'The Germans are back': Euroscepticism and anti-Germanism in crisis-stricken Greece

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Abstract

The Eurocrisis has generated a deep and ongoing politicization of the EU within and across national public spheres, fuelling age-old and new political and social conflicts, which in turn shape public perceptions of crisis and the legitimacy of 'crisis government'. Focusing on Greece, an EU member state at the epicentre of the crisis, this paper examines how the European polity was contested in the first five years (2009-2013) of the 'Eurocrisis'. During this period, anti-German stereotypes resurfaced in the Greek public sphere in parallel with increasingly mainstream Euroscepticism. Nevertheless, analysis of news and social media content from this period shows that beneath this new-found scepticism towards the EU and Germany's role in it lie two much broader narratives: that of the power struggle between the people and the political elites; and that of an epic clash between diametrically different political ideologies.

Keywords: crisis, Euroscepticism, Germany, Greece, public sphere, stereotypes

Introduction

The Eurocrisis that broke out in 2009 has given new momentum to the politicization of European integration, turning it into a mobilization force for intellectuals, political actors and citizens' movements (e.g. Statham and Trenz 2014). From a crisis management and communication perspective, this is hardly a surprising development: Crises, as threatening situations that belie expectations of normality and have widespread negative repercussions, inevitably create high levels of uncertainty, focus the attention of the media and increase the public's demand for information and proactive challenging of the decisions taken by political leaders (Seeger et al. 2003). The Eurocrisis is the latest in a string of critical situations in the European Union's (EU) history, which have led to the gradual replacement of the 'permissive consensus' characterizing public opinion before the 1990s with a 'constraining dissensus' of

heightened public and media contestation (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Statham and Trenz 2012). This 'EU politicization' sees the simultaneous rise or intensification of insurgent politics (ad-hoc citizens' protests, asymmetric communications), on the one hand, and further depreciation of representative politics, on the other (Kriesi 2012).

In this context, the Eurocrisis is constitutive of a particular kind of public discourse – polarized, emotionally charged, flaming but also frequently evoking democratic norms and European integration core values - that contests the legitimacy of governments, at national and European level (de Wilde et al. 2013; Michailidou et al. 2014). The manner in which Eurocrisis contestation unfolds and its content are, therefore, essential factors for the public legitimation and subsequently the success of attempted counter-crisis measures and reforms. Yet, while research has mainly focused on the institutional arrangements of EU 'crisis governance' (Crum and Fossum 2013; Peters et al. 2011; Willke 2010), there is still limited understanding of how public contestation of the Eurocrisis is linked to the struggle of political elites for public legitimacy.[2]

Looking at some of the most sensationalist news coverage in across EU countries, one could readily conclude that EU politicization in the context of the Eurocrisis is rapidly degenerating into a 'moral panic' blame game,[3] whereby certain national and EU political leaders and institutions are invoking the public's wrath on the basis not of their decisions before or during the crisis, but of stereotypical views about their nationality being inherently 'evil'. This is what Sierp and Karner (2016) describe as the 'essentialism' of stereotypes in the introductory article of this special issue. Here I examine this proposition from a crisis management and communication perspective, focusing on the case of the Greek public sphere during the early years of the Eurocrisis (2009-2013). Firstly, I discuss the concept of crisis accountability, as a key phase of

crisis management, and identify the conditions under which public accountability of crisis management turns into blame-games. Subsequently, the various actors are identified that drive the accountability (or blame-game) process forward and possible outcomes are discussed, drawing on crisis management and public sphere literature. In the second part of the paper, I combine data from different sources to map how the process of crisis accountability is unfolding in the Greek public sphere. Who contests Eurocrisis measures? Which aspects of Eurocrisis management does public critique focus on? How prominent are stereotypes in the Greek Eurocrisis discourse? The findings are then discussed in the third and final part of the article, where I revisit the concept of 'moral panic' in the context of crisis politics and consider the implications of the Eurocrisis politicization for the public legitimacy – ultimately, political success – of national and EU leadership in Greece.

Managing crises: from accountability to blame-games

Although approaches to crisis vary in the relevant literature, all categorisations can be neatly captured under Sellnow and Seeger's umbrella-definition that crises 'all generally evoke the notion of some dramatic, unanticipated threat, with widespread and wholly negative impact' (Sellnow and Seger 2013: 5). Crises violate expectations of what is understood as 'normal' or 'how things should be' and require rapid responses to contain or mitigate the harm (Hermann 1963; Seeger et al. 2003).[4] Furthermore, crises are disruptive: they interrupt the function of an organization thus posing a threat to the achievement of commonly agreed goals and/or affecting the performance of common problem-solving mechanisms - hence the need for rapid response. The increased levels of public communication due to the heightened media and public attention inevitably enhance the element of conflict in the public and political sphere. Perceptions are

crucial, in that they affect the severity of the threat and subsequently the degree of consensus about the measures that need to be taken in order to address it (Coombs 2010). How public communication and contestation unfold during a crisis can be used as a central indicator for analysing type, dynamics and impact of that crisis on the transformation of political order and legitimacy (Seeger et al. 2003: 297).

The basic expectation of any *democratic leadership* is that they will help safeguard society from the adverse consequences of crisis (Boin et al. 2005). This is a complex and delicate process of observation, interpretation, strategic thinking, communication, and learning, which is often depicted in literature as neatly linear. In practice, crisis management is a multi-stage process with overlapping components (Allison and Zelikow 1999; Boin et al. 2005). The main aim of most counter-crisis strategies tends to be the termination of the crisis.[5] It is not only the extent and quality of the introduced counter-crisis reforms that determine the success of a political leadership's attempts to terminate a crisis. Political approval and successful public legitimation of the reforms are also required. These cannot be achieved if the political leadership introducing the counter-crisis reforms is perceived as part or cause of the crisis. Although the outcome of this 'crisis public accountability' process (i.e. accountability attributed through the public debating of the crisis) is determined by several factors – discussed in more detail below – ultimately 'the burden of proof in accountability discussions *lies with leaders* [my emphasis]: they must establish beyond doubt that they cannot be held responsible for the occurrence or escalation of a crisis.' (Boin et al. 2005: 14). This is not to suggest that political leaders must necessarily be assumed guilty of causing a crisis or its outcomes. It is to stress that political leaders have a responsibility to make themselves and their counter-crisis decisions available to institutional and public scrutiny. Even if they opt for a largely 'silent' crisis

management style, their actions will be publicly contested: this is the effect of the democratic public sphere.

The media, political opponents, agencies, legislators, interest groups, investigation committees and citizens all have a say in the evaluation of political leadership in times of crisis and the outcome may be far from fair for political leaders. Yet, by maintaining transparency during the crisis period and facilitating the accountability process, political leaders help safeguard the core functions of democracy and preserve the democratic legitimacy of the system as a whole rather than their personal, short-term political survival. Therein also lays the difference between accountability and blame-games: the former generates valuable feedback that can be used to assess and improve the resilience of people, institutions and political systems (Boin et al. 2005: 102). It relies on critical and honest debate of actors acting in good faith (Pidgeon 1997: 9; Seeger et al. 2003). By contrast, blame-games are a race between actors to protect their interests by any means necessary, including defensive rationalization ('we made no mistakes'), covering up or distorting facts, deliberate silences or deflection of blame ('It is not my fault, I was following orders') (Boin et al. 2005: 103; Brändrström and Kuipers 2003). Crucially, crises are a test for 'the democratic authenticity of the governance systems' in which they occur (Boin et al. 2005: 111-112). Whether the crisis accountability process aims for 'truth-finding dialogue' or descends into 'inquisition and blame games' will serve as a proxy indicator for the 'health' of democracy (ibid.).

In order to determine which of the two aims are (attempted to be) fulfilled through the crisis accountability process, we must first identify the core arguments that constitute the crisis accountability discourse. How severe is the crisis deemed by the various actors? Where are its causes located? By classifying the answers given to these

questions, Annika Brändström and Sanneke Kuipers (2003) construct an analytical scheme which predicts which actors (individual or collective) will be held responsible for a crisis. Depending on who is held accountable, the Brändström-Kuipers model then proposes four different outcomes of the accountability process, namely:

(1) scapegoating (specific, low-level executive or crisis response agencies or individuals within them are identified as responsible);

(2) organizational mishap (several executive agencies or operational organizations across a range of policies are responsible);

(3) failing policy makers (specific actors at the strategic political level are identified as responsible); or

(4) policy/system failure (the crisis was caused by a flawed policy, or a flawed system of policy making and implementation, but senior policy makers are not necessarily responsible).

The type and extent of reforms (including sanctions) that will follow the crisis accountability process are contingent upon the type of actors found responsible for the crisis. Certain factors may influence the accountability process towards an actor- instead of network-focused discourse. If, for example, the future that the reform promises is not that which the citizens want; or if leaders fail to seize and retain the initiative in the crisis process (thus becoming established in public conscience as part of the crisis rather than the solution to it), then the likelihood of an actor-focused accountability process increases. Similarly, any of the following will quite certainly trigger a strong backlash from society and will likely bias the accountability process towards assigning responsibility and blame to specific actors instead of systems:

-   abuse of power (perceived or real) during crisis in order to push through reform;

- failure to effectively communicate and persuade citizens about the need for this reform;

- attempt of superficial rather than substantial reform, i.e. appearing to be making changes but not actually incorporating any learning in the attempted reforms (Boin et al. 2005; Seeger et al. 2003).

Existing literature on the chronic malfunctions and weaknesses both of the Greek state apparatus and of the Greek political culture (Lyrintzis 1987; Vasilopoulou et al. 2013; Pappas 2014), leads us to expect that any of the above factors may be have played a role in the way that crisis accountability was publicly attributed during the early Eurocrisis period. Indeed, by the end of 2013, when Greece was entering its fifth year of crisis governance and seventh year of recession, key aspects of the Greek economy, such as government debt, unemployment and economy contraction, remained despairingly high (IMF 2013a and 2013b). Nevertheless, both Greek and European leaders appeared optimistic, At the same time, the 'Eurocrisis years' governments had been following a consistently undemocratic path, in terms of both twisting democratic procedures in order to pass crisis-linked legislation and supressing dissent among their party ranks and the public (Michailidou 2014), more so than in the pre-crisis decades.[6] Certain measures deemed crucial to improve the state's finances and to redress the social justice imbalances of previous decades - such as tackling large-scale tax evasion, public sector corruption or unemployment - remained on paper only. Others, including repeated reductions of salaries, pensions and public welfare spending had further lowered the living standards for ever wider sections of the population and had in certain cases been deemed unconstitutional by Greek courts.[7] Throughout the studied period, there was thus a strong discrepancy between the reality that the vast majority of Greek people faced daily and the public claims made by national and EU decision-makers.

Crisis accountability, the media and the public: a public sphere approach

However, the match between counter-crisis reforms and crisis accountability outcomes is not always guaranteed. In order to determine whether we are dealing with democratic truth-seeking or self-serving blame games, we need to look not only at the claims made publicly by the different actors about who is or should be held responsible, but also at the ways these claims are publicly presented and justified, as well as the conditions under which crisis accountability takes place. Is public contestation open to competing views or do specific actors monopolize the debate? What do crisis evaluations tell us about the way the crisis is perceived? Is critique focusing on individuals or systems and policies? In other words, we need to take a close look at the *public sphere*, as the central locus of political contestation.

My starting point is not the ideal-type, deliberative public sphere, but rather the 'imperfect', mediatized public sphere, whose democratizing effect rests primarily with its power to 'open up decision making to public critique' (Statham and Trenz 2014: 7). Conflicts and polarization are not only expected but also welcome in the case of the EU, in so far as they function as structuring and integrating elements in an otherwise fragmented public sphere (de Wilde et al. 2014; Michailidou et al. 2014). The politicisation of the Eurocrisis and of the EU's representative system more broadly are understood as a process of mediatization and mediation through which formalised representative relationships have been conducive to but also constrained by mass media attention. Mediatization is 'the interrelation between the operational modes of the mass media and the political system. This implies not only media impact on the political process and modes of decision-making, but also, in broader terms, impact on the infrastructure of political communication, i.e. on the contours of the public sphere.' (Michailidou and Trenz 2010: 4). By contrast, 'mediation' reflects the relay function of

an actor in the communication process and as such, it is a broader term that stretches beyond the media's role in the public sphere.

Such an approach of the crisis accountability mechanism simultaneously emphasizes the centrality of *mediatized public contestation* in the crisis management process; decouples the *process* of accountability and legitimation through public debate from the quality of its *outcome* (it may not necessarily lead to the legitimation of political leadership's choices or to a termination of the crisis); and offers an explanatory framework that allows us to trace the thought process behind different types of crisis contestation arguments and subsequently to hypothesize about the potential outcomes of the accountability process for political leadership. Drawing on this 'mediatized crisis accountability' approach, I take a closer look at the conditions of the mediatized public sphere in Greece during the studied period. The aim is two-fold: Firstly, to outline the context and content of anti-German and Eurosceptic public discourse in relation to the Eurocrisis. Secondly, The focus here is on the contestation of German and EU political leadership, but I expand to national politicians and financial institutions in order to put Eurocrisis-related anti-Germanism and Euroscepticism in context.

The Eurocrisis accountability process in Greece: a populist blame-game foretold?

Personifying the causes of the crisis is a strategy commonly favoured by Greek politicians (but certainly not limited to them). As Tzogopoulos (2012: 6) observes

> …scapegoating has been the persuasion technique of choice for members of both the conservative and the socialist parties for years, helping them to achieve their own priorities at the expense of the Greek population… Being well-versed in finding scapegoats, it is not surprising that Greek politicians have adopted a similar persuasion strategy since October 2009.

This is frequently directed, but not limited to, the condemnation of Germany for 'the slow death of the Hellenic economy' (ibid.). The critique that Greek politicians direct at the German leadership tends to focus primarily on:

(1) Its 'dogmatic' insistence on austerity measures, even though these are strangling the Greek economy. This is the political economy/ideological type of critique, found not only in the public claims of left-wing opposition parties, SYRIZA and the KKE (the leader of SYRIZA and current Prime Minister, *Alexis Tsipras*, frequently referred to *Ms Merkel's* 'economic chauvinism' during the studied period) but also in critique expressed more subtly by members of the government or right-wing, fiscally conservative parties. New Democracy MP, *Dora Bakoyanni*, for example, has often stated both to Greek and German media that the level of austerity imposed on the Greeks is unprecedented in peace times (NewsUp GR 2012); or

(2) Germany's political arrogance and 'colonial' behaviour towards other EU member states, which is frequently linked to the Nazi occupation during the Second World War. Statements in this category that do not make comparisons of modern German leadership with the Nazis typically unfold like the following:

> …Our country is experiencing another kind of foreign occupation today, the economic occupation imposed by the lenders and implemented by the government, which executes their orders… we will not allow anyone to turn our country into a protectorate of Germany, as Merkel and her domestic vassals wish…

declared opposition party ANEL leader *Panos Kammenos* on the occasion of Greece's national day, on 25 March 2014 (Enet.gr 2014). On a similar streak, *Alexis Tsipras* has repeatedly accused *Ms Merkel* and *Mr Schäuble* of 'unashamedly dictating to the Greeks how to vote in the European parliament

elections' and of supporting 'Mr Samaras and his extreme-right gang… This Europe of division, but also of poverty, of unemployment, of social marginalization, bears no relation to our Europe.' (iefimerida 2014).

Another set of arguments emphasizes the pride of the Greek people and their moral and democratic superiority vis a vis the Germans or other Northern Europeans. A well-publicized example is the strong critique expressed by the Greek President *Karolos Papoulias* in 2012, in response to previous statements by *Wolfgang Schäuble* that Greek politicians may not be that sincere in their intentions to implement the structural reforms required by the 'bail-out' memorandums. Reeling, the Greek President retorted:

> 'I don't accept that my country is vilified by Mr Schäuble. I don't accept it as a Greek person. Who is Mr Schäuble to humiliate Greece? Who are the Dutch? Who are the Finns? We have always been proud to defend not only our freedom, not only our country, but also the freedom of Europe'. (TaNea.gr 2012)

One of the most widely reported in the Greek media cases of 'German resistance' is that of former PASOK member and [subsequently] independent MP *Yannis Dimaras*, who sent an aggressive letter to the chairman of the Legal Committee of the German Parliament, *Siegfried Kauder*, on 30 January 2012. He argued, inter alia, that 'thanks to Greece, Germans have been transformed from cruel and uncivilised Goths into an orderly nation' and assimilated Germany's role in the current crisis to that of Hitler and the Nazis in WWII (Ethnos.gr 2012). The notoriously big-mouthed former Vice President of the government *Theodoros Pangalos* in an interview with the BBC on 25 February 2010, commented:

> 'They [the Nazis] took away the Greek gold that was in the Bank of Greece, they took away Greek money and they never gave it back.' He concluded: 'I don't say they have to give back the money necessarily, but they have to say thanks. And

they [the German government] shouldn't complain much about stealing and not being very specific about economic dealings.' (Brabant 2010)'

The emotional message thus often sent by Greek political elites is that 'the Hellenic Republic has been imprisoned […] by a country with a catastrophic and unforgivable past.' (Tzogopoulos 2012: 7). It is crucial, however, to note that while several politicians conflate modern-day Germany and its political leadership with the Nazis, another group evokes the history of WWII and criticizes Germany's Eurocrisis policy without equating it or its people with 'absolute evil'. Perhaps the most recognizable political figure in this camp is 91-year-old *Manolis Glezos*, SYRIZA MP and historic member of the Greek Left, who fought the Nazis and has been a key campaigner for war reparations since then.[8] In an open letter to the German public, published in the Die Welt, Glezos (2013) wrote that

> '…you will never hear me speak of REVENGE. We, who lost our loved ones [during WWII Nazi occupation], do not feel hatred for the German people and we do not seek revenge…Every inch of European soil is soaked in blood. We paid dearly for the theories of superior races and nation states. We need a Europe of solidarity, equality and understanding. The recognition by Germany of the war reparations that it owes Greece absolutely serves such a Europe.'

Public opinion

Since the outbreak of the Eurocrisis, surveys of Greek public opinion have invariably recorded widespread pessimism regarding both the progression of the crisis and the ability of the national and EU political constellations to handle the crisis. The vast majority of Greeks consistently feel the worst is yet to come both at individual and country level in terms of the economy(for the latest figures, see European Commission 2015; Public Issue 2015b). The Eurocrisis is assessed primarily as a symptom of underlying policy failures at national level with external factors such as the global

financial crisis and unregulated global stock markets coming second by a great margin. Nevertheless, European Union (EU) institutions and other EU member state governments are equally little trusted to take Greece and the rest of the union out of the crisis and onto the right path of economic and social recovery (Pew Research Centre 2013; Eurobarometer 83, 2015). At the same time, support for Greece's membership of the Eurozone has remained high throughout the Eurocrisis period (Metron Analysis 2015), even though public opinion is deeply divided about the benefits of the common currency. Crucially, from a crisis accountability and legitimation perspective, the feeling of social injustice among the Greek people has been high since the first counter-crisis measures were announced in 2010: with the majority of respondents consistently assessing the economic measures taken in response to the crisis as socially unfair (VPRC 2010; ΚΑΠΑ Research 2015).

With regard to Germany in particular, opinion polls in the period 2009-2014 have consistently registered prevalent negative feelings towards this country, most commonly anger, indignation and rage. Such feelings, however, do not necessarily coincide with Nazi stereotypes. In a 2012 public opinion survey, when asked what they associate the word 'Germany' with, approximately one third of Greek respondents mentioned Hitler, Nazism and/or the Third Reich (32,4%) in general. A much smaller proportion (6%) said that they thought of the Nazi occupation and destruction during the Second World War and the war reparations issue (VPRC 2012). More than twice as many, though, perceive Germany as hostile towards Greece, insofar as German political leadership is concerned (Pew Research Centre 2013). Not surprising, then, that Greek public opinion is not well disposed towards Chancellor Angela Merkel, with approximately seven out of 10 Greeks consistently having a negative opinion about her (for the latest poll, see Public Issue 2015a). On the day of Angela Merkel's second visit

to Athens, on 10 April 2014, the well-established liberal tabloid newspaper *To Pontiki*

published a survey that not only highlighted the unpopularity of the German chancellor,

but also that half of the Greek population support the SYRIZA view that Merkel's

policies are tearing the EU apart (Pulse RC 2014). Four out of five respondents also

agreed that the then Greek Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, ought to put the issue of

the WWII reparations on the agenda during his meeting with the German chancellor.

From the above, it becomes clear that anti-German public opinion in Greece is

specifically directed not at the German people as a whole, but the German political

leadership in particular. Given Germany's role in the Eurocrisis, this is entirely

predictable from a crisis management perspective. That a substantial proportion of the

population conflates today's German leadership with the Nazis confirms the presence of

the discursive 'seeds' that could lead to an actor-focused blame-game 'witch hunt',

whereby senior political leaders are held responsible for the crisis and their legitimacy is

questioned on the grounds of them being inherently 'evil'; with that attribution of 'evil'

then extrapolated to the entire peoples these leaders represent.

Nevertheless, a closer reading of opinion poll statistics conducted before and

during the crisis, points to a deeper-running 'anti' attitude among the Greek people and

a potentially more damaging one for the EU polity: one of general scepticism towards

national political institutions and the leaders of the biggest (and traditionally also

perceived as the most powerful and influential) EU member states. Greek political

parties have always enjoyed poor or abysmally poor trust rates, which a look at all

Standard Eurobarometer surveys can quickly confirm. However, the parliament as an

institution has in pre-crisis years always enjoyed the Greek public's trust and so have

the EU institutions. The Eurocrisis appears to have dealt this trust a near-fatal blow.

Crucially, a cross-referencing of polls from different sources shows that the perception

of a power imbalance within the EU runs back a decade (at least in terms of opinion poll data) and is widespread across EU member states (European Commission 2004; Pew Research Centre 2013; Scharioth 2012).[9] The Eurocrisis has strengthened the view that the EU system is built on inequality of power and now also of access to resources. The conditions are therefore favourable for a more generalized system-focused accountability result, whereby the EU's legitimacy to represent the people of Greece and to handle the current crisis is questioned and possibly revoked.

Crisis, mediatization and the Greek public sphere

Greek news media sphere in transition. The Eurocrisis has had a profound impact on the Greek media sphere. The decline in media economic performance and journalism standards during the Eurocrisis has been such, that Greek journalists have been reported to 'operate in disastrous social and professional atmosphere' (Reporters without Borders 2013b), where freedom of information is 'repeatedly and blatantly flouted […] a dizzying fall for the world's oldest democracy' (Reporters without Borders 2013a). The sudden and unconstitutional closure of the public broadcaster, ERT, in 2013 by the then ND-PASOK-DIMAR coalition government contributed to the negative evaluations of the Greek media sphere.[10] Mainstream media, especially the highly-influential private TV channels, have been shown to have consistently broadcast one-sided, heavily austerity-biased coverage of the Eurocrisis (Grey and Kyriakidou 2012). This is hardly surprising, in a country that epitomises the 'polarized pluralist' media system model (Hallin and Mancini 2004) of close media links with the PASOK-ND bi-partisan political establishment of the post-junta (*Metapolitefsi*) era;[11] extensive state intervention and/or control; and the domination of media ownership by industrialists (Kontochristou and Terzis 2007; Papathanassopoulos 2001). From a democratic media

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perspective, the Greek media sphere has, therefore, never been a particularly healthy environment. This hampers its ability to meet the conditions of *publicness* i.e. to make political authority visible and expose them to the public's scrutiny. Weak or unhealthy media systems such as these entail diminished autonomy and accountability functions for the media professionals as well as reduced quality of the news services provided. Greece is not alone in this respect: Europe-wide and beyond, scholars point to the mainstream media being directly responsible for systematic misinformation, abusing power, restricting the diversity of political views and manipulating public opinion in the case of the Eurocrisis (Tracy 2012; Tzogopoulos 2013). Some journalists are fighting back by challenging the editorial lines of the crisis reporting.[12]

At the same time, the Greek online public sphere offers a reporting 'escape route' to journalists who lost their jobs in established news media outlets either because of the financial crisis, or because they diverged too much from the editorial/ownership line, or both. From this perspective, the Greek news media landscape has been dramatically transformed with the rise of news blogs and online news media platforms, several of which are owned and run by prominent journalists without any links (visibly at least) to powerful media conglomerates or other business interests. Such news sources now match established newspapers and even TV political talk shows in popularity and offer an alternative to the mainstream line of reporting (the quality of this alternative reporting is not necessarily better than what established TV channels broadcast, but what is crucial here is the very existence of riposte) (Michailidou et al. 2014).

News frames: 'Repent…Merkel is coming…'[13]There is no doubt that for the studied period 2009-2013, the Eurocrisis is a near-permanent fixture in the Greek news sphere. Findings reported here were collected in the context of the 'Eurocrisis in the media'

study, part of the ARENA EuroDiv project. Pertaining to the case of Greece, in particular, the following datasets are quoted in this paper:

- Political cartoons: Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the work of six prominent political cartoonists (Stathis, Kostas Mitropoulos, Dimitris Hantzopoulos, Giannis Kalaitzis, Ilias Makris and Andreas Petroulakis) over a period of four constructed weeks (dates randomly selected) in 2009-2011. In total, 172 cartoons were collected, of which 120 were about the Eurocrisis. Only 18 portrayed Germany or a German official in a negative light and only four had a Nazi theme.

- RSS feeds: 183,128 news feeds collected from the politics and economy sections of the top five news websites in Greece (according to Alexa.com rankings): in.gr, protothema.gr, newsit.gr, newsbeast.gr, zougla.gr, over the period January-August 2012. Of these, 104,382 were relevant to the Eurocrisis and were further quantitatively coded. Angela Merkel was mentioned in 1445 news feeds, while the Troika (IMF, European Commission, European Central Bank all together or separately) in 2978 news feeds.

- Newspaper front pages: The front pages of all 31 newspapers of national circulation at the time of Angela Merkel's two visits in Athens (9 October 2012 and 11 April 2014) were coded to determine the visibility of the German chancellor's visit in print media and the framing of the events (positive/negative; mention of war reparations). Our sampling stretched over a two-day period for each visit (date of visit and following day) which yielded 89 newspaper front pages in total. 77 of these mentioned the chancellor's visit and in 43, the visit was the main front-page news. The issue of WWII reparations appeared in only two front pages in 2012 and in eight in 2014.

- 364 online news articles and accompanying reader comments from two of the most popular online news media (according to Alexa.com rankings) during the period 2010-2012, namely protothema.gr and zougla.gr. Articles were collected in relation to three specific Eurocrisis events: the agreement on Greece's first loan ('bail-out) and establishment of the EFSF in May 2010; the 2011 announcement by then-Prime Minister of Greece, George Papandreou, of a referendum on whether Greece would accept a second loan agreement (the actual question of the referendum was never clarified, but when announced, the other EU leaders made it clear that any referendum would ultimately affect Greece's Eurozone membership regardless of how the question would be formulated); and the ratification by the German parliament of the second loan agreement for Greece in December 2012.

Longitudinal and event-based analysis of the above data[14] shows that, overall, technocratic and political elite actors (i.e. political actors in decision-making positions) dominate media coverage of the Eurocrisis in professional news platforms and their public statements virtually never contain any critique or hint of doubt of their own actions. Greek journalists largely opt for seemingly 'neutral' crisis reporting that simply presents the actions of various decision-makers as facts rather than provide commentary or analysis of those. The technocratic hegemony discourse thus remains virtually unchallenged. There is, however, a distinct divide among professional journalism sources, which runs in two dimensions. Firstly, there is a divide between pro- and anti- 'bail-out' agreement news outlets,[15] with very few news sources offering pluralistic coverage that allows both sides to be heard. Those that support the 'bail-out' reforms are also pro-government and supportive of the actions and demands of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the

three institutions that form Greece's international lenders and are most commonly referred to as 'the Troika'). Secondly, there is a divide between internet-only news sources and news media with a dual online-offline presence (print media, TV), with the former largely falling under the anti-'bail-out' block. Since the media provide the structure for the public sphere, it follows that the Greek public sphere is a divided space; the extent to which a member of the public will be exposed to technocratic hegemony discourse, or competing views about the Eurocrisis depends not only on their preference for online or offline news but also on the political views they and their preferred newspaper supports.

Sensationalist framing with strong anti-German, Nazi connotations is actually not that prominent. In fact, the vast majority of news feeds and complete articles referring to the Eurocrisis (80% of all complete articles coded and 70% of the RSS feeds) have a national perspective. We can broadly classify articles with a national perspective under two categories: those that highlight a 'national interest' angle of specific EU politics events or developments, such as news items in Greek online media covering the establishment of the EFSF mechanism and discussing the implications of this for Greece's economy and fiscal policy; and those that turn specific EU events or developments into a backdrop story for national politics, particularly inter and intra-party conflicts. Critique on German or EU leadership may be present in such articles, but then it tends to focus on the specific decisions or statements rather than portray the German chancellor or any other EU leader as a Nazi. During the studied period 2010-2013, he news sources that can be classified as anti-German 'moral panic' instigators fall mostly, though by no means exclusively, under either the nationalist/extreme-right side of the political ideology spectrum or the sensationalist tabloid type of journalism. The former tend to be low-circulation newspapers offering a curious mixture of

religious, apocalyptic analysis of current events, conspiracy theories about extra-terrestrials, strong anti-Semitism and of course strong anti-government and anti-German rhetoric based on the WWII experience. The latter pose a bigger challenge, in that they are popular with the public, have a 'mainstream news' reporting style and their anti-Germanism is more sophisticated, thus more credible.

Readers' frames The image that jumps out of readers' comments is of a nation in turmoil that is struggling to find a way out of a precarious situation in a united manner. The Greek political system is rejected as shamelessly corrupt and self-serving; particularly the Socialist party PASOK and conservative New Democracy that until January 2015 had been either alternating in government or governing in coalition. The majority of the analysed comments reject the Greek political system because they equate it with whichever of the two parties they oppose. The ills of the Greek political system are thus acknowledged but arguments are so tied up to specific political parties or even individual political actors, that all debates inevitably degenerate to emotive, 'enraged fan' behaviour (personal attacks, outright dismissal of different points of view, slogan-style comments, denial of facts). Debates are introvert in that 'others' (EU partners, EU peoples, EU institutions or countries beyond the EU) are sparsely mentioned and then largely to appoint blame (it is the EU/ Troika/ Germany/ global markets' fault). There is hardly any mention of other EU countries in crisis (Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy) and in the few instances that these countries do appear in the conversation, it is either to remind us that Greece is in a worse position (i.e. the others countries got a better 'deal' because they 'played the game more smartly') or to warn us and the people of other EU countries that we are all on the same boat and will soon be sharing the same 'austerity fate'.

'Us versus them' Comments that make explicit or implicit references to two of the darkest periods in Greece's recent history, the II World War Nazi occupation of 1941-1944 and the civil war of 1946-1949, are encountered often. The role of Germany in the Greek crisis has re-awoken bitter memories of military occupation, torture, humiliation and heroic resistance and has brought to the fore the unresolved issue of war reparations. There is at least one mention of Germany, the German government or

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chancellor Merkel in such context in all articles of the Greek dataset, including the top commented and shared ones. Articles or readers supporting the Memorandum agreements and austerity measures that come with these or comments that convey any support or alignment with 'hard-working Germans' are instantly labelled 'traitors', 'collaborators of the German occupation forces' or 'spivs' (in direct reference to those who profiteered during the Nazi occupation at the expense of the Greek people). Similarly, references to specific gruesome events of the civil war period – atrocities committed both by the right-wing government forces and the Communists - are used to threaten or warn other readers that such a fate awaits Greeks in general or the collaborators of the new 'occupying forces' (The EU, the IMF and Germany or Germany and France).[16] The brutalities committed against Communists or their suspected collaborators by the right-wing government forces during the civil war are also used by those who support the austerity measures and the role of Germany and of the EU in the Greek crisis, to warn anti-austerity protesters in general or specific commentators with anti-austerity/anti-German/anti-EU views, of the gruesome end 'communists' will have if they try to impose 'red fascism' on the Greek people once more. Foreign news media are often perceived as serving strategic interests of foreign or global powers, invariably 'the Americans', 'the markets', 'the British', or 'crook investors'.

Conclusion

Combining insights from crisis communication and public sphere theories, I have analysed the politicization of the Eurocrisis in Greek public discourse with two aims: Firstly, to create a general map with the actors and types of claims made publicly about the causes and effects of the Eurocrisis, and secondly, to more specifically determine

the prominence of Eurosceptic and anti-German discourse.

The Greek public sphere of the Eurocrisis years emerges from the analysis as deeply divided along the pro- and anti- crisis management strategy followed by the Greek governments at the behest of EU institutions and other member-state governments. The Greek media sphere offers crisis coverage that is deeply flawed, from a journalist credibility perspective. Most events or developments regarding the Eurocrisis are presented in a seemingly neutral manner, without journalistic analysis or commentary. There is a strong focus on the national politics, with the social and EU/transnational dimensions of the crisis rather overlooked. Sensationalist anti-German frames are not frequently encountered but the fact that they appear in high-popularity media and coincide with the general public's feelings towards Germany makes such frames more powerful. Sensationalist anti-German frames are also used occasionally by politicians of various ideological and party backgrounds, though the vast majority of anti-German or anti-EU critique coming from politicians' lips is mostly focused on a vision of an alternative Europe and the shortcomings of the crisis management strategy currently being followed. Crucially, the Greek public identifies the national, German and EU leaderships as directly responsible for the crisis and the subsequent suffering of the Greek people.

On the basis of the presented evidence, we can speculate that the most likely outcome of the current crisis accountability process would be an actor-focused one, whereby responsibility is attributed to senior policy makers or political leaders and sanctions follow (or at least are proposed). The ingredients for a generalised 'moral panic' whereby all Germans will be collectively held responsible for the ills of Greece due to the former's inherent 'evil', are present but not in sufficient doses to make such a moral panic likely. Nevertheless, a focus on individual actors – be that Ms Merkel, Mr

Samaras or Mr Barroso – prevents the system from learning and taking deep reformative action to restore the people's trust and to substantially reduce the risk of similar crisis in the future.

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Notes

[1] This is the direct English translation of the tile of a classic 1948 Greek movie ('*Οι Γερμανοί ξανάρχονται*') with a powerful anti-war message. Shot during a most turbulent time for Greece (the civil-war years that followed the end of the WWII-Nazi occupation of the country), the movie features Theodoros, a quiet, kind man, who one day witnesses a terrifying civil-war conflict while out shopping and upon his return home, he falls asleep and dreams that Hitler is alive and the Nazis are back in Greece with more powerful weapons. The movie – a 'satirical nightmare' as its creators called it – won critical acclaim and is considered one of the best examples of Greek filmography. For the original film poster in English (on which the title is '*The Nazis strike again*') and a selection of links with more information on the movie in English, see Βικιπαίδεια 2014 (Greek Wikipedia).

[2] Statham and Trenz (2014) identify this gap in research and propose an EU politicization research agenda that is based on contestation mechanisms in the public sphere.

[3] I use the term 'moral panic' here as a blanket concept that defines '[a] condition, episode, person or group of persons [which] emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests' (Cohen 1973: 9) and which is characterized by disproportionality (i.e. the perceived threat is disproportional to the real threat), whereby the perceived threat takes the shape of 'folk devils' (Thompson 2006).

[4] That a crisis is almost always unanticipated does not mean that there are no warning signs before its outbreak. It is more the case that key stakeholders fail to notice or act upon those signs, as has been the case with the Eurocrisis.

[5] Learning from a crisis is also a key aim of crisis-management but usually comes secondary. This is despite the fact that it pays off in the long-term for an organization or system as a whole to give this at aspect as much attention, because it constitutes a solid way to safeguard a system from future similar crises (Boin et al. 2005). .

[6] The quality of Greek democracy has been critically assessed and found lacking by several scholars. See, indicatively, Diamandouros and Gunther 2001.

[7] One in five Greeks are at risk of poverty according to the recent data released by Eurostat, but a careful reading of the report reveals that 'at risk of poverty' is a person in a household whose disposable income is already *below* the 'at risk of poverty' line (Eurostat 2013).

[8] Campaigning for the Greek War Reparations case has been ongoing for decades, but the Eurocrisis has focused the media's attention on it and made it part of parties' political agenda. For an overview of the Greek reparations case, including the confidential report produced for the Greek government see Lowen 2013. For an insight into some of the legal arguments produced by the German side in the case of the Distomo Nazi massacre in particular see Rau 2005.

[9] The issue of trust/distrust of citizens towards EU institutions and how this links to Euroscepticism, has been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Indicatively, see Hooghe and Marks 2007, Hudson 2006, Harteveld et al. 2013.

[10] The ERT was closed down in an attempt to meet the target of dismissing 4000 public sector employees by the end of 2013, as part of the conditions of the Second Economic Adjustment Programme (bailout). The ERT was eventually reinstated in early 2015, by the SYRIZA-ANEL government, which has vouched to safeguard the independence of the public broadcaster. Thus far, news production has maintained the co-operative, interactive, employee-led style of news making that the ERT journalist teams established successfully in the 'closure period' of the public broadcaster. Citizens will also have a direct say in the evaluation of the ERT, through the recently-announced Social Control Councils (SCCs). Any citizen or civil society organization can apply to become a member of their regional SCC, whose role is to communicate to the Board of Directors their views on the content of the ERT's program, to make recommendations for the proper functioning of the ERT and to monitor the compliance of the ERT's operations with the obligations envisaged in its founding manifesto.

[11] Metapolitefsi is the period that started with the restoration of democracy in 1974 and ended with the collapse of the PASOK-ND bi-partisan political establishment during the Eurocrisis years. Although this collapse has been gradual since 2009, the definitive moment that sealed the end of the Metapolitefsi was 25th January 2015, when SYRIZA won the national elections and formed the first-ever left wing government in Greece (albeit in coalition with the smaller, right-wing populist party Independent Greeks-ANEL).

[12] One example is the case of Greek journalist Kostas Vaxevanis, who published the infamous 'Lagarde list' of potential Greek tax evaders against the intentions of the Greek government, who were apparently trying to 'bury' the case and prevent investigations. Such has been the notoriety and impact of the Lagarde list scandal on international public discourse that the Financial Times now include it in their influential Lexicon of 'economic, financial and business terms' (Financial Times Lexicon 2014).

[13] Political cartoon by Dimitris Hantzopoulos (2012) depicting former Prime Minister of Greece *Antonis Samaras* on the roof of the Greek Parliament in a Messiah pose.

[14] All quantitative coding was carried out with DiscoverText, while for the qualitative analysis we followed a combined discourse and concept mapping approach. The concept-mapping component was carried out using Leximancer. For more details on the sampling strategy, quantitative and qualitative coding, as well as validity and reliability scores, see Michailidou et al. 2014.

[15] The more common terms used to define the two opposing opinion camps are pro- and anti-Memorandum, after the Memoranda of Understanding that accompany the loan agreements by the EU, the IMF and the European Central Bank that the Greek government has signed.

[16] For a concise history of Greece's civil war years and the atrocities committed by both warring sides see Close 2013; Hamilakis, 2002; Mazower 2000 and Voglis 2002.