Book Review

Dimitris Katsikas, ed. 2020. *Public Discourses and Attitudes in Greece during the Crisis. Framing the Role of the European Union, Germany and National Governments*, Abingdon, New York/NY: Routledge. xii + 146 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-73206-3 (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-1-315-18867-6 (eBook), £ 120 / € 33.29

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Do not let this title mislead you to think that this collective volume is merely concerned with describing how Greek society spoke and thought about the Greek euro/debt crisis. The authors actually use Greece as a meaningful case study for the impact of wider pressures and shifts weighing upon the European Union (EU) and the ways in which European societies perceive the integration process and their role within the EU. The authors guide the reader through all aspects of the Greek crisis: the roots of Greek Euroscepticism; the role elites play in Greek society; how their stances evolved during the crisis; and how the EU and Germany were framed in Greek media outlets and by news readers.

The style and structure of the volume reveal that many of its authors have a background in Political Science, as their chapters follow a clear structure, explaining in great detail the methodologies used and concepts studied and providing statistical data to substantiate the claims made. To the reader merely hoping to find a qualitative exposition, this might make the volume too much of an in-depth exploration of various topics. However, to anyone hoping to use this volume for study or research purposes, this book is undoubtedly a valuable addition. The opening chapter is followed up by two chapters that focus on the attitudes and opinions of people that mobilized against austerity and representatives of elite groups, while the following three chapters focus on different aspects of public discourse about the crisis.

Vasiliki Georgiadou and *Anastasia Kafe* provide a thorough analysis of the process of radicalization of far-right activists that participated in the Indignants' mobilization at Syntagma square in 2011. Their analysis reveals unintentional opportunism by these previously non-active citizens with a right-wing orientation, as it were their feelings of injustice over the economic crisis that mobilized them as part of the Indignants' protests. However, eventually their mobilization became their vehicle for voicing deeper dissatisfaction towards the political elites, the democratic system and their own underlying nationalist and extremist beliefs. The value of this new reading is immense when looking at the rise of right-wing,

extremist rhetoric in Greek (public) discourse in the years following 2011, which eventually even institutionalized itself when the far-right, neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party won 21 seats in the 2012 election. By digging deeper in the distinction between the typical, left-wing protesters versus the atypical, right-wing activists at the 2011 Syntagma protests, the authors pinpoint one of the earliest public outbursts of right-wing narrative since the beginning of the economic crisis, which adds to our knowledge of the process of political radicalization.

Dimitris Katsikas authors Chapter 3, which deciphers the attitudes and frames in thought on the Greek crisis of four categories of elites. Analysing in-depth interviews with politicians, technocrats/policy advisors, journalists/editors and representatives of socio-economic organizations, Katsikas finds many resemblances in attitudes but more interestingly, is able to pinpoint which divisions occur in the attitudes and mindsets of these elite groups. As elite coherence and consensus is crucial for a well-functioning liberal democracy, the findings of this chapter are a valuable contribution to understanding the nature and magnitude of division within these elite groups, and how these divisions could have contributed to the prolonged and intensified course of the Greek crisis. A call for further research to be done on attitudes and frames in thought of the technocrat/policy advisor category could have been added to this chapter. With only 19 respondents, Katsikas himself points out that gaining access to actors within this category proved to be a challenge. Looking at the precise composition of the interviewees, one notices that within this group only four interviewees are from the private sector. This is a serious issue of representativeness and underexposure especially because the technocrat group shows the most important differentiation on the elites' view of EU integration and Greece's role in it.

In Chapter 4, *Yannis Tsirbas* focuses on what many describe as the tensest period of the euro crisis in Greece, the week between the proclamation and conduct of the referendum in July 2015. The referendum asked whether or not the Greek government should accept a new bailout plan and its harsh conditions. Through a quantitative content analysis of distinct broadcast items and talking heads pertaining to the referendum on the six biggest TV-stations, Tsirbas confirms the "separation panic" hypothesis which entails that the "yes"-camp framed a "no" vote as an existential threat, by framing the EU and Greece's position in it as a sacred aspect of Greek politics. This chapter uncovers an interesting contradiction, as the "no"-camp eventually won the referendum by a landslide. Why the "yes"-camp was unable to translate their promotion of a "yes"-vote (by dominating Greek TV-stations in the week leading up to the referendum) to winning the referendum remains unanswered.

Digging deeper into Greece's nemesis in Chapter 5, *George Tzogopoulos* examines how Germany was represented in the Greek press during the crisis.

Looking at Greek newspapers covering the entire political spectrum, it becomes clear that the frames expressed by these media outlets are coherent with the attitudes towards Germany of the Greek government. Here, Chapter 5 highlights another interesting two-way conclusion of opportunism. Firstly, it was the Greek government who needed a scapegoat to divert attention from their own share in the suffering of the Greek people. Secondly, Greek media outlets understood their responsibilities being, in the end, enterprises with a need for survival. In a country where the media and political domain are traditionally intertwined, going along with the government narrative was the only logical choice for most media outlets. Although this is a self-explanatory conclusion, it still is a key element to understanding the evolution of Greek-German relations during the crisis.

Aspasia Theodosiou and *Maria Zafiropoulou* use a critical discourse analysis in Chapter 6 to transcend the economic angle of approach by looking deeper into the cultural politics that influenced the framing repertoires used by Greek news readers to make sense of the crisis. They limit their research field to readers' comments regarding three key events, being Chancellor Merkel's visits to Greece in 2012 and 2014 as well as the 2015 referendum. Seeing framing repertoires as a sense making mechanism, it is an unexpected conclusion that Greek readers predominantly highlighted Greece's own shortcomings instead of looking for external factors to attribute blame to for the crisis. Having followed Greek media reports from abroad, especially during the early stages of the crisis, they clearly made it seem like there was a consensus on who to attribute blame to, namely Germany and the EU institutions. The discrepancy between this frame and the actual experience of the Greek people sheds light on an unexpected angle of approach.

Dimitris Katsikas concludes this volume by identifying certain common patterns in thought and discourse that emerged during the crisis. Greek elites and the people realized that this crisis was much more than an economical problem, but rather a consequence of failed practices in domestic politics. Even though Greece exited its last bailout programme in 2018, a gloomy conclusion arises as most shortcomings in domestic politics have not been addressed adequately, endangering the path for Greece to come out of this crisis stronger and with greater resilience for facing the future.