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From Mainstream to Extreme: Casino Capitalism, Fascism and the Re-bordering of Immigration in Greece

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Abstract[1]

The electoral success of the far-right in Greece deals, not only, with the retreat of the state from the provision of public goods such as welfare services and security, but predominantly, with mainstream anti-immigrant discourses and representations, which have been further deteriorated, intensified and expanded during economic crisis. Over the last years, official and media discourses, re-fabricating the popular 'deep structures' of nationalism and masculinity, targeted immigrants as responsible for the deterioration of social life, especially in the urban centres. As a result, 'the immigrant other' came to the forefront of the political debate as the dangerous and contaminating 'other'. In this framework, my aim is to approach the popularity and the quick rise of fascism not as an accident, but as 'a chronicle of death foretold', strongly interconnected with media representations and official public statements and interventions, framed by casino capitalism and the expansion of mainstream nationalist, as well as racist discourses and accounts. As it emerges from the immigration histories of Europe and the USA, xenophobia and the rise of fascism under the cover of nationalism and patriotism in times of economic recession, is a rather banal phenomenon. What however needs further examination is the close interconnection between official representations disseminated through state-controlled media and fascist action. My main point is that fascists in Greece pushed to the edges mainstream xenophobic representations, further popularized in the era of crisis.

Keywords: Fascism, Greece, Golden Dawn, immigration, borders, xenophobia, racism.

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[1] *Casino capitalism* is the title of Susan Strange's book published in 1986. According to Strange 'the roots of the world's economic disorder are monetary and financial' and that economic disorder is closely associated with US state's decisions enabling the markets to operate without political control, what has been phrased as market fundamentalism (Strange, 1986: 60).

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Theoretical issues and methodological considerations

> Fascism, like other exceptional regimes, is not a 'disease' or an 'accident' it is not something that only happens to other people (Poulantzas 1970:359).

The rising of the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn[2] in the Parliament during the last elections and their regular presence in the Greek public life through murderous and provocative performances, that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago, shocked the Greek public, policy makers, journalists and certainly academic and non-academic intellectuals. Although, shock is not an interpretative framework for understanding the rise of organised fascism in Greece, it can operate as a motive in our search for the social parameters of the empowerment and the expansion of this murderous, Nazi organisation, virtually the most violent in Europe.

In my attempt to understand the establishment of fascism in Greece, I address my main enquiry on the interconnections between the economic crisis, immigration policies and mainstream representations of immigration. For this aim, a very short account of Greece as an immigration country is necessary. From early 90s, Greece has been transformed from a migration to an immigration country with a large number of non-documented immigrants, mainly, but not exclusively in Athens. The absence of any long-term vision policies, vis-à-vis immigration, accompanied with negative representations and the criminalisation of immigrants in the media (Karidis, 1996:93; Papastergiou and Takou, 2013:43) contributed significantly to the construction of a negative public image of immigrants.

As a consequence of the collapse of the communist regime in Albania and the pressure of immigration flows from post-communist countries and from Turkey, especially from the early 1990s onwards, Greece was transformed rather abruptly from a migration to an immigration country. By the mid-1990s the number of immigrants in Greece had reached one million, about 10% of the indigenous population, and a large number of them were undocumented. In spite of the fact that immigrants undertook mainly demanding and low paid jobs and that there was limited antagonism with natives in the labour market, immigration policies viewed the presence of immigrants as a temporary phenomenon and as a problem. Several approaches document that Greek immigration policies were preventative, authoritarian and repressive (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004; Marvakis, Parsanoglou and Pavlou, 2001; Papastergiou and Takou, 2013).

This is eloquently phrased by Baldwin-Edwards when he argues that "the main justification for a repressive law was the allegation of criminality with the mass-media playing central role in the development of a 'dangerous immigrant' stereotype" (Baldwin-Edwards 2004:3). Therefore, official policies coupled with relevant political and media discourses contributed significantly to the criminalisation of immigrants. These hysterical discourses found a fruitful space during the crisis especially in urban sites where there was a high concentration of unemployed, non-documented immigrants.

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[2] G.D., as abbreviation.

Restrictive policies are also detected in the strict implementation of the *jus sanguinis* principle in the procedures of provision of citizenship. As a consequence, a large number of the so-called second generation, that is, persons of immigrant origin growing up in Greece were deprived of Greek citizenship even though most of them do not have any other homeland (Papastergiou and Takou, 2013).

Public debates in the official and the less official arenas often fuelled questions regarding to what extent the Greeks became racists, if there was racism in Greece at all, or what the statistics of racism were, when Greece was compared with other European countries. Even the most pessimistic like me, used to conclude that 'at least Greece is not Nazi Germany, or apartheid South Africa and that it will never go so far'. The main argument before 2012 was that there was no significant fascist organisation despite the high percentage of immigrants in the country and despite the absence of any strict anti-racist legislation. Of course, nobody could argue in the same way anymore, especially after the elections of May 2012.

In sum, my main aims in this paper are the following: Firstly, I want to argue that immigration policies and hegemonic representations on the territorial and symbolic borders of the nation vis-à-vis immigration created a space to be filled by fascist action especially in the course of austerity measures. Secondly, I am going to foreground some of the overlapping factors, such as the acts of the state and of the state controlled media, which provided fertile space for the development and the consolidation of fascism in Greece. Thirdly, I will argue that while neoliberal austerity measures had a catalytic effect on the popularisation and the consolidation of organised fascism in Greece, we should take into consideration the banal, but nevertheless deep ideological structures, that are the profound, long term institutionalised and mundane structures of nationalism and masculinity.

In this respect, fascism cannot be reduced to capitalist crises as an economic reductionist approach would argue (Cox, 1948) but, at the same time, it cannot be disentangled from economic recession. I argue therefore, that the rise of extreme right radicalism and fascism not specifically in Greece but across Europe (Kitschelt, 1995) should be approached and analysed not merely as the outcome of neoliberal capitalism but as a phenomenon tightly linked to nationalist institutional culture and history. As such, we need to shed light on the interconnections and the interplay of racist ideas and practices between Greek state institutions, such as the police and the armed forces with more mundane popular racial ideological structures. Finally, we need to historicise fascism in Greece and to pinpoint Golden Dawn's predecessors in the state's institutions. As will become clear, these can be detected particularly in the armed forces and in their peculiar involvement in the political history of modern Greece. This approach will enable us to deal with fascism not as an autonomous phenomenon but rather as part of social relations in which state power, broadly defined, and specific state institutions are strongly implicated.

Methodologically, I focus particularly on the ways in which immigration issues are associated with the rise of fascism in Greece. In this respect, I attempt to explore to what extent preventive and repressive policies on immigration deteriorated for reasons of governmentality during the crisis, coupled with how negative media representations of immigrants as well as with police action against immigrants created a fertile space for the culmination of the Nazi project. To this end, I explore the ways

in which immigrants have been portrayed in the media especially the period that preceded the elections of 2012 in relation to state action against immigrants during the same period. This exploration is selective rather than systematic in the sense that I focus on certain particular moments and expressions that dominated the public debate. My hypothesis is that the simultaneous cross-examination of repressive policies, negative representations and repressive interventions are part and parcel of right-wing policies, which sought to ease and to reorient and, finally, to govern popular discontent turning the most vulnerable subjects into scapegoats of the crisis.

Apart from media representations of immigration issues and fascist public performances, my main ethnographic material comes from debates taking place in the new social media and particularly on Facebook. The fact that both immigration issues and the rise of Golden Dawn, particularly after May 2012, became central themes of public debate in the social media, provided a broad space of argumentation and ideological exchange in the social media. While the analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this article, I found the meetings and the dialogues on Facebook of people with the most diverse educational and political backgrounds exceptionally challenging. I was directly involved in these debates trying, in certain cases, to understand the ways in which ordinary people were theorizing and justifying their support of right wing extremists.

Immigration on trial for reasons of governmentality

Sandelind, in her introduction to a book dealing with populism in relation to immigration in contemporary Europe argues that mainstream parties and the civil society together must be able to offer a vision where immigration is not seen as a threat, yet which takes seriously the concerns of voters (Sandelind, 2014:12). This view is absolutely relevant for Greece. Despite the fact that immigrants existed as a significant labour force in the country since the 1990s, they have been treated as a problem by hegemonic political discourse and the media. For this reason, they have been pushed into the borderlands and the margins of the constitutional and legal order and they were turned into 'bare lives' deprived of their human rights, according Agamben's approach (1995). In Greece, news as follows is not rare:

> On January 20, 2013, a boat carrying twenty-eight Afghan and Syrian migrants capsized near the Greek island of Farmakonisi in the Dodecanese area of the Aegean Sea, while being towed by a Greek coastguard vessel.

> In their statements to the representatives of the Greek office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, survivors of the tragedy insisted that the accident occurred as the coastguard was towing the boat at high speed towards the Turkish coast during a storm.[3]

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[3] http://www.equaltimes.org/farmakonisi-migrant-tragedy-sparks-eu-policy-debate#.VEwN0VfivB8

Indeed, between 1993 and 2007, nearly 9000 immigrants lost their lives in their attempt to cross the borders of Greece[4] and the Aegean maritime borders are among the most dangerous passages in world. Mainstream media news for some more immigrants who perished in their attempt to cross the borders of the Aegean Sea is rather banal information for the Greek public.

Due to the state's inability to control its territorial and maritime borders, much emphasis has been placed on inner borders, multiplying them and making them more fluid. The establishment of 'Border Control Police', (*sinoriofilakes*), acting mainly in the centre of Athens, but also in other cities is part of this enterprise. Andreas, drawing on Deleuze (1992), is right to argue that "debordering is being accompanied in many places by a partial rebordering in the form of enhanced policing ... (t)hus, it may be more accurate to say that the importance of territoriality is shifting rather than simply diminishing" (Andreas, 2000: 3).

Caption 1. Don't worry Mum, here all the people are busy with us

The multiplication of these 'inner city' controls in ports, airports, stations, checkpoints and at immigrant sites, the 'sweep up' actions by police, multiplied in the pre-election period, supported by media discourses criminalising immigration, created a space to be covered by extreme right volunteers wishing in their words "to get rid of the filth", meaning the immigrants. The exposure and the scapegoating by Lomverdos, the Minister of Public Health, of the so-called immigrant HIV-positive sex workers, as responsible for "the contamination of the Greek family" needs no further comment. As I clarify in another text:

> Out of the great number of women who were forced to be checked, only twelve
> were eventually found to be HIV-positive; most of them were homeless and
> drug addicts – and one of them was under-age. Ten of them were of Greek

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[4] Eleytheriadou, E. (2007) "8.885 In The list of the shame", *Ta nea (The News)*: 26-04-2007.

origin, one from Russia and one from Bulgaria. Even though the way in which this extensive 'sweep' operation took place, provoked furious reactions between doctors, lawyers and activists – concerning evident law violations and the human rights of these women alike – the media presented the whole operation as a major success story for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Protection of the Citizen; and proof of the care for Greek male sex clients and the Greek family alike (Tsimouris, 2014: 80-81).

Similarly, the repressive police enterprises against immigrants, the persecution of non-documented immigrants in the centre of Athens and the detainment of immigrants in camps, in large numbers and under inhuman conditions including that of non-accompanied children, contributed immensely to the criminalisation of immigration in Greece. These acts of state intervention were coupled and encouraged by acts of misrepresentation of immigrants regarding the exaggeration of their number, their share in delinquency (Karidis, 1996) and their responsibility for domestic unemployment. In Greece as elsewhere they "... saw immigration itself as an intrinsic delinquency" (Sayad, 1999:283).   Soon, media coverage contributed significantly to the panic and the fear of 'the other' settled among 'us'. As is the case in other European countries the media 'played the nationalist card' (Ellinas, 2010).

Deleuze warns us that in modern societies of control "enclosures are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other" (Deleuze, 1990: 4). In this respect, re-bordering and embodying control implies that fear and anxiety are permanently dispersed and diffused within society for reasons of governmentality. According to Foucault's approach, 'governmentality' operates as "a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future" (Foucault, 1982: 789). Representing therefore the 'other', as a source of pollution or as a long-standing threat is an act of reworking anew the symbolic borders between 'Greeks' and 'non-Greeks' in order to manage domestic anxieties. In this respect, if the newcomers, stigmatised as responsible for domestic discontent, were forced out from the territorial or the symbolic borders of the nation, mainstream political parties could recuperate their political legitimacy and support.

Media (mis)representations and fascist interventions

Indeed, during the last elections both the Prime Minister Samaras and the leader of the G.D., Mihaloliakos, rallied, competing with each other, regarding whose anti-immigrant project was more strict and effective. In the same spirit Syriza, the main opposition party of the left, has been castigated by mainstream politicians and media commentators as the political force, responsible for the large number of non-documented immigrants in the country. The expression 'Greece is not a borderless vineyard', was a shared one among the leaders of our coalition government and the leaders of the G.D.

Caption 2. A militarised organisation

The attacks, and in some cases, the physical extermination of immigrants undertaken by the members of G.D., may be seen as the direct consequence of a sequence of official acts of anti-immigrant policies and media representations. Mainstream political parties, hand in hand with media and corporate interests contributed significantly to in this enterprise, seeking to ensure their political *status quo* in the course of the imposition of austerity measures.

The orientation of the media in these campaigns is hardly surprising if we consider that they are entirely controlled by the state. Both scholarly research and journalistic reports reveal the strong client ties among the media, the governing political elites and the business sector. According to a European Commission report of 2011, reproduced by Reuters, Greek media policy "has remained highly centralized in the hands of the government of the day", and that it "has been thoroughly influenced, albeit in opaque and informal ways, by powerful economic and business interests who have sought to gain power, profit, or both".[5]

This explains why G.D. appeared to gain 1% nationwide in November 2011, and a few months later, in the elections of May 2012, got almost 7% of votes. The period in-between Zenakos, a journalist of the left journal *Unfollow* stressed, "illegal immigration is focused on by the Media, representing immigrants as the first and foremost threat that Greece is faced with".[6] For just one thing G.D. cannot be accused as irresponsible: their anti-immigrant hate campaigns. Apart from fatal attacks against preferably Asian immigrants in the centre of Athens they diffuse false information. They "propose(s) to reinstall the anti-personnel landmine fields on the Greek borders – a criminal weapon, banned by the Ottawa Treaty, which Greece has of course

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[5] http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/17/us-greece-media-idUSBRE8BG0CF20121217 (Accessed: 20-03-2015).

[6] http://borderlinereports.net/2012/10/25/report-golden-dawn-1980-2012-the-neonazis-road-to-parliament/ (Accessed: 20-03-2015).

signed[7]. Their concern about the borders is so intense that they diffuse false information that "Turkish soldiers drew their guns on Greek border guards". This information was vehemently denied by a police spokesman, according to the daily conservative journal "Kathimerini".[8]

Economic recession and fascism in Greece and elsewhere

The history of fascism in Europe has some similarities with the interconnection of the inter-war economic crisis with the rallying of Nazism in Germany. Similarly, an account of postwar European immigration history leaves no doubts on the links between the recession of the 1970s, due to the oil crisis, and the expansion of xenophobic action, sometimes murderous, in West European countries such as France and Germany. Indeed, from the 1970s, antifascism ceased to be the hegemonic ideal in West European countries (Fenner and Weitz, 2004).

Due to mainstream Eurocentric ideas, these attacks were addressed mainly against immigrants of colour, but also against all non-Europeans as well as those coming from South European countries, those not adequately European. In the same line, John Higham a scholar of US immigration history argued already in the 1950s that while xenophobia was not uncommon in the USA it deteriorated in times of economic recession (Higham, 1955). Indeed, during international economic recessions, which affect nation-states of the periphery more than those at the European centre, national stereotypes and essentialist categories of 'otherness' were reworked, solidified and popularised.

Caption 3. Crisis Unearthing Nazism

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[7] Zenakos, A. (2012) Golden Dawn, 1980-2012. The Neonazis' Road tot he Parlament. http://borderlinereports.net/2012/10/25/report-golden-dawn-1980-2012-the-neonazis-road-to-parliament/ (Accessed: 20-03-2015).
[8] Journal "Kathimerini", 17-8-2012, (a conservative daily newspaper).

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An important aspect of the Greek crisis was the re-production and re-circulation of oriental, nationalistic stereotypes in the conservative European media regarding Greece and Greeks and similarly, essentialised images of Germany and Germans became more popular in Greece. According to Slavoj Zizek:

> There are two main stories about the Greek crisis in the media: the German-European story (the Greeks are irresponsible, lazy, free-spending, tax-dodging etc. and have to be brought under control and taught financial discipline) and the Greek story (our national sovereignty is threatened by the neoliberal technocracy imposed by Brussels) (Zizek 2012).[9]

Both these stories encouraged essentialist and nationalist voices in Greece emphasising Greek cultural superiority (a usual saying among these circles in Greece is that 'when we were building the Parthenon and the Acropolis, Europeans were still climbing trees') and at the same time targeted immigrants as non assimilable inferiors, responsible for the shortage of employment opportunities and for urban delinquency and violence. This anti-immigrant populism was not a novelty in Greece, nevertheless, it has intensified in a time of crisis and was supported significantly by distrustful and preventative immigration policies coupled with media panic crusades.

Due to monetary policies imposed by Central European Bank and the IMF, the Greek state, that has never demonstrated high performance as a welfare state, retreated further from the provision of public services and social security and at the same time placed much emphasis on mechanisms of repression and control. The deterioration of life in the urban centres under the austerity measures imposed over the last years by EU-IMF, provided fertile space for the fascist project. In this environment, G.D.'s understandings of 'authentic Greek' in biological terms, those with 'Greek blood' became more popular. As a consequence, they handed out food, only to the Greek poor, under the condition that they could prove their 'Greekness', and they established a 'blood deposit', only for those of Greek origin having 'Greek blood'.

Caption 4. *Kassidiaris providing blood for Greeks only*

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[9] http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n11/slavoj-zizek/save-us-from-the-saviours (Accessed: 20-03-2015).

The historical and institutionalised roots of fascism in Greece

The rise of organised fascism in Greece, apart from the economic crisis, and the diverse hegemonic ideological aspects of nationalism is closely associated with the ways in which state repressive institutions were organised, staffed and operating after the Greek Civil War. Indeed, as Papaioannou emphasises, the far Right has a long history in Greece and did not cease to exist after the fall of the Junta in 1974 (Papaioannou, 2013: 20). It has always been thriving in the Army and the Police (Kousouris, 2014). It is strongly arguable that the Greek Police has never overcome its post-civil war right-wing syndrome. Despite the interventions by post-Junta PASOK administrations, which mainly sought to democratise its headquarters, the Greek Police mostly remained the ideological cradle of right-wing fanatics (Christopoulos, 2014: 14). This ideological profile was further intensified by the fact that their 'professional enemies' were mostly left-wing strikers, demonstrators, immigrant supporters, feminist and gay activists, certainly gypsies and other subaltern groups. In short, all those deprived of the credentials of a full cultural Hellenic citizenship.

Not surprisingly, many army officers and ex-officers are nostalgic of 'the good days' of the military Junta that dominated Greece from 1967 to 1974. Similarly, the process of getting rid of the remnants and the vestiges of the military dictatorship in the public administration after Junta's fall, called *'apohoundopoiisi'*, very popular in the student movement of the 1970s was never completed in Greece. Regarding the number of policemen who support G.D., Michalis Chrysochoidis, the Minister of the Protection of the Citizen under the PASOK administration said during an interview after the elections of May 2012: "I don't know whether it is 50% or 60%. But there are many. Even if it is 40%, there are too many". Moreover, the ways in which state institutions, such as education were operating after WWII and the Greek Civil war provided the ideological ground for nationalist ideas to flourish.

Therefore, the murder of the fifteen year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in cold blood by a Special Police Guard in December, 2008, despite the shock and the reaction it provoked in Greek society, should be seen as the tip of the iceberg, rather than as an act that came out of the blue. Similar murders of young Roma or anarchists by police guns have occurred repeatedly in the recent past without, however, provoking mass mobilisations, when compared to those of December 2008.

Caption 5. Connection with Greek police

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There are many reported incidents documenting the interconnections of the Greek police with G.D.: Amateur videos showing members of the G.D. taking refuge among Riot Police (MAT) in action during popular demonstrations, the high percentage – more than 50% – of votes that they got in the departments, in which policemen voted during the last elections, the indifference of local police directors, when G.D.'s members and MPs were impersonating police officers.

Indeed, on one occasion G.D.'s cadres practised control and attacked immigrant petty-sellers on camera in an open-air market without any intervention by the local police. There are also incidents of threats addressed by policemen against immigrants that they will be delivered into the hands of G.D. to be punished, the list is too long. The torture and the humiliation of young activists campaigning against fascist violence in the centre of Athens, at the headquarters of the police (GADA), is just one more incident on this list. These inter-connections between this paramilitary organisation and the Greek police facilitated their distasteful endeavour.

Caption 6. Open market, run by immigrants after G.D.'s intervention

Mainstream 'deep ideological structures' as the underlying path driving to the extreme

The events following the murder of left wing rapper Pavlos Fyssas by G.D.'s cadre Roupakias in September 2013, ratifies Agamben's statement about immigrants in Greece as 'bare lives'. In Athens particularly, attacks against immigrants, were rather ordinary phenomena during the last years. In certain cases immigrants were found stabbed and murdered and at least in one case the murderers were caught and identified as G.D.'s followers if not members. In none of these cases was G.D. characterised as a criminal organisation by the Greek courts.

Only after the stabbing of a Greek musician in cold blood and the involvement of the Anti-terrorist Police in the investigation were many members and MPs of G.D.

arrested, facing severe charges as criminals. Indeed, after the verdicts of public prosecutors and the publicity of the organisation's illegal activities G.D. lost some of its popular support. My point is that the Prime Minister's attempt in this process was to win back the lost votes from G.D. rather than to deal with fascism in Greece. To this end, the death of a Greek person was more appropriate than the death of a Pakistani immigrant who had been the previous victim of the Nazis. To draw again from Agamben, the government, in a time of crisis, sought to manage disorder for reasons of governmentality rather than to impose order and to attack fascism effectively.

One more aspect of the popularity of fascism in Greece, less elaborated and debated, is the plethora of practices of masculinity, sexism and the aggressive manhood of the personnel of this paramilitary organisation, an issue that became more obvious between the two elections in the spring of 2012. The violent attack and the slapping of Ms Kaneli on camera, a journalist and MP of KKE (Communist Party), by G.D.'s spokesman, Kasidiaris, made the most optimist commentators conclude that this act is going to reveal the ethos of the fascists and that it will diminish their electoral support significantly. As became clear a few days later, this was not the case. As Avdela and Psara conclude in their account of this episode:

> It is certain the crisis led to a paroxysm in some 'deep structures' of Greek society, transforming them into common sense. It is equally clear that the aggressive idiom that adopts in its public discourse and practice, a version of aggressive manhood that is closely intertwined with nationalism has been allowed to become publicly acceptable (Avdela and Psara, 2012).

As they explain, these 'deep structures' of masculinity and nationalism had been marginalised in the course of the first post-junta decades.[10]

Speaking from a feminist perspective, Avdela and Psara clarify this viewpoint. There are several incidents documenting their point. Tatsopoulos, an ex MP of Syriza and a well-known Greek novelist, answering back to Kassidiaris, who accused him of being gay, argued on his facebook page, that this is not true because he had 'f***ed' half of the women of Athens. This incident is not unique. Kassidiaris attacked Tsipras, the leader of the left coalition, advising him to 'be careful not to destroy his feminine underwear'. As a matter of fact, Tsipras did not answer back in the same way to demonstrate his manhood. However, the reaction of Tatsopoulos reveals that sexism and aggressive manhood is a 'deep structure' embracing many arguably non fascists, mainstream men, including intellectuals of the left and not merely the members of the G.D. This case reveals that one does not have to scratch a progressive male intellectual too deeply in order to find the homophobic essentialist. For G.D. this is not strange if we consider that militarism is closely articulated with masculinity and with a very peculiar version of manhood that was always present in the army. Along these lines, Kassidiaris is keen to remind us that he served in the Special Armed Forces.

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[10] http://www.avgi.gr/ArticleActionshow.action?articleID=698856 (Accessed: 20-03-2015).

Similarly, in the course of the opening day of a theatre rehearsal dealing with gender issues, Panagiotaros, an MP of G.D., shouted on camera at the director of the play, a man of Greek-Albanian origin, "F*** you, f***ing Albanian a***holes". These examples at hand and many more others can illustrate that G.D. drives certain latent, deep ideological structures that are banal and yet 'common sense' values, quite popular in Greek society, to extremes.

These events, occurred at the theatre *Chityrio,* when Laertis Vasileiou, the director of Greek-Albanian origin, decided to rehearse Terrence McNally's play, reveal both homophobic and brutal attitudes and its alliance in that matter with other dark forces in Greek society, namely fundamentalist Orthodox nuns and priests. The play was shut down violently by this attack orchestrated both by G.D.'s thugs and Orthodox hooligans. Laurie Penny in her electronic article under the title, "Greece's Fascist Homophobes Have God and Police on Their Side"[11] reports that:

> Last night, Athens police looked the other way while fascists beat up theatregoers outside *Corpus Christi.* Tonight they've got the place on lockdown. What's changed? It might have something to do with the gaggle of reporters, cameras and news organisations from all over Greece who've turned up to see what happens. On opening night, when few cameras had arrived, Manolis V, a blogger for *Lifo* magazine, was taking pictures of priests ripping down *Corpus Christi* posters, when he found himself surrounded by neo-nazis. 'I told them that I write for *Lifo,* thinking that that would protect me. Instead they started yelling, "This fag works for *Lifo,* come and see this faggot." They ganged up on me, started swearing at me and pulling my beard, and one of the G.D. MPs spat in my face.

The fact that educational institutions in Greece contribute significantly to ethnocentric and to nationalist ideals and to a certain extent reproduce stereotypical gender images in Greek society (Freideikou 1995) may be considered as a significant institutional contribution to the consolidation of students' 'deep structures' regarding nationalism and masculinity. Indeed, an extensive research study examining the books of language, history and geography in compulsory education revealed that their content was openly ethnocentric. The same research also brought to light that the views of most teachers were ethnocentric as well (Frangoudaki and Dragona, 1998). These are particularly important for a country in which almost 10% of the student population is of immigrant origin.

Political corruption may also be seen as a condition that contributes to the Nazi project. The shared belief among Greeks of diverse political orientations that a large proportion of politicians are corrupt (Psarras, 2012) contributes significantly to the empowerment of fascists in Greece. It is a rather widespread belief that there is no accountability among MPs and Ministers. Despite the fact that the names of some among the protagonists of well-known and significant scandals became public (Siemens, Langard's list) they have never been on trial. This feeds into a general

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[11] Laurie, P. (2012) *Greeces's Fascist Homophobes Have God and Police on Their Side.* http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/greeks-fascist-homophobes-have-gay-jesus-on-their-side (Accessed: 20-03-2015).

distrust of politics and particularly of the governing institutions, providing a space to be covered by fascist populism. This has been phrased eloquently by Verney as a "broader delegitimation of the national political system" in Greece (Verney, 2014:18). Let us not forget that a similar discourse on corruption among politicians, political parties and the parliament was also very popular and was strongly propagated by Nazis in inter-war Germany.

The most prominent political scandal confirming the links and the cooperation between the Nazis and New Democracy, the major right-wing party of the government, was the release of a video testifying the secret agreement between Baltakos, cabinet's secretary and close advisor of the Prime Minister, with G.D.'s spokesman Ilias Kassidiaris. During their meeting, filmed secretly by Kassidiaris, Baltakos argues that the criminal investigation against G.D. was encouraged by the Prime Minister himself in order to get back the conservative votes from G.D. Through this and other testimonies, it became quite clear that Baltakos was operating as the link between the conservative party and the fascists. Kassidiaris publicly threatened to release more videos of the same kind. After that, Baltakos resigned from the government trying to protect the Prime Minister.

It is also important to stress that the anti-racist bill, long debated in the Greek parliament and among the Greek public was never voted into law. Among the main provisions of this bill, were the penalisation of racist propaganda and the incitement to racial attacks, as well as the denial of Nazi atrocities. It is important to note that the reluctance of the conservatives to pass the anti-racist bill is closely associated with their immigration bio-policies. Indeed, this attitude of the coalition government justified criticism over this blatant governmental indifference and was seen as a clear mark of their political affinities with the extremists.

Epilogue

As a conclusion, I argue that the rise of fascism in Greece in the age of crisis was not an accident, but 'a chronicle of death foretold'. Because of the domination of casino capitalism and market fundamentalism that leaves behind deserted lands, what Jean and John Comaroff's call "zones of ambiguity between the presence and the absence of the law", (2006) discourses over the national glories and nationalist pride came back with a new force bringing up issues on immigration, the territorial and imaginary boundaries of the nation, the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', pushing the newcomers further into the dark side of national purity and legal protection. To this end, new regimes of control and policing were established and disseminated in society in the form of walls, fences, concentration camps, checkpoints and digital controls driving to intensifye purifying enterprises against 'contaminating others'. The transformation into scapegoats of the most precarious subjects, those deprived of ethnic, cultural, legal and other symbolic credentials of national purity in a time of crisis is not a Greek peculiarity. Paul Gilroy is right to argue that:

> We increasingly face a racism which avoids being recognized as such because it is able to line up 'race' with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism ... It constructs and defends an image of national culture – homogeneous in its whiteness yet precarious and perpetually vulnerable to attack from enemies within and without ... This is a racism that answers the social and political turbulence of crisis and crisis management by the recovery of national greatness in the imagination (Gilroy, 1992: 53).

In Greece, mainstream debates on the 'condition of exception' and the need for a new patriotism override democratic principles, pushing those not bearing Greek or European essentials and prerequisites into the dark side of the national order of things. What further facilitated the job of fascist gangs in Greece, apart from austerity measures, should be sought in the nationalist core of fundamental social institutions such as the nationalisation of history, gender and religious education and the post-civil war history of repressive institutions of the state such as the police. The complex exchanges between media, corporate interests and government had a significant share in the production of 'zones of ambiguity'. Most importantly, the exposure of the covert collaboration of fascists with New Democracy, the main party of the governing coalition, is saying enough on the close affinities between the mainstream Right and extreme Right in Greece.

The fading of the welfare state – as an institution operating for social coherence and the redistribution of social resources – called into play the repressive state and forms of governmentality based on disseminating fear in general and the fear of 'others' in particular. Strategies of biopolitical control and governmentality, through fear and precariousness, implied a 'return back to the roots' and to a patriotic, biological national absolutism that "provides special comfort against the ravages of [national] decline" (Gilroy, 1992: 53).

Despite G.D.'s anti-systemic discourse, this paramilitary organisation operates if not as the long arm of the governing regime, yet as a police par excellence manipulated for the governmentality of crisis. To this end, popular cultural values concerning the diverse borders between 'us' and 'them', patriotism and masculinity, are re-articulated and re-activated. Despite the fact that the main leaders of G.D. including Michaloliakos, the General Secretary of the organisation, are under arrest facing severe sentences for their criminal activities, the Nazi's consolidated their electoral support gaining 6.28% of the total votes in the election of 25 January 2015. For this reason I argue that the threat of fascism in Greece is not a temporary economic outcome associated merely with marginal and extremist group action. Accordingly, the struggle against fascism exceeds the economic domain and deals with effective immigration policies and with the transformation of mainstream nationalist ideological and institutional structures which make the extreme and the unthinkable possible in Greece.

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