-32.

The End of Globalization as we knew it?: Perspectives for Balkan Countries

Ahmet Atil Asici

Abstract

2008 global crisis is not just an economic crisis. It is the crisis of current economic globalization which had immense negative consequences on people lives and nature. Lipietz (2011) was right to coin the term as "triple crisis": economic, social and ecological crisis, all happening at the same time. The short-sighted, austerity-led policies only help to aggravate the already dire conditions. We need a comprehensive package of measures extending beyond measures just to revive economic activities. Although economic growth is essential to maintain welfare of people, it has to respect social and ecological constraints.

The second wave of globalization, starting from early 1980s, came to an end with the 2008 crisis. Business-as-usual policies are dead-end. What we need is to transform the whole economic structure on the basis of "strong sustainability" principle, which puts equal emphasis on social, ecological as well as economic sustainability. The past globalization process was successful to bring economic welfare in most parts of the world. But this was achieved at the expense of unprecedented environmental degradation and the destruction of social fabric. Despite these facts, governments in the world are seem to repeat the same mistakes by resorting to some unilateral and bilateral actions.

Balkan countries were one of the hardest hit region from the crisis. Balkan people should be careful in dealing with populist policies adopted. Many governments in the region had already resorted to ecologically destructive "unnecessary and imposed" projects (like gold mining in Halkidiki in Greece and Roşia Montana in Romania, third bridge and third airport in Istanbul) in the name of reviving faltering economies. What the region really needs is the transformation of economies away from fossil fuels and natural resource extraction to renewable energy and ecologically and socially-friendly production.

Uncoordinated actions are not only limited in unilateral policies employed domestically. It also involves inter-regional attempts, like striking free trade deals between EU and USA, again in the name of reviving economic growth at whatever social and ecological costs.

In this article I would like to argue that there is an alternative way to address the roots of the triple crisis we faced today. The challenge is immense and it is clear that there is no short and easy answer. If we are going to continue to live in this planet we need to transform the whole global economic system based on a global consensus.

The Milestones on the road to World War 2: Bad memories

The dissolution of the world trade and financial system, in the form of currency and tariff wars has been cited as one of the most important factors that increase the already high tension among Big Powers in Europe and elsewhere. It was due to the economic depression that hit almost all countries which started in 1929 in USA. Countries desperately sought to export their economic crisis to their neighbors, which is why in economics these unilateral actions are called as "beggar-thy-neighbour" policies. Yet, it was reckoned very soon that these policies would do little to get countries out of crisis but had an immense negative impact on the world trade system, which was (and even today) thought to constitute the main source of economic prosperity.

How did countries respond to the Great Depression of 1930s?

Karl Polanyi explained that 3 ways out were possible to that kind of crisis : fascism, Stalinism, or social-democracy. At the beginning of 1941, fascism was controlling major part of Europe, and Stalinism the rest of it. Social democracy were under way in the USA under the Roosevelt presidency but Latin American countries were divided between pro-Stalinist Mexico and pro-fascist Argentina. The defeat of fascism was not easy. The World was only saved from fascism because of the attack of Japan against USA and the attack of Germany against Soviet Union. And, at the cost of 50 millions deaths, the alliance of Social democracy and Stalinism defeated Fascism (Lipietz, 2011).

This is why the first action that countries took in the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944 under the leadership of USA and UK was the foundation of International monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to

supervise global financial system and development policies. In 1947, with the foundation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (which was renamed as World Trade Organisation in 1995), international trading system was taken under control. The main vision of these international institutions (called often as Bretton Woods Sisters) was to create and sustain a system of prosperity based on rules and coordination among countries. Currency and tariff wars were reduced to bad memories of the past during 1950s and 1960s, an era called as the "Golden Age of Capitalism". Inward-oriented demand-led Keynesian policies created a Welfare System based on mass production and consumption.

Yet, especially after the collapse of the Bretton Woods System in mid 1970s, IMF, WB and WTO gradually became tools of Big Powers in transforming the global economic system in accordance with the so called Washington Consensus which rested on the idea of free markets and good governance. Financial sector which was kept under control during the post WW2 era did her best to convince governments that markets work for the benefit of all and therefore they should be free of control. Soon, the ease of controls, unprecedented liberalisation of financial markets all over the world led many countries into crises: Mexico in 1995; East Asia in 1997; Russia in 1998; Brazil in 1999; Turkey in 2001; Argentina in 2002. Many theories were developed, i.e. "crony-capitalism" to hide the underlying structural deficiencies of the global economic order. Yet, the 2008 crisis in core countries tore down the veil, and tsunami waves are still hitting countries causing unprecedented social costs.

It is no surprise that many economists were quick to liken the 2008 Global Crisis to the 1929 Great Depression. The world today has many commons with 1930s, yet, bad memories of the past seem to be forgotten. Today, countries (regions) resort to some unilateral and bilateral actions again rather than trying to fix the deficiencies of the system in a coordinated manner as was the case in the Bretton Woods Conference. This is clearly a dead-end.

The 2008 crisis opens a window of opportunity to put the global economic system on sustainable path by transforming local economies on the basis of "green" principles. Unfortunately, many countries in the Southern European region, unilaterally took the opposite direction by resorting to ecologically destructive projects. On the international front, EU and USA is still negotiating the terms of the so called TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment

Partnership), which carries a potential to lower further environmental and social standards which were the fruits of long struggles.

For a sustainable and resilient global economic system international finance and trade have to be regulated, which has been gaining wider acceptance among scholars and policy-makers. Yet, there is a growing concern that many nations may not have the flexibility to appropriately deploy such regulations because of trade and investment treaties they are part to (Pardee Center Task Force, 2012, p. 1).

Nevertheless, when we compare the existing WTO trade agreements with increasing number of "free-trade agreements" (FTAs) and "bilateral investment treaties" (BITs), the latter two is found to be far more incompatible with the ability to regulate cross-border financial flows.

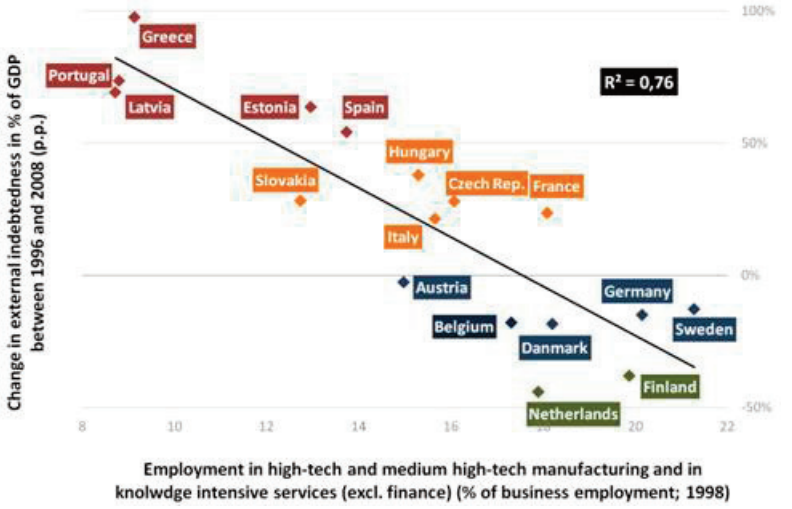
Recently, it has been announced that a bilateral free trade agreement between EU and USA may be finalized at the end of 2014. TTIP clearly carries the spirit of "beggar-thy-neighbour" policies of the past and should be resisted on all grounds. Why? First of all, what we are facing today is a global crisis and regional proposals solutions will only harm the efforts to get the world out of crisis by fueling retaliation elsewhere. Attempting to increase trade and enabling growth across Atlantic at the expense of Pacific and Indian Oceans will surely increase the tensions among regions and led similar unilateral actions elsewhere (Ifo Institute,2013, p.9). As mentioned above, the history clearly shows that this is not going to work, if not totally destroy what we already have. Secondly, WTO trade agreements are much more democratic than FTAs and BITs. Despite all well-grounded criticisms against WTO agreements, when compared with FTAs and BITs, they are less threatening. "One country-one vote" principle under WTO agreements is clearly superior to asymmetric bargaining power under FTAs and BITs. Moreover, state-to-state dispute settlement system under WTO is again clearly superior to investor-state dispute settlement under FTAs and BITs.

What is the challenge facing us? It is not difficult to infer that striking deals (on trade, financial flows) behind closed doors (among two countries) rather than in council rooms where every country is represented with equal voting rights, carries a risk of creating asymmetric relations among countries. It is not difficult to foresee that the already lax environmental and labor standards under the existing WTO agreements will get worser under FTAs and BITs. The so-called Race-to-the-Bottom behavior will force coun-

tries to lower down their standards to be able to gain "competitive advantage" against each other. What we need is the opposite. We need to find a simultaneous solution to economic, social and ecological crises at the same time. The current macroeconomic policies or plans to get the economy out of crisis on the country and the global levels, are dominantly aiming to solve economic crisis by aggravating social and ecological crises. This does not work.

Another way is possible!

Nowadays economic globalization, as represented by free trade and capital mobility, evolved at the expense of local economies. As, once resilient and relatively independent local economies are forced to integrate to the global economy, the latter easily dominated and local economies started to decline. This was an unsurprising consequence of the "rule of the game". We need to rewind the process and get the local economies back at their feet. And for this, we need local, regional and international policy coordination. This is not to deny the importance of global economy nor international trade and financial flows. What I mean is simple: It is not possible to sustain a global economy at the expense of local economies.



Source: Ricardo Mamede, 2013. The European crisis explained in two graphs. GEF Journal

Under the existing "rule of the game", easy credit conditions following the integration to the EU created a bubble in many of the South European economies. This could have been avoided but nobody wanted to be the bad guy announcing the "end of the party". As euphoria set in, value creation was diverted from productive to non-productive sectors like real estate, finance etc. The integration of these economies to EU, and hence global economy, clearly undermined the productive basis, as cheap money poured in. I think, the figure below hints clearly the dynamics leading many South European countries into a crisis.

As can be seen, there is a strong correlation between the size of the knowledge-intensive (high tech) sector and the external indebtedness. Countries which managed to transform their economies into a more competitive and knowledge-intensive structure (bottom-right countries like Finland), saw their external indebtedness to fall. In contrast, countries like Spain experienced a huge increase in her external indebtedness as bubble economy grew on the basis of non-productive and uncompetitive sectors. Same can be told for Greece as well. Yet, this figure shows only the roots of the crisis, and not the way forward. The lesson that we can induce from this figure is not that Greece or Spain should transform their economies as Finland or Germany. No! And yet it is not possible, since it is the result of the form of specialization and division of labor governed by the "rule of the game". That is, under the current setting, Germany can only specialize in high-tech if some others are forced to specialize in low-tech and non-productive sectors. And hence, a surplus in Germany requires deficit elsewhere. A zero-sum game!

Can Germany be a role model for South European countries? Under the current global economic setting the answer is clearly no! Why?

First of all, today we are living in a world in which we already exceeded the world's bio-capacity. The world in which Germany and today's developed countries achieved their development was a relatively "empty" world (Hahnel, 2010), with ample resources and "customers" to satisfy. Yet, according to Global Footprint Network, as of 2008 our consumption requires 1.5 worlds. If we continue like before, by 2030 this number will increase to 2 worlds. This is clearly not sustainable.

We urgently need to find a way to live sustainably on this planet. We have one world but we are consuming what 1.5 worlds can afford. This puts an

enormous strain on the natural resource stocks. As bio-capacity of countries degrading gradually, countries are forced to import bio-capacity elsewhere. A new threat appears on the horizon: Land grabbing. Enclosing large lands by dislocating local people, and devoting the land for cash-crops threaten the livelihood of millions of people especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin American countries. This is another example of current state of uncoordinated, selfish policies of countries. Is there a way forward out of these dilemmas?

The Response to the Crisis and what needs to be done?

The general characteristic of the responses given to the current crisis in the region is shaped by economic-growth-only policies. Social and ecological issues are taken to be of secondary importance and thought to be addressed automatically once economic growth is maintained, although the historical experience shows the opposite.

Nowadays, governments especially in the Southern European countries, resorted to ecologically destructive "unnecessary and imposed mega projects" by hiding behind populist rhetoric. The gold mining licenses distributed in ecologically sensitive Halkidiki region in Greece, Roşia Montana in Romania, Kazdağları in Turkey, the construction of third airport and third bridge on the last remaining forests of Istanbul, are just few examples showing governments short-sighted reactions against the crisis. The "marketing" of these projects employs classical populist rhetorics that they are essential to revive faltering domestic economy and to reduce unemployment. It is also very common to find a nationalistic flavor in these rhetorics which is thought to help in convincing public opinion in favor of these projects[1].

We do not have many options if we want to solve our problems in a sustainable and peaceful manner. If we let history guide us in these days of turmoil, we should definitely cooperate and work together to find solutions to our common problems. Bilateral attempts, like the possible EU-USA Free Trade Agreement, can damage other parts of the world while fixing EU and US economies. Hence, we are facing a serious threat of retaliation from other parts of the world.

---

1 For example, once completed the third airport of Istanbul is reported to be the "biggest airport in the world" and the Turkish government instrumented its size to appeal to the nationalistic feelings of ordinary Turkish people.

Rather than taking selfish steps, what we need is a more visionary governance at all levels. We need to reiterate the fact that the only peaceful way out of the current crisis is through the green transformation of the economy, hence the Global Green New Deal.

Lipietz (2011) describes the important elements of the Green New Deal as following:

a. Financial regulation (new Glass-Steagall Act is required)
b. A new sharing-out of productivity (redistribution of income both within the country and across North and South
c. A Green-Investment pulled model of development (to decouple GDP from resource use)
d. A labor-intensive technological paradigm (Green jobs for unemployed millions)
e. A cooperative international regime (global problems require global actions)

We need an urgent transformation of the economic system in accordance with the green principles. This is a conclusion shared by both GND supporters and many other groups such as ecosocialists. Yet, there are serious disputes over the agent, and the mechanisms. The former group calls for a gradual transformation of the economy within the existing economic and political system through a democratic process. But ecosocialists often describe GND as "green capitalism", as if GND is a concept that is invented by CEOs of the capitalist system. But this is not true. GND concept is a fruit of long discussions within the left (Bünül and Aşıcı, 2012). Having said that I do not underestimate the ability of the capitalist system to domesticate every alternative and find a way to make money out of them. It is clear that the GND faces a huge risk of becoming a mere "green-washing" under the hands of the capitalist system. Yet, it is an ongoing struggle and a policy of "a green step forwards" is superior to "wait and see" or "the worse, the better" policies.

Therefore, from individual to international levels, steps need to be taken. At this point I think local governments have an important role to play: to create resilient and sustainable local economies. This requires appropriate legislation at the national and international levels, and finance. We do have enough financial resources to transform our economies as can be seen from the reports of UNEP (2009) and Green European Foundation (GEF, 2011).

On the legislative side we welcome the introduction of Financial Transaction Tax in some EU countries. These steps are necessary but not sufficient. On the international trade front, more radical changes are necessary. Yet, the world seems to be heading the opposite direction by trying to solve their problems bilaterally. Bilateral actions, like the possible TTIP between EU and USA, will only trigger retaliation from other parts of the world.

Is this the world we are longing for?

References

Bünül, Z., Asici, A.A. 2012. Green New Deal: A Green Way out of the Crisis?", Environmental Policy and Governance, 22 (5), 295-306.

GEF, 2011. Funding the Green New Deal: Building a Green Financial System. Green New Deal Series Volume 6, Brussels.

Hahnel, R., 2010. Green Economics: Confronting the Ecological Crisis. M.E.Sharpe.

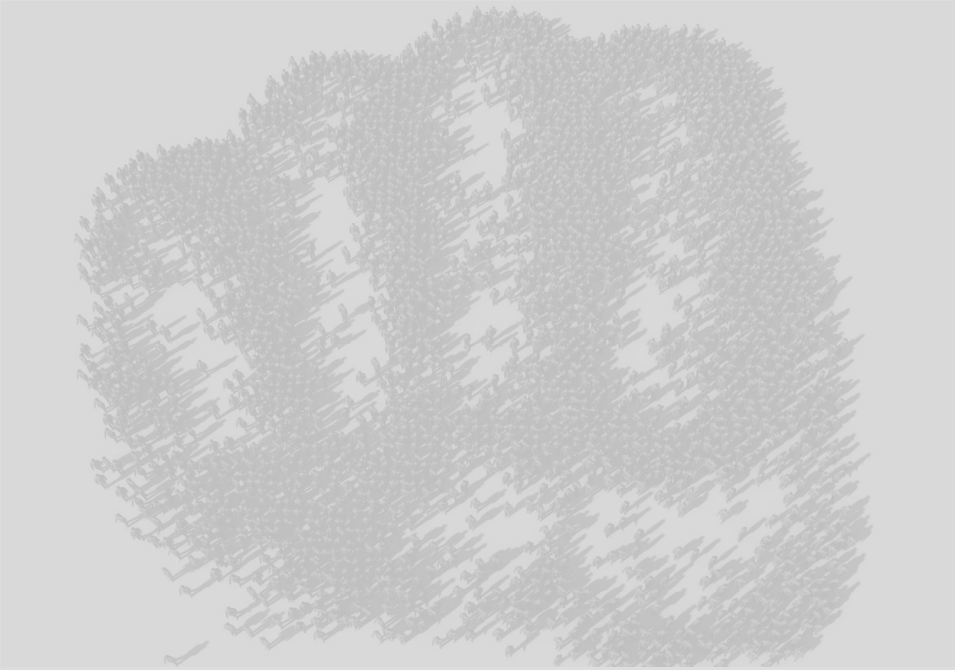
Ifo Institute, 2013. Dimensions and Effects of a Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement Between the EU and US. [internet document: http://www.bmwi.de/]

Lipietz A. 2011. Fears and hopes: the crisis of the liberal-productivist model and its green alternative. http://lipietz.net/IMG/pdf/Fears_Hopes_final.pdf .

Pardee Center Task Force, 2012. Capital Account Regulations and the Trading System: A Compatibility Review. [internet document: http://www.bu.edu/pardee/files/2013/02/Pardee-CARs-and-Trade-TF-March2013-copy.pdf]

UNEP, 2009. Financing a Global Deal on Climate Change. www.unepfi.org

Populism, Greece, and Europe



Populism - Nationalism: values and policies

Michalis Tremopoulos

During my speech I would like to emphasize the phenomenon of populism, which is the theme of this conference, but in particular the phenomenon of nationalism of the extreme right-wing and the manner in which the latter can gain followers through the paths and the policies of populism. Obviously we do not share the same experiences. However we will be discussing about the crisis-ridden Greece, about a country where the neo-nazi party Golden Dawn owns about 15% of the votes and about a city with a powerful national-populist environment.

The case of Thessaloniki

In the past I have been accused for, among other things, claiming that Thessaloniki had begun in 1912 to become Greek (again). I would like to explain myself:

Thessaloniki went through a severe population shock around 1430 when the city was invaded by the Ottomans. Ioannis Anagnostis, a historian of the Ottoman invasion, mentions that at that time Thessaloniki was populated by only 2.000 inhabitants, and only half of them were Greek. On the same surface of 330 hectares the city which in 1315 A.D. had 50.000 inhabitants in 1430 it was facing the danger to become an insignificant town. Trying to avoid the loss of an important tax unit, the Sultan Murad II tried to compel or even force people from Thessaloniki, who had escaped to the surrounding villages and Chalkidiki, to return to the city. Thus, in 1478 the population of the city consisted of 10.400 residents, 4.320 of them were Muslims. The following 20 years and through the encouragement of the Ottoman authorities around 15.000 Spanish-speaking Jew refugees (Sephardim Jews), but also German-speaking (Ashkenazi Jews) arrived to Thessaloniki. This is why the 1519 census showed 29.220 inhabitants, of which 15.715 (53,80 %) were Jews, 6.870 (23,50%) Muslims and 6.635 (22.7 %) Christians.

Many important events followed. In 1912 Thessaloniki became Greek (again). I would like to ignore all the contradictious censuses which were driven by various national interests and point out that even the census that took place under the Greek General Commander K. Raktivan, in April 1913, registered 157 889 residents, the majority of which were not Greek: 61 439 were Jews, 45 867 Ottomans, 39 956 Greek, 6 263 Bulgarians and 4 364 were "foreigners". We should emphasize that about 5 000 of the registered Ottomans were Dönmeh, that is Jews who converted to Islam, while many "foreigners" were actually Jews of a different nationality.

Through research we can detect the process which led to Thessaloniki having a population with a Greek majority. Through this process emerged a social group which perceived patriotism and nationalism as a call of duty and at the same time it reproduced ideologies and adopted some practices which frankly are rather disgraceful for the city. During the interwar period Thessaloniki was one more place were movements which were aligned with their respective European fascist and nazi counterparts flourished. Thessaloniki was Greece's seedbed; it was the city, were the well-known -at least for those who study local history- organisation The National Union of Greece (EEE) emerged. This organisation founded 27 branches throughout the country, and sent by train hordes of people to Athens in order for them to parade. Further, they determined the political agenda at that time and initialised persecutions and arsons etc. in Thessaloniki. These escalated to the point that the first big pogrom resulting to deaths took place in Thessaloniki and mainly on the Campbell settlement. They wanted to eliminate the Jewish population of Thessaloniki and challenge the left-wing people. As a movement they did not manage to come into power, however they influenced the governing liberal party and paved the way for the fascist dictatorship of Metaxas.

Crisis and fascism

The 1930s were a turbulent period for Greece as they were for the rest of the world. After the Great Depression of 1929 the interwar period led to a social, political and moral crisis. In many European countries fascisms were the radical answer to the violent hardening of the political life. When fascisms do not look to the past, they impose leaders who are not direct descendants of the old elite but, as Traverso Enzo has put it, "*of the social waste of a shaky world. They are nationalist demagogues who renounced*

the left-wing, like Mussolini, or Plebeians like Hitler, who in the atmosphere of the German defeat have discovered that they are talented as "leaders of the crowds"".

In October 1922 Mussolini announced that he would march to Rome. During the elections of April 1924 the Fascists gained 406 out of the 535 seats in the Parliament. Hitler who got inspired of Fascism went beyond his idol, Mussolini. Through the National-socialist party's populist agenda he managed to take advantage of the general discomfort triggered by the economic and social crisis of 1929-31 and gained 107 seats, which in 1932 raised to 196 and by 1933 to 288. The *Sturmabteilung* and the *Schutzstafel* -the most frightening private military forces- claimed political domination in Germany. As Hitler came into power (January the 30th 1933) the *brownshirts* took over policing duties and allowed Hitler's party to win the elections of March 1933. On March the 23rd 1933 Hitler assumed all powers.

One of the main ingredients of fascism is the undisguised use of violence and zero tolerance to diversity. Typical and primordial characteristics of fascism, according to Umberto Eco, are a profound admiration of tradition, action for the sake of action, selective populism, the acceptance of the opinion that the identity of the nation consists of its enemies and that peacemaking is trading with the enemy.

However in order for a fascist, populist construct to become a movement and come into power there are some **prerequisites**: a) an environment of economic crisis, b) a political system which is discredited and c) the support of the economic, religious or media elite. The analogies to the current Greek reality are obvious, as are the dangers.

The Far-Right in transition

But let's see what happened after World War II and the collapse of the Nazi model which could had militarily won and lead to a very different European reality today.

The radical right after the end of the World War II appeared in Europe as a marginalised political power and remained in quarantine even while some of its prominent members were politically integrated into the political system.

Specifically in Greece the traitors who collaborated with Nazi Germany hid behind the big Right-wing political family and turned national ideals and

anticommunism into their flag through their kind of populism. In the destroyed, post-war and post-civil war Thessaloniki the social groups that had become rich during the Nazi occupation of Greece gradually rose to power and created a new middle class, which "always functions as the protector of the regime" (Sp. Markezinis) together with the remnants of the pre-war bourgeoisie and all those who were aware of the fact that nationalism could turn up to be a profitable business. The city became the scene of a chain of political assassinations (Zevgos, Polk, Nikiforides, Veldemires, Lambrakis, Tsarouhas, Halkides and others) and soon people, ideologies and practices emerged that diffused the nationalist-populist mentality. All versions of the Right-wing were embraced by the Greek Rally party and later by the National Radical Union while the ultra-rightist unofficial and illegal military-political complex functioning in a parallel way to and influencing the official state structures (parastatal organizations)[1] became so much independent of the government that participated in the coup d' etat which brought the military junta to power in 1967.

Generally on a European level, the Far-right started moving towards the front line of the political scene in the 1970s. That was the "second wave" which we could already see from the pre-war Far-Right and the Far-Right of the first post-war period and which conflicted with the demands of the emerging new Left-wing parties. It was only in the 1990s when a "third wave" emerged, as the communist regimes collapsed, as the globalisation and the immigration flood were brought about and created new realities which favoured that procedure.

The radical right and populism prosper mainly in transition periods. The end of the war in 1945, the post-industrialism of the 1970s, the post-communism of the 1990s, the neoliberal globalisation and the "financial" crisis after 2008 are some typical transition turns, during which the past awakens and defensive attitudes towards the new reality are stimulated.

---

1 Perhaps that parallel structure is better described with the term deep state which refers to the Turkish political reality. It is a group of influential anti-democratic coalitions within the Turkish political system, composed of high-level elements within the intelligence services (domestic and foreign), Turkish military, security, judiciary, and mafia. The notion of deep state is similar to that of a "state within the state". The political agenda of the *deep state* involves an allegiance to nationalism and state interests. In Turkey (and in Greece of the 60s) violence and other means of pressure have historically been employed in a largely covert manner to manipulate political and economic elites and ensure specific interests are met within the seemingly democratic framework of the political landscape. In Greece political assassinations (eg of Grigoris Lambrakis who was an MP of the Left) were executed by the parastatal/deep state organizations.

The conflicts in former Yugoslavia, the rise of nationalisms and of politics of ethnic cleansing, the foreign interventions, the dispute over the name of FYROM, the mass entrance of many undocumented immigrants etc. enhanced in Greece the national and racist discourse and created a set of social values which made the acceptance of the extreme right political agenda much easier.

"Roaming protest" and populism

As early as in the 1980s one could observe in Europe the dynamics of a "roaming protest" among the persons of the electorate who neither identify themselves with a political party nor associate to any organisations of the civil society. This could be observed in both the right and the left part of the political spectrum and unemployed people showed a high percentage of roaming-readiness.

Analogies can be found in Greece since the 1990s, when the "political party of Avramopoulos" (the Movement of Free Citizens), the Democratic Social Movement, the Political Spring and later on the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) were established. The "roaming protest" intensified after the blow to clientelism (through the establishment of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) etc.) and the dominance of nationalist beliefs on the political battle.

That "roaming protest" is the expression and at the same time reproduces a context of support to the populist parties, which are trying to give voice to the general feeling of "reproach" towards the established parties. At the same time an attitude of total rejection of the political parties is being established, as it seems that their differences become more and more insignificant, therefore every and any candidate can be acceptable.

The extreme right moves internationally forward to its counterattack through the "third wave". It claims popular participation, transparency in public life, selective welfare, public order, national security and national independence from the transnational power establishments. It does not hesitate to express its objection to the free market economy and its support to the redistribution of income in favour of the weakest local people and to claim a "welfare chauvinism" against immigrants. Even when it supports the free market economy it also favours the national and state sovereignty and an authoritarian view of the political and social order with clear and explicit

anti-liberal and anti-communist attitudes. It unifies all these with coherent collective national visions and projections of a nationally and culturally homogeneous society.

Even though far-right and populism are two distinct phenomena they are related. According to Ernesto Laclau, populism is "a specific form of the articulation of "people" in the discourse of a "class" in order for the latter to impose its hegemony". The discourse of the extreme right which denounces those who consciously undermine the popular interests and is directed against the dominant ideology and the structures of power, connects the Far-Right ideology with the populist discourse. This connection is rather inspiring mainly for those who already perceive in a positive way the values and the political agenda of the Far-Right.

As the catch-all parties are being abandoned by their traditional voters and the party system is entering into a crisis, the Far-Right merges contradictory social demands and political currents into a "complex alchemy" of expectations and interests, while it claims and attracts the disappointed voters from almost everywhere: it collects votes both from the Right-wing and the Left-wing, voters who used to abstain from voting or to cast a blank or a spoilt vote, the votes of the working class and of the manual workers, of the elderly and the low-pensioners, of housewives, of young people who are anxious about the future, of those who want to punish the political system, of the unemployed, of those working in precarious jobs and so on. The low education level of all previous potential voters certify the popular and "proletarian" basis of the Far-Right, nevertheless, it does penetrate into the middle class as well.

According to Vassiliki Georgiadou, an associate Professor at the Panteion University, the Far-Right is transformed into a collector of the protest vote of the former middle classes, of freelancers, of the people who did not profit by their business trades with the state. Its populist anti-statism made it a good option for people that did not necessarily share its ideological values. Being a protest vote-collector the Far-Right is ideologically discoloured and in the eyes of the voters it is not anymore a neo-fascist construction but a post-fascist entity. So it becomes a potential option for people both within and outside the Far-Right.

Today's analysis of the Golden Dawn electoral success reveals that it gains votes from all classes. The same goes for populist right wing parties such

as the Independent Greeks. Surely the conceptual generalisations do not help us to fully perceive this phenomenon, but an analysis of their intolerant and national-populist political agenda proves that they coincide in both the "radical" platform and the appeal to populism. Their main difference remains the use of violence, something that the Golden Dawn has already integrated into its practices.

The expression of the pathology of democracy?

In a period of radical changes and global overturns, the Far-Right by preaching about its ideological norms (nationalism, xenophobia, racism, anti-enlightenment, anti-universalism, the disregard of equality) has spread jealousy and resentment among the citizens and has now turned into a collector of fear, insecurity, anger and of prejudices of people who were traumatised by the shock that hit their personal, political and collective identities.

During the 1990s we could observe in the Balkan countries that the ghosts of the interwar fascism were reinvigorating, along with irredentism, plans of constructing national communism and ultra nationalism. All those ideas were once again appealing. Nationalism, the threat of the national identity and the priority of the national-cultural characteristics, constitute the imaginary line that connects the various types of the populist Far-Right whenever and wherever it appears; from the Balkan to the Scandinavian peninsula and from the old to the newer democracies.

However, the populist Far-Right is not merely the product of transition, a side-effect of social shifts. Although we can notice the intensification of populism and extremism in transition periods and situations, populism and the increase of power of the extremes seem to be a "normal pathology" of western democracies. As the demands of the citizens from the democracy will always be more than those that the systems of democratic governance can actually implement, this permanent gap between expectations and reality builds an inherent condition for the emergence of populism and extremism even in an established democratic environment.

Of course we are facing the question whether the populist Far-Right political parties seek to participate in or to overthrow the political system. This is a question that keeps rising again and again ever since the 1970s when - for the first time in Austria- the populist Far-Right started to sporadically

participate (directly or indirectly) in the governance. Greece's case was similar, when the populist Far-Right party LAOS participated in the government together with PASOK and New Democracy at the first period of the memorandum policies.

Integration to the political system or social addiction?

The strategies of political marginalisation of the Far-Right which were implemented by the European governments were replaced by attempts to "accommodate" it into the parliament. Some right-wing parties have even agreed on the possibility of a coalition government with parties of the far and populist right. This is a dangerous game.

Our experience has shown that in cases were populist or far-right parties have participated in coalition governments or supported in the Parliament a minority government, the parties did not become more institutional nor more radical due to such a participation. They can gain more votes or they can be destroyed but they can also be replaced by more radical versions of the same political quality. This was the case with LAOS, which played a major role in the dominant politics and as a consequence, it collapsed and gave its place to the Golden Dawn.

Furthermore, every time the dominant political parties tried to gain electoral benefits by adopting political positions of the Far-Right, they either transformed themselves towards that direction or simply revealed to their electorate which direction they should follow in order to find their genuine representatives. When dominant parties of the center-left followed such practices, by addressing mainly issues such as immigration and asylum, their electorate showed indifference or simply stepped away, rejecting the opportunism.

We are also facing a problem when after the participation of the populist Far-Right in the government the production of politics remains the same as it already were during their presence and action in the political scenery. Such a participation obviously reduces the limits of democratic tolerance. If the political system does not function under strict conditions, then the ideological load of populism, nationalism and extremism can easily be adopted by many without any reluctance, and it becomes socially accepted and appears politically safe.

This is what happened in 2011, when for the first time since 1974 -the time when democracy was restored in Greece- governance duties were given to LAOS, during the government of Papademos. Moreover one of the four portfolios that were appointed to LAOS was the position of the Deputy Minister for National Security, a position that was filled by the vice-leader of Karatzaferis, Georgios Georgiou.

PASOK's share on responsibility was enormous since it was its leadership that legitimised the far-right LAOS by letting it participate in the government. After LAOS accepted the memorandum policies, many young people but also voters of other parties, who were already familiar with such political agendas, searched for their genuine representation at the face of Golden Dawn.

This problem is very severe and cannot be silenced, no matter how dangerous could be to speak up because of the threats of the thugs. Unfortunately young people who do not know what junta and fascism are, have led the neo-nazi and parastatal/deep state underworld into the Parliament.

Moreover, this phenomenon is here to stay and presents a threat to both the left and the greens. A research showed that e.g. in Italy, 2/3 of the members of the Italian Social Movement –which played the role of the third power, which is a tactic of several similar formations- a few years ago, that is before it turned from being neo-fascist to the Popular Conservative National Alliance, were in favour of and willing to political ally with the Socialists and the Greens. Consequently, these phenomena need to be prudently dealt with.

The left populism and nationalism

Ever since the 1990s the Far-Right started to include in its discourse and practices leftist demands. This is the so called "third wave" of the populist far-right, as we mentioned above.

Is there though a populism in the Left? Or is it just a trick of the government trying to confront SYRIZA?

I have read the article of an Italian intellectual in the newspaper "Epohi", in which he analysed that it takes a strong dose of populism in the Left in order for it to claim the power. Even some political scientists approach populism as a positive phenomenon. We have to distinguish of course what the

"Left" can mean and what "left populism" means, as it could be merely the claim of some political and social demands with emphasis and a populist form.

But some radical events need to be denounced. E.g, in the evening of the 1st of August 2006 an incident occurred in Thessaloniki that reveals the underlying anti-Semitism of the Greek traditional Left. According to the newspaper Rizospastis some demonstrators of the Communist Party (KKE) "broke the protection blockade" of the police forces, who were protecting the Monument of the Holocaust on Eleftheria square and filled it with pictures of the Lebanese war. The taboo of respect of the memory of the 50 000 Jewish victims of Nazism that lived in Thessaloniki was destroyed. Unfortunately many similar anti-Semitic verbal expressions and practices have taken place. KKE reached the point where it openly discussed in its forum, and fomented in this manner a conspiracy suspicion, about the "role of the CIC (Central Israeli Council)" in Greece.

Akis Gavriilides connected in his book "The incurable necrophilia of radical patriotism, Ritsos-Elytis-Theodorakis-Svoronos" the passionate national TV-discourse of Liana Kanelli with the relevant statements of Mikis Theodorakis. By addressing emblematic intellectual works of the Left he revealed a discourse that was initially created to function as a bridge of the communists- nationalists gap created by the civil war of the 1940s but gradually consolidated to a "cenotaph of patriotism" and today it still creates implicitly, but repeatedly some of the stories of the Left.

This narration is often expressed in the context of an anti-imperialist analysis. According to D. Psarras, in the context of this tradition, the Greek leftists from 1950 up until today continue to edit endless versions of the same subject that is based on the two pillars of scaremongering/victimising: to practice left-wing politics was considered to be a definite synonym of being a "prophet of ominous things to come", of sounding the alarm for the upcoming disasters. This "prophetic" activity however was transformed in "Composition and Myth" by Elytis, to offer to the "awakened Greek" a new element: these disasters are now systematically attributed to the "American plans" against "our" country.

This is a context that PASOK deepened and reproduced repeatedly, while at the same time it was developing the culture of the Turkish danger by adopting attitudes against minorities and national approaches to the interna-

tional relations of the country. It is not a coincidence that its populist slogan "Greece belongs to the Greeks" is inherited today by the Golden Dawn, who added to it a clearly xenophobic content. When the crisis and the memorandum policies demolish the reliability of the Greek political elite, this shift of the electorate towards the dustbin of Golden Dawn seems like something painless and familiar.

Far-Right has a popular support

Several political scientists claim that the political parties of the Far-Right will develop and finally become the "new parties of the masses" and the "contemporary labour parties", since the old ones are collapsing.

After the war, the Far-Right, without directly asking for the return of the period of its almightiness, followed some strategies that undermined the democratic regime. After its quarantine, which was imposed by the post-war political elite, the populist Far-Right came to the front line of the political scene and started to gain more and more influence by attracting voters they used to vote for the traditional parties.

In Greece there was a point when the Far-Right revealed its hidden (and hard core) agenda. Right from the beginning LAOS was created based on the nostalgia for the military junta. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the leader of LAOS, Karatzaferis, was calling the old supporters of the junta and the king along with the Neo-nazis, to unite and create together a far-right pressure group within the conservative party of New Democracy. This kind of people are useful as vote-collectors in the big right wing political parties. When he created his own party, he gathered all the scattered far-right, junta favouring and nazi groups under his leadership. He seized each opportunity he had to praise the honesty and the proper administration of the colonels of the junta, who supposedly "died in extreme poverty", while at every anniversary of the Athens Polytechnic School Uprising he repeated the same discourse about the "provocations" and the "misleading of naive young people". He did the same in 2012 before the elections, when he understood that Golden Dawn was about to win. All those who felt oppressed by "Democracy" found an opportunity to express themselves. And not only the supporters of the junta but also the descendants of the Nazi collaborators, "the sons of those who were defeated" in World War II, as the Golden Dawn proclaimed.

What does the church do? Does it study the testaments, like the former archbishop Christodoulos did during the junta? I' m afraid it is doing something much worse. At the same time when a Golden Dawn's regional government candidate, who was involved in organised crime, was getting arrested for a double murder after a death contract, some priests were blessing the offices of the party. Furthermore, the metropolitan bishop of Piraeus, Seraphim, after he had met the Führer of the party, gave him as a present an icon of the Mother of God and announced that "they share the same views on many national questions and questions of inner security"! Thus we came to have metropolitan bishops that are fond of Golden Dawn.

It is exactly the same political atmosphere which was generated in the past by people belonging to New Democracy, such as Panagiotis Psomiadis; through a TV audience throughout the whole of Greece, who were vulnerable to the intolerant demagogy, the cheap populism and the inexpensive localism. This were the seas were the Golden Dawn went "fishing" votes, very successfully as it was later proven.

We need a coherent political approach to this problem

The political system was proved not to be capable to confront in time the phenomenon of the Far-Right populism, as it happened in other countries, for instance in Germany. German Deputies of the European Parliament admit that about 15 % of the German public would support views such as the ones of Golden Dawn. But there, the members of the political system collaborate to confront that phenomenon before it becomes a monster. What happened in Greece? PASOK provided a TV channel to Karatzaferis, to reduce the number of New Democracy votes, whereas New Democracy supported the Golden Dawn in order to prevent Karatzaferis from attracting the Far-Right votes. The political elite current discussions and concerns about the increasing influence of Golden Dawn and the measures which should have been taken against it, seem nothing else but a shear hypocrisy.

Although we might believe that by cursing the Golden Dawn, we contribute to its weakening, it is clear at last that we need other political techniques. We need to reveal the contradictions in its discourse, its personified penal and criminal attitude and to expose the antisocial character of some of its actions, but surely not by means of prohibitions, but through respect for the rights and the constitutional order.

We definitely **need a wider rally** of the political forces to confront Golden Dawn. Unfortunately the political parties of the democratic and left opposition did not espouse this on time and are still feeling uncomfortable or weak. Furthermore political shareholders are pressing SYRIZA to create a coalition government with the "democratic patriotic Right", that is the populist Right of Panagiotis Kammenos. The parties of right wing populism, like the Independent Greeks are always trying (this is what we learned from international experience) to present themselves more moderate than the typical right wing extremist parties. However in their inner hard core they always include right wing extremists and the relevant views. In this way manage to preserve their ideological basis intact, and at the same time allowing large social groups of the society to seek and search for the genuine representatives of the fascist populism and finding at last Golden Dawn. Consequently, the right wing populists shoulder heavy responsibilities on that issue.

There is a pressing need to confront this phenomenon in a substantial and coherent way and on the level of values. When the crisis began, I foresaw that the Far-Right and its populist agenda would thrive and in 2009 when I was a European Deputy I suggested to the European Parliament that we should ban the Golden Dawn. At that time the party was politically marginalised, possessing only 0,2 %, so a ban was possible. But is it possible to ban today the 10 % of the Greek votes?

The European identity and the status of *citizen*

Of course an analysis of the modern world is necessary. The mere statement that one is European without giving into the question if they are "pro-European or anti-European" is the only realistic stand. During the Cold War, at a time when we were still living in a bipolar world, there were discussions around the 1970s about the concept of a quintopolar world emerging. This world order is already created and evolving. Today in addition to the USA, there is another pole around the former Soviet Union, there is Japan and China and developing regional powers. Today the world is multipolar, with of course some predominant powers. The EU, the European continent, has the right and the obligation to form itself around an independent pole even if this would happen within the context of a neoliberal globalisation.

However, Europe is not an idea having an inherent value (a value per se) that we were meant to blindly serve one way or the other. There were some European federalists a century ago, who had this vision, but today we are not talking in terms of ideology. We have to take into account the painful reality which for the 20th Century meant two world wars with tens of millions of victims. We are talking about Europe, which collapsed twice and through the World War II, had to pay a very expensive price for the conflicts among the great powers and the former empires, which tried by means of a neo-colonialism to continue to take advantage of the modern world.

Europe as we know it today was built upon the debris of the World War II, on the desire not to face again blood, tears and human sorrow. And at the beginning, as the "European Coal and Steel Community" it tried to control energy on the one hand and coal on the other. Thus, it wanted to ensure that there would not be any more wars for energy, for coal and later for nuclear energy, but also for steel, from which the cannons are manufactured. There are of course interests and conflicts. The EU is based on two great powers: Britain suffers the complex of being once an empire, but what is really functioning in the EU is the German-French axis. These are the powers that shed each other's blood in our European home and they are bound to collaborate. Politics change, we have the Socialists on the one hand and the Conservatives on the other, but this axis remains united. The European dimension was undoubtedly perceived in a different way when the leaders were Mitterrand and Kohl; the Merkel-Sarkozy team did not share the same feeling of European tolerance and the same political attitude was imposed on Hollande as well. One day I heard the former chancellor Schmidt saying: "The one problem is that Germany will never be able to play a leading role in the EU, because the country is caring the load of its actions in war; the other problem is that we have Merkel who was not born European". These are the thoughts of a man who run politics for decades and who was more European than Merkel. At his time though, the social-liberal consensus was marked by social-democracy, whereas today is marked by neoliberalism.

But the subject of this dispute is the Far-Right populism. In the European Parliament it's expressed by some anti-Europeans like Farage who was rude enough to call the President of the EU a "damp rag" and who is unfortunately also reproduced by some left-wingers in Greece. There might be also some far-right influences within New Democracy, such as Failos Kranidio-

tis, the advisor of Samaras who might aspire to govern together with Kammenos or the Golden Dawn. Are we going to remain indifferent to the deconstruction of -and not only the threat to- the European project, which is caused by the populist Far-Right?

We will have to defend our common home just the way we fund a football club in a neighbourhood and support it. European politics and European unity are two distinct entities. We strive to change the first ones, while we support the second, which is not a compulsion, but realistic politics and at the same time the duty of us all. This is where the Greens differ and what Cohn-Bendit, a deeply European politician, is stating: that one should speak with arguments, in an understandable manner, to be dynamic, to respond to the popular demands, and have a vision for the place he lives. I say, that these are real politics; and not populism. We have to adjust our discourse. We have to criticize the European politics. We have to reject the neoliberal content of consensus that shapes the current politics. At the same time we need to add a real content to the identity of the modern citizen. Is there anybody who gets excited by the European Ode to Joy, by the Star-Spangled Banner, by the flag of the EU? Nobody! What people do get excited of though is the Bulgarian, the Greek or the British flag, just like Farage gets excited. So what we need to do is to find an extra identity to the (not adequately yet elaborated) European one; that is the identity of the citizen.

Today people feel that the whole world has collapsed and they are seeking to embrace an identity and a vision. This cannot be the return to the shell of the national state. We can identify ourselves with our city; we love it, it forces us to be strict in criticism, for the mere reason that we love it. Above all I am a resident of Thessaloniki and my city is part of European Greece and of an endangered planet. And this is the imperative for the active citizen who lives in a particular town and at the same time shares another vision, which is the one of the common European home and the planetary consciousness. This is the way he can survive in a complex modern world. But this is not enough. Because we also need a new collaborative non violent culture, where the rival's words are respected and become the subject of a dialogue until they are integrated.

And all these belong to another culture; they stand on the exact antipode of the lack of acceptance of the Other, of violence, of intolerance, of conflict; that is of junta and of Golden Dawn.

Populism, nationalism and neo-nazism seriously hurt European unity

Nikos Chrysogelos

Populism is a major and multidimensional issue. It is hard to analyze this issue within a speech or a debate, yet dialogue helps us analyze its several aspects. In my presentation, I will mainly focus on the aspect related with the prospect of Europe. We are going through a hard, a very hard moment, for Europe, because what is now being questioned is not some European political choices. What we realize is that the common European prospect is being questioned by a major part of society and political forces. Thus, the following question is posed: can we all co-exist in Europe. It is not the austerity policy, let's say, which is questioned. That would be reasonable. We tend to fall back to the so-called national selfishness, which leads societies to deep deadlocks. I will try to analyze my statement later in this speech.

I will refer to some examples, in order to clarify my statement. It is clear that citizens, during the previous period of prosperity, supported the European idea, linking it with prosperity. In this hard period of crisis, there should have been a solidarity policy, which would help people resolve their fiscal, economic and social issues, in a fair and balanced way, to the benefit of social cohesion and the entire society.

It is true that this was not the case. For several ideological and other reasons, what prevailed was a model of horizontal and flattened austerity and cuts in major social sectors. This resulted in citizens in South Europe getting extremely angry. We see this rage in Greece, Spain and other countries against the European policy. But, there is a mistake here. These unacceptable policies are identified with Europe itself. Not even a dominant European policy, but with Europe, as if an abstract "Europe" imposes these policies, and not the political correlations of governments. It is as if someone opposes to the current governmental policy and putting the blame on Greece. Let's say that some social groups, municipalities or prefectures oppose to the governmental policy. Would it make sense to turn against their own country or should they try to change the political correlations

and the promoted policies?

We observe unawareness as for the several European institutions. Some, and intentionally populist and far-right parties, aspire to provoke such a confusion. There is a misunderstanding: The Council (governments) and part of the European Commission (Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs) imposing these policies through Troika, are identified with Europe and the European Union, which should not be happening, since the European institutions are not just the Council and the European Commission, but also the European Parliament. These policies are abstracted and separated from their political subject, i.e. certain parties promoting these "bad" policies. Certain political parties bear the responsibility for this practice. The promoted policies are choices of some political parties and specific political correlations. This means that intentionally some political forces, representing populism, far-right and euro-skepticism aspire to canalize the reaction of citizens against the European edifice itself, against Europe itself, instead of opposing to political choices and correlations. The reason why this is happening is clear once you get to see what is happening in the European Parliament. The conservatives (Tories) vote down reports and provisions aspiring to protect social rights, to reinforce the social model, protect the working class and the environment. They represent the ultimate expression of reaction, while they fiercely and obscurely detest any sense of social and European solidarity, cooperation etc. In a "smart" way, they conclude: poor Greece, how much better it would be if you were on your own, with your drachma, while aware that not even Germany, with its strong economy, would ever be able to survive on its own, in a globalized economy and society.

On the other hand, if we take a close look at the European North, we see another problem: some of the Northern Europeans they wonder "should we keep paying for the South?" Of course, this is not the impression of all societies. Not the entire German, Dutch, Swedish society shares this point of view. Sadly, both South and North Europeans perceive each other as homogenous totals, which is not the case. For example, Greens all over Europe (eg Germany, Sweden etc) do not consent on Christian democrats. So, the first mistake is that we tend to believe that every national team is homogenous within it, as if there are no different political convictions. In other words, we consider that all Germans, Greeks, Italians and Spanish are the same, embracing the same political convictions in a national level!

In this case, we over-simplify and, instead of talking about different European policies, we talk as if we have one and only one European policy and an edifice, Europe, within which there are separate, but also homogenous societies, the German, the Greek, the Spanish etc. Following this process, we tend to attribute collective responsibilities: Are all Greeks lazy? Are all Germans fascists? Are all Finnish populists? This is a brand new framework, which has been developed within extreme populism. We forget that there are ideological disagreements, that there are different values in every society. When it comes to societies and institutions, we should tell the difference and distinguish social groups representing them or people staffing them and attribute responsibilities in a fair way.

During the debate for the European budget, there were three institutions, with three different opinions. One of these institutions was the European Commission, an institution which, in the good sense (in some cases in the bad sense) represents a bureaucracy, in a European level. It goes through a stable path and applies certain policies, which imprint to different degrees political correlations. One of these three European institutions submitted its own proposal for the budget in the European Union, proposing a rise in the overall budget; taking into consideration inflation, as well as some of their directions, which could help resolve problems. The second European institution, the European Parliament, in a majority, despite the fact that it consists of different political groups and MPs from different countries, proposed a rise in the budget, but also criteria leading to the support of innovation, its sustainability, social cohesion, employment, mitigation of climate change etc. So, we are dealing with an institution which reflects in (pan) European terms and states that we want a common, effective, European budget, which will help us deal with the crisis.

Let's now move to the third institution, which is the Council. What is the Council? It is the governments themselves. Governments that show up and demand a common budget, but this is where differentiations start. For example, UK wishes to get back most of its money. Germany thinks that it has already given too much and does not want to give any more. Greece is wondering what it will get. Finnish state that they are going through a difficult situation and they cannot give much. We end up witnessing a situation, where each government promotes its own interest, as far as the budget is concerned and does not integrate this interest within the common European interest. Governments do not promote the interest of a common Euro-

pean budget, which could help us deal with the crisis. Each government aspires to protect its own special interests, even if this is against European interests, eventually against European citizens.

One must be naive to believe that, if the crisis persists, it will remain beyond Germany or UK, and it will not affect those countries. Both Germany and UK will eventually lose if this crisis expands and puts the entire Europe at risk. Then, Germany and Britain may have to pay a higher price, compared with the one they would pay within a common European strategy to deal with today's crisis.

Let's take an example, in figures. The cost of the crisis (bailout programs, recapitalization of banks, social cost, recession) is about to exceed 4.5 trillion. The budget of the European Union for the 7 coming years, 2014-2020, rises up to 940 billion (best case scenario), although in fact it comes up to 908 billion, less than 1% of the European Gross Product (with the governments' – Council trick). The cost of the crisis and the bailout is multiplied, compared with the 7year budget of the entire EU. If this budget was better targeted and higher, it could help us exit the crisis. But this will not happen, as long as the budget represents only 1% of the European Gross Product. So that we can have a reference point, we should note that the US budget is almost 27% of the GDP, in Greece about 1/4 of the GDP. For years, it has been suggested that Europe should get an effective and higher budget, the Greens have been proposing 5% of the European Gross Product, with its own resources. Populists, conservatives and the far-right pursue the minimization or no European budget at all, since their whole policy aims at the deconstruction of the European edifice.

But what do governments think? What do they say? The Greek government joins the debate for the European budget and says "I want a little bit more, could you give me more?". The British government says "I want my money back. Shrink the budget by 25%". Merkel says I no longer want to pay, and so on. These are the demands that Herman Van Rompuy took into consideration, while trying to have an agreement in the Council. He tried to allocate some billions to one direction, decrease the contributions of certain countries, trying to reach a compromise, but not trying to fulfill an objective which would lead to a sustainable European budget. He just tried to keep some governments satisfied.

So, where do we end up following this policy? For example, it all started when we realized that we should allocate at least 30 billion euros to deal

with youth unemployment during the following period and establish the "Youth Guarantee" system, i.e. guarantees for young people. Then, it was decided that these funds would not be allocated now and that 3 billion euros would be allocated instead, as well as 3 billions by the European Social Fund. This means that only 6 billion euros will be spent for young people. These funds represent 0,6% of the budget. Considering that unemployment rises to 50-60% in some countries and that there are 8 million young unemployed people, if we divide 6 billion euros by 8 million people, we get 700 in 7 years per person. Could we possibly believe that this is the European policy to deal with employment and young people? Of course not! Populists and euro-skeptics do not claim more money from an increased common European budget, and do not present proposals. They are content with simple slogans on how to deal with unemployment in a national level, according to their own plan.

Since governments propose a reduced budget for the period 2014 – 2020, where will cuts apply? It is pretty likely that cuts will apply in social cohesion, despite the fact that the problem of social inequalities deepens among regions, countries and social classes, because of the crisis and the policies applied. Moreover, although poverty rises, funds allocated to the underprivileged and the deprived ones are reduced to half of the funds previously allocated by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. This Fund aims at helping the most deprived, providing food, and according to its new regulations, providing also other goods. Instead of increasing, this fund's budget is reduced by 45%. This is taking place in a period when poverty rises and underprivileged people exceed 30 million, with the risk of their number rising, instead of falling. Populists, nationalists and euro-skeptics neither submit proposals on how to deal with poverty with measures and funds in a national level, but nor do they support the idea of a rise in budget, in a European level, so that poverty can be dealt with.

Another sector seriously hurt is the sector of sustainability and green economy, as well as the sectors of innovation. Smart economies invest in innovation, whether it is social, technological, or green etc. This means that the compromise reached between governments was such that, on one hand, it satisfied some countries, but in the end, the compromising budget is unacceptable and it does not help the society deal with its problems. In the first stage, five major political groups in the European Parliament condemned this budget and, indeed, turned it down in the Plenary Session on 13 March

2013, when everyone thought that it would be voted for, since 55% of MEPs belong to governmental parties, now managing the government.

Governments put pressure on MEPs, to accept the budget agreed upon by the Council (governments). But, the European Parliament, in majority, turned down this "governmental" budget. This shows, on one hand, that there is an institution that thinks a little bit more in a "European" way, while, at the same time, there are trends pushing for and leading to a national isolation, developing within each society a flattening approach, a populist approach, which is looking for the guilty ones, the ones to blame etc, and not in the policies that failed, but in social groups and countries. By considering, for example, that Greeks are lazy. These ideological approaches and stereotypes immediately become a policy tool, with political parties investing in them. And they say "We won't give anything to the Greeks", pointing their finger, "because, we, Germans, Finnish, we work hard, while they are having fun". So, firstly, they create stereotypes that they then use, in order to promote their political choices, within simplistic, populist approaches. Are all Greeks cheaters? They are not. Do all Germans hate Greeks and do nothing else in their lives but hating Greeks? Of course not. Consequently, all these approaches attributing bad qualities to national groups and not wrong policies are stereotypes, which prosper in an easy populism, which, sadly enough usually works, because its messages are simplistic and easy to digest.

In Greece, many protesters said "No to Merkel" because "she is infused with the Nazi ideology". And, on the other hand, a part of this same society chooses to vote or states that it will vote for a real Nazi party, in terms of ideology and practices. While they used to say "no to fascism", now they wonder "Should there be some of it, because we find ourselves with too much of democracy?" Oversimplified convictions in any case. Because, obviously no problem will be solved if Golden Dawn stabs 5 or 500 immigrants. Because, this party does not deal with the hard ones, it does not oppose to a political system, it does not have alternative solutions, but uses communicative tricks, i.e. distributes food, bread, goods etc to starving people, just to gain election benefits. But, does anyone believe that this will resolve the poverty issue? If someone is starving, with this kind of practices, applied once, will resolve their problems? Of course not. But, Golden Dawn abuses this problem, in order to promote an image, that we (the Golden Dawn) we are with the poor people side.

If there is no policy dealing with poverty, if there is no policy creating job positions, (for the time being no populist party presents coordinated policies, but only creates slogans and symbolisms) then there will be no solution to the problems. The major problem with populism, nationalism, neonazism is that they trick people, taking advantage of their rage and anger, offering no tangible solutions. They just take advantage of them, seeking to deepen their problems and gain greater influence.

If you carefully read some of the statements of Golden Dawn deputies, what they usually repeat is that, the worse society gets, the better for us. This means that they do not want to resolve the problem; they want the crisis to worsen, so that they can gain influence, so that they can say "We are the ones competing with the system, so we are anti-systemic". In fact, they are a major part of this system. They create the illusion through populism (not only Golden Dawn, but also other parties) that "we, the thugs, sometimes with guns in our pockets, we are the ones to resolve this problem". They say "we will give some food, we will beat someone" etc. But, these practices are very dangerous. How would our society be, if these practices got generalized? Will we replace thieves with rippers? Will we keep up with them swearing, attacking, stubbing in the name of enraged "people"?

So, which is our objective, as far as euro-elections are concerned? Because, we have reached that point, where we either move forward to a European federation, with solidarity, common policies for social issues, financial tools to deal with the crisis, new solidarity policies or we are heading for a collapse, either typical or not, but in a case a substantial collapse of the currently imperfect European edifice. The European Parliament, the only elected European institution is the only way to promote a better Europe and apply better common European policies.

The European Parliament has repeatedly criticized the austerity policies imposed by the Troika, they have demanded that the Troika accounts for those policies, but, for the time being, it has a clear majority oriented towards a European unification, in the social, economic and political level. So, while the above mentioned political will has been imprinted in many decisions, there is a trend noticed in the Greek society of disregard towards the European idea. In their effort to punish these policies, there is a risk that Greeks will not vote for these elections or that they will send to the European Parliament forces that will lead to isolation, while what we need is solidarity and real support.

If participation in elections falls below 30-40%, then there is a risk that the European Parliament will be delegitimized and will no longer have the power to impose changes to European conventions and the promoted policies. The risk will be even greater if this abstention is combined with a rising trend in forces representing populism, nationalism and Nazism. Then the current majority, now wishing the evolution of Europe in a common people's house, will collapse.

I will now mention an argument stated by the conservatives in the European Parliament. Do you know what they say? Poor Greece, if you were on your own, you would have resolved your problems. This argument, in an oversimplified way, is refusal to solidarity, since Greece would be able to resolve its problems, if it was on its own. Can anyone possibly believe that we would be able to resolve our issues on our own, in a globalized world? Of course not! The answer to globalization is the creation of stronger, and more democratic, at the same time, institutions, which will give answers, will set limits on the uncontrollable market and will be able to make decisions, within a reasonable time period. So, this populist and oversimplified solution, which sounds good, some Greeks even say "they are right", what does this solution mean, once you get to analyze it? That Germans mind their own business, British mind their own business, Greeks mind their own business. So, in fact, we are dealing with a populism leading to the collapse and the survival of the stronger ones. This is very dangerous.

So, the participation in elections should be high, with a clear message: if you want to condemn these policies, massively vote in the Euro-elections and send in those forces, which will change policies and correlations, so that we can move forward, towards a democratic European federation. Vote for the Green Party, so that we can change Europe.

Not only the Green Party, but every social, political, professional group should set as priority, starting from now, the development of a different Europe through, and through, the massive participation in euro-elections and through the support of the Green Party and the political forces suggesting a better Europe. It will be too late, if we remain inactive and in May 2014 we finally realize that European idea has been seriously hurt by the populists, nationalists and neo-nazi. The survival of the Greek economy will then become an ever harder task.

Populism and post-democracy

Petros Theodoridis

The purpose of this paper is to distinguish the modern consumer post-democracy from previous types of democracy, and to also detect different types of populism, including right-wing ethno-populism (or nationalistic populism), but also a kind of progressive, democratic populism. Finally, it is trying to connect populism with the financial crisis and "populism" of emancipation, an anti-consumerist one, is being proposed, which will bring to the fore the "right to happiness", redefined through the Ecological imperative as well.

1. Democracy

In my view, democracy, as we have learned it historically (with a constitution, rights, elections, etc.) is a fragile flower that blossomed within a three-century-long historic conjuncture in Europe. In shaping democracy, the values of enlightenment, religion and war played a role. I indicatively refer to the European Wars of Religion during the 17th century, that resulted in religious tolerance, according to the "cuius regio, eius religio" principle ("Whose realm, his religion"). Workers' struggles during the 19th century and the claim for workers' suffrage played a role in shaping democracy. Here I should point out that there is no one-way relationship between democracy and capitalism or socialism. Socialism / communism and capitalism have historically been able to coexist both with democratic and with absolutely dictatorial forms of government as well.

Since 2001 liberal democracy is more evidently being transformed into what Colin Crouch calls post-democracy, reminding some very recognizable features: the election campaign is a fully controlled spectacle, the majority of citizens holds an apathetic attitude, policy is being formed through reconciliation, politicians are dragged behind the polls, the personification of the election controversy tends to substitute dialogue, trivial events of the politicians' privacy become central issues in the media, the

state allocates more power to business interests, with the contraction of the welfare state, the marginalization of trade unions, the increase of inequalities, the transfer of tax burdens to the weakest as a consequence[1].

In the new post-democratic conditions, we increasingly slip into a state of emergency. The state does nothing and washes its hands of the vulnerability and uncertainty that emerge from the logic (or the illogic) of free market, redefining them as a private issue, one that people have to face themselves. So "people are now expected to seek individual solutions to systemic contradictions". After decades of welfare state, we are now entering a period, where a certain kind of economic state of emergency receives a permanent status, becomes a way of life.

2. People and populism

Firstly I would like to remind the plethora of meanings for the term "people" and that a unique and solid meaning of the term does not exist. On the one hand there is the concept of people as "plebs", as "rabbles", as the sum of the poor, downtrodden and excluded. On the other hand there is the People as Sovereign, as described in the Constitution: the people as the supreme organ of the state. The "people" is a polarizing concept, which denotes a double movement and a complex relationship between two extremes: Naked life (people) and political existence (People), exclusion and inclusion, survival and life[2]. So we would say that the People do not exist as a Substance, but as something with potential, something malleable, and something that can undergo many transformations throughout history. And I would add here a distinction of three concepts: the concept of "multitude" as a heterogeneous set of disparate desires and expectations, the concept of "mob" as the residue of all classes (according to Hannah Arendt), as the "lumpen proletariat" (according to Marx) as something prone to indiscriminate acts of violence, as something that is often instigated and manipulated by the reaction, as the social basis of fascism.

The term populism is certainly something different from the term "people". Populism as an ideology entails as a central reference point the people, not

1 Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Polity Press Ltd, 2004.

2 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1998.

with the legal, historical, or the class sense of the concept, but rather with an emotional sense, which concerns those, who see themselves as underprivileged and wronged. The characteristic of populism is that it exploits the so-called "plebs", the lower social group, which is presented as the embodiment of the totality in society. I would also like to remind you that the core element of all populisms is a specific reference to the people as a subject, a "rhetorical style", which depends on "references to the people". However, any reference to the people does not automatically constitute populism. What transforms a popular reference into populist rhetoric is its polemical rhetorical structure. Some of the characteristic features of populism are: a) personal reference to the people, b) the pretentious defense of "national identity" (which is considered to be threatened), c) the systematic instrumental exploitation of collective forms of resentment, d) the condemnation of decay, e) the emergence of a popular demagogue leader, e) the systematic resort to demagogic clichés[3].

A particular form of populism is associated with television. Our post-democracies are threatened by tele-populism and Trash TV. In Orwell's "1984", the Minitrue (the Ministry of Truth) had a specific section for the production of trash - newspapers that contained nothing else, but sports, crimes and astrology, five-minute sentimental novels, sex tapes and love songs composed entirely by mechanical means on a special kaleidoscope. Today our democracies are afflicted by Big Brother tele-populism: reality shows create the illusion of naturalism, i.e. of something that happens "naturally" – we watch others as if they were we ourselves to do recognizable things. The trite seems "authentic"[4].

3. Ethno-populism

Another form of populism is the well known to the ecological movement concept of ethno-populism. Several years ago, in 2005, we used the term "ethno-populism" for the first time, in the framework of the Ecological Movement of Thessaloniki, trying to illustrate the meeting of the two ideologies, the two rhetorics. Back then we said that we are dealing with an original phenomenon that combines new type identities. It combines the idea of love for the nation with the plebs, as replacement of what they think

3 Nikos Demertzis, *Populism and resentment*, Science and Society, Issue 12 Spring, 2004.

4 Petros Theodoridis, *The Fraudulent Promise of Love*, Eneken, 2012.

they have been deprived of. It creates a new ethic, where the demonstration of bourgeois misery and complaining moved together with the demonstration of a consumerist parvenus.

As we wrote back then "In ethno-populism, the dominant feeling is a certain attitude, not just envy, or anger, but what Max Seller described as resentment, which is a combination of emotional and imaginary elements of those prevented from an actual reaction" (...) "and this is atoned through an imaginary revenge, the main characteristic of which is its relation with memory. Resentment regurgitates, reminisces and reforms other bitter feelings, like nastiness, envy and hatred[5].

Since 2005, it has been a long time and major changes have taken place in the Greek society and its dominant ideology. Of course, the crisis turned the tinny ethno-populism into a sound and clear nationalism and fascism, or even ethno-socialism. But, these Nazi and fascist movements could not have "blossomed" as "flowers of evil" anywhere but in the diffuse and omnipresent atmosphere of ethno-populism, which prospers everywhere in Greece and the Balkans today.

Especially in Greece, a critical point in the formation of this climate was the cyber-dispute around the book of History, of the sixth grade of elementary school in 2006 – 2007. This conflict showed how vulnerable the world of internet and blogs is to national-populist ideologies. Besides, this case showed that History is not defined by historians, but by "people", in the vague definition of it, who has the right to memory. A memory delivered to people, through already processed ideologies. Of course, the invocation of people served those who manipulated against what they called "Historical Revisionism".

Which are the causes of development of ethno-populism? I already mentioned the ideological case of history (and the example of the book of History, of the sixth grade of elementary school) and the spread of Internet and blogs (in a speech structure that resembles parallel monologues). I should add the dominant ethno-populism, cultivated by the Church, for years now, as well as the feelings of indignation – los indignados, the violence of crisis.

5 Petros Theodoridis, *Nationalism and Thessaloniki*, Aposperitis blog, 2008, http://luciferidis.wordpress.com/2008/09/22/%CE%B5%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7/

Nowadays, the feeling seems to have been separated from rationality. Being rational seems to have been identified with thinking in an equal and fast way, neglecting the depth of things, not sinking in the subjectivity of passion. So, feeling, as an imaginary invocation of love, the tool-wise use of feeling – as a television tool to touch people's hearts – accompanies the modern national-populist speech: the passion of Panagiotis Psomiadis raising his huge Macedonian eagle, the smile of happiness of Karatzaferis, when white doves picked at his head. The modern ethno-populist, appearing like Home sentimentalis, should be defined not as a person who is challenging feelings (because we can all do that), but as a person who has turned these feelings into values.

In the case of "indignados", we witnessed the dominance of the role of feeling and experience in the political expression and within particular targets. This means that we witnessed a consumerist perception of politics: politics as, more or less, a product to be consumed, in order to cause indulgence, a logic obviously influenced by the ideology of hedonistic individualism and the veneration of the individual – consumer. What else but the denial of the ideology of auto-realization, where everybody deserves to "reach their dreams". Consumption dreams, after all.

I would like to add two more aspects, which undermine the modern Greek far-right national-populism: the financial crisis, which creates war conditions "everyone against everyone" and the migration flow, entering the country, arousing the (always existing) racism of Greeks. I am referring to the refugees and migrants, considered to be "useless creatures". Far-right national-populism in our post-democracies distorts a diffuse existing sense of discomfort, as it gets a practically carnal advantage. Its enemy is not impersonal, like the garbled functions of capitalism or the deregulation caused by neo-liberalism. The enemy, the scapegoat, is the migrant. Impoverished, dowdy, the migrant smells bad, and steals our jobs. "This is the truth that they are hiding from you," says modern far-right. This tool-wise use of feeling lies in the nucleus of modern far-right populism.

4. Fossil fuel national populism

Issues of natural resources and, mainly, oil issues are very attractive to a movement that we could call "fossil fuel national populism". The basic ideology of this movement is that there are untapped mineral deposits, which

could save the Greek economy. These deposits are not exploited, because of the betraying corruption of the Greek elite. This movement is popular thanks to three main elements: a) a financial proposal, with emergency features, b) betrayal suspicions (someone is preventing us from taking advantage of our wealth, to which we are entitled) and, above all, c) the element of the land (which is sacred for every version of nationalism). Emergency, betrayal, land. In this latest version of national-populism, our underground is equal to undisputable superiority and, in a way, it cannot be inferior to the underground of other countries. In a way, we are dealing with a ground-land mysticism, to which we return, falling, just to be able to recover our strength, like the mythical Aias (Ajax)

5. Populism of ecological topicality

On the other hand: We notice in the area of Skouries in Chalkidiki the development of an authentic populist movement, with tens of thousands of demonstrators, which might be the biggest mass movement of the last years and at the same time the first concentrated on ecological demands. It is not a movement that is exclusively about the quality of life. It is a movement that also embraces professions that are threatened by total destruction: farmers, bee-keepers, tourism businesses, fishers. Despite that this movement cannot be named a class movement, since it surpasses class characterizations, nor can it be named ethno-populist, since it very quickly combines the local with the international and it networks with equivalent movements that have arisen in the Balkans. In these movements that have an ecological form, that combine the popular with the local, the love for the place with the international, sustainability with mobilization, we can distinguish hopeful populisms, with their old movement sense.

The neo-nazi Golden Dawn (GD) party in Greece

Alexandros Georgopoulos

The ancestors

During World War II there were many prominent Nazi collaborators who cooperated with Axis forces in occupied Greece. Subsequently, during the civil war (1946-49) between the communist led political coalition and the nationalists, the above mentioned collaborators sided with the king and the conservative political parties in fighting against the left wing guerillas and later on were integrated into the Greek state apparatus because of their avowed anti-communism. Thus, the civil war gave the opportunity for those acts of "quisling-like" betrayal not only to be "forgiven", but, partly, also "forgotten" since they eventually became an organic element of the post war Greek ruling class. They went on intimidating members of the Left and sending them to exile, committing political assassinations, forming networks of informers, watching left wing activists and laypeople etc all the way to the colonels' junta with which they collaborated closely (1967-74). After the fall of the dictatorship, they were discredited and national elections' figures for them were kept under 3%.

A short history of GD

Nikos Michaloliakos is the leader of Golden Dawn since the beginning of its existence (1980) and a disciple of former Greek military dictator Georgios Papadopoulos who led the colonels' coup d' etat. He was sentenced and jailed for bomb attacks. Later on, he issued and directed a periodical- also called Golden Dawn- that praised the ancient Gods of Olympus and propagated the idea of Greeks being a superior race. Golden Dawn was established with a clear cut Nazi orientation, distancing itself from Italian fascism and the colonels' junta because its members wanted to differentiate themselves from the worn out term "fascism" but, at the same time, place emphasis on the inherent to the Nazi ideology element of violence against all "subhuman trash" like the Jews, immigrants, homosexuals, Roma people,

etc[1]. In the 1990s, Golden Dawn exploited the political upheaval following the use of the name "Macedonia", a region of Northern Greece, by FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)-Greek nationalists perceived it as a "usurpation" of a part of Greek history related to Alexander the Great- and directed its efforts to xenophobic protests and violent attacks against foreigners. The massive wave of immigrants and the inability of the Greek State to integrate them strengthened its xenophobic call. At the moment, they are promoting a mythical/idealistic political image of themselves as citizens who would accompany and protect old people going to the bank or would "assist" Greeks in evacuating by force houses inhabited by immigrants who don't want to leave. The recent financial crisis, with skyrocketing unemployment figures reaching dizzying levels and the disappearance of approximately 25% of the Greek wealth, catalyzed their resurgence and transformed them into a political party influencing 7% of the votes (440.000 people and 18 parliamentary seats- in 2012) from a previously fringe political entity. In that way, the "children" of colonels' regime and the "grand children" of the quisling-Nazi sympathizers[2], have been liberated from the guilt and reintroduced themselves in the political life of the country[3] as a pool/receiver of the accumulated frustration and anger of a part of Greek society. This fact might correspond to the grievances-or-threats-expressed-to-established-interests-or- groups, which is the first stage of the development of a fascist movement, while normal democratic processes are unable or unwilling to resolve them, according to Paxton[4].

Their present practice and ideology

They currently organize food hand outs and blood drives, give small amounts of pocket money to some poor people and establish employment agencies in a Hezbollah-like political behavior, inflated by the media and of

1 Psaras, Dimitris (2012) Interview about the book "The black book of Golden Dawn", 27 October, http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/10/27/psarras-4/ (in Greek)

2 Louka, Maria (2013) Golden Dawn : The attack against Democracy, BHmagazino, 6 October, see also http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35I2Y2qfTfE (in Greek)

3 Recently, a GD law maker (Dimitris Koukoutsis) declared in the Greek parliament: we are the children and grandchildren of the civil war winners and we are here to stay and write the "true" version of Greek history, because until now history was written by the people who lost that war. http://www.tovima.gr/politics/article/?aid=500631 (in Greek)

4 Clark, Martin (2004) A review of Robert Paxton's "The anatomy of fascism", The Times Literary Supplement, 26 September http://www.powells.com/review/2004_09_26

course addressed to Greeks only. They use abusive language against Jews and homosexuals, protest against theatrical performances even beat up a Greek MP (in front of the cameras), shocking all audiences. Shouting against the "criminal acts of illegal immigrants" and the "inadequate guarding of our borders", arguing about the "insecurity of Greek citizens" having to contact people of other countries, they attempt to establish "fiefs" in specific neighbourhoods of Athens (eg. the area of Neos Pandeleimonas), promote their presence in the working class districts of Athens for symbolic reasons and infiltrate football fan clubs[5] with a rhetoric of fear and hatred stirring the most xenophobic emotions among the population. The fact that they "protect" shops in a Mafia-style, extorting money in an illegal way out (racketeering) and their involvement in pandering affairs, makes their distinction from the underworld of the organized crime quite blurred. Last but not least, they organize "conscriptions" of people into black shirt paramilitary hit squads[6], patrolling the streets of Athens and terrorizing refugees and immigrants, stubbing some of them and attacking houses-turned-into-mosques[7] for the needs of the Moslems, in that way attempting to transfer their imaginary causes of the current predicament into the different Other/scapegoat. All previous tactics show an attempt by them to replace (substitute) state administration mechanisms with their own. That might correspond to the second stage of fascist development where "the fascist movements become not only spokesmen but also organizers for the disaffected, and start tackling the grievances themselves, illegally but effectively, and with some official connivance"[8]. On the pretext that immigrant peddlers didn't pay for a license to sell their products, GD declared that from now on "GD officials will take care of that" as far as the police doesn't look to it and proceeded to smash the stalls of unlicensed migrant ped-

5 Louka, Maria (2013) Golden Dawn : The attack against Democracy, BHmagazino, 6 October (in Greek)

6 According to Greek Deputy Public Prosecutor, Charalambos Vourliotis, the "Centaur" program concerning Golden Dawn's "youth corps" is headed by a 17-year-old supporter and aims at the recruitment of children as young as 14 years old in order to form "assault groups" (in Greek) http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=532555

7 At the same time opposing the plans for the construction of a new Mosque in Athens by pledging to organize mass protests against it http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite1_1_16/11/2013_528140#

8 Clark, Martin (2004) A review of Robert Paxton's "The anatomy of fascism", The Times Literary Supplement, 26 September http://www.powells.com/review/2004_09_26

dlers[9]. They participate in military training and use a specific dress code to be distinguished from the relaxed liberal look. Women participate in an aggressive masculinity and dogmatic hierarchy of genders (sexism) atmosphere prevailing among the members of GD who use a twin discourse: perceiving women as inferior but, at the same time, praising the "feminine nature" of them, materialized mainly in being mothers-who-raise-children type of duties[10]. Recently their strategy has shifted its focus from foreigners-invadors/infiltrators[11] to the local traitors[12] and an ominous sign of that shift of focus was the GD supporter who admitted to the killing of the left-wing hip-hop rapper Pavlos Fyssas. GD pictures itself as the protector of vulnerable Greeks who are the victims of their political elite's racism, which by the way is judged by them as the "only true and existing racism". They were even reported campaining to proselytize to their neo-nazi ideology Greeks of the diaspora[13].

In terms of political culture, ideology and personnel, GD seems to be classified among the radical nationalist, anti-semitic and homophobic first post war generation of parties like the Front National (1972), the Vlaams Blok (1979), the FPÖ under Jörg Haider's leadership (from 1986) and Lega Nord in Italy (1991), along with the second generation-the British National Front, the German NPD, Ataka in Bulgaria, the Slovakian National Party, Jobbik in Hungary-(Pels, 2014, present volume).

---

9 http://www.skai.gr/news/greece/article/212004/hrusi-augi-epithesi-kata-allodapon-mikropoliton-kai-to-savvato-/ (in Greek)

10 Psara, Aggelika (2012) Masculine avengers in Agios Panteleimonas, http://tvxs.gr/news/egrapsan-eipan/timoroi-me-fylo-ston-agio-panteleimona-tis-aggelikas-psarra, 29 January (in Greek)

11 Hundreds of attacks against them were notoriously overlooked by the Greek authorities

12 Sevastakis, Nicolas, After the assassination. The Greek neo-nazism facing a critical turning point, http://www.synchronathemata.gr/meta-ton-fono-o-ellinikos-neonazismos-ke-i-krisimi-kampi/ (in Greek)

13 "It's a well-studied campaign", said Anastasios Tamis, Australia's pre-eminent ethnic Greek historian. "There is a large stock of very conservative people here – former royalists, former loyalists to the junta, that sort of thing – who are very disappointed at what has been happening in Greece and are trying to find a means to express it. They are nationalists who feel betrayed by Greece over issues like Macedonia, Cyprus and [the Greek minority] in Voreio Epirus [southern Albania], who cannot see the fascistic part of this party. Golden Dawn is trying to exploit them". http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/01/greece-golden-dawn-global-ambitions

Greek political life features favouring the GD's growing influence

In order to explain the increasing influence of the neo-Nazi entity, the following political parameters, which also catalyzed the Greek crisis, should be taken into account.

Successive Greek governments have showed themselves to be notoriously ineffective/inefficient in handling the financial crisis. They have proven unable to control prices which keep increasing, whereas salaries and pensions decreased by an average of 30% between 2010 and 2014. In the economy sector, there is no reliable tax collection system, which-of course-is a politically conscious choice and tax evasion is estimated to be a few billion euros per year[14]. A consequence of that is the over-taxation of only a portion of the Greek people (among them even unemployed or very low salaried people, whose ability to pay is next to zero), whereas no efforts were made to pin down a huge part of Greek citizens' money exported to foreign banks and tax them accordingly[15]. Last but not least, the government is accused of being reluctant to claim compensation from the German State, either for the loans it was forced to provide to Germany or for the damages it suffered during the war, as a top-secret report compiled at the behest of the Finance Ministry in Athens has concluded[16], but the government disinclined to raise the issue with Germany for obvious reasons.

Public administration is also very inefficient indeed. For instance, issuing a license for a warehouse requires 28 days to receive the necessary official documents, but in Belgium the same undertaking would only require 2 days! There is always the very old demand for the unification of the different ministries' electronic data in order to prevent surrealistic events like a blind citizen to be able to hold a driver's license as well![17]

---

14 "The self-employed [professionals] in 2009 dodged taxes on at least €28 billion of unreported income, enough to fill 31% of the Greek budget deficit that year" http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2012/09/tax-evasion-greece

15 Eg., the infamous Lagarde list, containing roughly 2,000 potential tax evaders with undeclared accounts at Swiss HSBC bank's Geneva branch and named after former French finance minister Christine Lagarde, which in October 2010 was passed on to Greek officials to help them crack down on tax evasion, only two years later became known to a wider public, with the journalist who published it being prosecuted. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20116548

16 http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/greek-commission-concludes-germany-owes-billions-in-war-reparations-a-893084.html

17 http://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2012/03/20/greek-miracles-blinds-who-see-paralyzed-who-walk/

The so called rationalization of the economy led to huge social injustices: the health sector is burdened with newly imposed fees for medical examinations and prescriptions and the elimination of entire departments of hospitals. Whole sectors of technical education were eliminated overnight and the universities are recently experiencing a rather dramatic change in their functions due to cuts of their budgets and human resources[18]. One cannot avoid thinking (given the fact the neo-liberal mentality prevails among government officials) whether such measures are taken on purpose and the state intervenes actively in order to favor the private sector, by rendering the public sector unable to respond to its duties. The fact that 350.000 households are without electricity because they couldn't afford to pay for it, is another index of social insensibility/cruelty on the part of the political authorities. Today's (2014) government is accused of pushing almost half of the country into poverty due to its reluctance (or conscious political choice?) to split/divide the economic burden evenly.

The political class that has governed Greece for the last four decades, although is held responsible for the current economic calamity, has largely escaped culpability.

Human rights record is not satisfactory either. During recent years, police brutality and attacks to immigrants were reported very often in the press[19]. The implication of a number of police and army officers with GD's affairs (police officers often co-operated with the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn, sometimes even redirecting Greek citizens in need of protection to them[20]), raises the question of the impartiality and proper functioning of the police and the army. The very case of GD which was left unchecked to exert violence, despite being characterized as a "criminal organization" by independent bodies like the Greek Association for the Human Rights, is typical of the Greek state, suspiciously reluctant to apply the law effectively[21].

---

18 The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for instance, suffered a decrease of its budget from 50 million euros down to 17 since 2010 and recently even central heating systems were shut.

19 Allegations of human rights abuses by police, including torture and excessive use of force continued throughout the year (2012). Migrants and asylum-seekers faced impediments in registering their asylum applications and were often detained in substandard conditions. Hate crime on the basis of race and ethnicity escalated dramatically http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/greece/report-2013

20 Nikos Dendias, Greek minister of Justice, interviewed by BBC http://www.thestival.gr/policy/item/109546-sto-bbc-o-dendias3a-tha-timorithoyn-astynomikoi-poy-stelnoyn-toys-polites-stixrysi-aygi-28video29 (15:50)

Racism is endemic in Greece. About 14.000 immigrants died between 1993 and 2012, while trying to enter Greece and thousands were detained for months in detention centers without the necessary care. There is also a growing consensus among political scientists pointing to the rather unfortunate fact that the mainstream political parties adopted some of GD's political messages[22], insisting on "law and order", urging "us, Greeks" to "reclaim our cities" from the immigrants, embarking on massive arrests and repatriation operations or establishing detention camps to guard them, etc. All these policies targeting the appeasement of conservative voters and attempting to secure their votes on behalf of the two main parties (PaSoK and New Democracy) by partly adopting GD's vocabulary, only failed and managed to increase the votes of GD, at the end of the day. The allegation that "GD's influence was incubated into neighborhoods "packed" with immigrants" legitimized it in an indirect way and made people prefer Golden Dawners over the mainstreamers. After all, they (GD) were the ones who can claim to be the genuine "national detergent" struggling to "clean the country of filthy immigrants" portraying themselves as more "sincere" and authentic in pursuing the same aims[23].

Yet, despite the above named parameters contributing to the problem, there are always fundamental issues about the nature of Greek political life which trigger the question whether the rise of right-wing extremism is not necessarily the result of economic crisis, but is rather related to the chronic dysfunction of the Greek state. A state, which might be liberal but not really democratic (Mouzelis, 1996)[24] with a very weak civil society, possibly the weakest in western Europe. Also, its "deep structures" of nationalism, racism, anti-semitism, sexism and the tendency to discredit all political personel (class) without any exception (a populist discourse which deviates sometimes into sheer and plain anti-parliamentarism), inherently embedded

21 Takis, Andreas, http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/s-lth-g-th-lth.html

22 Even now, prime minister Samaras stated that "there are as many unemployed people in Greece as there are illegal immigrants", insinuating of course that if the second ones left the country, the first ones would probably find jobs. http://www.thepressproject.net/article/49215/Samaras-There-are-as-many-unemployed-people-in-Greece-as-there-are-illegal-immigrants-video

23 Valavani, Nantia (2013) Confronting neo-nazism today, 4 May (in Greek) http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2013/05/04/valavani/

24 Mouzelis, Nikos (1996) Authoritarianism and political crisis, TO VIMA, 21 January

in Greek society[25], might be the cause for the delayed response to GD's criminal acts[26]. The importance of these "deep structures" can be understood if somebody takes into account that other European countries facing similar crisis conditions including the economic problems of debt, low growth and high unemployment have not seen such a rise in right-wing extremism (Ireland doesn't have such a political party, Spain[27] and Portugal[28] have but marginal ones, Italy's Lega Nord is shrinking).

GD's electoral base

The above situation provides a fertile ground for breeding insecurity and anger, to the unemployed and low paid, to unskilled workers and employees, especially to young people who don't see any viable future-some of them are now supported financially by their parents' pensions- but to an important degree to the middle class as well, who were made "outcasts" and concomitantly enchanted by their violent anti-systemic GD's rhetoric, feeding political irrationalism of all kinds.

Now, this party has a rather even geographical spread and sex distribution, voted mainly by men (75%) of lower education between 25 and 55 years old and its strongholds are, not surprisingly, in the traditionally right wing areas. It has a definite social basis – mainly salaried people of the private sector (24%), unemployed (17%), retired people (17%), free lance professionals (craftsmen, small entrepreneurs, merchants, taxi drivers etc-16%), free lance scientists (7%), farmers (5%), housewives (5%)[29], members of the security forces, plus people of the criminal underworld[30].Their votes are to a large degree protest votes, coming from those expressing a deep and blind anger against the political establishment, which has pushed the austerity

25 Avdela, Efi and Psara, Aggelika (2012) Apocryphal aspects of the "black" vote, AVGI newspaper, 1 July, http://archive.avgi.gr/ArticleActionshow.action?articleID=698856 (in Greek)

26 Mark Mazower recently warned against underestimating the threat posed by a party whose use of violence was so disturbing. "Unfortunately, the Greek state does not seem to realize the urgency of the situation," he told an audience in Athens. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/01/greece-golden-dawn-global-ambitions

27 Regionalist/nationalist Platform for Catalonia enjoyed only a small increase at the local elections

28 Partido Nacional Renovador

29 http://www.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_kathremote_1_14/10/2013_522916 (in Greek)

30 Marchetos, Spiros (2012) Golden Dawn and the rise of fascism, The Guardian, 19 June

measures too far and consequently making people afraid of the future.

The mainstreamers only implied whereas GD really meant what it propagated for. Voting for GD was a reaction to the political elite, which they want to punish and annoy, rather than a mere reaction to immigration or illegal immigration (Lodi 2012, cited by Pels, 2013-this volume). People have voted for GD lawmakers disregarding consciously or unconsciously their Nazi ideological parameters. Their deep, intense, extreme and blind anger doesn't really aim to give the necessary votes to GD to govern, but targets-and wants to annoy as much as possible- the Greek political elite as a whole. Anger is expressed also as a resurgent anti-western feeling of Greeks who resent the portrayal of Greece as a land of lazy, tax-evading criminals in the international media, a fact which would play right into the neo-Nazi's hands. The GD's electoral basis people obviously are not fascists, since they were until recently voting for the two major parties of mainstream Greek politics. The "clean-the-dirt-and-the-corruption-of-the-old-political-elite" discourse has definitely enchanted a percentage of the 1.3 million unemployed (only a portion of them gets the social security benefit) and the 2 million people excluded from the national health service scheme. Was it not for their anger, people listening to the Golden Dawn leaders denying publicly that there was any Holocaust at all (!), alleging that Hitler is not yet conclusively judged by History (!), openly endorsing the country's 1967-1974 oppressive military dictatorship[31], seeing them use the swastika as their emblem, beating up a left wing MP in front of TV cameras or knowing that GD adhered to a hierarchical "Fuhrerprinzip" structure with "Fuhrer" Michaloliakos' (yes! He still is the indisputable leader) political authority above and beyond any written law[32](!), they wouldn't vote for them. Even after Pavlos Fyssas' assassination by a member of the GD who allegedly spoke with, and his action had been approved by its leaders, the polls showed a drop of its support, which was not lower than its percentage of the last elections though.

31 http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/02/14/mazower-warns-greece-on-golden-dawn/

32 See what Rudolf Hess declared: "It is with pride that we see that one man is kept above all criticism -- that is the Fuehrer. The reason is that everyone feels and knows: he was always right and will always be right. The National Socialism of us all is anchored in the uncritical loyalty, in the devotion to the Fuehrer that does not ask for the wherefore in the individual case, in the tacit performance of his commands. We believe that the Fuehrer is fulfilling a divine mission to German destiny! This belief is beyond challenge" Cologne, 25 June 1934-http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/resource/document/DOCNAC3.htm-

After the assassination

The deterioration of the country's international image, the warning that Greece might be deprived of the presidency of EU (Hanes Svoboda) and the urge of the Greek and international Jewish communities to deal with the neo-Nazis[33], might have contributed to the Greek state's serious preoccupation (for the first time) with the criminal underground structure of GD, after the assassination.

It was an event that contributed to the awakening of public opinion which although "seeing an elephant in the room" was quite reluctant to accept it as an important parameter of Greek political life. Hopefully, the assassination of Pavlos Fyssas will destroy aspirations which the privileged strata and traditional politicians might increasingly have had about a fascist force as a legitimate shield against the increasing influence of the left[34]. Also, it will cancel any thoughts about a possible post election cooperation with GD as some high rank officials of New Democracy have either stated clearly or insinuated gradually getting us used to the idea[35]. People were exposed to the typical Nazi tactic of lying publicly and negating facts which are obviously true to the impartial observer[36], gnawing down their reliability. Although GD officially refuses the "fuhrerprinzip", the fact that they commit crimes in order to satisfy their political ends, their Nazi ideology and their commitment to abolish democracy, there are lots of other semi-official statements and documents which verify exactly the opposite. In a recently published book introduction[37] about GD, one of its leading figures confirms beyond any doubt all previous points[38].

There is always the possible constitutional and legal fault; a clear warning came from constitutional experts and legal scholars, who were concerned with the potential backfire on democracy caused by the crackdown on

---

33 Ex-minister of Justice, A. Roupakiotis, interview to the SKY TV-channel, 3 October 2013

34 Marchetos, Spiros (2012) Golden Dawn and the rise of fascism, The Guardian, 19 June

35 Papadimitriou, Babis, SKY TV-channel, 13 September 2013, http://www.tempo.gr/ston-kosmomas/ellada/20288-nea-dimokratia-xrysi-avgi#

36 High rank officials of GD denied that the assassination was committed by a GD member, despite photographs published proving exactly the opposite!

37 Perdikaris, Giannis (Filippou, Ion) in the introduction to Plevris, Kostas "Golden Dawn, road-signing in politics", Ilektron, Athens

38 Psaras, Dimitris (2013) The GD's co-founder contradicts the Leader, 30 October, http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/o-%C2%ABsynidrytis%C2%BB-kaiei-ton-arxigo

extremism. Nevertheless, the leadership of GD, now in custody, has been charged with murder, attempted murder, money laundering, arson and blackmail, in order to clamp it down as a criminal organization that has used systematic violence. State aid funds were cut off too.

There is no clear picture about how these facts might alter the political landscape. Political analysts reckon that previous events might alienate GD from women, people connected to the church, and petty bourgeois strata in the cities or the country that feel unconfortable with recent revelations.

Legal means are not enough to curb the political influence of GD

Using legal means instead of political acts (even for just causes) might have traumatic results for democratic institutions, because there is always the problem of distinguishing between the dissolution of a political party and the dismantling of a criminal organization[39] overlapping each other, which was the case for GD. Furthermore, a possible blurr between the two might justify the pro-GD supporters who allege that the recent clampdown really targeted the silencing of its leadership from propagating their political ideas. How do we then react politically to all that?

A change of the political landscape and a radical reform of the weak democratic foundations of Greek society, especially political institutions, among them the previously major political parties-PaSoK and New Democracy-whose relics are supposed to diagnose and treat the Greek financial crisis, is more than a necessity.

Undemocratic "cracks" in the edifice of Greek democracy (clientelism, corruption, populism) which enstranged the general public from the state, were the fertile ground into which GD sowed hatred, racism, xenophobia and street violence and have to be thoroughly studied and meticulously dealt with. Consequently, some kind of punishment of persons responsible might be the medicine for the increasing political cynicism among the Greek electorate. Attention should be paid to the "easy come, easy go", vulgar rhetoric against "kleptocracy" and the denouncing of corruption in a rather pompous way. Unless there is no alternative proposal on accountability mechanisms and a reliable procedure to punish the politicians who are

39 Dimitris Christopoulos, Dissolution of a party or dismantling of a criminal organization? Avgi, 22.9.2013

responsible for corruption, that kind of reaction may not be the proper one, due to its prompt and immediate hijacking by ultra right wing populist elements which are bound to use it in their attack against the "degenerate" political elite in a demagogue-like manner[40].

What is needed then, is a smart and scrupulous use of democratic procedure which could reinvigorate the social contract between state and society[41]. In other words, a long-term solution cannot be found in only addressing the legal aspect of the Golden Dawn problem. Unless a culture of tolerance is developed (against the aggressive nationalism which was always the beloved companion of the political life of the country), civil society gets stronger and the education system is reformed towards promoting pluralism, respect for institutions and the Rule of Law, critical thinking[42] and substantive democracy[43], there is no hope[44]. There is a need for a set of positive, progressive reforms towards the reconstruction of the country and the defense of democracy[45]. And these kind of reforms cannot be materialized without the widest possible antifascist front, (and it is a critical point whether even political figures like today's prime minister Antonis Samaras who flirts with ultra right wing elements through his advisors, should be persuaded to participate) and consequently our distancing from the "theory of the two extremes" which tends to equate GD with the left wing SYRIZA in Greece[46, 47, 48, 49].

---

40 Christopoulos, Dimitris (2012) Anti-ultra right wing strategy and antifascist front, 30 September, http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/30/dchristopoulos/

41 Prodromou, Elizabeth, H. and Kyrou, Alexandros, K. (2013) Breakdown or crackdown: Greek democracy and its discontents, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-elizabeth-h-prodromou/crackdown-or-breakdown-gr_b_4096624.html

42 See, Vlahos, Aggelos: History in Greek schools was based on memorizing kings' and heroes' names along with dates of battles, the actual texts never included the civil war or information about the Nazi occupation or the Holocaust and was sometimes hostile to European Enlightenment basic tenets (in Greek) http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/ls-p-x.html

43 Halikiopoulou, Daphne and Vasilopoulou, Sofia (2013) The rise of the Golden Dawn is not a natural consequence of the economic crisis, but a reflection of wider problems in Greek society http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/10/16/the-rise-of-the-golden-dawn-is-not-a-natural-consequence-of-the-economic-crisis-but-a-reflection-of-wider-problems-in-greek-society/

44 Kosonas, Akis (2013) GD as a new element in the political analysis (in Greek) http://tvxs.gr/news/synergates/i-xrysi-aygi-os-neo-stoixeio-politikis-analysis-toy-aki-kosona

45 Liakos, Antonis (2013) What's the appropriate strategy to confront GD? (in Greek) http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/ls-p-sg-th-ps-s-g.html

46 Christopoulos, Dimitris (2012) Anti-ultra right wing strategy and antifascist front, 30 Septem-

Their manipulation of the media[50]

GD exploited Hitler's dictum "it doesnt matter whether they refer to you in a positive or negative way, what it really matters is to keep mentioning you". Their aggressive behavior seemed to profit them electorally, turn the lights of publicity on them and increase their percentages.

They know how to use the media very well -which had already been propagating chauvinism, sexism and showed an anti-immigrant attitude- and in a few cases they tried through them to manipulate the public in portraying the "Fuhrer" Michaloliakos as a romantic figure and GD cadres as tender husbands, tango lovers, God loving people with spiritual interests or even classical music admirers. They rarely discussed the violent crimes for which many of these people have been accused or convicted for.

On the alleged GD's "anti-capitalist" fervor

There were always anticapitalist nuances in the Nazi ideology and the cadres of those parties perceived themselves as antisystemic rebels fighting against a capitalist state, organizing and exploiting the petty bourgeois envy for the bourgeois culture[51]. Despite their anti-plutocracy rhetoric, their lawmakers in the parliament always voted in favour of the entrepreneurial and financial world, whose deafening silence about the issue is a matter of great interest. Given GD's very small contribution to the parliamentary work, their preoccupation with the Greek ship owners' interests is telling.

GD's lawmakers voted in favour of the tax evasion of Greek ship owners and, at the same time, demanded that the state should provide subsidies as

---

ber (in Greek) http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/30/dchristopoulos/

47 Bournazos, Stratis (2012) Death danger, 16 September (in Greek) http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/16/bournazos-35/

48 Balden, Sotiris (2012) Anti-fascist front and sectarian reformism, 15 September (in Greek) http://www.metarithmisi.gr/el/readText.asp?textID=11996&sw=1360

49 Doxiadis, Kyrkos (2012) A two directional struggle, 22 September (in Greek) http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/23/kdoxiadis/

50 Pantzou, Christina (2012) Golden Dawn as a media phenomenon (in Greek) http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/%CE%B7-%CF%87%CF%81%CF%85%CF%83%CE%AE-%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%B3%CE%AE-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%89%CF%82-%CE%BC%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CF%86%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%8C% CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%BF/

51 Kouzelis, Makis (2012) Theses on fascism, 23 September (in Greek) http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/23/kouzelis-3/

incentives to ship owners in order to make it easier for them to employ Greek crews[52]. They supported an amendment stating that the value of maritime/shipping companies' shares would not be subject to «pothen eshes[53]» statements of the people holding them, in that way making the laundering of money easier[54]. During the summer of 2013, GD members and MPs came in the Perama ship building area after accusations by four different trade unions and threatened they will exterminate PAME (a trade union close to the Communist party of Greece). A few days later, an attack against nine members of the Communist party took place, an incident which happened just a few weeks before the Pavlos Fyssas assassination, who- by the way- used to also work there. Later on, a move by some pro-GD workers was reported in order to establish another trade union which-according to their confessions-would decrease the workers salaries and stop strikes, in agreement with "our" ship owners desires, because after all, "we depend on them"[55]. All previous facts established the rumours about ship owners being donors for GD's activities, while a small museum of Nazi paraphernalia and weaponry was found at the house of Anastasios Pallis, a fugitive ship owner who is believed to be a GD donor. Pallis was also a major shareholder in Proto Thema, a newspaper often condemned for its uncritical reporting on neo-Nazis[56]. Recently, it was reported that they discussed with an industrialist in the manufacturing field to sack his immigrant workers and employ Greeks instead, paying them the same amount of money for a day's work: 18 euros!

Epilogue
Ultra right wing in Europe: Towards forming a "nationalist international"?

The Dutch far-right politician Geert Wilders has announced plans for a pan-

52 6 November 2012, http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/kata-tis-forologisis-ton-efopliston-i-xrysi-aygi

53 Legislation mandating that officials divulge information about their finances, aiming at the reduction of corruption. That disclosure allows a public employee's wealth to be monitored and if periodic disclosures show an unusual increase, he can be asked for an explanation.

54 Fortunately, that amendment wasn't voted at last

55 8 October 2013, http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/oi-efoplistikes-erotiseis-ton-neonazi (in Greek)

56 Chatzistefanou, Aris (2013) Neo-Nazi tattoos fall out of fashion in Greece after Golden Dawn crackdown, The Guardian, 21 October, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/21/neo-nazi-tattoos-greece-golden-dawn

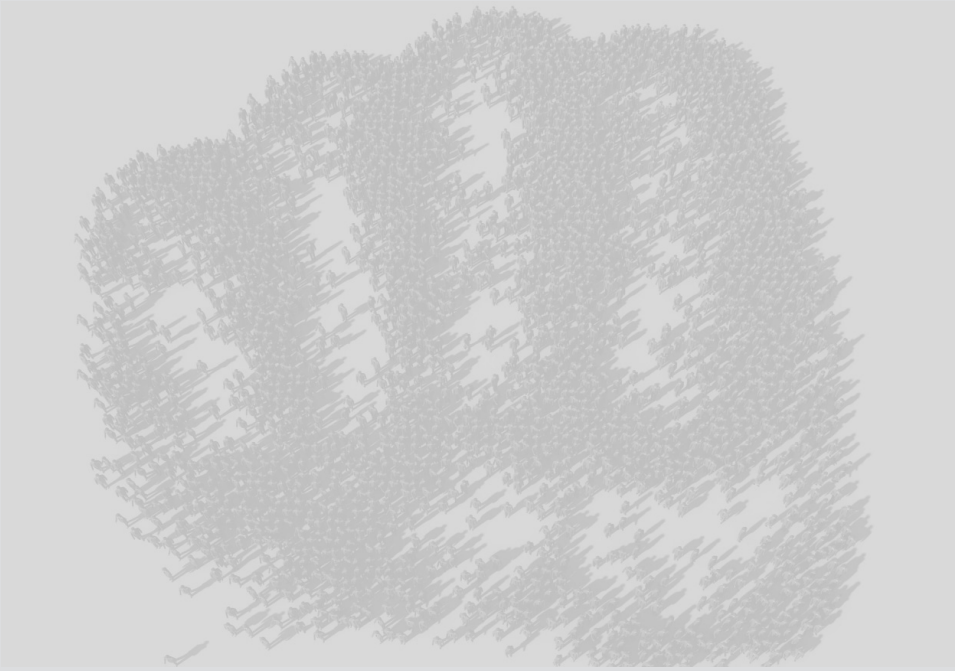
European alliance with Marine Le Pen's Front National party in France ahead of the 2014 European elections, where homologue parties from Italy, Sweden, and Belgium might participate and try to disrupt the European parliament and destroy the European "monster" as they call it "from within", exploiting current and widespread euroscepticism. That pan-European movement/alliance doesn't hide its abhorrence to the integrationist aims of the EU. The possible Wilders-Le Pen anti-EU alliance electoral success in 2014, will partly be the result of the way the European political elite continues to drive the measures to austerity and the concomitantly perceived lack of democratic legitimacy that surrounds those harsh economic policies. Perhaps a different way to think about the European Union (not only about budgetary policies, trade and the free circulation of goods, but also about enlightened values and tolerance[57]) should be the way forward. Although both Marine Le Pen and Wilders have ruled out collaborating with more overtly fascistic parties such as Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary[58], the far right is still able to win as many as a third of all the seats in the European parliament after the European elections next May[59] which might produce the most anti-European parliament to date, as Dick Pels (2014, this volume) ominously foresees.

57 Mammone, Andrea (2013) The rise of the far right is overplayed – but austerity increases the threat, The Guardian, 16 November

58 http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/13/le-pen-wilders-alliance-plan-wreck-eu

59 Palmer, John (2013) The rise of the far right: a European problem requiring European solutions, The Guardian, 15 November

Populism in Europe



Populism, anti-populism and European democracy: a view from the South

Giorgos Katsambekis[1] and ***Yannis Stavrakakis***[2]

Isn't it time to start dissecting the extremism of this "moderate centre"? Is it not the duty of every truly moderate citizen/social scientist, of every democrat, to radically oppose this extremism camouflaged as moderation?

The recent debate between Philippe Marlière[3] and Catherine Fieschi[4] around the difficulties in defining populism and the ambiguities marking its political effects have provided the opportunity for the articulation of some elaborate and insightful arguments. However, although they have both already touched upon some of the most relevant features and scientific/political implications of this notion, we think that there is still some (if not a lot of) light to be shed on the matter.

But what is really at stake here? Marlière, has rightly stressed from the beginning the ideological uses and abuses of "populism" in mainstream discourses that usually conceal élitist demophobic sentiments, while Fieschi insists on the actuality of a populist danger to democracy. Thus Fieschi's disagreement with Marlière seems to develop around a core (political) issue, namely the need for a "moderate" (democratic) politics against the (populist) excesses.

A second (underlying) point of discord involves the validity of distinguishing left-wing from right-wing articulations of populist discourse and the possibly differing impacts they may have on democracy. In what follows, we intend to critically engage with both of these issues articulating a view from the crisis-ridden European South.

---

1 http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/giorgos-katsambekis

2 http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/yannis-stavrakakis

3 http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/philippe-marli%C3%A8re

4 http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/catherine-fieschi

Deconstructing the "Europe vs. populism" opposition

Let us start with the uses of populism in public debate. In the European context, as we all know, the label "populist" is indiscriminately utilized to describe a vast variety of policies, politicians, parties or rhetorical styles. What this multiplicity of phenomena is supposed to share is revealed by the "enlightened" gaze of the scholar or the public commentator: "populism" is most often treated as a democratic *malaise*, as a virulent social disease *threatening* European democracy. It is supposed to invariably involve an irrational Manichean view of society that mesmerizes the "immature" masses, releasing uncontrolled social passions and thereby threatening to tear society apart.

In this prevailing view we find a real "trap" for the political scientist – as well as for every citizen for that matter – already pointed out by Marlière: the temptation to oversimplify, to essentialize, or even hypostasize the object of analysis, to treat it as one and homogenous, as coherent, as a speaking and acting "*it*".

Ironically enough this type of anti-populist critique is usually articulated in a very populist and Manichean manner: through the drawing of strict dichotomies, evident both in academia, journalism and politics. Such dichotomies include: "*Democracy vs. Populism", "Pluralism vs. Populism"* or even *"Europe vs. Populism"*. This last one is of particular interest, given our geographical location and the force with which it has been articulated by people like Herman Van Rompuy[5] and Manuel Barroso[6].

Indeed, post-war Europe seemed to incarnate all the virtues of pluralism and the European Union was initially hailed as an innovative political experiment advancing democratic values, respect for otherness, tolerance, the welfare state, moderation, and so forth. Anybody opposing this project had to be an authoritarian/totalitarian enemy of democracy. Thus, when so-called "right-wing populists" gained momentum from the late 1980s onwards, the representation that dominated the field was that of a clash between Europe, conceived of as intrinsically democratic, moderate, benign, and Populism, conceived of as inherently undemocratic, extreme and malignant.

---

5 http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/europaeische-union/eu-ratspraesident-van-rompuy-anlaufstelle-fuer-merkel-und-sarkozy-1965888.html

6 http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C2114482%2C00.html

This representation seemed persuasive to the extent that anti-European extreme right-wing forces were indeed predominantly anti-democratic (although the widening democratic deficit in European Union decision-making started providing them with an indirect democratic aura). However, to the extent that the crisis is transforming almost everything around us, is this representation still valid? Simply put, which "Europe" and which "Populism" can one observe in our crisis-ridden landscape? And how are we to judge their effects on democracy?

The experience from the South can be illuminating precisely because the transformations underway have been imposed here in a more violent and radical way. In fact, what the European periphery has experienced is an EU acting against its very defining values and principles, while local/national "moderate centrist" political actors, claiming to be fundamentally "Europeanist", incarnating the supreme *rationality* of the European spirit, are becoming more and more anti-democratic in their *radical* implementation of draconian austerity and neoliberal adjustment policies.

Needless to say, such rationality has nothing to do with reason as understood in the European tradition of reflexivity; it is rather related to the instrumental reason Adorno and Horkheimer have so cogently deconstructed. If one wants to trace the origins of such "radicalism" and "rationalism", the extremist, anti-social individualism of Ayn Rand[7], her passionate defense of capitalism, can serve as a good guide. It wouldn't surprise us if *Atlas Shrugged*[8] was found to be the most popular book in the European Commission book club.

Indeed, high profile intellectuals, like Jürgen Habermas[9] and Ulrich Beck[10], have already sounded the alarm on Europe's post-democratic, if not outright authoritarian, mutation, highlighting the need for European politics to return to the rough grounds of "the people".

Echoing similar concerns, Étienne Balibar has also maintained that Europe is increasingly becoming part of the problem[11], rather than being part of

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand

8 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Shrugged

9 http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/euro-krise-rettet-die-wuerde-der-demokratie-11517735.html

10 http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/12/26/creons-une-europe-des-citoyens_1622792_3232.html

11 http://www.opendemocracy.net/etienne-balibar/our-european-incapacity

the required democratic solution. And how else could it be, given that major European institutions accept, support or even actively encourage the *brutal implementation* enacted by national governments in the South?

It is not only that legality has been gradually distanced from legitimacy, that the separation of powers suffers, and that the parliament itself has been marginalised as more and more elements of a virtual "rule by decree" are put in place (all characteristics of the Greek predicament during the last few years of implementing the policies imposed by European and international financial institutions). In addition, and most crucially, what the recent silencing of the public broadcaster in Greece (ERT) has shown is that we are currently witnessing a further escalation in favour of establishing a decisionist system of domination through cruelty. Distanced from any real argumentative/reasonable support, this type of domination can only be described in terms of brutal nihilism[12].

Can this Europe still claim to be rational and democratic? Only if one favours an unreflexive "rationality" without reason and an oligarchic "democracy" without the demos. Radical change is surely needed, but can this be conceived, decided and implemented without the involvement and consent of the people? Can the European project be reinvigorated without further involving the masses of the people in our common project?

The problem here is that whoever does that, whoever utilizes in her/his discourse the forgotten symbolic resource of "the people", is bound to be accused as an "irresponsible populist" or a "demagogue" and to be demonized as an irrational enemy of democracy and the European project. This is the case even if we are talking about political forces that have nothing to do with the extreme right; even, that is to say, if we are dealing with *inclusionary* populism and not with the *exclusionary* dystopias of so-called "right-wing populists", to use a perceptive distinction put forward by Mudde and Kaltwasser[13].

Once more, the Greek experience can be illuminating here: without any exaggeration what has lately emerged as the central discursive/ideological cleavage in Greek politics is the opposition between populist and anti-populist tendencies, where the accusation of "populism" is used to discredit

12 http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/y-stavrakakis-brutal-nihilism.html

13 http://journals.cambridge.org/article_S0017257X12000115

any political forces resisting austerity measures and defending democratic and social rights against the brutal nihilism sanctioned by the European Commission and the ECB (both integral parts of the *troika*).

This is especially the case with SYRIZA, the left opposition, with all its references to "the people" and its rejection of hegemonic (oligarchic) solutions to the crisis in favour of restoring democratic legitimacy and popular sovereignty. Who is the good and who is the bad guy here then? The choice is yours!

The extremism of moderation

Moving away from the various biases against populism doesn't mean that we overlook the deeply problematic ways through which some populist movements articulate their claims to represent "the people", clearly opposing an open and inclusive conception of democracy – relying on charismatic leaders, fueled by resentment, virtually bypassing the institutional framework of representative democracy and/or often containing an illiberal, anti-rights and nationalist potential; to be sure, these aspects need to be taken very seriously into account and Catherine Fieschi is correct to highlight the dark side of this phenomenon.

Still, such a picture cannot exhaust the immense variety of populist articulations. Indeed, by representing excluded groups, by putting forward an egalitarian agenda, other types of populism can also be seen as an integral part of democratic politics, as a source for the renewal of democratic institutions (as certain developments in Latin America during the last ten years have shown).

From this point of view, the more western democracies turn to de-politicized or even oligarchic forms of governance, the more populism will figure as a suitable vehicle for a much-needed re-politicization. Unfortunately, very often pleas for "moderate politics" dangerously flirt with such a post-democratic and de-politicized direction, where politics has abandoned the possibility for real change in favour of a technical administration of public affairs.

As we have tried to show, it is precisely here that we come across some major contradictions. Today, in crisis-ridden Europe, it is the institutional defenders of "moderate politics" that construct a Manichean view of society, dismissing virtually any disagreement as irrational and populist, and

thus becoming more and more radicalized and exclusionary.

Given the turn of events in the South in a brutal nihilistic direction, isn't it time to start dissecting the extremism of this "moderate centre"? One of the key terms in grasping this tendency is what we call "anti-populism", a discursive strategy that needs to be studied in its own right, since it often generates its own caricature of the populist "enemy".

Anti-populism refers here to discourses aiming at the ideological policing and the political marginalisation of emerging protest movements against the anti-democratic politics of austerity, especially in countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, etc. As Serge Halimi[14] has recently pointed out in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, "[a]nyone who criticizes the privileges of the oligarchy, the growing speculation of the leading classes, the gifts to the banks, market liberalization, cuts on wages with the pretext of competitiveness, is denounced as "populist".

Indeed, as Jacques Rancière has put it, populism seems to be the "convenient name" under which the denunciation and discrediting of alternatives legitimizes the claim of economic and political elites to "govern without the people", "to govern without politics". Can a sincerely moderate and democratic approach to politics condone this orientation? Or is the duty of every truly moderate citizen/social scientist, of every democrat, to radically.

Deconstructing the "theory of extremes"

Let us move on now to the second axis of dispute. Although Fieschi's argument that populism can constitute a distinct ideology does contribute an important insight to a *formal* approach to populist discourse (something that should dispel Marlière's initial reservations regarding the validity of the category itself), the idea that all populisms –right or left– share more or less similar substantive features, initially echoes what in Greece lately goes under the banner of the "theory of the two extremes"[15].

What this "theory" implies is that the radical left opposition, SYRIZA, and the neo-Nazis of the Golden Dawn are basically two sides of the same coin,

14 http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2011/06/HALIMI/20653

15 http://www.opendemocracy.net/othon-anastasakis/far-right-in-greece-and-theory-of-two-extremes-0

since there is something equally dangerous for democracy in the extremist populism they both share (a relatively similar argument has also appeared in the French public debate, with the equation of Mélenchon with Marine Le Pen, as Marlière observes).

If one of the key elements of populism is the construction and interpellation of a "people", then a good place to start our examination of the "theory of extremes" would be in singling out differences or similarities between the two constructions, between "the people" of the left and "the people" of the right.

Are these two constructions identical? What happens when we pass from the *formal* to the *substantive* level, from that of the signifier to that of the signified? It is clear that in the context of the discourse of both SYRIZA and Front de Gauche, "the people" is called upon to actively participate in a common project for radical democratic change; a project of self-fulfilment and emancipation.

Unlike the "people" of the extreme right, the "people" of the left is usually a plural, future-oriented, inclusionary and active subject unbound by ethnic, racial, sexual, gender or other restrictions; a subject envisaged as acting on initiative and directly intervening in common matters, a subject that does not wait to be led or saved by anyone.

On the contrary, as Caiani and Della Porta[16] have observed in their extensive survey of extreme right discourse in Europe, "the people" of the right and extreme-right is most of the time passive, racially and ethnically exclusionary, painted in anti-democratic and authoritarian colours; a "people" that waits to be saved be a new, more "virtuous" and ethnically "pure" élite to replace the corrupt neoliberal élite currently in power. No wonder that the Greek Golden Dawn espouses the *Führerprinzipas* the proper incarnation of popular will. It is obvious that, instead of being identical, these two constructions of "the people" have almost nothing in common.

What we need then is to acknowledge the variability/plurality of populist hybrids and the distinct effects they have on democratic institutions. Contrary to simplistic essentializations, we should stress the fact that populism comprises a vast variety of ideological elements – often contradictory – and organizational features. Thus, depending on the socio-political con-

16 http://www.palgrave-journals.com/ap/journal/v46/n2/abs/ap201028a.html

text, it can operate as both a *corrective* for and a *threat* to democracy, to borrow Mudde and Kaltawasser's[17] formulation. As we have seen, it can acquire both inclusionary and exclusionary articulations.

Furthermore, to the extent that the role of "the people" remains central within any democratic regime, to the extent – that is to say – that some kind of populism must remain unavoidable, what we may then need is to cautiously engage with and sublimate the first and fight the second.

Fortunately, that might not be that difficult because, as we have also seen, the extreme right may not be that "populist" after all! Its references to "the people" are, at best, of secondary or peripheral importance; instrumental means utilized to further nationalist, racist and strongly hierarchical ends. As Torcuato di Tella[18] has put it, such "radical nationalist" or "radical Right" forces, which are "often branded populist, should be put in a different category, because they are not aimed against the dominant groups but rather against the underprivileged ones they see as threatening".

Given this stark contrast, how can we interpret the insistence of intellectuals and politicians in Greece, in the European South and in Europe at large on characterizing right-wing extremists as predominantly "populist" instead of racist, authoritarian or outright fascist? Can any body point to any other reason apart from the determination of hegemonic political, economic and intellectual circles to discredit popular demands and delegitimize the European left in its bid to reverse the post-democratic, austerity avalanche sweeping Europe?

At the same time, Marlière is correct to point out that this characterization gradually *de-demonizes* the extreme right, paving the way for its future systemic rehabilitation when the time demands it (this has already happened in Greece with the inclusion of LAOS, an extreme-right populist party, in the Papademos coalition government that took over from George Papandreou in 2011 with the blessings of the *troika*).

The task ahead

Thus, the task ahead, in terms of research (and, why not, political) strate-

17 http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/politics-international-relations/comparative-politics/populism-europe-and-americas-threat-or-corrective-democracy

18 http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1477-7053.1997.tb00157.x/abstract

gies, would be to register the development in Europe of inclusionary populisms, reclaiming "the people" from extreme right-wing associations and re-activating its potential not as a threat but as a corrective to the post-democratic mutations of the democratic legacy of political modernity.

This does not mean that left-wing populism(s) now become a panacea; that, from now on, they would necessarily have to be (unconditionally) accepted as having a positive impact on democracy. Not at all; there are no guarantees here. However, the recent Latin American experience of democratization through left-wing populisms and the current "spring" of left-democratic European populism(s), call us to sharpen our analytical tools and escape our one-sided euro-centric parochialism by adopting a historical, comparative and cross-regional perspective. Our two deconstructive exercises in this text were meant to enhance such a reflexive attitude.

In other words, our role today as social scientists is neither to dismiss populism *tout court*, nor to idealize it, but rather to critically engage with both populism(s) and the current post-democratic and increasingly anti-democratic *malaise* in an effort to re-activate the pluralist and egalitarian imaginaries lying at the heart of political modernity. A task that may prove crucial for the survival of democratic Europe itself

Left vs. Right, North vs. South. The Populist Challenge to Europe

Dick Pels

In our book *Populism in Europe* we have attempted to elaborate two propositions (Meijers 2011; Pels 2011). First, that the new populism which has established itself in postwar Europe is not a simple rehearsal of "old school" fascism or national socialism, but indeed represents a novel political phenomenon (cf. also Taguieff 2012). Secondly, that it should not be dismissed as an unfortunate political incident or historical accident, but instead forms a stable addition to the European political landscape. Indeed, as a pan-European phenomenon, it represents the severest challenge to and test for the viability of the European project that has emerged since the beginnings of European integration in the early 1950s.

Since the founding of the Front National in France in 1972, the new right-wing populism has firmly settled in virtually all European member states. Right-wing populist parties are represented in more than half of the 27 national parliaments. Currently at a 15-17% high, averaging 13% across Europe, they muster almost twice as much electoral support as the green parties. Populists have assumed governmental office in countries as different as Italy, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland and Hungary. A recent inventory by the European Greens describes the "creeping normalization" of the presence of what they call "right-extremist" parties and positions in the European Parliament (Albrecht 2012).

In the run-up to the 2014 elections, we are also witnessing the opening moves towards a right-wing International in Europe. FN leader Marine le Pen has issued an "appeal to the peoples of Europe" to dismantle the European Union, praising both Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement and Nigel Farage's UKIP for their recent electoral victories. Farage and Timo Soini, the leader of the True Finns, are already connected by friendship ties dating from their joint membership of the European Parliament.

Geert Wilders, the leader of the Dutch PVV, who has long cultivated contacts with the Danish People's Party, recently announced that he would

enter into cooperation with Vlaams Belang in Belgium and Front National in France. In the Spring he joined Marine le Pen in Paris, who will replicate the visit later this year. In May he visited Prague in order to speak with former president Vaclav Klaus, who told him that "Europeanism" is "one of the new dangerous ideologies which have replaced Socialism". In August he spoke with FPÖ-leader Heinz-Christian Strache in Vienna, confirming that the PVV and the FPÖ had much in common: "Our voters expect us to work together".

Wilders is convinced that a political revolution is approaching in Europe: "We can strike a resounding blow next year. The parties that resist what we call the policy of the elite are growing fast in popularity. Parties which cherish the national interest, the national identity... The time is rife in Europe for a glorious, democratic and non-violent revolution for the protection of our national liberties and the restoration of our sovereignty. We feel the heartbeat of a New Patriotism in Europe... The European Spring is near". Indeed, it is becoming increasingly likely that the 2014 elections will turn around a stark yes-or-no vote about Europe; perhaps 2014 will also produce the most anti-European parliament to date.

Diversity of the Populist Challenge

Undeniably, then, right-wing populism offers a much more serious challenge to the theory and practice of liberal democracies than is often acknowledged, particularly on the (green) left. Instead of being alien to our political traditions, it comes much closer than expected, forcing us to reinvent our settled conceptions of freedom, democracy, identity and tolerance. To mention just one example: instead of being simply anti-democratic, populist parties have initiated and intensified a Europe-wide debate (perhaps most acute with regard to the tendency towards authoritarianism in present-day Hungary) about the true meaning of democracy: is it identical with majority rule (people's democracy, the unity of the popular will) or do we favor a liberal democracy of constitutional checks and balances and respect for minority opinions and rights?

Right-wing populism also offers a special challenge to us greens – not merely because *leftwing* populism undeniably forms part of our ideological origins and still remains present in our political genes ("power to the people!"). The green-left and the right-wing populist movements are intercon-

nected in unexpected ways, since they represent adversarial sides of the cultural politics which (at least in the European Northwest) has emerged in the wake of the educational and meritocratic revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s. In sociological terms, they are joint products of a new sociopolitical divide which has emerged in the European post-industrial economies around the differential access to cultural capital as strategic resource: that between higher and lower educated groups. Both movements hence also share a tendency to dilute or move beyond traditional materialist left vs. right issues, in order to politicize post-materialist issues such as immigration, nationality, identity, culture and religion. But, of course, they remain ideological opposites in this new field of cultural politics, particularly with regard to the three skepticisms which have been successfully cultivated by the populist right: integration skepticism (the notion that "strangers" cannot be absorbed into "our" indigenous culture), euroskepticism and climate skepticism.

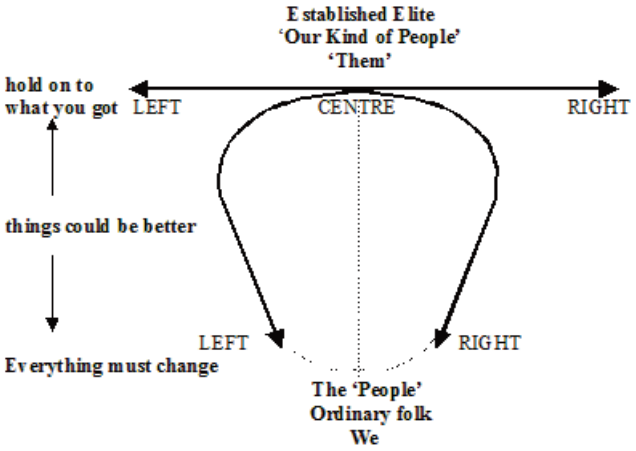
Lots of energy may be spent in pondering over the most adequate definition of populism. In order to save time, let me subscribe to the well-established view of populism as a "thin-centered" ideology, which considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: an allegedly pure, homogeneous and oppressed "people" and a corrupted "elite", implying that politics should express the "general will" of the people (a.o. Mudde 2004). This leaves ample room for adding various definitional framings and "fillings" which put more flesh on this bare but significant definition. Populist subtypes may vary according to the particular groups that are included in or excluded from "the people". On this reading, the "thin" definition of populism is close to the notion of political style, likewise mediating between mere "form" and "thick" ideological content (Corner & Pels 2003).

In the present context, I will hence prefer to emphasize and explore the sheer diversity which characterizes the family of populist parties across the political space of Europe. For this purpose, I propose to elaborate a threefold differentiation: 1. between leftwing and right-wing populism; 2. between first and second generations of (postwar) populist movements, and 3. between Northwestern and Southeastern varieties of populism.

Left vs. right populism

The first distinction implies that populism also features strong leftwing traditions, including significant affinities between left and right. Among these feature strong anti-elite, anti-political party and antibureaucratic sentiments – cf. Grillo's "vaffanculi tutti!" or Mélenchon's similar "Qu'ils s'en aillent tous!" – and a penchant for direct popular democracy, especially for the referendum. In quite a few cases, left and right populism also share a radical sentiment against the economic elite, particularly against plutocrats and financiers. In a number of European countries, one may currently discern a shift in the populist protest vote from the right to the left flank, while the centre parties continue to crumble electorally (cf. Italy, Greece). This traffic between the radical right and left can be fruitfully charted by replacing the traditional one-dimensional "wing" model of the political spectrum by an alternative two-dimensional "horseshoe" model:

Populism in the horseshoe



The horseshoe adds a second dimension which cross-cuts the traditional left vs. right "ideational" opposition in order to thematize more emotionally charged or temperamental differences separating "status quo-ism" or quietism from reformist and radical-revolutionary attitudes. It is sufficiently open on its "south side" to permit traditional distinctions between left and right radicalism to become blurred. Indeed, some new strands of populism,

such as the German Piratenpartei, Grillo's Five Star Movement in Italy and the Palikot movement in Poland are not easy identifiable in straighforward left vs. right terms.

Many right-wing parties wed nationalist and conservative values to left-leaning economic policies in defence of the traditional welfare state, such as the Danish People's Party, the Dutch PVV, the True Finns, the Front National, UKIP, and even Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece. "Neither left nor right, Front National!" sounds not too different from the early slogan raised by the German Grünen: "Nicht links, nicht rechts, sonder vorn!" ("Not left, not right, but forward!"). The maritime version was brandished by the Dutch populist leader Rita Verdonk, former leader of a now defunct party called Pride in the Netherlands: "Niet links, niet rechts, maar recht door zee" – meaning both "straightforward" and "forward into the sea".

Rather than maximizing and dramatizing the opposition between left and right populisms in terms of political good vs. political evil, the horseshoe model permits us to trace continuities without blurring the obvious differences (to compare is not the same as to equate). Of course, one should remain aware that such comparisons may function to discredit and "demonize" radical leftwing challenges to the European status quo and national elites, as premeditated by the "theory of the two extremes" or the "unified theory of extremism" which is currently wielded by the ruling party New Democracy in Greece against its rival Syriza (Marlière 2013; Katsambekis & Stavrakakis 2013). Rather than representing a political disease, populism can indeed function both as a threat and a corrective to democracy (Taguieff 2012). But this fact does not rule out acknowledgment of significant similarities between leftwing and right-wing populism. Both types, for example, are prone to defend a form of radical (or "literal") democracy which roots in the principles of popular sovereignty, majority rule and national unity. In this respect, populism is not at odds with democracy per se, but with the *liberal* democracy of checks and balances, political representation, and the pluralist defence of minority rights (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Pels 2013).

Syriza and Golden Dawn

Though painful to some observers, the comparison between left-radical Syriza and neofascist Golden Dawn in Greece cannot be ruled out of bounds (Doxiadis & Matzaganis 2012; for the opposite view see Anastasakis 2012; Katzambekis 2012). Both parties tend to mobilize the sovereignty of a supposedly unified Greek people against both national and European elites, the troika and the politics of austerity. Golden Dawn, of course, immediately pictures "the people" in racist, nationalistic and xenophobic terms, while Syriza favours a more social, democratic and inclusive version of national sovereignty. In doing so, it shows traces of continuity with the leftwing national populism of early Pasok, which long held an anti-western, anti-imperialist and anti-EU stance, adopting the same slogan "Greece for the Greeks" which is currently cultivated by the radical right.

Hence, there exist closer affinities between radical left and radical right than for example Katsambekis (2012) is comfortable with. His argument that the role of the people in the Golden Dawn discourse is secondary if not opportunistic, since it is focused on nation and race, appropriates the positive term "people" for the left while denying it to the right, in a classical gesture of definitional splitting (Pels 2013). "We stand with the Greek people who have been driven to poverty and despair by the imposition of the genocidal IMF and EU austerity policies that are decimating the population and turning Greece into a slave state". Could this statement on the website of the New York branch of Golden Dawn also not occur on that of Syriza?

Political scientist Stella Lodi of the Panteion University of Athens has described Golden Dawn as casting itself "as a political group of "people for the people", wanting "to create a country that is going to take care of the people". In her estimate, the Golden Dawn vote is in large degree a protest vote, coming from those feeling against the political establishment, which has pushed the austerity measures too far. Blaming immigrants of course plays into that, but immigration may not have been the key reason for voting for the party: "Rather, it was because their stance was nationalistic. Their focus was on Greece... Voting [for GD] was not just a reaction to immigration or illegal immigration but a reaction to the political status quo" (Lodi 2012).

This view may play down the danger, since GD leader Michaloliakos has in the past openly praised Hitler, embraced national socialism, antisemitism

and white supremacy ("we are racist and nationalist and we are not hiding that"). Katsambekis is right in emphasizing that Syriza's "interpellation" of the Greek people is crucially different. But by defining the austerity measures as an offensive of the "dominant classes against the Greek working people", and rallying the people against the international troika and the national elite of political "technocrats", Syriza flirts with a similar anti-establishment register. (Meanwhile, Syriza's July Congress has voted to defeat its Left Platform's call for a "second wave of radicalization", including the total repudiation the national debt, the nationalization of banks and the economy, and a rupture with the eurozone and the EU. In doing so, its has opted for a more moderate and realistic course).

While the radical right frames the people in nationalistic and racial terms (ethnic Greeks of all classes vs. alien immigrants, the leftwing elite and Europe), the radical left frames it in social class terms (Greek workers and middle class against the right-wing elite and Europe). The distinction is indeed crucial, and our sympathies must clearly lie with the latter. But this should not blur the risks which reside in *any* usage of the concepts of popular sovereignty and popular will, whether on the left or the right, and their well-proven blindness to the need for liberal checks and balances, the logic of political representation and the necessity of political elites. Pleading a "return to the rough grounds of "the people" (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis 2013) easily forgets that these are indeed "rough grounds". The history of the past century has proven to be a bloody graveyard for claims to act as "true representative of the people". Liberal democrats should hence always remain wary of taking democracy literally, in the "Athenian" way, as direct "rule of the people".

First vs. second generation

The second, generational distinction overlaps to a large extent with the third, geographical one. In terms of political culture, ideology and personnel, first generation parties such as the Front National (1972), the Vlaams Blok (1979), the FPÖ under Jörg Haider's leadership (from 1986) and Lega Nord in Italy (1991) al appear to be rooted more strongly in the radical nationalist, anti-semitic and homophobic past – a description which applies with even less restriction to parties such as the British National Front, the German NPD, Ataka in Bulgaria, the Slovakian National Party, Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece.

However, more recently established parties such as the Danish People's Party (1995), the True Finns (1995), the SverigeDemokraterna (under new leadership since 2000), the New Flemish Alliance (2001), the LPF (Pim Fortuyn's party, founded in 2002), Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (2005), and Die Alternative für Deutschland (2012), have all adopted a more civic, centrist and liberal-democratic face, having emerged in more than a few cases as offshoots of established liberal parties. The biological racism (especially antisemitism), militarism and territorial nationalism of the older movements has been replaced by a softer cultural nationalism, which urges the defence of an indigenous "lead culture" and national identity against a generalized dangerous Other which is not necessarily identified as Islam, but can adopt a variety of guises and masks.

In France, this generational shift is even literally enacted by the succession of Marine Le Pen to the leadership of FN. Consciously breaking with the past and her father's policies, especially with regard to anti-semitism and Holocaust denials, Marine le Pen has sought to create a FN "light" which increasingly downplays immigration issues in order to focus on economic protectionism, the critique of ultraliberalism, defence of the welfare state, national and republican values and exit from the euro and the European Union. While her father Jean-Marie still forged an alliance with antisemitic and ultranationalist Jobbik in 2009, Marine severed all contacts with the Hungarian radicals in 2011.

The "normalization" of FN is perhaps indicative of a more general *Abmilderung* of populism in the European Northwest, which is increasingly shifting from cultural racism and the fear of islam to anti-European economic nationalism, exit from the eurozone and a focus on the North-South divide. This "economic turn" is clearly discernible in the recent subsitution by Geert Wilders of Europe for Islam and "Brussels" for "Mecca" as his main targets of attack. In this "enemy swap", the defence of Dutch national culture and identity against creeping Islamization is largely replaced by the defence of hard-working Dutch taxpayers against "lazy" and "corrupt" Southern countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Spain.

As a result of the bank insolvency and sovereign debt crisis in Europe, political attention has increasingly shifted from cultural to economic issues and from cultural to welfare nationalism. While it would be wishful thinking to claim that the polarization around Islam is over in Western Europe (remember Anders Behring Breivik, or the recent riots in Swedish suburbs), it has

nevertheless died down, having been demoted in favour of more traditional left vs. right issues – which of course tend to favour both the traditional and the populist left. A number of other nationalist parties in Northwestern Europe, such as the Danish Folkeparti and the SverigeDemokraterna, have generally moderated their tone on Islam (the SD has of course attempted to ride the wave of the recent riots), while a party such as the True Finns has never emphasized the immigration issue, relying from the beginning on anti-European, especially anti-Southern, economic nationalism. Hence there are signs that a kind of ideological convergence is developing among "second generation" Northwestern populist parties on their road to political normalization, which may be enhanced by the recent openings by Wilders and others towards political collaboration.

Perhaps the most expressive examples of this generational shift are offered by parties such as the New Flemish Alliance, which last year all but replaced Vlaams Belang in many Flanders municipalities, or Beppe Grillo's Five Star movement, which recently took over from the Lega Nord in many northern Italian communities. Different from the Vlaams Blok, which was convicted and banned in 2004 for racism and had to change its party name, the N-VA has never focused so much upon immigration or Islam as upon the economic gap between hard-working Flemish and supposedly lazy and welfare-dependent Walloons. Its platform has been aptly characterized as a "patriotism of the rich" or as "monetary nationalism". In this regard, Belgium represents a miniature version of Europe as a whole, emphasizing the cultural and economic gap between a thrifty, hard-working and honest North and a lazy, parasitical South – a cultural-geographical divide which is also replicated in Italian and to some extent in French domestic politics.

North vs. South

This third divide –across a broad diagonal running from Germany and the Netherlands to Greece and Cyprus, but also visible in residual form in the old antagonism between Germany and France– highlights some major differences between Northwestern and Southeastern brands of populism. While liberal and economic individualism have become major building blocks of national identity (and hence also of national populism) in at least some Northwestern countries, populisms in the Southeast tend to gravitate towards more traditional collectivist and reactionary forms of nationalism, which are closer to the parties of the first than to those of the second gen-

eration – if they do not simply revive the racist radicalism of the thirties, as in the cases of Jobbik, Ataka, the Slovakian National Party and Golden Dawn.

The political diagonal not merely highlights a contrast between cooler and warmer climates, but also contrasts the old democratic core of Europe's founding nations with those in the former southern and eastern periphery which still suffer from their not-too-distant legacy of right-wing and left-wing totalitarianism. Even though populist parties have participated in governments in the Northwest, the incidence of what one might call "governmental populism" is far greater in the southern and eastern countries: cf. the successive Berlusconi governments in Italy, the regime of the Kaczynski brothers in Poland, the presidency of Vaclav Klaus (but also his successor Milos Zeman) in the Czech Republic, the authoritarian Orbán government in Hungary, and the current regimes in Romania and Bulgaria. The comparative softening of the anti-immigrant and anti-islamic stance as a result of the "economic turn" in the Northwest is counterbalanced by more classically xenophobic responses to the economic crisis in the Southeast. Many Southeastern parties still tend to culturalize economic issues, reconfiguring victims of the economic crisis as victims of a cultural invasion by illegal "foreigners".

Not the least disconcerting effect of the more collectivist or "national-socialist" bent of southeastern populism, as opposed tot the more liberal, market-oriented tendencies of the northwestern parties, is that the latter are without exception skeptical about climate change, while the former embrace something like a "green" or "ecological populism". Defence of the integrity of the homeland (*Heimat*) routinely weds the defence of the purity of the (blood of the) *Volk* to the defence of the national soil, national ecosystems and the national landscape. Hungarian Jobbik is not merely anti-semitic, anti-Roma and homophobic, but also favours "an eco-social national economy" for which "environmental protection must be a consideration taken into account in the making of every political decision" (electoral manifesto *Radical Change*, 2010). Its slogan about "cleaning up the Danube basin" has an indistinguishable ethnic and ecological ring, quite reminiscent of similar ambiguities in Nazi ecologism.

Despite such differences, populist nationalism, both in its more liberal and collectivist guises, with or without Islam as its main enemy or scapegoat, has everywhere become the most formidable challenger of the European

project of integration. Depending on the local context, the "enemy of the people" can be identified in different ways, ranging from Jews and Muslims through Gypsies, "boat people" and lazy Southerners to – as with the Polish Law and Justice party – traditional neighbors such as the Germans and the Russians. But what is increasingly connecting all these populisms, both of the left and the right, of the first and the second generation, of the Northeast and the Southwest, is a shared antagonism towards Europe ("Brussels") as the source of all political evil, and the need to reassert and protect national sovereignties against further dilution by the ongoing process of European integration.

It is up to the Greens not to be seduced by the leftwing populist retreat from austerity-oriented Europe towards the nation as the only remaining repository of democracy, civility and social solidarity. The Green left must not linger in nostalgia for the social-democratic autonomy of the nation-state but attempt to reinvent social democracy on the European plane. Greens should refuse all conceptions of sovereignty (popular, national, individual, consumer-oriented) and continue to strive for a reformed, democratic, ecology- and solidarity-based Europe across the new "class divide" which increasingly separates North from South. They should meet the anti-European populist challenge head-on, while remaining fully conscious about its inner diversity. It is equally unwise to generalize from political experiences in the Northwest as from those in the Southeast of Europe. Fears that fascism may raise its ugly head all across Europa are misplaced. But it is equally wrong to misrecognize those variants of national populism which resemble, or even deliberately mimic, the style and ideological content of "old school" fascism.

References

Albrecht, Jan Phillip (Hsg.) *Europa Rechtsaussen. Rechtsextremisten und Rechtspopulisten im Europäischen Parlament*. Brussels: Die Grünen/EFA.

Anastasakis, Othon (2013) "The far right in Greece and the theory of the two extremes", *Open Democracy*, 31 May.

Corner, John & Dick Pels (eds)(2003) *Media and the Restyling of Politics.Consumerism, Celebrity, and Cynicism*. London: Sage.

Doxiadis, Aristos & Manos Matsaganis (2012) *National Populism and Xenophobia in Greece*. London: Counterpoint.

Katsambekis, Giorgos (2012) "Sacrificing Democracy. Reflections on the Populist Challenge", www.bureaudehelling.nl, 21 January.

--- & Yannis Stavrakakis (2013) "Populism, anti-populism and European democracy: a view from the South", *Open Democracy*, 32 July.

Lodi, Stella (2012) http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/05/201257123259482708.html

Marlière,Phillippe (2013) "The demophobes and the great fear of populism", *Open Democracy* 4 June.

Meijers, Erica (ed.)(2011) *Populism in Europe*. Vienna/Brussels: planetVerlag/GEF.

Pels, Dick (2011) "The New National Individualism", in Meijers (ed.)

--- (2012) "The Left is Right. Reply to Katsambekis", www.bureaudehelling.nl, 28 January.

Mudde, Cas (2004) "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 541–63.

--- & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (eds)(2012) *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (2012) *Le nouveau national-populisme*. Paris: CNRS.

About the authors

Daniela Bozhinova is an independent researcher, activist, and writer. She is the Vice-chair of Democracy International, an international coalition for direct democracy. Author of "The People Decide. Referendum, Initiative and Recall in the USA", "Highlights of the European Constitution", "Bulgaria into Maritime Europe", "Women Rights and Leadership Guidebook". Founder and Co-chair of the new greens – Zelenite political party in Bulgaria.

Vasil Kadrinov is a Doctoral student in Political Philosophy, at the St. Kliment Ohridski University, of Sofia. He is also the Director of the Hannah Arendt Centre in Sofia.

Murat Belge is a Turkish intellectual, academic, translator, and civil rights activist. Since 1996 he has been a professor of comparative literature at Istanbul Bilgi University. He has published various articles and books, including the "Militarist Modernlesme" in 2012, and the "Edebiyatta Ermeniler" in 2013.

Giorgos Katsambekis is a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research focuses on contemporary political theory and discourse analysis, studying, more specifically, populism, democracy and post-democracy, as well as contemporary social movements in Greece. He is the co-editor of *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today. The Biopolitics of the Multitude versus the Hegemony of the People* (Ashgate, June 2014).

Ahmet Atil Asici is an editorial board member of International Journal of Green Economics. He is the founding executive board member of Turkish Green-Left Party, currently serving as the international relations secretary and co-spokesperson of EGP Balkan Network.

Michalis Tremopoulos has worked as a lawyer, journalist, and writer. His field of studies include the BA degree in Law Department of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the MA in Social Ecology, of the Goddard University of USA. During 2009-2012 he has been Member of the Green Group in the European Parliament and Vice Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development. He has been a founding member of the Ecologists Greens since 2002, and member of the Pan-Hellenic Council and the Executive Secretariat. He served as a prefectural councillor of Thessaloniki (1998-2009) and as a regional councillor of Central Macedonia since 2010.

Nikos Chrysogelos is a Greek MEP, member of the Greens/European Free Alliance, elected by the Ecologists Greens of whom he resigned in February 2014. He is the founding member of the party "Greens: Solidarity, Creation, Ecology". He studied chemistry and has been active in the ecological movement since the 80's.

Petros Theodoridis studied Political Science and Pedagogy and continued his postgraduate studies in International Relations at the University of Florence. He further studied International Studies, Public Law and Political Science at the Faculty of Law of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Since 1990 his research focuses on nationalism and national identity. Petros Theodoridis wrote various articles in political science journals.

Alexander Georgopoulos is a professor in the Faculty of Education, in the School of Early Childhood Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He is the chairperson of ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace, and Non-Violence. Member of the Balkan Environmental Association, the Mediterranean Association for Environmental Protection, the Greek Association for the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage and the founding member of the Pan-Hellenic Union of Teachers for Environmental Education. Professor Georgopoulos is one of the oldest members of the Ecological Movement of Thessaloniki and the editor of the ecological newspaper "EN OIKO, EN DIMO".

Yannis Stavrakakis studied political science at Panteion University (Athens) and discourse analysis at Essex University. He received his PhD from the "Ideology and Discourse Analysis" programme at the University of Essex. His doctoral thesis was entitled "New Directions in the Theory of Ideology and the Case of Green Ideology. He worked at the Universities of Essex and

Nottingham and at the Postgraduate Programme of the Department of Political Science and History of Panteion University. From 2006 onwards he has been teaching at the School of Political Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Dick Pels is former director of the Research Foundation of GroenLinks, the Dutch Green Party. Earlier he worked as Professor of Sociology at Brunel University, London and at the universities of Amsterdam and Groningen, and as a freelance political writer and commentator. His English books include *Property and Power in Social Theory* (1998), *The Intellectual as Stranger. Studies in Spokespersonship* (2000), *Unhastening Science. Autonomy and Reflexivity in the Social Theory of Knowledge* (2003) and *Media and the Restyling of Politics* (2003, ed. with John Corner). He is currently engaged in writing Groene vrijheid ("Green Freedom"), which reconsiders the opportunities for a "green good life" and for a post-growth politics of moderation.