

MAPPING  
**ULTRA-RIGHT  
EXTREMISM,**  
XENOPHOBIA and  
**RACISM**  
within the Greek  
State Apparatus

**Edited and with an Introduction**  
.....  
**by Dimitris Christopoulos**  
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ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG

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**Edited and with an Introduction**

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**by Dimitris Christopoulos**  
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# Introduction

Dimitris Christopoulos  
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## 1/ WHY THIS STUDY?

A year and a half ago, in October 2012, when we first decided to conduct and publish this study, the context was different. Opinion polls showed Golden Dawn solidifying the support of a double-digit share of the electorate. The police were accused of collaborating with or at best tolerating Golden Dawn. The government strongly denied the problem and did not hesitate to admonish critics who said otherwise. When a major British newspaper raised accusations of official tolerance of Golden Dawn<sup>1</sup>, it was threatened with a lawsuit by the Greek Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, who now leads the hunt against Golden Dawn. Confounding standards of rule of law, the judiciary seemed little concerned with the crimes perpetrated by members of the organization. It was not only that cases involving members of Golden Dawn dragged on indefinitely. Greek judges also refused tenaciously to do what they now find simple: to connect these criminal acts in a comprehensive prosecution strategy. What the authorities have done in recent months, all too easily yet all too belatedly, is to designate Golden Dawn as a “criminal” organization under the relevant article of the Greek Penal Code. The great victory of the Greek Nazi organization had been in the fear it inspired, but Greek society was fearful because the Greek State did not seem willing to confront the issue. Official inaction was neither a matter of political neutrality nor a product of bureaucratic indifference. It was in part related to the fact that certain affinities were hard to cover up. Naturally these affinities, within the Greek political apparatus itself, tend to appear to varying degrees and different ways.

In autumn 2012, when the bishop of Piraeus joined the Golden Dawn vice-chief in a legal filing against “blasphemous” theater actors, some were worried and some protested, but none seemed ready to take serious action, notwithstanding the political parties of the Left and a few human rights organizations. The Church, an inextricable participant in public power, a virtual State within the State, never practically underwent a process of political cleansing during the Greek transition period after 1974 (the “Changeover”), as the public administration did. As a result, even senior Church officials traditionally seem to lack any scruple about stating

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1. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/09/greek-antifascist-protesters-torture-police>

views that, under the strict standards of European anti-hate speech law, would be subject to prosecution. As a matter of fact, a few months ago, when the adoption of an anti-hate speech law was under discussion in Greece, Greek Orthodox priests were all over private TV talk shows, trying to convince the public and the believers that “nobody can contain God’s speech”. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the archbishop has not opposed the prospect of such legislation introduced to Greek law, and would most likely be relieved to welcome a few restrictions on the public speech of certain Greek bishops. The special position of the Greek Orthodox Church within the Greek State and its close ties with public authorities have not served as a factor of self-censorship against stating such views and reproducing such ideological perceptions within the Church, and have instead functioned in a rather unforeseen way. In making full use of the privileges accorded to them, Church officials actually feel empowered to speak out on just about any political matter in sometimes surprisingly interventionist ways. The decentralized administrative model of the Greek Orthodox Church (at least compared to the Roman Catholic church) enables individual Church officials not only to say practically whatever they like, but also to form coalitions with ultra-right political strategies, either because they feel this is a good way to consolidate their presence and power among the clergy, or simply because they really think this is the right thing to do. The result is that some Greek priests have successfully claimed a vital space within political discourse from which they do not underplay but consciously uphold an ultra-right political orientation. In this sense, the speech of the Church is very easy to penetrate, because it does not bother to hide. On the other hand, a very different situation evidently obtains with the police, and even more so with the military and the judiciary.

Obviously, one should not expect Greek judges to manifestly express their political beliefs, especially when these follow ultra-right patterns. This does not happen and normally could not happen in Greece, although there are some unfortunate exceptions in this sphere as well. What does happen and is worthy of consideration and study is that within the judiciary there is a constant and systematic reproduction of practices and judgments that are especially favourable to the consolidation of an ultra-right political culture and ideology, and emphatically disseminate it within society. The most crucial issue is not the ideological crystallization of extremely reactionary normative judgments and their systematic pronouncement; in the final analysis, this could be also attributed to the conservative functions performed by any judicial system, anywhere and at any time. The problem is that both in cases that are emblematic for the Greek society and political system, and in cases that are publicly irrelevant, the judiciary seems to increasingly slide towards judgments that reproduce dominant nationalist and racist views in a punitive way. The counter-argument here is that one should not expect judges not to be “ordinary people”, since such views are widespread in Greece across the political spectrum, and not just in ultra-right settings. In any case, judges are people too and are entitled to have the views that they prefer. The fact that some of them endorse racist views and pronounce racist judgments is naturally of concern. But the most interesting thing is not what judges think, but that some judges make their own ideology into a normative rule, more often than not in a blatant and partial way, favouring one side of the political

spectrum. This is why we do believe that the Greek judiciary is the main issue of this study of Greece today. This is not to say that the judiciary poses an exceptional danger to democracy, but that it reproduces judgments and views that consolidate a culture that may be convincingly shown to share most features of the ultra-right as the normative horizon (i.e., as the common view of what is just) of the Greek political community.

As for the Hellenic Police, and notwithstanding the results of recent judicial and disciplinary actions taken against its officials (whether high-ranked or not) as part of the effort to dismantle Golden Dawn, the present study finds it represents the sector of the State that is by far the most exposed to ultra-right intrusion. This, of course, should not come as a surprise, although today even the most sceptical observer may feel abashed by the degree to which the Hellenic Police is contaminated with Nazi enclaves. The very phrase “police erosion” is a commonplace even in mainstream currents of public speech, while confessions by the highest political actors have become common. Interestingly enough, not a single minister of public order during the crucial last three years has failed to admit in public (but only after his incumbency) that there is indeed a major problem. Perhaps the one exception here is, to our knowledge, the only minister of public order in Greece since 1974 who was himself a former police official, during the “experts’ government” under Loukas Papadimos (late 2011 to early 2012). This could be attributed either to a strong *esprit de corps* towards his service, to a lack of political cynicism compared to all his other colleagues, or maybe to a combination of both.

Due to the recent 20th century history of constitutional aberrations in Greece, the military takes on a relatively even greater historical and political significance in the context of our study. Twentieth century Greek political history constitutes a paradigmatic model of repeated interventions by the military in politics in coup d’état strategies of ultra-right inspiration and anti-communist ideology. Precisely because of this legacy, the Greek military since 1974 has displayed an exemplary behaviour of constitutional faith. Both its position within the State and its historical legacy do not leave any doubt about its faith in the Constitution. Indeed, this study shows that the military follows rather convincingly a recommended institutional approach regarding its position within the Greek State. However, even here there are cracks, and increasingly so as of late. Obviously, it goes without saying that ultra-right stains within the military (“droplets”, according to Evangelos Averoff’s famous formulation soon after 1974) never altogether disappeared or evaporated; nor could they. The deep ultra-right stains within the military were instead covered up and ultra-right voices were hushed. The transition to democracy and the consolidation of democracy after 1974 have assured that the only institutionally recommended voice of the military lies in institutional silence. This has held until the present day, but with progressive bumps now at a high point, as seen in the chapter on the military. As the crisis progresses ever further in Greece, an increasing number of military officers, including high-ranked ones, seem to slide, sometimes overtly, towards a view of the “salvation of the country” from a double enemy: first and foremost, an external one, which, as Greek nationalism is keen on repeating, lurks whenever “our homeland is weak”; and, second, an internal one

naturally bearing the features selected by those who imagine it. These are the subjects treated and documented in the present study.

## **2/ THE TURNING POINT OF AUTUMN 2013: FROM PUBLIC SILENCE TO TRIUMPHANT CONFESSION**

The assassination of Pavlos Fyssas, as an outcome of previous events, became a catalyst for crucial developments regarding the position of Golden Dawn on the Greek political map. To put it simply: even the political right wing felt unsettled because they saw that, even as Golden Dawn was claiming to give hegemonic expression to the country's traditional circles of extreme conservatism, it now posed a real threat to social peace. In the autumn of 2013, at the moment when these lines were first written, the limits were reached in the Greek Republic's until-then unjustifiable and unbearable tolerance towards its imminent enemy. Golden Dawn was too obviously revealed as a criminal organization combining national socialist ideology with mafia practices, until then unperturbed in spreading the seed of violence and toxic ideology within Greek society; a part of which seemed well-disposed to adopt its message.

A number of different reasons have been given to explain the political consolidation of this organization. Some observers, in a quite one-sided way, point to Greek immigration policy as the sole cause. Of course this policy, which constitutes a total State failure, has something to do with it. Others speak rather abstractly about the predominance of nationalism in Greek political culture, or the historical depths of the ultra-right's intrusion into the Greek state. Still others blame the Memorandums and the economic crisis for everything. But this is no one-sided matter, and it would be a mistake to attribute Golden Dawn's rise wholly to one factor. The political right finds it convenient to blame immigration for everything, thus pandering to its conservative electorate. Some centre-left intellectuals and parts of the political centre, supporters of the "modernization" of yore, think that bad nationalism is to blame for everything. Parts of the political left blame it on the Memorandums. And yet... it is naturally true that Golden Dawn would not have come this far if it were not for the crisis afflicting the country since 2009. The crisis was a catalyst, however, and not the cause. It is also naturally true that immigration has led many people to despair and resentments that have been thoroughly exploited by the ultra-right, in Greece as elsewhere in Europe. Finally, it is naturally true that crude "underdog" Greek nationalism, sometimes adopted even by parts of the left, has served to intoxicate the minds of many. All these factors have something to do with the current situation of the country with regard to Golden Dawn, but it is false to present any of them as single causes. Notwithstanding the pending results of the criminal prosecution of the organization and the ongoing effort at dismantlement, the Greek State and society have a lot more work to do in order to give a convincing and sustainable political answer to the social, political and economic conditions that engendered Nazism in 21st century Greece. Even if the criminal organization is eventually dismantled, even if its ties with the State are restrained or cut

off, the part of Greek society that has expressed itself through Golden Dawn will continue looking for a political outlet.

This study does not cover ultra-right political culture in Greece in a general way, nor even Golden Dawn per se, but poses a simpler question: How is to be explained that Golden Dawn is being treated by the State as another organization in the mould of the “17 November” group, despite the obvious fact that the latter, quite unlike Golden Dawn, only operated for many years under cover of darkness and illegality? What are the ties, the inactions, the ideological or other mechanisms that for so long prevented the Greek State from doing its job with respect to an organization now all-too easily characterized as “criminal” under the relevant article of the penal code? For example, why must the minister in charge first issue an order to the leadership of the Supreme Court before a criminal investigation can even begin? In the famous conclusion by the deputy public prosecutor at the Supreme Court, one reads that all it took to begin the recent anti-Golden Dawn mobilization was for a document to be sent over by the minister of public order and citizen protection (the latter being, again, the same person who a year earlier had announced his intent to sue *The Guardian* for the newspaper’s article on the torture of anarchists by police officers with Golden Dawn sympathies or affiliations). The prosecution was also prompted by “*a number of articles in various newspapers regarding the activities of the party Popular Association – Golden Dawn, which, according to the aforementioned ministerial report, exceed the limits of single events, provoke public morals, undermine the authority of the rule of law, offend human rights and human dignity, endanger public order and the country’s internal security, and expose its democratic tradition and its legal culture as well as its obligations emanating from international and European law...*”

Why, then, did we have to reach that point? This is what the present study tries to explain, especially today, at a time when things appear to be changing. This study, again, was conceived and conducted before the turning point of autumn 2013, during the long period of State inaction attesting to acquiescence or even affiliation. This inaction was unbearable not simply because the criminal acts now being pursued in court are only a fraction of those that were actually perpetrated. Even more telling is that until recently the State made no effort to connect these crimes and to expose their organized and systematic character, although many loud and clear voices within Greek society were exposing the ugly reality through a series of books, analyses, reports, countless video documents, and political confessions. Additionally there were reports on racist violence by watchdog groups, ample coverage in the international press, and international expressions of concern about developments in Greece, where society appeared to be on the verge of open domestic conflict. From the other side, public immunity afforded much space for revealing expressions of racist hatred on the Web, disgusting statements in the Parliament, Nazi salutes, etc. All this did not require demonstration: it was commonly known and commonly experienced.

What then are the emblematic moments of culmination and what are the subjects around which ultra-right pockets formed within the Greek State? How are these pockets interrelated, how do they reinforce each other? Are there mechanisms

of communication among them? Where does ultra-right ideology seem to be most deeply rooted? To what degree did the “dejuntaization” after 1974 affect the structures of the parastate? Did it succeed in dissolving or silencing these? What was the effect of the accession of the socialist/centre-left party PASOK to power in 1981? What were the crucial moments that changed the scenery during the 1990s? How does the surrounding political culture reflect itself in the fluctuations of ultra-right extremism within the State? Can we document through political research that the rise in racism and xenophobia against immigrants in Greece served to legitimate or remobilize ultra-right extremism within the State? Are we dealing with the familiar offspring of post-civil war Greece, or with something altogether new? At some point, a discussion started about the “deep state” in Greece. What exactly is this? Again, is it something new and discrete, or a variation on something old?

Ultra-right ideology is deeply rooted in Greek political history. A major part of Greek political culture is based on a compact and continuous background of totalitarianism and authoritarianism. Let us not forget that in the last century Greece has seen more constitutional aberrations than any other supposedly comparable European country. This is a country where the appeal to “danger” has always functioned as a pretext for the abrogation of constitutions and guarantees on liberties, with Greek security forces and the military in the vanguard of such abolitions. Forty years have passed since the transition of 1974, and yet these are not enough to forget the parastate of a “sickly” republic, according to an apt characterization of the Greek Republic.<sup>2</sup>

Constituted power in Greece has developed vigorous romances with the ultra-right, which though intermittent seem to endure, as the following pages will show. The military, the church, the judiciary and the police have been the “great nodes of anti-communism”,<sup>3</sup> eminent branches of a “national and ideological” State such as the Greek one was for the major part of its trajectory in the 20th century. In our harsh times, certain pockets within these State apparatuses wish to reconstitute the old romance. The impunity granted to Nazi violence, whether as a product of tolerance due to affiliation or of distance due to fear, is truly without precedent in the European context and enables the recent revival fuelled by the despair and anger of the Greek people. Let us not forget that the flagrantly bigoted speech of State officials, which would promptly activate the penal code in other European countries, and the total lack of accountability for this, have also fed Nazism. What is there to say, when in the spring of 2013 a government led by New Democracy passed an “anti-racist” bill that explicitly excluded all State officials from criminal responsibility for hate speech?

As long as Greece continues as a stigmatized country along a socially painful path of neoliberal restructuring, the threat of fascistization cannot be considered to have been repulsed just because of the current effort to dismantle Golden Dawn. The Greek Republic degenerates along with the dismantlement of orga-

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2. Nikolakopoulos 2001.

3. Bournazos 2009: 23.

nized labour in a society that suffers. Let the following pages be read not just as evidence for mapping the ultra-right within the Greek State, but primarily as evidence of the pressing need to develop a different strategy for resetting the country.

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\* All titles originally in Greek unless noted otherwise.

# Greece in the European 20th century

Dimitris Kousouris  
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This short historical review of the continuities and discontinuities of fascism in Greece has no intent of reducing the causes underlying the current rise of the ultra-right to the Greek “anomalies” of the 20th century. The political dynamic behind the ultra-right today very clearly combines certain historical features with more general developments in the country’s recent European history. The latter include the (re)emergence of neo-fascist trends in European countries after the 1970s crisis, the challenge to and disempowerment of anti-fascism as a dominant ideology of legitimization of European republics after the “fall of the Berlin Wall”, and, finally, the international economic crisis since 2008.<sup>4</sup>

The three dictatorships, two civil wars and six interstate wars that marked the country’s political and constitutional life during the “short 20th century” were also manifestations of the social and political divisions that shook the entire European continent and took on frenzied form especially in those nation-states founded in the geographical space dominated less than a century earlier by the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires. The Balkan area during the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods offers a panorama of the ethnic, national, political and class divisions that composed a long and painful process of transition from (multi-ethnic) empires to a Europe of nation-states. It also offers a peripheral viewpoint on the successive transformations of Europe’s eastern frontiers in the wider region from the Baltic through the Black Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup>

The three critical moments of Greek “fascism” are directly related to three major crises that shaped the formation of this frontier. The first two of these crises took place in the 1910s and the 1940s, and mark the start and end points of what was effectively a second Thirty-Year War (1914-1945): a generalized political and cultural crisis and conflict that signaled the end of old regime structures and elites in Europe.<sup>6</sup> From the Balkan Wars of 1912 to 1913 to the end of the Greek civil war in 1949, the constitution of the “deep state” in Greece followed

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4. Cf. Fenner & Weitz 2004.

5. Cf. Diner 2000.

6. Cf. Mayer 1981.

the social engineering behind the conquest of the northern part of the country by the State originally created and consolidated in southern Greece in the first half of the 19th century. Later, in the latter half of the 20th century, the anti-democratic, anti-communist, “royalist-fascist” mechanisms constituted during this earlier period were largely integrated into the postwar State as mechanisms aimed at imposing a strategy of tension, and also as a part of a NATO’s secret armed branch, with a goal of preventing the westward expansion of communist regimes.

## 1/ **PROTO-FASCISM: THE CONSCRIPTS’ MOVEMENT, 1916-1919**

The formation of the modern Greek State was practically completed by the years from 1912 to 1922, the period that saw the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913), Greece’s participation in World War I in support of the Entente (1917-1918), and the Greco-Turkish War in Asia Minor (1919-1922). Linking these foreign conflicts was the so-called National Disunion (1914-1916), a form of civil war around the issue of whether the country would participate in the Great War. The opposing sides in the National Disunion were, on the one hand, the legitimate royalist government in Athens, which favoured neutrality; and the provisional military-political government of the “National Defence” movement under Eleftherios Venizelos in Thessaloniki, which insisted on the country’s participation in the Great War in support of the Entente. The political developments in Greece during the National Disunion were made into an issue of “international civil war” from the start because of the simultaneous German-Bulgarian invasion of Macedonia and Thrace and the French occupation of Western Macedonia and Thessaloniki. In this context, the Greek royalists, exploiting their political apparatuses and the military, formed the *Conscripts’ Movement*, the first type of mass political organization in modern Greek history. As Mavrogordatos has argued,<sup>7</sup> the conscripts’ movement and the National Disunion were indispensable features of the newly formed Greek State in the 1910s, and as such left an indelible mark on the Greek 20th century.

The conscripts’ movement shares the same features as other proto-fascist movements that emerged in Europe during the last phase of World War I. The conscripts’ political associations brought together ex-soldiers who shared nationalist ideas, not unlike the subsequent Italian *ex-combattenti* and the German *Freikorps*. These militias also used systematic terror against their political opponents. The social background of the movement was mostly in petit-bourgeois urban classes and small rural landholders. Geographically, the associations were based in Old Greece and were led by former military officers and politicians. During the Greco-Turkish War of 1919 to 1922, the members of such associations were either integrated in the organizational structure of the People’s Party or established other contacts with the Venizelian opposition camp.

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7. Cf. Mavrogordatos 1996.

## 2/ FASCISM: FROM INTERWAR ORGANIZATIONS TO THE SECURITY BATTALIONS DURING THE OCCUPATION

### A | INTERWAR

Fascist ideas had an appeal to both sides (i.e., the Venizelian and the Royalist) within the Greek bourgeoisie during the interwar period. The conscripts' militias acted on a local level in the form of isolated groups and people who put their action and their "know-how" to the service, first, of local politicians of the People's Party, industrialists and landowners; but also, and increasingly so, of paragons of the State as it under the control of the anti-royalists.

Most attempts at creating distinctly fascist associations and organizations were dispersed, poorly prepared, and achieved no remarkable results. The exception occurred in Thessaloniki, the city of the largest and most active Jewish community in Greece, with Nation Union Hellas (NUH), founded in 1927. A few years after its creation, NUH acquired a massive and dynamic character in Thessaloniki and other areas around the country. Like other fascist groups it did not at first show much potential for mass appeal, but eventually developed into a mass organization with about 10,000 members during the international economic crisis, in the context of which the last Venizelos government declared Greece's default in 1932. During the short period of its massive growth, the ideology of NUH was a mixture of nationalism, anti-Parliamentarism, anti-communism and anti-Semitism. After 1931, the organization was also expanded to rural areas of Greek Macedonia, following the revival of ethnic tensions during the economic crisis and rediscovering the political and martial traditions of Greek nationalism, which had already developed in the early 20th Century during the so-called "Macedonian Struggle" of 1904 to 1908.<sup>8</sup>

In 1932 to 1934, NUH, favoured by powerful economic and political interests and quite often enjoying impunity from the judiciary and the police, formed assault squads in the workers' districts of Athens and Piraeus and clashed many times with communists.<sup>9</sup> After the Greek State instituted its special anti-communist law, which targeted all those claiming or calling for an overthrow of the "social regime in force", the "Steel Helmets" were often used as an ancillary force in support of the Gendarmerie against workers' strikes and demonstrations. However, this mass phase of the organization ended a few years later when the royalists, after their electoral victories of 1932 and 1933, set about stabilizing the regime. At first, they were aided by the military; later, stabilization took the form of a monarchical restoration with the controversial 1935 referendum; these developments finally led to the establishment of a dictatorship under Ioannis Metaxas in August 1936. During this process, many members of NUH

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8. The "Macedonian Struggle" that culminated in the early 20th century was the conflict between Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian nationalists regarding the territories of Ottoman Macedonia; the conflict was conducted both with "peaceful" means (the creation of schools, etc.) and with the active participation of paramilitary squads.

9. Cf. Chondromatides 2001.

were integrated in State security services and the apparatuses of the dominant political parties.

## **B | WORLD WAR II, OCCUPATION, CIVIL WAR**

Among the first who attempted to assist the country's later conquerors were pro-German and pro-Italian ideological and political followers of fascism.<sup>10</sup> As with all other political parties, NUH had been banned by the "4 August 1936" regime, but was revived as a pure nationalist-socialist organization during the first months of the country's occupation by the Axis powers. The initiative came from some of NUH's veteran members in Thessaloniki, but the organization's official reestablishment occurred in Athens, where it was supported by the German occupation authorities and by officials of the first collaborationist government. NUH formed the hard core of collaborationism during the occupation, along with organizations such as the Hellenic Socialist Patriotic Organization, the Organization of National Forces of Greece, and the National-Socialist Party of Greece.

The second period of the occupation (1943-1944) was characterized by the development of the third and most massive fascist current in Greek history, formed largely by the occupation-organized Security Battalions (about 30,000 to 40,000 armed men in southern Greece and 10,000 to 20,000 in northern Greece) and the various local anti-communist organizations that after the war became an indispensable part of the dominant power bloc – the bloc of "national-mindedness". During that crucial turn, different royalist and anti-royalist milieus started to converge in the defence of the country's so-called "social regime".

The social and political coalition formed by members of the prewar elites, economic collaborators and armed battalions under German command describes a minority yet quite broad social bloc. From October to December 1944, during the short "interregnum" period of the National Unity Government under George Papandreou, in which the National Liberation Front (EAM) participated, the anti-communist camp organized its internal alliances and secured the external supports that would allow it to engage in a head-on collision with EAM. December 1944 then saw the "Battle of Athens", in which troops of the British Empire and armed battalions of Greek nationalists/anti-communists fought the forces of EAM-ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army). Thus the first open clash between the forces of the anti-fascist coalition took place before even the official end of World War II. EAM was defeated and banned from the government, setting the terms for the reconstitution of the Greek State. The years of 1945 and 1946, a period of at first latent and then open civil war, represent the crucial link in the formation of the post-war Greek Republic and the mechanisms of what is variably termed the "parastate", "deep state" or "parallel state". These, in the context of an international civil war, tried and succeeded in keeping Greece within the Western camp during the Cold War.

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10. Cf. Vlachopoulos 2012.

### 3/ **NEO-FASCISM (I): “NATIONAL-MINDEDNESS”, “PARASTATE” AND “DEEP STATE”**

As in other European countries, the legal prosecution of those who had collaborated with the Axis occupation in Greece was subordinate to the logic of securing the State's continuity. A first period was characterized by an intense activity in the special courts, numerous convictions, and drastic administrative purges. This was followed however by a wave of acquittals, a progressive diminution of prosecutions, and finally, in the early 1950s, an amnesty for all pending cases.<sup>11</sup>

It was not long before the judicial purge of collaborators was put in the service of monarchist restoration and the reinstatement of prewar elites. While a few members of collaborationist governments were subjected to the famous “collaborators’ trial” in the spring of 1945, the vast majority of prewar elites who had collaborated or who had sought extremist political solutions were acquitted of all charges – usually without even having to stand trial. This was true not only for those who had engaged in occasional or casual collaboration with the conquerors but also for some of the most blatant cases, including people who were prompt to insert themselves in one way or another into the postwar regime. Cases of industrialists or high-profile entrepreneurs who escaped justice were numerous.

The apparatus that most indelibly shaped the postwar regime was undoubtedly the military. This grew not only out of its rich tradition of active interference in politics. It also saw an exponential rise in status, as by the end of the civil war in 1949 it had become the most massive organized military in Western Europe. The short history of the “Holy Unity of Greek Officers” (IDEA), the largest royalist and anti-communist organization inside the military, sheds much light on the Ovidian transformations of “parallel state” mechanisms within the military. Rooted in the repression of anti-royalist mutinies among Greek troops stationed in the Middle East in 1943 to 1944, IDEA was a secret organization founded by royalist officers in Egypt just before the liberation of Greece. Its operational centre then moved to Athens, where it formed clusters of active middle and high-ranking officers with the explicit goal of establishing a military dictatorship. Widely discussed during the civil war, this secret society made a dynamic appearance in a failed coup attempt of late May 1951. After that the organization officially ceased to exist, yet its various transformations and/or branches continued to play an active political role up until the military junta of 1967 to 1974. The most (in)famous of these branches was the so-called “Pericles Plan” for an intervention of the military and the police to contain communist influence using both political and military means, which became most active after the party of the United Democratic Left (EDA) emerged as the official opposition during the 1958 election. The later junta's immediate reinstatement of former Security Battalion members underlines the internal continuities within the extremist reactionary/fascist wing of military officers with a collaborationist past.

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11. Cf. Kousouris 2012.

#### 4/ NEO-FASCISM (II): FROM THE TRANSITION UNTIL THE END OF THE COLD WAR

After the Junta fell, the only State apparatus that was somewhat systematically subjected to investigation and prosecution was the military police with its Special Interrogation Unit (EAT-ESA), after initiatives on behalf of victims and international campaigns by human rights organizations<sup>12</sup>. Even in that case, however, punishment of the culprits remained incomplete. The Greek military police had been a rather exemplary mechanism of the “deep state”. Founded in 1951, it functioned as an elite corps of the hardest anti-communist cluster of military officers, in collaboration with the State Intelligence Service (KYP). After the 1967 coup, it was progressively transformed into an extremely powerful paramilitary organization with thousands of members, informants, torturers, etc. During the general administrative purge after the 1974 transition, the official strategy was to revoke appointments and to refer cases to special disciplinary boards. Beyond a limited number of dismissals and temporary removals, in the vast majority of these cases the supporters of the junta were left in place. Perhaps the only institutional exception was the university, where, under pressure from the student movement, a wide if still incomplete “dejuntaization” was implemented.

Following the logic of the “Togliatti Amnesty” (1946) in Italy, the Third Greek Republic was formed on the basis of a reintegration of the Communist Party into the political system, compensated by amnesty and immunity for the wide social base of fascism/neo-fascism.<sup>13</sup> Despite the difference of two decades, this historical analogy between the legitimization process in the parliamentary regimes of Italy and Greece helps explain the historical “dark side” affinities among the enemies of democracy. A thin red line connects the Greek ultra-right paramilitary forces with their Italian counterparts, in the context of NATO’s “Stay Behind” network after the 1950s. These contacts proved valuable for the Greek ultra-right directly after the fall of the colonels’ junta, allowing it to exploit the “know-how” of some of the leaders of the Italian neo-fascist organization *Ordine Nuovo*, who at the time were hiding in Greece in order to avoid prosecution by the Italian judiciary.

Between 1976 and 1979, a network of ultra-right parastate organizations conducted dozens of bomb attacks in cinemas, bookstores, political bureaus, etc., aiming mostly at left-wing organizations and militants.<sup>14</sup> The attitude of the authorities towards ultra-right terrorism cannot be seen as particularly harsh, since most cases were not solved and left pending, with only few exceptions. One of the most illuminating cases was that of Nikos Michaloliakos, the later leader of Golden Dawn. He was arrested as part of a group of 34 people for an assault against journalists, but never stood trial. In 1978, while he was serving in

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12. On the first torturers’ trial, cf. Amnesty International 1977.

13. Cf. Pavone 1999.

14. See <http://www.efsyn.gr/?p=42906>.

the military, he was arrested again for delivering army explosives to ultra-right organizations. This time he was convicted to a sentence of eleven months and twenty days in jail.

Beyond paramilitary terrorist action, the ultra-right at the same time formed political clusters. One of the organizations operating in schools was “Free Pupils”, led by Makis Vouridis of the College of Athens, who went on to become a government minister and spokesperson for New Democracy’s parliamentary delegation. However, most of the groups during this period were formed as “research institutes” and associations of victims of “communist atrocities” with strong participation among priests, military officers, university professors and members or even MPs of New Democracy. Quite often, these covert efforts to re-group neo-fascism were protected by local authorities and networks. Groups of “political action” were also active, engaging in “the battle of the streets” – that is, assaulting members of left-wing organizations – while mostly acting and recruiting within the privileged field of football fan clubs.

Thus, the post-1974 transition or “changeover” proved to be a slow process, only gradually completed with PASOK’s rise to power in 1981. The new government’s first two years were marked by a coordinated attempt to gain control of the military, the security forces and the National Intelligence Service. The first government of Andreas Panandreu tried to avoid a head-on clash with consolidated apparatuses within the State, instead conducting a “mild” purge of the military through honorable discharges and taking control of promotions. Even during those years, numerous ultra-right elements continued to operate within the intelligence services. Although the police was put under the control of “democratic” officers, many solid ultra-right pockets were left intact. Their privileged field was the riot police, which was created by Konstantinos Karamanlis during the first years of the transition, only to be developed and modernized by PASOK during the 1980s. Deprived of any political culture, fed with fear of communism and the “dangerous classes”, the police force has had an impressive record of dozens of citizens murdered after 1974, culminating in the virtual political assassinations of demonstrators during the in 1979 and 1985 anniversaries of the 1973 Polytechnic School uprising. Such political assassinations have not been an exclusive purview of the official State, however. During the school occupations movement in January 1991, the minister of education called on the police and ordinary citizens to “reclaim” the schools. Two days later, in the city of Patras, Nikos Temponeras, a syndicalist schoolteacher, was murdered by an assault squad led by the president of the local New Democracy Youth Organization (ONNED).

On a symbolic level, fifteen years after the fall of the junta, “national reconciliation” seemed to close the breaches created by the civil war and marks the consolidation of parliamentary democracy in Greece. During a period of political crisis, in the summer of 1989, after the defeat of PASOK in the June election, a short-lived coalition government of New Democracy and the Communist left passed

a law “for the abrogation of the consequences of the 1944-1949 civil war”.<sup>15</sup> Along with a series of largely symbolic measures, the law was followed by a public ritual of voluntary forgetting: the public burning of millions of State intelligence files recording the political activities of Greek citizens.

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15. Law 1863, Government Gazette No. 204/18, September 1989.

\* All titles originally in Greek unless noted otherwise.

# The Hellenic Police

***Dimitris Christopoulos***  
 .....

## 1/ STOP PRESS: “THEY DISMANTLED THE WHOLE OF THE POLICE IN ORDER TO ARREST US”

On 17 September 2013, around midnight, a Golden Dawn official murders Pavlos Fyssas. This assassination immediately becomes the catalyst for crucial developments in the position of Golden Dawn on the Greek political map. The dismantlement of the organization begins. The series of events is literally exponential. The plan is to do within a few days what had not been done for years. All at once everybody admits that Golden Dawn is not a political party but a criminal organization under Article 187 of the Penal Code. Pavlos Fyssas had to give his life in order for the Greek State to do the obvious and dismantle this criminal organization.

On 28 September, the same day when the above “stop the press” lines were written, Golden Dawn’s leader, some of its MPs and other members of the organization were arrested. Operation “Dismantle Golden Dawn” had begun, and the developments of the following days are stunning.

The corrosion of the Hellenic Police by Golden Dawn pockets is one of the reasons – not the only one – why there first had to be a dead Greek citizen anti-fascist before the Greek State would take action. Yet, a few days before Fyssas’ murder, during a commemoration for the 1944 victims of Meligalas, a group of MPs and members of Golden Dawn attacked a military formation, taunting and shoving bystanders, including the mayor.<sup>16</sup> “The MPs of Golden Dawn wanted to disgrace the blood of the people that were killed at the Well of Meligalas”, according to a later statement by the town’s (right-wing!) deputy mayor. Regardless of the multiple contradictory interpretations and representations of the 1944 events in this Peloponnesian town, it is a fact that the Meligalas commemoration constitutes an emblematic point of national mourning for the Greek ultra-right; a mourning that has been politically instrumentalized for many years, yet remains an honest one as well. Golden Dawn disrespected this ritual of mourning, and paid for it. Precisely because of the importance accorded to this commemoration by national right-wing memory, the minister of public order had ordered that six riot police platoons be sent to the Well of Meligalas, the commemora-

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16. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRadhVsGOBs>

tion site. But, despite the minister's order, at the crucial moment these platoons were not where they were supposed to be.

On 25 September 2013, a few days after Fyssas' assassination, in an interview to BBC, the manifestly most right-wing minister of Samaras' (already very right-wing) government gave the following answer to a journalist who asked directly if there are affiliations between Golden Dawn and the police: "Very unhappy to say that to some point it's true".<sup>17</sup> Of course, the minister added to this astonishing statement the remark that "some people within the police, thought they are not Nazis themselves, are fond of this particular party, because they have not realized how dangerous it is". Obviously, he was trying to mitigate the disgrace of this political affiliation by downplaying the police officers' accountability. In other words, the problem was the public confession of the crime, not the crime itself.

There is no point in trying to hide it: a rot had taken hold inside the Hellenic Police for quite some time. The mourning of the conservatives had to be profaned, and a Greek lad, "one of us", had to be killed (the murder of a Pakistani a year earlier was not enough), before the boil could be lanced. Moreover, a police officer who only happened to be at the crime scene had to identify the murderer and, above all, his motives. As she testified: "[At some point, someone approached us, told us that he was a colleague and that] things had settled down. When we asked him what happened, he told us that there had been some kind of quarrel in a coffee shop between some people who were watching the football match, Olympiakos vs. Paris St. Germain, but they had already left and there was no problem. Let me add that the person who presented himself as a colleague was not a police officer, but an external guard at Korydallos Prison". This member of the special guards is the emblematic personification of the Greek State: although he had witnessed the coordinated action of a Golden Dawn attack battalion (consisting of 30-40 people, according to the police officer's testimony), he saw it as "a quarrel between football fans". This is exactly how it was reported the next morning by a private TV station that, through its keynote commentator (a fervent supporter of the neo-liberal restructuring) had a few days earlier advocated for a more "proper" Golden Dawn.

A week after the assassination, the developments in the Hellenic Police are shattering: first, there is the sudden resignation of the police Inspector General for Southern Greece and the chief of the General Division of Sterea Hellas Region, both "for personal reasons", according to the Hellenic Police communiqué. But the same communiqué also reads: "Following an order by the Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, the Chief of Police assigned to the Director of the Division of Internal Affairs, Police Brigadier General Panayiotis Stathis, shall conduct a thorough investigation regarding complaints published in the press about an active implication of police officers in the activities of the party Popular Association – Golden Dawn and their possible participation in the perpetration of crimes ... The Chief of Police communicated to the Chief Officer of the

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17. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z6002QED4c>

Division of Internal Affairs the will of the Minister not to leave a single shadow over the Police Force”. What follows is extraordinary. In order to absolutely secure the objective conduct of the investigation by the Division of Internal Affairs, a series of chief officers are replaced and relocated. Among them are a major general of the police who heads the Security Division at Police Headquarters; a police colonel who commands the Special Anti-terrorist Unit and his deputy, a lieutenant colonel; another police colonel who heads the Division of Weapons and Explosives, Subdivision of State Security, Attica Police Directorate; a police major who commands the DELTA squad; a police major and precinct chief in Nikaia; and the commander of the riot police platoon in Keratsini. The members of the latter, according to photos and testimonies, threw stones at demonstrators during the riots of 18 September 2012, without being hindered or arrested by their colleagues.

Three days later, on 27 September 2013, the press reports the additional removal of the head of the Third Counter-Intelligence Division of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), who had been responsible for an investigation of Golden Dawn activities that included systematic telephone tapping. The counter-intelligence director was deemed to have served the organization as its chief informant! The same day sees the arrest for unrelated misconduct of a police sergeant who had effectively acted as an instructor for Golden Dawn members. A newspaper photo shows this particular police officer giving lessons in self-defence to members of the organization at an ancient stadium on the island of Rhodes. The next day, Saturday, 28 September 2013, two police officers of the DIAS squad are arrested, along with the leader of Golden Dawn, after incriminatory evidence had been collected in wiretaps of their phone calls. A further chief of precinct, in Agios Panteleimon, is then arrested on 1 October. This is the Athens neighborhood where, for three years, Golden Dawn has maintained its operations centre, amidst numerous complaints that the precinct was functioning more as a Golden Dawn office than as a service of the Hellenic Police.

The first Golden Dawn MPs are arrested that same morning. The operation was kept highly confidential, and even the police officers of the anti-terrorist unit that conducted the arrests did not know whom they were going to arrest until the very last moment. This indicates the fear of a leak, not to the press, but within the police force itself. A Golden Dawn MP put a fitting point on the proceedings at the moment of his arrest, proclaiming: “They dismantled the whole of the police and the NIS in order to arrest us”. Touché.

## **2/ A PROLOGUE: TWO SNAPSHOTS BEFORE THE DISMANTLEMENT OF GOLDEN DAWN**

In October 2012, a group of people from para-religious organizations besieged the Chytirio Theatre to block a performance of the play *Corpus Christi*. Demonstrations of this kind, against artworks deemed “blasphemous”, are not unusual in Greece. This case was extraordinary, however, because Golden Dawn cadre had come out in force to support the otherwise somewhat picturesque

old people from the para-religious organizations. A truly unprecedented incident ensued. As the police took one of the protesters into custody and led him to a riot police van, a Golden Dawn MP ran up to the door, casually took the detainee from the grip of a police officer, and, in front of photographers, journalists and the riot police squad, pulled the man in the opposite direction, all the while shouting at the police: “Let the man go”! Thy will be done...<sup>18</sup> In Greece, as in every other rule-of-law state, if the police has detained someone and some other citizen tries to set him free, he too will be detained. At least that is what we thought, until October 2012.

A few weeks later, in late November 2012, another Golden Dawn MP visits Heraklion, Crete. There, he stumbles upon a leftist counter-demonstration trying to prevent the Golden Dawn gathering. Numerous police forces promptly take position to repel the leftists, but the MP asks the police to open their lines and sets about repelling the demonstrators all by himself, cursing and threatening. The MP tells the chief police officer: “I will fuck them all. I promise you that by the end of the day you will have dead bodies”! The police officer listens, eyes to the ground. The MP keeps cursing and threatens to sue the police for “neglect of duty”, adding: “They come here and ruin cars, while you sit around and jerk off. How am I supposed to do my thing?” His interlocutor continues to listen without reacting<sup>19</sup>. Later on, the MP issues a statement in which he threatens that Golden Dawn will sue anyone responsible for neglect of duty and abetting criminals.

Naturally it is uncommon for the Hellenic Police to appear on camera as the administrative inferiors to Golden Dawn MPs. In this sense, these two snapshots are indeed unique. Nevertheless, the image, the discourse and the posture of both the police officers and the Golden Dawn MPs evoke a bizarre hierarchy that must be deemed politically excrescent. That something is unique does not mean it has no meaning. On the contrary, given certain conditions, something unique may reveal significant conclusions. This is what we are going to attempt in the following pages.

### **3/ MODELS OF INTERPRETATION REGARDING THE INTRUSION OF THE ULTRA-RIGHT INTO THE POLICE FORCE**

The events of September 2013 and the aftermath have, sadly, served to altogether confirm our working hypothesis: The intrusion and infiltration of the ultra-right extreme into the Hellenic Police until that point was systematic and deep-seated.

Let us begin, however, by considering three common models of interpretation regarding this infiltration. The first model tends not to see it as an infiltration. To summarize as accurately and fairly as we can, it goes like this: “It is all a matter

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18. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MMR2cLSZio>.

19. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4zw5CSVD5c>.

of individual incidents by low-ranking police officers expressing their discontent with a political environment that disdains them, or who are unhappy about cuts to their wages. In these conditions, the only party that panders to them is Golden Dawn. It is only logical that the more militarized among the young and low-ranking officers turn to it". This view does not deny that "there is a problem", and this is better than nothing, but the problem is viewed as anything other than systematic. This has been the nearly predominant view within the Hellenic Police and Greek governments, but the facts revealed after September 2013 have made a mockery of it as an untenable apologia. However, there are two other common views on the degree to which the Greek police force has been infiltrated by the ultra-right. Both of these move beyond the cliché of "individual incidents," but they differ in important ways.

The second view understands that a series of different but mutually reinforcing factors have given rise to a complicated, ominous, and increasingly dangerous situation. The intrusion of the ultra-right is systematic, and has been especially pronounced in those parts of the Hellenic Police charged with suppressing political protest – meaning the riot police and the DELTA squad ("Force of Control Fast Confrontation"). The systematic intrusion also extends to specific police departments in big cities, mostly in Athens where a major part of police work is concerned with issues of illegal immigration. Variations on this view were expressed by a number of police officers interviewed in our research, who did not hesitate to admit that "the situation is out of control". Within the most affected sectors of the Hellenic Police, ultra-right ideology, practices of illegal violence against demonstrators and immigrants, and a culture of impunity have become widespread and pervasive, to the point even of forming the hegemonic work culture. Informal social structures arose that perceive the relationships of the police to leftists, anarchists and immigrants as hostile, in fact existentially antagonistic; and that invest politically in this antagonism.

The third model of interpretation is predominant within a large, left-wing part of Greek society. For reasons related both to Greek history and to current police practices, this sector perceives itself as antagonistic to the Hellenic Police by definition. Discussion of ultra-right ideology within the police must also take into account the way parts of the left indiscriminately incriminate all police, adopting stereotypical classifications and categories. According to the third model, "a police officer is a priori a fascist", or worse, "[all] cops [are] pigs, murderers". This view actually serves as a feedback to the consolidation of ultra-right ideology among certain police circles, facilitating or accommodating their slide to the right. We shall call this the "communicating vessels theory".

The main problem with the framework of the discredited "individual incidents" model is that it fails to discern the new quality of consolidation indicated by the sheer quantity of incidents. It is stuck – or, to be more exact, until September 2013 it was stuck – in the idiosyncratic model of ultra-right violence and ideology, attributing their occurrence to individually conceived characteristics, when these occurrences of course are not individually inspired. In response to allegations that the problem is much more serious and the situation is often out of control,

the “individual incidents” framework moves to vindicate and defend the police through the argument that “even in difficult circumstances, the police does its job as best as it can”. This is a voluntarily blind approach that inescapably leads to a conscious ignorance of the issue through a “hedgehog logic” that repels questions as soon as they are posed. This sets up a dynamic in which the problem becomes bigger and bigger because it is not confronted, because it is not even conceptualized as a problem. Thus even if the problem is indeed concentrated among low-ranking police officers, the higher ranks do not seem to appreciate this, as they try to convince others and themselves that things are fine. This is exactly what happens with racist violence in Greece: it “does not exist,” simply because it is not registered as such.

Conversely, the “communicating vessels” theory has its own major flaws. In the name of politically prejudiced and ideologically bound conclusions, it presents the infiltration of the Hellenic Police by the ultra-right as a done deal, a distance already covered, despite the obvious fact that there is still much distance to be covered and that course changes are possible – as the turning point with the effort to dismantle Golden Dawn after September 2013 demonstrates. Substantial evidence of political danger has come to light, but it is counterproductive simply to characterize the entire situation as a repeat of the fascism of the wartime Security Battalions. The total fascistization of Greek security forces is a historically familiar situation, however, and the course taken before September 2013 no doubt had tended in this direction. That is precisely why changes are immediately and urgently needed (even now) in order to establish discipline and compliance, or undoubtedly the situation is destined to slip increasingly out of the control of any institution. This kind of situation is familiar to anyone who has some knowledge of modern Greek political history.

Therefore it is clearly closer to reality to highlight the transitory and, finally, very volatile character of the ultra-right infiltration, instead of dogmatically presenting it as a kind of *fait accompli*. There are many incidents and evidence showing a consolidation of ultra-right and even Nazi ideology in informal groups (such as companies of police) and even formal structures (such as riot police platoons and certain regional police departments in Attica), but this is far from a verification of the “communicating vessels” model. We are called upon to understand the situation as an extremely complicated process, not a given fact.

Finally, we must also contend with a serious problem of documentation, one that our study also cannot avoid. The police produces actions recorded officially (in case files, communiqués and events files) and unofficially (through the media). The fundamental methodological consequence is that we deal with second-hand descriptions, whether from the media or the impressions and testimonies of people who are now controlled, detained, arrested, jailed or otherwise implicated. All these descriptions require evaluation as to their credibility.

#### 4/ PUBLIC CONFESSIONS BY STATE OFFICIALS AND THE 2012 ELECTIONS

Public discussion about underground links between the Hellenic Police and Golden Dawn is hardly exclusive to the last three years. In fact, such confessions have been made by the most official sources one might expect, even by ministers in office.

Dimitris Psarras (2012: 181-182) quotes a highly illuminating conversation between a high-profile Greek journalist, Nikos Chatzinikolaou, and the then Public Order Minister Georgios Romeos, in autumn 1997, after the disclosure of the infamous “junta-lovers fest” organized by high-ranked officials of the Hellenic Police in Thessaloniki.<sup>20</sup> “We hear a lot about a specific organization, Golden Dawn. Is it an organized group within the Hellenic Police?”, the journalist asks. The Minister’s answer is cautious, yet telling: “No, it does not seem to be an organized group. But it is clear that some of them [police officials] have ties with some organizations”. “The organization in question, is it Golden Dawn?”, insists the journalist. “Yes”, is the one-word answer given by the Minister.

Two years later, in December 1999, a special team of the Hellenic Police itself prepares a “top secret” document after an attempted homicide by a high-ranking Golden Dawn member. This document was published five years later by a major daily, *Ta Nea*. It mentions that a special team of commissioned officers of the Hellenic Police had set up an information network with ex-members of Golden Dawn. Here is a rather telling excerpt: “The organization entertains very good relationships and contacts with commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Hellenic Police, as well as with regular police officers. In the past, during the demonstrations in commemoration of the 17 November 1973 Polytechnio uprising against the junta, and other events organized by leftist and anarchist groups, the police provided them with walkie-talkies and batons in order to beat the demonstrators in the guise of ‘indignant citizens’”.<sup>21</sup>

In May 2011, after the serious injury of a demonstrator and systematic pogroms against immigrants by Golden Dawn without any arrests whatsoever (despite the fact that there is a video of a dark-skinned man hunted down with knives by another man in front of Athens City Hall<sup>22</sup>), there was the following statement, the importance of which lies mostly in its locutor, not in its content: “A service, however strong, effective or popular, should be dissolved and start over from scratch, rather than function under a peculiar regime of tolerance that serves to promote, on the one hand, conducts of defiance, indiscipline, arbitrariness and abuse of authority, and, on the other, activates in cases of criminal behaviour a

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20. This was a fest organized in Thessaloniki by police officers and members of the special forces who were manifestly nostalgic towards the junta regime; see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2p374rN80E>.

21. A. Athanasiou, “Police officers covered ‘Periandros’ back: Golden Dawn goon A. Androutsopoulos still free after 6 years thanks to his ties with Hellenic Police officers”, *Ta Nea*, April 17, 2004.

22. See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxUBr5\\_tczU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxUBr5_tczU).

particular form of fraternal solidarity ... *There is clearly a lack of democracy within the Security Forces. Arbitrariness is inherent in the Security Forces*". The speaker was none other than the minister of citizen protection, Christos Papoutsis.<sup>23</sup> At a clearly very difficult moment for Greek society and the political system,<sup>24</sup> the highest responsible State official issued this public confession, explicitly distanced from the avoidance of the "individual incidents" theory, asking for the dismantlement of specific services and units of the Hellenic Police such as the riot police and the DIAS and DELTA squads.

If this were not enough, a month later, a former minister of public order and a fan-favourite of the police force itself spoke as follows in a TV interview of 30 June 2011:<sup>25</sup> "In October 2009, I took over a thoroughly disintegrated police ... I was afraid at that time of what was going on in the country ... I remind you of the parastate then active within the police, where Golden Dawn members and various fascists were participating in a series of activities and helping the police. Along with the chief of the police, we drove them off, one by one". His interlocutor, a high-ranking New Democracy official (shocked not by what is being said, but by the man who is saying it) asked him if he understood the consequences of what he had said, while the journalists kept asking if the situation was still the same. Mr. Chrysochoides replied: "Are you actually trying to play dumb now?", adding that during his term 40 to 50 persons were indicted on grounds of collaboration with Golden Dawn, although, of course, he no longer has the faintest idea what happened with these indictments. To a journalist who insists on asking him whether things remain the same, Mr. Chrysochoides answered that it was possible: "I do not know that, I cannot rule out anything, it may well be that the phenomenon runs deep".

The results of the two consecutive 2012 elections only confirmed what everyone already assumed and whispered – that the electoral appeal of the neo-Nazi party had reached astonishing proportions among members of the security forces, far greater than its appeal to the rest of the electorate. In Attica, and more specifically in Athens, security forces were scheduled to vote in various election departments surrounding the Attica Police Directorate, mostly in the Ampelokipi area. Golden Dawn gained between 15.4 and 23.7 percent of the vote in the areas of Ampelokipi and Kaisariani, at the same time harvesting much lower, single-digit scores in neighbouring election departments with similar socio-economic profiles. Golden Dawn appears to have won a massive share of the vote among thousands of police officers serving in the Attica Police Directorate and special services such as DIAS, DELTA, ZITA, the Emergency Unit and State Security. If one takes into account that each election precinct has 500 to 600 registered

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23. See <http://www.tovima.gr/society/article/?aid=400491>.

24. This is the moment (summer 2011) of the biggest social explosion in Greece during the Memorandum years, and also a moment of unprecedented violence by the Greek police against demonstrators in Syntagma Square, aiming at preventing the latter from possibly attacking the Greek Parliament. The question of resignation is publicly posed to the Prime Minister for the first time; eventually, it did take place a few months later.

25. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKaaCdFnKns>.

voters, and that police officers made up about 25 to 30 percent of the voters in each one of the precincts in question, one may conclude that the “pure” police officers’ vote ranged as high as a shocking 50 percent.<sup>26</sup> The trend also does not seem to have been affected by Golden Dawn’s intensification of racist assaults against immigrants during the short period between the two elections. On the contrary, the 17 June election results from eleven crucial election precincts in Athens show that Golden Dawn again gained between 17.2 and 23.04 percent, virtually the same share as in the May 2012 election in the same departments.<sup>27</sup>

One may wonder: How did we get here? To foretell in a way our conclusions, we could say that the question is falsely put: a brief overview of the aforementioned deep historical affiliations between Greek security forces and Golden Dawn shows that we did not “get” here; *we have returned* here. It is the same play, all over again. There have been turns in the plot for the better, like in 1974, 1981 and 1985, but the subsequent periods of inaction in each case have led to repeated renewals of ultra-right influence. Today, the Greek State has a historic opportunity to shake off what it has long tolerated or even bred inside a service of great consequence to democracy and the rule of law.

## 5/ THE HISTORICAL BURDEN: THE ULTRA-RIGHT AS DOMINION, DEMOCRACY AS INTRUSION

“The fratricidal conflict of the 1940s naturally brought nationalists together with the security forces. This tactic continued during the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, within the so-called ultra-right there were numerous ‘snitches’, ‘stool pigeons’, and informers, and many of them actually believed that they were performing a... patriotic duty by reporting what was going on within the nationalist circles, whether legally or underground. Moreover, the ‘ultra-right’ perception has always been that it is only natural for the security forces to be close to the national ideas...” Surprisingly, these words are not from one of the many left-wing Greek historians, but spoken by the leader of Golden Dawn himself.<sup>28</sup> The relationship of the Greek security forces with the ultra-right has deep roots and can be explained by the role they have played in a continuum that practically starts during the interwar years and only provisionally ended with the 1974 transition.

Already during the years of the Axis occupation, the coalition of interests between a hegemonic part of the Greek status quo and the occupation forces against the “enemy inside the walls” (Michaelides, Nikolakopoulos & Fleischer 2006) led to the creation of the Security Battalions, starting in 1943. This marked a turning point against the developing communist front heading the Resistance. The

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26. V. Lambropoulos, “Police officers vote massively for Golden Dawn – again”, *To Vima online* (19.06.2012).

27. See details in <http://www.thepressproject.gr/article/19846/>.

28. Quoted by Psarras (2012: 177).

Security Battalions were an institutional creation and arose from a security policy logic that favored paramilitary operational units. They functioned as the fulcrum in the subsequent civil war. Officially disbanded after the occupation, some of their members were recruited into the State's new security forces, with rights of preference no less (Vidali 2007: 535). The State formed after the occupation not only did not acknowledge the criminal nature of the actions of collective violence perpetrated during the occupation years. It also went on to selectively persecute the political left and give amnesty to collaborationists, thus contributing to an impenetrable complex of "self-censored memory" (Kostopoulos 2005). Despite this veil of silence, it is no secret that those who had collaborated with the Germans were not systematically pursued, but were instead used in the later anti-communist struggle. In the official view, participation in the EAM-ELAS resistance was considered a worse crime than collaboration with the occupation forces.

The basic mechanism for the institutional reformulation and the political expiation of the Security Battalions after the war was the recruitment of its members into the cleansed and renewed security forces. The policy combined rupture and continuity. The rupture was in the public and obligatory forgetting of collaborationism. The continuity, on the other hand, was in reproducing the consolidated institutional memory of these forces with regard to their image of the enemy. The struggle against the "Communist danger" was both the main reason and the main pretext for the postwar constitution of the Greek security forces by using a personnel that had already proven its anti-communist credentials, and even if they had done so through collaboration with the Germans against the political left. This is how the Greek police state was staffed – a State officially "under Communist siege", where the security forces played a primary role in safeguarding and implementing a new philosophy of social control. This philosophy elaborated upon the ideology of "national-mindedness", in the context of the "anti- and un-constitutional practices" of the so-called paraconstitution (Alivizatos 1986: 203, 447-600).

The influence exerted by the military both on the gendarmerie and on the municipal police forces was very important in the consolidation of a police subculture founded on impunity and the view that the sole legitimate judge of security force actions and omissions were the security forces themselves, "as if they were self-sufficient entities that obeyed to their own rules and followed their own criteria in estimating their situation" (Meynaud 2002: 521). In this sense, the Greek Security Forces became a pocket of "a state within a state", a virtual parastate long before the term was coined and came into wide use during the 1960s. The relationship of the parastate and the police came to function as an organized enterprise with political and constitutional goals. In every city, there were attack squads manned mostly by criminal groups acting as agents provocateurs. These squads took orders from the police but sometimes claimed and gained some degree of independence (Lentakis 2000: 78-80). In this peculiar relationship, the gendarmerie wholly assumed the role of guardian of the "social regime", as opposed to the municipal police, who were mostly concerned with common crime. With this historical burden carried by the security forces,

Greece headed towards the seven-year dictatorship of 1967, which, naturally, was overtly aided by the security forces, now cleansed of any democratic culture whatsoever.

Therefore, what one must understand first and foremost when one studies the consolidation of ultra-right ideology and the intrusion of pockets of ultra-right extremism into the Hellenic Police is that the 1967 dictatorship was not a rupture in the hegemony of these apparatuses. It was a culmination. The culture of torture that was dominant within the Greek security forces during the seven-year dictatorship should also not be viewed as an aberration but as the culmination of a firmly established and functional work culture.

## **6/ A LONG AND INCOMPLETE TRANSITION**

Given this historical burden, it is obvious that adjusting the security forces to the post-1974 transition was far from an easy task. The first issue immediately posed to the new political regime was to remove all the high and low-ranked officials of the security forces who had enjoyed privileged ties with the dictatorship. This process was labeled “purgation”. The second and equally important issue was to reestablish the lost honour of the security forces and to clarify their role in the new State by effectively subjugating them to government control under the Constitution.

In the case of the security forces, “purgation” was limited to a few indictments in the most blatant cases of police officers engaged in the power core of the dictatorship, especially those who were accused of torture. The great bulk of the police forces were naturally left intact. Changes and purgations inside the security forces and the army obviously had to be done very cautiously, since the long process of waterproofing and securing them from any infiltration by democratic elements had already formed a certain professional body. If we dare make a leap to our own present, we may remark that the “classes” of the municipal police and the gendarmerie enlisted during the dictatorship are today the leading echelons of the Hellenic Police. In this sense, a radical solution, directed towards a possible discharge of the whole middle and lower staff, would entail the dismantlement of the security forces altogether. On the other hand, the option of impunity also came at a great social cost. The relationships of the police with society were indelibly marked for the next twenty years. It is obvious that today’s developments are closely related to this historical burden.

When PASOK came to power in 1981, it brought important changes to the police system and essentially initiated a second phase of “purgation”. Strict political control, democratization and the reconciliation of the security forces with Greek society were an obvious priority of the first PASOK governments. Political control by the government could only be made possible by removing the influence exerted by the army. Democratization progressively led to organizational and operational changes and, most importantly, to an “opening up” of the police to enlistment and employment of persons from all strata of Greek society. The

creation of the Hellenic Police integrating all former municipal police and gendarmerie staff brought new potentials for a total restructuring and rearrangement of police personnel. The constitution of the Hellenic Police essentially laid down the institutional and organizational foundations for extricating the Greek security forces from the army.

Among the measures to solidify complete government control, no provision was made for a central police headquarters. At the same time, the first two ministers of public order were army officials. To understand both the concrete situation then and the underlying continuities, however, we need to point out that the strict political control claimed and secured by the new government was counterbalanced by a virtual lack of effort to change the work culture and democratize the workplace culture. While the first PASOK ministers delivered a message to “stop beating people!”, the transmission process allowed for a number of digressions. As noted many years later by a special investigator in a manual used mostly inside the police corps (Chatziconstantis 2011: 19), “many police officers [still] face the dilemma: ‘If I am gentle, they call me incompetent; if I am harsh and effective, they call me a torturer. So what am I supposed to do’?”

In Law 1481/84, the new government established explicitly that the mission of all services under the Ministry of Public Order was “to protect the democratic Constitution”. To summarize this turning point in the democratization of the Greek security forces in simple terms, the State practically forced the Hellenic Police to promise not to undermine the Constitution – and that was all. Longstanding views and mentalities stemming from the old regime were left mostly untouched. In fact, their preservation acted as compensation for the strict control secured by the new government. The police was cut off from the army but not from the military mentality. The rights to association granted to police officers in 1987 were not enough to reverse the gradual retreat of the original PASOK spirit of “Change” and the Hellenic Police, as has been said, “by the end of the 1980s is increasingly similar to the old gendarmerie” (Vidali 2007: 787).

The years 1986 to 1988 already saw a sharp increase in incidents of police violence, mainly in Athens. As a result, the popularity of the Hellenic Police within Greek society reached a dramatic new low. Those years also saw the beginnings of a peculiar vendetta by radicalized elements of Greek youth (mostly in Athens) who participate in demonstrations just for the sake of rioting (the so-called “fuck-ups”, *bachala*). A view progressively took shape that these hooded young people are effectively used as a branch by the police, constructing a “threat” for the police to counteract, albeit sometimes by wielding violence indiscriminately against anybody who happens in the way.

Thus the ruthless violence that shook central Athens after the murder of a 15-year-old schoolboy by a member of the Special Guard in December 2008 did not come out of nowhere. With the society in a lumbering and incomplete transformation towards the model of a Balkan capitalist metropolis, the use of police force was progressively and informally institutionalized as an everyday practice, mostly against youth and a few specific groups (the Romani are a special case in point).

The intensity and frequency of these incidents demonstrates that, contrary to the official credo of the police and governments, the use of illegal force is not a series of “individual incidents” by low-ranking and uneducated police officers, but rather continues a consolidated and longstanding culture in a direct link with the past, now centered on new target groups.

The PASOK governments of 1981 to 1989 instituted a new system to recruit police officers with strong party affiliations, which remained in place through 1993. The clientele system aimed at supporting the incomplete cleansing of the police from ultra-right elements and junta collaborators. The problem was finally solved in 1994 with Law 2226/1994, which established a long awaited system of admission to the Hellenic Police through national examinations. Recruitment mechanisms until then had been altogether political and arbitrary.

## **7/ THE POLICE AND IMMIGRATION: THE NEW ENEMY OF THE 1990s**

The 1990s brought many changes to Greek society and new challenges for the Hellenic Police, the most important of which was immigration. The collapse of the Balkan socialist regimes fuelled extremely intense immigration flows to Greece, a country still airily living the myth of a unicultural society – re-fuelling this myth with all sorts of ideologies. Violence and repression by the security forces in northern Greece became the indispensable means for attaining an ethnically uniform society.

The end of the cold war radically changed the scenery. Experiencing unprecedented capitalist growth by Greek and Balkan standards, Greece became a leading destination for immigrants from neighbouring countries. For nearly a decade, the State left the Hellenic Police to handle almost all immigration issues single-handedly. The State’s first reaction to intensified flows of immigration (Law 1975/1991) was, practically, to outlaw immigration. This assessment may seem extreme, but it is the plain truth. This 1991 law realistically left no legal means to enter Greece as an immigrant.

Having shut off all possibilities for legal entry, stay and work in Greece, the State itself effectively encouraged illegal immigration while giving the Hellenic Police carte blanche to contain immigration if possible. Immigrants (mostly from Albania) entered Greece in conditions of total deprivation and lack of human dignity. Faced with these people, whose presence floats in a perfect legal void, the Hellenic Police recalls from its institutional memory practices that are seemingly extinct in its relations with the Greek population (or at least were treated as “individual incidents”, according to the now-famous official formulation; as they indeed were to a certain degree). We are talking about brutal torture and refoulement among the wild paths and mountains of the Greek-Albanian borderlands, where even shooting and murders took place.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Regarding that period and the various incidents of torture recorded in reports by human rights organizations, see <http://www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20060409.htm>.

Caution is advisable. Not all of these incidents can be integrated in a mechanistic and abstract way within an ideological framework and interpretation of society and the political system as ultra-right. Rather, they indicate the survival of the typical authoritarian mentality of impunity, one that has always been dominant within the Hellenic Police and that was destined to become increasingly aggressive after the police received the message sent by the political authorities: that this kind of authoritarianism remained inherently desirable as part of a police officer's job description. Still, the ideological reception of the immigrant as "intruder" has become a basic element of today's new ultra-right. Faced with "intruders" who were legally invisible yet all too visible in the undocumented labour market, the Hellenic Police once again became accustomed to the basest practices of human devaluation, lacking any sense of responsibility or accountability.

The framework for a mechanism of political capitalization and ideological constitution of a self-conscious ultra-right pole was now in place.

## **8/ ... PLUS AN OLD ALLY: "INDIGNANT CITIZENS"**

Looking back today at the turbulent period of 1990 to 1993, one sees that the government in office under Prime Minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis excelled in authoritarian practices aimed at repressing the schools occupation movement, strikes, and demonstrations that swept the country; yet did little to pursue the organized crime that had come to stay in Greece. During those years, a new type of collaboration between the Hellenic Police and the so-called "indignant citizens" took hold in Athens. Viewed in its historical continuity, this constituted a reunion of the security forces in Greek cities with the so-called "parastate" of yore, effectively modeling the later tolerance (or active collaboration, according to some) for the rise of Golden Dawn.

The term "indignant" was introduced to the Greek political vocabulary long before the emergence of the "indignant" movement during the Memorandum protests at Syntagma Square. In late 1990, pupils rose against a sweeping bill put forth by the minister of education. The pupils and students' response came in massive occupations of schools and universities and large-scale demonstrations, which were attacked by the police and elements of the parastate – our familiar "indignant citizens". During the winter of 1990 to 1991, the government summoned forth more than its official forces of repression. The occupied schools were supposed to be recaptured by indignant citizens acting as the "long arm" of a State traditionally ready to take recourse in a kind of authoritarianism and even biologically familiar to it. Let us not forget that the dictatorship had ended just fifteen years earlier. "Indignant citizens" are an eminent ally to repression, reconstituting and reviving underground liaisons between the police and criminal groups and recalling well-known images from previous decades.

## 9/ ASYMMETRICAL VIOLENCE AND LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY IS NOT NECESSARILY ULTRA-RIGHT BUT POTENTIALLY LEADS THERE

A 1995 report by the Council of Europe Commission for the Prevention of Torture disclosed complaints about torture against immigrants inside police departments. An increasing number of press reports tell of extremely violent methods of containment and torture of immigrants, mostly at the Greek-Albanian border, where the Greek military is also involved. As we have seen, during the 1990s Greek society came face to face with racism against foreigners, and the vanguard of this encounter was the Hellenic Police, whether or not the foreigners were criminals, since mere entry into the country was officially a crime. As a result, it is no accident that even today racist ideology is comparatively more widespread within the police than in the population at large, with the Hellenic Police claiming (correctly) that “it was left all alone to do the dirty work” without an even elementary preparation. It took until the late 1990s before the first effort to legally arrange the undocumented population of immigrants in the country, after presidential decrees concerning their legalization in 1998. Only then, for the first time, did services other than the Hellenic Police begin to deal systematically with immigration, and only then did Greece first appear to acknowledge that there was also a legal population of immigrants.

When immigration is illegal, immigrant populations are exposed to organized crime, which comes to substitute for the absent State. Technological restructuring, new equipment, the creation of new special task forces and the like unfortunately could not prevent a spectacular rise in crime during those years. The changes in some types of crime compared to the 1980s are astonishing. This increase in criminal activity, which is at the same time a typical and sometimes misleading leitmotif in various interpretations of the Greek 1990s, is not unrelated to immigration, precisely because the way of (non) reception of immigrants throughout the 1990s permits organized crime to act in an open field. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in crimes against property, a consolidation of the leisure industry, prostitution, human trafficking and, of course, drug trafficking. These years also mark a rearrangement of the traditional Greek underworld, which naturally caused trouble in the affiliations traditionally entertained between these circles and the security forces. The change brought to the human geography of crime in Greece, through the emergence of foreign circuits and links in the chain of organized crime, disorders whatever equilibrium there had been in the internal market between the underworld and the police. In this way, dominant racist views of a possible connection of immigration and criminal behaviour that had been (and still are) inherent in major parts of Greek society are even more accentuated within the Hellenic Police, because these were the people who immediately and personally faced the problem in its most acute form.

The widely recognized achievement of the Hellenic Police in 2002, when, after years of failures in combating terrorism, it succeeded in arresting the members of the organization “17 November” and later of the Revolutionary People’s Struggle

(ELA), came to reinforce an institutional pride that had been hovering around zero. After dismantling “17 November” and especially after contributing to the impeccable (though, of course, extremely expensive) Olympic Games of 2004, the Hellenic Police’s self-esteem and public image reached its historically highest level. However, the political and operational priority given at that time to the struggle against terrorism came at a cost, as organized crime in Greece kept roaring on. The Hellenic People was not able to boast about combating as effectively the qualitatively new form of crime afflicting Greek society. Hardly had the police forgotten the practices that marked their identity in Greek dissidents’ memory, when, faced with new crime, they seemed to turn increasingly to practices of illegal violence, having furthermore been equipped with modern, always heavier weaponry. The police’s success against left-wing terrorism had given it the boost of self-confidence always desired but never achieved in public opinion. But just four years after the Olympic Games, the events of December 2008, triggered by the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, presented all the features of a virtual revolt of the Greek youth.

It is telling that since 2004 Greece practically has generated its own body of case-law in the European Court of Human Rights regarding violations of the right to life (Article 2 of the European Convention) and the ban on torture (Article 3). There have been four Article 2 convictions, mostly with regard to applications by Romani (non-Greeks and Greek alike),<sup>30</sup> while there are already six Article 3 convictions for torture, again mostly against immigrants and Romani.<sup>31</sup> The emblematic case arrived in early 2011, when Belgium and Greece were both convicted for inhuman practices, after the refoulement of an Afghan seeking asylum in Greece, on the grounds of the Dublin II Regulation. The court found that the Belgian authorities “should have known” that the conditions of detention in Greece for asylum seekers were inhumane. For the first time since 1974, Greece is practically viewed as a destination to which a person cannot be returned because of the inhumane conditions. The term used by the court was “blatant omissions”, for cases that constitute a “thermometer” of the culture of each State’s police services.

## 10/ THE CONSOLIDATION OF ULTRA-RIGHT IDEOLOGY

What follows is the most complicated part of the present study from a methodological point of view. Undoubtedly, the basic elements of ultra-right ideology (racism, sexism, nationalism) are widespread within the Hellenic Police. Undoubtedly too, these ideologies, either as interpretative exhortations during the crisis (as well as before it) or as systematic frameworks of analysis, do not

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30. *Makaratzis vs. Greece* (20.12.2004), *Karagiannopoulos vs. Greece* (21.6.2007), *Celniku vs. Greece* (5.7.2007), and *Lonides vs. Greece* (8.1.2009)
  31. *Mbekos @ Koutropoulos vs. Greece* (13.12.2005), *Mhn Ghassan Allaham vs. Greece* (18.1.2007), *Zelilof vs. Greece* (24.5.2007), *Petropoulou vs. Greece* (24.5.2007), *Galotskin vs. Greece* (6.12.2007), *Stephanou vs. Greece* (22.4.2010).

only concern the Hellenic Police but also the whole of Greek society, and naturally not only Greek society, but other comparable societies. The crucial issue is to identify the exact point where this ideological mush, quite widespread or even a commonplace within the security forces, is transmuted into ultra-right ideology as such, or into a systemic intrusion of the ultra-right into the Hellenic Police. Our basic thesis here is that the situation has indeed undergone this transmutation in recent years. *The main feature is not just the ideological hegemony of views that recall ultra-right extremism on the level of ideology and the analysis of reality – because these views are always latent among the police and have solid bridges to its institutional memory – but their re-legitimatization as an institutionally proper constant within the police, as the only ideology that is able to express in the most successful way the official temperament of the security forces in a now bankrupt Greece.* This is what emerged in a malevolent yet triumphant way after the events of autumn 2013.

In a historical juncture when all Greek workers, including police officers, must live through devaluation, austerity and various dead-ends (while non-workers experience total frustration), the security forces stand inherently and systematically against them whenever social protest reaches a certain point of tension. At these borderline moments, the only political party that pets the security forces is Golden Dawn. This delivers the pay-off in the traditional elective affinity between the hard core of “indignant citizens” and parts of the security forces who see a credible ally in these strata. The transition of Golden Dawn to the political and electoral mainstream releases and legitimizes the dynamic expressed in the 2012 elections, thereby making the neo-Nazi party the most genuine expression of police indignation towards society and the State.

## 11/ NEW FORCES, OLD MINDS

After how to contain immigration became the new “national question” during the 1990s, the “answer” came in a restructuring of the Hellenic Police services and the creation of new forces with special duties: the Border Guard and the Special Guard.

Law 2622/1998 instituted police services for the protection of the borders. The sole duties of these new services were supposed to be to prevent foreign nationals from illegally entering Greece, to track them down, arrest them, or refool them. The *Border Guards* are mainly concerned with illegal immigration. Unlike graduates of the Police Officers Academy and the Police Constables Academy, they are graduates of secondary education and are recruited through a mixed system of employment credits, interviews and other requirements (physical ability, psychometric tests, etc.). They are employed for a five-year service. Under Law 2734/1999, passed one year later, the Ministry of Public Order instituted regular positions for *Special Guards*, with the task of protecting stationary targets. This group is recruited through a system of objective evaluation and employment credits (Article 3, para. 5). Many special guards are former members of the Army Special Forces, as service there boosts their evaluation. In practice

however, the police decided to use them not only as guards proper, but also in other functions, sending many of them to reinforce policing in regional cities and Crete. In 1999, the first 1,000 regular positions were created. They were supplemented almost immediately with 1,300 additional positions under Law 2838/2000. Another 2,000 positions were added in 2007 (Presidential Decree 39/2007).

Law 2838/2000 specified: “Special Guards may be assigned to staff Special Police Services or Units and Transitional Squads in order to cope with special forms of crime and search for prosecuted or vanished persons”. This is a spectacular broadening of special guard responsibilities, highly questionable if one bears in mind that these persons have not passed through the same training as the rest of the police staff. A little later, with Presidential Decree 14/2001, border and special guards both became a special staff category of the Ministry of Public Order. Their integration into the Hellenic Police contributed obviously to creating a lower-level police staff with different skills, origins, education and, of course, mentality. More specifically, the training of border and special guards takes no longer than four months (Rigakos & Papanikolaou 2003: 293). As remarked by Vidali (2007): “their integration or adjustment to the police system is an issue that may prove of some importance in the future”. It did.

There is no question, therefore, that border and special guards are special staff categories as governed under the relevant legal provisions. Their regular positions are distinct from those of other police staff. The subsequent reordering of Hellenic Police staff mandated by Law 3686/2008 was aimed primarily at reducing diversity inside the uniformed police staff and “consolidating unanimity”; Article 13 of this law integrates border and special guards as police staff (after an additional two-week training period), conferring on them the rank of police constable with all the corresponding rights, duties and obligations – save those of a preliminary examination.

A new corps was then created in 2009, out of the ranks of special guards, to cope with the increased problems of petty crime in central Athens: DELTA (the Force of Control Fast Cofrontation). DELTA consists of police officers who have served in the army special forces and “are the spearhead of the Emergency Unit”, as stated in a blog that bears the service’s name and shows heavily armed DELTA police officers posing proudly on camera. The fast-moving DELTA was created specifically with the idea of preventing attacks on shops by groups of young anarchists. About 300 special guards and police officers with supplementary training succeeded at least in containing these constant attacks. Yet the long-term cost was disproportionately greater than this operational success, as it was in this poorly educated squad that the ultra-right snake found a suitable environment to lay its eggs. Due to the intensity of social protest after 2010 (the year of the first Memorandum), DELTA’s operational responsibilities were extended well beyond the prevention of attacks against central Athens stores to include repression of demonstrations as support adjuncts to the official riot squads. It is no accident that interviews with people with a long experience of participation in or observation of demonstrations in central Athens show unanimous agree-

ment that DELTA has acted with excessive cruelty, while quite often, according to our interviewees, “they do not care to show even a hint of neutrality”.

In fact, it is no accident at all that the “removals” in the high ranks of the Hellenic Police after the events of autumn 2013 started from these particular police forces. Even before these events, as found during our research, the Division of Internal Affairs seemed to many of our interviewees to be the only service of the Hellenic Police that could be somewhat trusted to serve justice and stand by a certain degree of accountability. Today, it is as important as ever for the Division of Internal Affairs to be able to do unhindered what we have long expected from such a service: to make a decisive contribution to the disclosure of the tolerance or the active collaboration of the Hellenic Police with the neo-Nazis.

## 12/ RACIST VIOLENCE AND POLICE

In January 2013, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, following a week-long visit in Greece and before publishing his report on the country, stated: “I am deeply concerned with the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of racist attacks in Greece. Very few have been led to justice and even fewer have been condemned ... The police does not do its job as it should: abuse of authority, excessive use of force, collaboration with Golden Dawn. Among police officers, there are undoubtedly ‘rotten apples’, but they suffer no consequences – impunity here as well ... The international image of Greece, and particularly of the judicial system, is in danger. We wish to witness the indictment of members of Golden Dawn and police officers. Until this happens, anything else is mere words”!

Finally published in April 2013, the Muižnieks Report<sup>32</sup> is an unprecedented blow for Greece, bringing the issue of racist violence and police impunity to the forefront. Its formulations are anything other than discreet. The Commissioner “regrets that rhetoric stigmatizing migrants has often been used in Greek politics, including by high-level politicians”, and explicitly mentions the prime minister, who in November 2012 spoke before his party’s parliamentary fraction of “an on-going ‘recuperation’ by the Greek authorities of city centres from irregular migrants who had ‘occupied’ them and subjected them to their ‘illegal activities’” (para. 23). The report mentions similar statements by the political superior of the Hellenic Police, the minister of public order, who said: “the country perishes. Ever since the Dorians’ invasion 4 000 years ago, never before has the country been subjected to an invasion of these dimensions... this is a bomb on the foundations of the society and the State” (para. 24). The reply of the Greek government to the commissioner’s report is of equal interest. Having acknowledged that Golden Dawn is “an expression of popular disillusion and protest against harsh, though necessary, austerity measures”, it admonishes the commissioner that “the solutions cannot be a product of sentimental reactions that

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32. Cf. <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet@InstranetImage=2275537@SecMode=1@DocId=2004246@Usage=2>.

could prove unproductive”, and happily concludes that “despite its shortcomings, our country is moving in the right direction”.<sup>33</sup>

If one wishes to talk responsibly about ultra-right and racist violence tolerated by or – worse – actively abetted by the Hellenic Police, then it is highly important to underline what many democratic police officers told us during our research: that in the last instance the tone is not set by Golden Dawn, but first and foremost by the government itself. After all, “the Dorians’ invasion” as a metaphor for immigration was not (only) used by the leader of Golden Dawn, but (also) by the minister responsible for the police. This is a message that straightforwardly legitimizes racist violence, and at the same time totally represses the racist motive as a possible motive of criminal acts. To highlight an issue as a political priority, as has been done with immigration in Greece the last few years – and most certainly so by the current government – gives fuel to arbitrary practices by police and, of course, serves to incubate ultra-right political ideology; in its national socialist version, no less.

Thus, to talk about the ultra-right within the Hellenic Police is necessarily to talk about how the ultra-right keeps hostage the political right wing itself, at the level of its political leadership. This is crucial. To put it simply, if the message sent by the political authorities was not to “recuperate”, surely the Hellenic Police would deal in a wholly different manner with the all-too real “recuperation” carried out by members of Golden Dawn who beat or even murder immigrants on the streets of Athens. Yet while racist attacks climaxed between the two 2012 elections, the arrests or detentions of the perpetrators by the Hellenic Police were virtually non-existent: nobody was arrested.<sup>34</sup> However, the groups that carried out these attacks were not the abstract Greek voters of Golden Dawn, and not even Greek racists in general, but a hard core of a few hundred criminals. For this very reason the police inaction was all the more blatant. In retrospect, the ease with which the dismantlement of the organization by this self-same Hellenic Police began in the autumn of 2013 only highlights the enormity of the earlier idleness.

Most of the racist attacks (which for now have virtually stopped, though they are likely to resume in the future) were carried out at night by groups of young people wearing Golden Dawn t-shirts assaulting people who appeared to be immigrants. These attacks often included theft. A wallet, a mobile phone or even a few euros carried by the victims are the perfect trophy from the “invader” and, of course, a convenient expropriation of others’ possessions. As testified in documentations by organizations that systematically record racist crime, the detection of such criminal acts usually stumbles upon a dual unwillingness: police unwillingness to investigate the criminal act itself, as the immigrant is not

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33. Cf. <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet@InstranetImage=2270785@SecMode=1@DocId=2004288@Usage=2>.

34. Perhaps the only exception has been the arrest of the murderers of a Pakistani man in January 2013, thanks to the testimony of a taxi driver.

considered to be a credible source of information; and the unwillingness of the immigrant, who usually lives in Greece without papers, to file a complaint for the incident, because he or she is afraid that he or she will be deported. (This second type of unwillingness must be noted although it is beyond the scope of the present study.)

The Hellenic Police's unwavering denial to accept racism as a motive of criminal acts is, first, a "bureaucratic resistance", a sign of its unwillingness to understand a new reality confronted by all police forces in nations that have become immigrant destinations. Yet there is more to it than that. To not accept racism as a motive and at the same time prevent victims from taking legal action (as is well documented by now) is a direct sign of an official subculture of acquiescence, tolerance and even internalization of racist motives. The "involvement of uniformed and State officers in the attacks" constitutes a special category in the 2012 Annual Report of the Racist Violence Recording Network,<sup>35</sup> which finds an explicit "connection between racist violence and police violence". In early 2013, the Departments and Offices Against Racist Violence were put to work inside the Hellenic Police. Now, any Greek or foreign citizen can report racist attacks by calling 11414. The creation of this service is certainly laudable. However, neither the (ostensible) education of its members nor its (randomly recruited) staff promise any spectacular results. With an institutional framework that by definition does not secure any protection either for witnesses or victims of such incidents other than their expulsion, many of our interviewees sense that this office mainly responds to the needs of good publicity, rather than to any honest attempt at persecuting racist crime, which, by the way, is still denied as such by the Hellenic Police. And, naturally, the reason for this denial is not that such a crime does not exist, but that a large part of the Hellenic Police approves its motives.

### 13/ THE HELLENIC POLICE AT A CRITICAL CROSSROADS

The conclusion of this research is that the current alarming situation within the Greek security forces regarding their various ties with the ultra-right is not surprising. The historical background, a long-established political culture, and the present crisis all contribute to the situation we have tried to describe.

The strategy of tension inaugurated by Golden Dawn after the 2012 elections had two main goals, one medium-term and one long-term. The first was to boost Golden Dawn's vote in the coming election. According to this argument, Golden Dawn would like the present government to fail and a left government to come as quickly as possible to power so that this can also fail, creating an opportunity for Golden Dawn soon after. The long-term goal, however, is the trans-historical goal of the Nazis: to overthrow democratic government, a form of government Golden Dawn has typically rejected. The relevant policy here recalls the histori-

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35. See <http://www.unhcr.gr/1againstracism/11940/>.

cally tested formula of ultra-right extremism – the strategy of tension, which fuels people’s fear of a particular social group by dividing and manipulating public opinion through terror, propaganda and provocation. Let us add here that any reference to “civil war” is not meant to prompt associations with the Greek historical experience, nor to general connections and vain historical analogies, as has been fashionable the last few years with the comparisons of Greece and the Weimar Republic. In contrast to these usually inaccurate historical associations, what should be seriously studied is the experience of Italy from late 1960s to early 1980s, where the terms “civil war”, or at least “low tension civil war”, or “violent political conflict”, are, according to the best analysts of Italian neo-fascism, valid descriptions of the situation in the country at that time.<sup>36</sup>

To conclude, the situation in the Hellenic Police today is indeed alarming. One wonders how it is possible that the current Greek government does not understand the danger entailed by the existence of police divisions that seem summarily to engage in a long-term romance with ultra-right ideology in its most extremist form.

The cynical explanation would be that the government does indeed understand the danger. However, a truly democratized Hellenic Police would harbor a different danger, that of potential defiance. During these borderline times for the country and for Greek police officers themselves – who, along with all Greek workers, saw their wages drastically cut in 2013, with the revocation of the Hellenic Police’s special payroll – the present crossroads are more critical than usual. A part of the Greek political authorities prefer to put their minds at rest. They may well acknowledge the problem, yet keep repeating that it is marginal – the well-known “individual incidents” theory. If the slide to this theory aims at saving the Hellenic Police’s public honour, one may reasonably fear that it is already too late. For quite some time now, the Hellenic Police’s international image has been at its lowest. State media and big mainstream newspapers all around Europe publish reports about the “collaboration”<sup>37</sup> of the Hellenic Police with Golden Dawn and the “intrusion” of neo-Nazis into the police<sup>38</sup>, and it is surely going to take time and effort for the Hellenic Police to remove the international infamy for torture practices that have repeatedly exposed it.

In order to save what can still be saved of the Hellenic Police’s public image, it would be much more effective to assume responsibility for the problem and make an honest effort at solving it. This, however, had stumbled until recently upon the fact that a major part of the Greek political authorities – no doubt hegemonic within the current government – clearly seem to prefer the danger of having an uncontrollable racist police, a virtual incubator of a hardcore ultra-right political culture, than to face the possibility of a democratized police with some elemen-

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36. An annual average of 25 dead from 1969 to 1982, with 11,000 violent incidents in total; 47% of them are attributed to the extreme left and 53% to the neo-fascists (Cento 2007: Prologue, 15). Cf. our own analysis in Christopoulos 2013: 113-118.

37. Among many others, cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-19976841>.

38. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/26/golden-dawn-infiltrated-greek-police-claims>.

tary class reflexes in a bankrupt country with a collapsed labour market. For those who disagree with this strategic choice, the challenge ahead is twofold: First, to undermine the culture that forms the background of the consolidation of ultra-right ideology in the Hellenic Police; and, second, to stop communications with pockets of ultra-right extremism both inside and outside the police. The former is a matter of education. The latter is a matter of punishment. Both are a matter of will.

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# The Judiciary

Clio Papapantoleon  
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## 1/ INTRODUCTION: WHY THE JUDICIARY?

In a study published in 2006 under the title *Racism and Xenophobia: A Research in the Judiciary and the Police*,<sup>39</sup> the author, a judge by profession, writes: “the ideologically charged words ‘racism’ and ‘xenophobia’ in the subject of the interview often seemed to provoke a reaction by the interviewees. They expressed their concern about the a priori ‘racist label’ and, using as a pretext their limited time, often refused to participate in the interview ... These inhibitory factors were overcome and our approach became easier when the subject focused on the ‘rise in crime’ and the ‘existence of foreigners in Greece the last few years’”.

This excerpt is highly telling regarding the agents of social control, and it is true that it could just as equally refer not only to Greek but also to French, German, American, even Danish judges (and police officers). The Greek judiciary during the last twenty years was asked to deal not only with current issues of regulating everyday private disputes, or with traditional issues of securing a supposedly uniformed collective identity (matters of religion and minorities), but also with a number of new issues: immigration, terrorism, the progressive deregulation of labour relations, Nazi and racist violence, bigotry, increasing social tensions – and, finally, a large part of the population under violent pauperization, as people see themselves rapidly suffering a rapid marginalization from the “productive” social whole and falling suddenly into a fringe until recently reserved in our society exclusively for “Others”.

Penal and more generally judicial practices do not just reflect constituted cultural models or State choices; nor are they an exact duplicate of such models and choices in a judicial form. They also have an active aspect, a certain *selectiveness*.<sup>40</sup> For instance, never before was Greek criminal justice as anxious to pursue and punish tax crimes as it is today, under pressure from the economic juncture and the State pursuit of revenue and penalization of tax evasion. Regardless of the effectiveness of such intensified persecution, it is clear that the social message has been well received. In short, judicial action effects a preventive

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39. Vagena-Palaiologou 2006: 13.

40. Emmanuelides & Koukoutsaki 2013: 120.

“compliance” of individual behaviour, before any eventual deviation, as well as social discipline. Yet at the same time, and *a fortiori*, it produces a morality. In people’s minds today, tax evasion is socially and morally disdained, even if the person who utters the moral judgment is a delinquent him or herself.

Conversely, the general atmosphere of judicial impunity regarding police officers who commit violent and criminal acts, either in public (e.g., during demonstrations) or in the invisible spaces of holding pens, also performs a certain function. It produces a moral and collective consciousness that puts forth, above and against all else, the restoration of order and discipline: “cleaning up” cities of rioters, foreigners and strikers who interfere with the normal processes of commerce and urban life. The emerging polar opposition is between an abstract public order as the supreme need, on the one hand, and rights as a luxury, on the other – between the concept of security as detached from the conceptual core of rights, and its total appropriation by the forces of public order. As we reached the mid-2000s, the distance that separates rights and “security” increasingly grew.

One should view the inexplicable inaction of the judiciary towards severe Nazi criminal violence until September 2013 in this context. The Greek judiciary sadly followed along with a general intensification of repression, hardening of sentences, and downsizing of rights on all levels.

In speaking of judges, one cannot but refer also to confinement, either penal or administrative. The general and indiscriminate subjection of foreigners to inhuman and degrading treatment in detention centres for foreigners<sup>41</sup> was followed by a systematic denial by all administrative courts of first instance in the country – especially after the police operation “Zeus Xenios” in 2012. Courts refused either to accept the temporary suspension of enforcement of expulsion orders or to hear objections against detention.

A discourse on prison cannot avoid that foreigners now constitute the main population of prisons nowadays. According to the latest data of the Ministry of Justice, found in the explanatory statement to Law 4043/2012, foreign prisoners make up about 7,000 out of a total 12,500 prisoners in the country. This over-representation of foreigners is inversely proportionate to the foreign population in Greece, as well as to their absolute participation in crime. This should be a commonplace by now.

Thus, the social relationship of a judge with these images, as well as the experience of a public prosecutor who is appointed prison supervisor and is supposed “to implement the legal provisions regarding the treatment of prisoners, as well as penal code provisions and the special laws concerning the enforcement of sentences and the implementation of security measures”, but actually admin-

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41. This treatment has been characterized as such by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) case-law; cf. *Tabesh vs. Greece* (Decision) and, of course, *MSS vs. Belgium and Greece*.

isters human populations in inhumane conditions,<sup>42</sup> are destined to shape the consciousness of judicial and prosecution officers. The ever growing exposure of all these, inherently conservative agents of social control to human misery – as well as the growing impact, dissemination and exculpation of extremist ideas and views about public order, race and nation – would inevitably come to encompass similar attitudes and perceptions among the judiciary.

It is understood that the following study only compiles a limited number of judicial decisions without claiming to give an exhaustive account of court judgments. At points we make extensive use of quotations from judicial decisions because the judiciary expresses itself through these, and it is otherwise rare for a judicial officer to make a public statement. Our choice of rulings is related to their content or their object; obviously, it was not our intention to accuse or characterize particular persons.

The cases examined are suggestive in many ways. Thematically, they concern issues of national or other identity, the formation of a collective “we” against some “Other”. Moreover, they deal with the specific ultra-right ideological components of racism, religious fanaticism, sexism and nationalism. In these cases judges were asked to pronounce upon issues charged with special ideological connotations because of socially widespread, extremely conservative or even ultra-right valuations. These ideas are not exclusive to the ultra-right. The ultra-right is their privileged outlet, but their greater social dissemination leaves room for a judge who implements these ideas in his or her practice to still feel as though he or she is anything other than an ultra-right sympathizer. Indeed, this dissemination allows a judge to neglect the fundamental obligation to subordinate his or her ideology to the rule of law and the principle of legitimacy. This is where we get a clear idea of the problem in its entirety, which exceeds by far the outcome of particular cases: judges making use of their public authority to send clear, ultra-right and racist messages to society and other authorities.

## 2/ INACTION TOWARDS NAZI VIOLENCE

“Both the defendant and his organization [i.e. Golden Dawn] condemn violence”. With these words, the Public Prosecutor of the Single Judge Court of Appeal for Felonies concluded his recommendation to acquit Elias Kasidiaris, MP of Golden Dawn, in April 2013. A few months earlier, during a national TV morning talk show featuring MPs in a debate, Kasidiaris threw the water in his glass across the table at Rena Dourou, an MP of SYRIZA, and then assaulted and punched another MP, Liana Kanneli of the Communist Party. He ran out of the TV studio and, although the police supposedly was trying to catch him *in flagrante delicto* (i.e., within 24 hours after the assault), he remained in hiding and never surrendered to the police.

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42. As far as Greek prisons are concerned, the ECHR case-law has been repeatedly condemnatory; on Ioannina prison, cf. *Tagatidis and others vs. Greece*, *Tzamalidis and others vs. Greece*, and *Samaras and others vs. Greece*; on Korydallos Prison, cf. *Nieciecki vs. Greece*.

Rebroadcast widely in the international corporate media, the televised incident obviously was no secret. What is more, members of this organization the prosecutor termed “peaceful”, have repeatedly referred back to the incident in an effort to terrorize their political opponents. During a June 2012 election campaign rally, Elias Panagiotaros told the crowd that if Greek MPs dared to bring forth the issue of the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (known in Greece by the acronym FYROM and not as Macedonia), “then we will show them the Antenna video [i.e., the video of Kasidiaris’ assault] as a warning, and if they do not get it, then we will make it even more clear”.<sup>43</sup> The violence by ultra-right groups is not just a matter of assaults during nighttime “patrols”. It is also public violence, loud crime. Violence is both the medium and the message. Its public dissemination not only tests the limits of the system, but also calls on all “deviants” to comply, to submit and bend over.

### A | “BLOOD NEVER STOPS!”

From the attempted murder of University student Dimitris Kousouris in 1998, an assault that shocked public opinion and led to a temporary suspension of the activities of Golden Dawn, through the murder of a Pakistani bicycle rider by two members of this organization, to the murder of Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, the cycle of bloodshed indeed never stops. The Racist Violence Recording Network documented 154 incidents of racist violence in the year 2012, including threats, hazardous and grievous bodily injuries, and even homicide. The testimonies of the victims reveal very similar patterns of action by the perpetrators.

Of special interest is the confession by a member of Golden Dawn who was arrested for arson in May 2013. The perpetrator stated the party had organized “attack battalions” active in the areas of Kypseli and Agios Panteleimon, Athens, starting in September 2012, and that he along with 30 other persons had formed a “committee” aimed at “policing” Kypseli. “We formed five-man teams and patrolled from 7 pm to 4 am”. He also claimed that their teams were formed after they had failed to close down foreigners’ shops in the area, and that he himself used to patrol with his pit bull dog called “Chrysavgi” [Golden Dawn]!<sup>44</sup>

The fact that this man was arrested for arson of one of these shops probably means that these “attack battalions” of numerous persons, acting continuously, as groups and according to a fixed schedule, were “patrolling” in order to impose “order” around the foreigners’ shops and neighbourhoods in a way that fits the criteria of a criminal organization under Article 187 of the Penal Code, rather than that of a political organization, let alone a normal parliamentary party. It is thus very impressive that, after all these confessions, the defendant was only charged with a misdemeanour and walked free.

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43. See <http://newpost.gr/post/133306/o-ili-as-panagiotaros-tis-xrysis-aygis-apeilei-oti-tha-pesoyn-fapes-kai-sti-voyli-#ixzz2dv7nCwXA>.

44. See [http://www.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_kathremote\\_1\\_21/05/2013\\_499876](http://www.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_kathremote_1_21/05/2013_499876).

In a similar case, three other members of Golden Dawn were arrested in the city of Volos while transporting Molotov cocktails and bullets. One of them confessed that he intended to set a makeshift mosque in Volos on fire. The result? The examining magistrate let them walk free on restrictive terms.<sup>45</sup> Although we do not intend to criticize the restrictive terms regime, we should however note that this milder measure (compared to temporary detention) of restriction of personal freedom was the magistrate's choice in a country with an otherwise strong tradition of temporary detention, especially regarding crimes related to public order and security: out of a total of 12,479 prisoners in the country, 4,254 await trial.<sup>46</sup>

The violent incidents against foreigners, homosexuals, Romani and “political enemies” that were reported, recorded or published number in the hundreds, and the actual number of all such incidents remains unknown. Such attacks are not always easy to detect. In part this is because foreign victims, the most typical though not exclusive target of such attacks, are afraid to report their cases to the authorities, as there is no protective framework for them.

This fear is not accidental and has everything to do with the violence experienced by victims and witnesses. According to an eyewitness of the attempted murder against Dimitris Kousouris, “about ten people were holding sticks, thick wooden sticks from fences, about 1.5 metres long. They were marching orderly, like soldiers ... They were tall, big; they had a goon-like appearance and were fit ... They started beating the young men, all together, with the sticks ... The third one had already fallen down from the hits on his head, and the whole group of ten kept beating him with the sticks, they were kicking him as he lay down. [Person X.] and I approached the perpetrators, we put ourselves in danger ... One of the young men who were lying down was full of blood, there was blood everywhere, and his face was deformed by the hits. We told the perpetrators ‘go away already, you killed him’. Four or five of them kept beating him, while the others had formed a ring around them, waving their sticks so that nobody could approach to help”. However, having so vividly described the incident, which must have stuck in mind, this witness refused to answer the examining magistrate's questions and identify the perpetrators, and at the same time refused to provide any facial description, repeating: “I do not remember”.

## **B | A LOST CHANCE FOR THE JUDICIARY**

“A lot of people had surrounded us, maybe 30 persons. They told us that the perpetrators were about ten persons, hair cut short; they were holding wooden sticks ... We did not ask for the identities of the people there, because they talked nonsense”. This is an excerpt of testimony by a police officer regarding witnesses to the attempted murder of Dimitris Kousouris; it is

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45. See [http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_ell\\_3\\_22/11/2012\\_502511](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_ell_3_22/11/2012_502511).

46. Ministry of Justice, official data.

telling about the attitude of the authorities at that time, despite the public outcry and the political pressure to track the culprits down.

It is also telling that no member of the organization that had been present at the crime scene that day stayed in his own home for several days. With the exception of the perpetrator, who was put on trial after seven years of contumacy and was finally convicted for attempted murder, nobody else was bothered in the least. A member of the organization testified to the police that during those days he was at a camping area, “along with my girlfriend named M., whose last name is unknown to me ... I do not know her address or her telephone number ... I do not know the name of the tavern where we had lunch four or five times”. To a police officer who asked him if anybody else knew this M., he replied: “There is an acquaintance of mine, his name is S., I do not know any other personal details about him, he lives in Kypseli, but I do not know either his telephone number or his address”. When the police officer asked him if anybody else knew that he had gone camping, he replied: “Yes, my parents and my siblings”, yet he also did not know where they currently were. “My mother is out of Athens, but I do not know exactly where she is; as for my siblings, I do not know where they are”.

This ridiculous testimony was evaluated by the judicial authorities as credible and serious, and the person in question was not even called back for supplementary testimony. Other members of the organization who had been at the crime scene either were never called to testify or were called only once; despite the fact that they had no alibi, they were not pursued. The highly deficient investigation of that crime did not only secure impunity for most of the perpetrators of a brutal, violent, murderous assault. It also gave this organization a green light to commit this kind of violent criminal act, as they had, free and unpunished, in broad daylight, in front of dozens of people, just outside the Athens courts.

The sole defendant of the case absconded for seven years and later chose for himself the time and political juncture to stand trial. In the meantime, nobody had searched for him. One may easily conclude that if “Periandros” *had not chosen* to stand trial, he would have never been put on trial. At the same time, however, his conviction had its effects, since to date it remains the only conviction of a former high-ranking member of Golden Dawn for such a serious felony. The verdict found that he had acted together with other, unknown members of the organization. The organization can never remove this stain, although when everything had been said and done it broke its ties with “Periandros”. It is also certain that had not “Periandros” been accused and convicted back then, his political career and his high profile within the organization would by now have made him a member of the Greek Parliament. This may be a useful conclusion, especially for the judiciary.

### 3/ IMPUNITY FOR RACIST SPEECH, PROSECUTION OF BLASPHEMY: PUBLIC SPEECH AND THE JUDICIARY

#### D | LAW 927/1979 AND ITS INTERPRETATION: THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF RACIST DISCOURSE

The first anti-racist law in Greece was instituted at a rather unexpected time, in 1979, long before the huge immigration flows into our country. Thus, one could plausibly think that in the new social and political conditions after 1990 there was a ready-made penal disposition in order to confront racist discourse. Yet despite the fact that racist discourse was broadly disseminated during the last twenty years and severe felony-level racist violence reached new heights, the legislators did not care to “renew” their criminal law regarding violent racist crimes (the so-called hate crimes), while at the same time Law 927/1979 was exercised as seldom as the recently abolished Penal Code provisions regarding... duels. It is, therefore, very likely that this law was exercised for the first time in the famous Plevris case (to which we shall now turn). The first judicial decision that applied it was issued in 2007 – that is, 28 years after its enactment.

Konstantinos Plevris, a lawyer by profession and a virtual guru of the ultra-right and neo-Nazism in Greece, published a voluminous book under the title, *Jews: The Whole Truth*, which led to his trial after a complaint was filed and an own-initiative criminal prosecution was initiated for violation of Articles 1 and 2 of Law 927/1979.<sup>47</sup> The Athens Three-Member Court of Appeal for Misdemeanours convicted him in the first instance by majority and sentenced him to a 14-month jail term, which was wholly suspended. Of special interest is the view of the minority judge,<sup>48</sup> who explained her arguments in favour of the defendant’s acquittal in a 32-page memorandum, something extremely rare, especially in a misdemeanour case with a rather limited record.

After an appeal by the defendant, the minority view was largely adopted by a majority of the Five-Member Court of Appeal, which conducted the second-instance trial and acquitted Plevris of all charges. The acquittal is highly illuminating for its reasoning and use of excerpts from the book, as well as its interesting legalistic approach in treating the issues of limitations on freedom of speech and the weighting of rights. The interest lies mostly in the way the court gave its own interpretation of the author’s claims, fully adopting his assertion that the book

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47. In the criminal prosecution, the accusations did not include the incitement to discrimination on religious grounds, and, judging by the *ratio decidendi*, this omission proved crucial for the defendant’s acquittal.

48. Regarding this particular judge, much fuss was made as soon as it became known that she administered a blog under the alias “marianaonice”, yet without hiding that she is a judge (there was also a photo of hers on the blog). On this blog, not only did she comment on the cases she judged, but she also used racist and anti-Semitic discourse. Suffice it to quote her phrasing: “God-damned Jews, I wish Hitler had killed them all!”(<http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=230315>).

referred to “Zionist Jews” and not Jews in general. Of course, both in the title of the book and in the excerpts read during the proceedings, the term “Jews” without modifier predominates, while the term “Zionist Jews” is also constantly identified with “Jews”, making it extremely difficult to discern the difference, even if one assumes that there is indeed a difference.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, the Court accepted that this is a historical-scientific book “based on historical sources and undeniable specific facts concerning the Jews’ trans-historical pursuit of global dominance ... The strong phrasings and the characterizations against the so-called Zionist Jews, found repeatedly in the book, are logically and meaningfully consistent with the style and the content of the book, which is a book of polemic, and are justified by the defendant author’s exercise of his right to freely express his thoughts”.

Thus, we have a paradoxical situation wherein an author explicitly declares in his book that he is a racist and a Nazi. He does not care to (nor could he) hide his political ideology from his readers. Yet the Court gives its own interpretation of the author’s historical views and refuses to classify him as a racist and a Nazi. By adopting the false distinction between Jews and Zionist Jews, the Court, in a lengthy and highly unusual *ratio decidendi*, constantly refuses to read the actual words and see that the use of the term “Jew” is the dominant one in the book, and that no such distinction is plausible. Besides, the author himself refers en bloc to “Jews”, “Semites” and “Jewishness”, while praising national socialism and Hitler’s practices. Nevertheless, the Court gave its own meaning to the book, ruling that, based solely on the excerpts in question, one might distort and misinterpret the author’s intentions and belie the substance of his work! In other words, the court fully accepted the author’s argumentation, as it found that the Jews’ trans-historical goal is indeed global dominance based on the author’s well-grounded sources and undeniable cited facts. As a result, the author did not offend Jews on grounds of their racial or national origin. On the contrary, it was the Jews themselves, or at least a part of them, who were linked to dark pursuits, schemes and conspiracies.

On similar grounds, the Plenary Session of the Supreme Court judged that the appeal court decision was well-reasoned and confirmed the acquittal. This Supreme Court decision is emblematic, not only because the Plenary Session handed down its first case law on the matter, but also because it weighed the right to express a purely racist, and not just “revisionist”, discourse against the others’ protection of their rights from violations through the application of the anti-racist law, and decided in favour of the former.

Most importantly, though, this decision of the Supreme Court,<sup>50</sup> which has a special authority not easily ignored by other courts, must also be seen within the context of the Supreme Court’s other case-law regarding freedom of speech, and

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49. However, cf. the very interesting minority view in this Supreme Court ruling.

50. The Supreme Court decisions in Greece do not constitute a *precedent* in the Anglo-Saxon sense, but they do have an *autorité de la chose interprétée*.

particularly speech that may annoy, shock, or be on the minority side. As we shall see, the weight accorded by the Supreme Court to other forms of speech, especially “blasphemous” speech, is radically different from that accorded to a genuinely offending, repulsive and hateful kind of speech.

## **E | OTHER CASES OF IMPUNITY OF RACIST SPEECH**

We turn now to a complaint filed by the legal representative of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) and four well-known gay rights organizations against the Greek Orthodox bishop of Piraeus. In an interview, the bishop had said that homosexual relations were terrible distortions of human dignity with awful consequences to both physical and mental health. The applicants filed a lawsuit for criminal defamation and collective insult, claiming that these statements constitute a collectively despising act against every homosexual person, and may harm their honour and character. With order no. ΕΓ 104-2010/361/9Δ/2011, the Athens public prosecutor<sup>51</sup> found that these statements by the bishop constitute “value judgments regarding homosexuality as such” and dismissed the lawsuit as unfounded.

Members of GHM and the Humanist Association of Greece filed a complaint against another bishop for violation of the anti-racist Law 927/1979 (Article 1, para. 1, 2) on grounds of collective insult. In a public post on his personal blog, the bishop had indiscriminately attacked immigrants, Turkish people, the “nation-less”, the “godless”, the “homeland-less” and others, then criticized the Greek State because “it does not care to strip all of them of Greek nationality by sending them to hell as traitors to our homeland.” The bishop also took on “the so-called GHM, led by nation-less, godless, homeland-less false Greeks,” which “promotes the removal of religious symbols from schools, the abolition of morning prayers and of church-going! Greeks and fellow Greeks, let us awake from our slumber! ... The blood of our freedom heroes calls us to take action, in an honest, lawful and peaceful way!”

The applicants claimed that they were indeed atheists and that the respondent, by virtue of his position as a high-ranking State official and cleric of the Greek Orthodox Church, was inciting acts that could cause discrimination and hate on the part of thousands of Christians. GHM representatives claimed that their Greek identity was blatantly put into doubt because of their minority religious identity, and more generally that the characterizations used in the bishop’s post offend the dignity of atheists and contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of fear, hostility, degradation, contempt and aggressiveness against them. The deputy public prosecutor of Aegio (in order no. 26/2011) dismissed the complaint as unfounded on the grounds that “an absolute ban on the public expression of racist ideas is against the Constitution”. Moreover, the deputy prosecutor ruled that the post in question cannot be regarded as offending or inciting discrimination or hate, since “the contrary view would lead to an unallowable

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51. See [www.greekhelsinki.gr](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr).

restriction on freedom of speech and dissemination of ideas ... since, on the one hand, the Bishop would not be able to freely disseminate his views on God, under the pressure of a possible criminal prosecution against him, and, on the other, the applicants would not be able to freely disseminate their own views on atheism as well, under the pressure of a similar possibility”.

According to the case file from another court decision on the interpretation and application of the anti-racist law, during the military parade of 25 March 2010, a contingent from the Underwater Demolition Command of the Hellenic Coast Guard publicly expressed offending views against others on grounds of national origin. After marching past the VIP stage at Syntagma Square, they continued in step and shouted the following slogans at the public: “One is born a Greek, one does not become a Greek. Albanian pigs, we will make you bleed”. “Whether Albanian or Skopjan, I will make my clothes out of their skin”. “There will be mayhem, then I will have my revenge, when you will have bent the knee before our symbols and the Cross”. Out of 39 accused officers, the Admiralty Court of Piraeus eventually convicted two, who, according to the Court, appear clearly to shout these slogans in a video of the incident. The other 37 were acquitted on reasonable doubt.<sup>52</sup> The clear unwillingness of the Court to convict coast guard officers for the odious things they had shouted while in uniform, in the midst of a military parade on the nation’s Independence Day, was made all the more evident by the sentence imposed on the two convicted officers: three and a half months.

#### 4/ INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE IN A “ZERO TOLERANCE REGIME AGAINST ANOMIE”

There are numerous cases in which members of Golden Dawn did not just express opinions that might have threatened vital legal rights, but actually declared specific criminal intent, including such that later materialized. The emblematic Nazi statement by the leader of Golden Dawn, according to which “bayonets will be sharpened on the sidewalks”<sup>53</sup>, did not draw the attention of the judiciary. In other cases, however, clear incitements to violence could have been immediately connected with subsequent violent acts. There as well, the Greek judiciary failed to take action. Let us consider the following cases as a small sample that establishes the general context of inaction.

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52. Let us note that the Prosecutor had asked for the conviction of all defendants on grounds of “hair-raising slogans calling for the physical extinction of Albanian and Skopjan citizens”. He further mentioned that this was a case of a specially trained military body that normally follows orders as a collective unit, and asked that his view be formally and wholly transcribed, something extremely unusual. Unfortunately, the decision has not been published, and thus we have not been able to read the full text of the Prosecutor’s suggestion.
53. See <http://www.koutipandoras.gr/43163/%CF%8C%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD-%CE%BF-%CE%BC%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%AC%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%8D%CF%83%CE%B5.html>.

In statements made to journalists during the campaign for the 2010 local election, then-candidate for municipal councillor and current Golden Dawn MP Elias Panagiotaros said that, “If Golden Dawn elects a municipal councillor in Athens, a pogrom will ensue. Victoria Square [a location where many immigrants gather] is up next”.<sup>54</sup> During an electoral campaign speech on 6 June 2012, the same Golden Dawn MP informed the public that, “If Golden Dawn enters the Parliament, it will storm hospitals and childcare establishments and start throwing out illegal immigrants and their children, in order to replace them with Greeks”. A short while later, soon after he was elected as an MP, Panagiotaros submitted a question to Parliament (No 354/1-10-2012) to the ministers of labour and interior on the subject of “balloted positions in municipal and local day nurseries and childcare establishments”<sup>55</sup>, asking for information regarding infants of foreign origin that had been admitted into these institutions, their parents, and their countries of origin.

Then Interior Minister Evripides Stylianides hastened to oblige him, despite the “promise” of throwing out little children made by Golden Dawn before the election. Stylianides was quick to ask the regional administrations for the relevant data, with a ministerial document signed the very same day and deemed “extremely urgent”, no less. Over the following period, it was made clear that the Golden Dawn MP’s words were not mere threats. The organization took action soon after, with its members and MPs visiting hospitals, schools and day nurseries in order to terrorize foreign patients and nurses, creating a climate of fear among parents, pupils and infants, and fostering an atmosphere of discord, animosity and hatred among parents, teachers and children.<sup>56</sup> Sadly, no prosecutor found it convenient to simply investigate any of these actions of his or her own accord.

In June 2012, current Golden Dawn MP Yannis Lagos informed his public at an election campaign gathering in Keratsini, Piraeus that Golden Dawn takes all “actions”<sup>57</sup> necessary to “get rid of the stench”, and went on to say that Egyptian fishermen in the area are bad for Greek fish merchants’ business, because they are uncontrollable. Thus, “from now on they will answer to Golden Dawn”.<sup>58</sup> A few hours later, in the middle of the night, at least ten members of the organization, armed with batons and iron bars, attacked the home of some Egyptian fishermen in the nearby Perama area. They inflicted severe head and facial injuries to

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54. See <http://antapokritis.wordpress.com/2010/11/13/%CF%84%CE%B1-%C2%AB%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%BA%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%BC%2%BB-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%B5%CF%80%CF%8C%CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%82/>
  55. <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/c0d5184d-7550-4265-8e0b078e1bc7375a/7743585.pdf>.
  56. See <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article@id=359971>.
  57. The Nazi organization is very fond of the term “actions”; by this, they usually mean “criminal acts”.
  58. See the video of the speech, <http://left.gr/news/ypopsifios-tis-hrysis-aygis-proanaggellei-ti-dolofoniki-epithesi-stoys-aigyptioys-psarades>; on the conflicting interests of fish merchants in Perama, cf. [https://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article\\_id=1412837](https://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article_id=1412837).

one of the lodgers. On their way out, they damaged the lodgers' cars. Six members of the organization were arrested a few hours later. They were identified by the victims and they were charged with grievous bodily injury, serious damage, home intrusion, and violation of the law on weapons. All of them walked free on restrictive terms. The defendants were not charged with criminal conspiracy. Naturally, there was no mention of the highly inflammatory speech by the Golden Dawn candidate, which was materialized overnight.

In the same period when Golden Dawn was sweeping public hospitals and day nurseries, meeting resistance only from facility workers (nursing staff, doctors and teachers) and private citizens, the Ministry of Citizen Protection, aided by prosecutorial and judicial authorities, declared the principle of “zero tolerance against anomie”. The occasional government declarations about “anomie” have always arrived with a supplement: an extension of the concept of anomie. Thus, anomic, unlawful or illegal come to mean any act or behavior that deviates, differs from or opposes power, regardless of its official characterization under criminal law. Despite this extended view of law and order, neither the police nor the judiciary bothered to deal with any of the aforementioned Golden Dawn actions or with numerous others. On the contrary, “zero tolerance” was reduced to violent evacuations of various anarchist or broadly leftist and radical squats, often without even a request by the legal owners of the buildings.

In 2009, after various leftist and anti-racist organizations published tracts calling for anti-fascist demonstrations, members of Golden Dawn filed a lawsuit against these groups for incitement to violence and conflict and criminal defamation. Three years later, an Athens public prosecutor started a criminal prosecution against the secretary general of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, Savvas Michail, a well-known Marxist intellectual of Jewish origin, for incitement to violence, as well as against the former rector of the Greek Polytechnic University for having allowed the use of the university's electronic network by the unidentified administrators of the Athens Indymedia website<sup>59</sup>. At hearings held on 3 and 4 September 2013, it emerged not only that no incident whatsoever was caused by the leftist organizations during the demonstrations in question, but that the only trouble not just threatened but actually occurring involved the stabbings of five immigrants a short while after a Golden Dawn rally, under the guise of an “Inhabitants Committee” gathering. Nevertheless, the prosecutor hastened to put on trial not just the accused persons, but also the historic European slogan, “The people don't forget, they hang fascists”, terming it the expression of an illegal opinion and of intolerable sentiments of hate and violence. These, of course, are absolutely to be condemned, and yet pursued only when they are expressed by the Left.

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59. On this particular case, see <http://www.efsyn.gr/?p=103260>.

## 5/ CENSORSHIP, ART, BLASPHEMY: RELIGION AS THE “FOUNDATION OF THE STATE”

Our review of Greek case-law reveals numerous interpretations and implementations of the provisions on blasphemy. Prosecutions regarding such crimes are extremely common, in total contrast with the virtually unused anti-racist law.

In summarizing the attitudes of the judiciary towards such crimes, two things need to be pointed out. First, it is usual if not universal that whenever a complaint or lawsuit is filed because of an artwork, book, visual artifact, play or other work, prosecutors at the very least initiate a criminal prosecution; artists become defendants and artworks unworthy to be deemed as or integrated into the holy community of Art. This is to say that no such complaint is found inadmissible by prosecuting authorities (as is the case with the anti-racist law described above) on grounds that might at least mention freedom of speech and artistic expression; although both of the latter are constitutionally guaranteed.

In 2003, as part of the Cultural Olympiad, a visual exhibition called “Outlook” occupied public opinion for a long time, causing severe controversy among artists, politicians and clergymen.<sup>60</sup> The eye of the storm was a painting by Belgian painter Thierry de Cordier, *Asperges me*. It showed a human figure covered with a shroud and bearing a cross, while on the left side a penis ejaculates towards the cross. Amid the growing fuss, the hosts decided to remove the painting a short while after the exhibition opened, even as a public prosecutor initiated criminal proceedings against the curator for violation of the law on obscenity and defamation of religions. The curator was eventually acquitted. However, the right of the artist to exhibit his work and the right of the public to enjoy an artwork without obstruction and intrusion were definitely annulled.<sup>61</sup>

Two years later, the artwork at issue was the graphic novel *The Life of Christ* by Austrian cartoonist G. Haderer. Copies of the comic were seized at the request of a public prosecutor, with criminal proceedings for defamation of religion initiated against the author, the publisher, and even bookshop owners and employees (as “primary accessories”!) who had been present at the time of the seizure. The court eventually acquitted the bookshop owners, their employees, and the publisher from charges of being primary accessories in defamation, “on grounds of lack of malice”. But the author was convicted. After fierce protests from cartoonists, publishing houses, authors and newspapers, Haderer was finally acquitted during a second-instance trial, which arrived at the (obvious) conclusion that the book was a humorous one (Decision No. 4532/2005 of the Athens Three-Member Court of Appeal).

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60. Miltiades Evert, former leader of the governing party of “New Democracy”, said that if the painting was not removed immediately, he would remove it himself, while the press officer of the Archbishop of Athens asked then Minister of Culture and current Vice-President of the Government Evangelos Venizelos to intervene in order to stop the disgrace. And so he did..

61. Cf. the opinion of the Greek Ombudsman in 2005: [www.synigoros.gr](http://www.synigoros.gr).

In the long story of blasphemy as crime, the case of the play *Corpus Christi* and the events of autumn 2012 outside the Chytirio theatre, where the play was staged, are among the most disgraceful moments for Greek politics, the Greek police, and the Greek judiciary. The crucial difference in this case was that for the first time, ultra-religious circles were aided by a parliamentary party, Golden Dawn. It is noteworthy that the Greek Orthodox Church, which had deemed the play blasphemous, stated that it did not wish for the artists to be prosecuted. What is more, after the arrest of three actors, the church issued an additional communiqué to make clear that it had not filed a lawsuit and had not authorized anyone to do so. This, of course, did not prevent Bishop Seraphim of Piraeus from filing his own lawsuit, joined not by the official church, but by leading MPs of the Nazi party, such as the currently imprisoned Christos Pappas.<sup>62</sup>

The Chytirio theatre was literally under siege for weeks, as groups of citizens, clergymen and members of Golden Dawn threatened to kill and did actually beat up actors and citizens trying to enter the theatre, and caused damage to the building. At the same time, “religious citizens” filed not one but three motions for provisional protective measures, demanding to cancel the play. Although all such requests were dismissed in the first instance before the Athens court, the Greek State proved absolutely incapable of securing the artists’ and producers’ fundamental right to stage the play without being severely endangered.

Finally, after at least a month of serious rioting and incidents, the producers decided to suspend performances of the play, as their ability to stage them normally had been seriously compromised. During all this time of violent, public and even televised incidents,<sup>63</sup> the police and the prosecuting authorities stood by, abashed and inactive. The highlight of their inaction came with the outrageous moment when a Golden Dawn MP intervened to unarrest a man detained on the street. The overall effect was as though the illegal and violent acts taking place outside the theatre were treated by the authorities as a natural disaster, impossible to prevent or contain.

However, the worst thing was that the indifference on the part of the judiciary was, once again, highly selective. Just a few days after the producers voluntarily stopped the play, the Athens public prosecutor started criminal proceedings for malicious blasphemy and defamation of religion against all artists and producers of the play (the director, actors, lighting technician, choreographer, etc.) – a total of twenty persons – and designated the preliminary investigation as “extremely urgent”. In October 2013, the Athens prosecutor of first instance, instead of simply filing the case, decided to put the defendants on trial. At the

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62. See <http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/xrysi-aygi-kai-serafeim-katethesan-apo-koinoy-minysikata-toy-corpus-christi>.

63. See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2J49pltn\\_Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2J49pltn_Y). This video, where a Golden Dawn MP practices his skills in homophobic and racist verbal abuses, has been all around the web and the world too. In addressing the actors and the citizens that were around the theatre in support of the play, the MP shouts: “you faggots, ass-fuckers, shitty wanker actors, you pussies, your time is coming, you ass-fucked homos, you fucking Albanian ass-holes”.

same time, for the first time after almost a whole year, with the general investigation into Golden Dawn's criminal activities having begun, the judiciary also decided to pursue the criminal acts committed outside the theatre by the MP, E. Panagiotaros.

To summarize all of the above in a phrase that may seem provocative but certainly not untrue, we could say that in present-day Greece, you may well be a racist and a Nazi, because the Greek judiciary believes that this is protected freedom of speech. Yet you may never be blasphemous. In that case, Nazis along with fundamentalists are free to attack you, and, what is more, the judiciary is free to prosecute you as well...

## 6/ PETTING ULTRA-RIGHT REFLEXES: HUMILIATING EXPOSURE AS A BAN ON EXISTENCE

On 2 February 2012, the General Police Division of Western Macedonia issued a press release<sup>64</sup> regarding the arrest of four persons for armed robberies in the town of Velvendo, Kozani. On the same day, Hellenic Police Headquarters issued a communiqué<sup>65</sup> stating that these four persons were accused of serious felonies, including participation in a terrorist organization. At the same time, the Kozani prosecutor of first instance ordered public disclosure of the identities and photos of the four arrested persons. However, these photos showed the faces of the arrested blatantly abused and even deformed. A crude photoshop job had been performed to clean up their injuries and make them somewhat recognizable. According to Minister of Citizen Protection Nikos Dendias, in a TV interview after the outcry stirred by the photos in question, "If we had not used Photoshop, in order to make them match the image that common people may have had of them, there would have been no point in disclosing the photos".<sup>66</sup>

The next day, the police was forced to issue another communiqué stating that during the operation that led to the arrests, only "the absolutely necessary and judicially allowable physical force" had been used.<sup>67</sup> In this way, the police tried to justify the physical abuse they had committed, and that had been made public with the prosecutor's concurrence. After the public outcry, there was eventually a prosecutor's order to investigate the events.

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64. See [http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content&lang=%27.%27&perform=view&id=24417&Itemid=1055&lang=](http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27.%27&perform=view&id=24417&Itemid=1055&lang=).

65. See [www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content&lang='..'&perform=view&id=24429&Itemid=1058&lang=](http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang='..'&perform=view&id=24429&Itemid=1058&lang=).

66. See [http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content@lang=@&perform=view@id=4489@Itemid=564](http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content@lang=@&perform=view@id=4489@Itemid=564).

67. See [http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content&lang=%27.%27&perform=view&id=24446&Itemid=1055&lang=](http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27.%27&perform=view&id=24446&Itemid=1055&lang=)

Of course, one may reasonably ask: “What does judicial foul play in the struggle against terrorism have to do with the ultra-right?” The answer is that such practices form a dangerous authoritarian habitus. This does not necessarily serve any pure “ultra-right” objective, yet the damage is done. It is a commonplace to say that during the last few years we have witnessed the emergence of “preventive criminal law” of massive detentions, preventive arrests of suspects, humiliating exposure of arrested persons – all purportedly aimed at protecting the major good of public order. The notion of public order has taken on almost metaphysical dimensions, so that its protection eventually passes through channels of “instituted illegality”, such as extensive police violence inside police departments or in public at demonstrations and rallies, or the systematic, everyday violations of fundamental rights stemming from conditions inside the detention centres for foreigners and the prisons.

Criminal prosecution is being extended beyond criminal milieus to a point where the attributes of suspect, accused and guilty merge, as is becoming clear in the increasingly common practice of publicly disclosing the identity and photographs of accused persons with the concurrence of prosecutors.<sup>68</sup> There is a systematic move away from traditional ways of identifying suspects or accused persons – testimonies by victims, identification of photos, or by the suspects/accused persons themselves inside the police departments. Greece has begun to use the triumphal “perp walk” (that is, a humiliating exposure) of suspects before the general public. These measures reintroduce a dimension of public humiliation long before actual culpability is ascertained, recalling medieval practices of punishment and justice.

This borderline practice has particularly tested the strength of the democratic constitution in two cases during the last two years, pushing against the limits of legality into a grey zone of suspended rights. While the latter case was the aforementioned disclosure of photos of physically abused suspects, the earlier one involved the public disclosure of the identities, photos, and private medical records of drug-addicted, HIV-positive women rounded up in a police sweep. It is of special interest to study the whole judicial process in that case, which involved humiliating exposure and criminalization not just of the actions but of the very existence of these women.

The participation of public prosecutors in the issuing of the order to disclose identities, photos and, in an unprecedented move, confidential medical files, as well as the criminal prosecution, on felony charges no less, against these women for “grievous and intended bodily injury,” represents a turning point in the history of the Greek judiciary. Moreover, the concurrence of examining magistrates and prosecutors in this case with the detention of the HIV-positive women marked the consolidation and confirmation by the judiciary of a brutal racist practice that divides people into “clean” and “unclean”, infectious and healthy, by criminalizing the former and violently removing them from the social whole.

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68. According to the provisions of Law 2472/1997, “*On the protection of the individual from processing of personal data*”.

That these women were addicts at a particularly advanced stage, that many of them were homeless or temporarily staying at cheap hotels around Omonia Square, only worsened a tragedy caused by the government, at the time still under PASOK. The star of the show was then Health Minister Andreas Loverdos, who made the following bold statement on 30 April 2012: “A part of the problem is illegal immigration and undeclared prostitution. Greek family men go to whorehouses and then carry the disease into their homes”. A few months earlier, he had already declared: “HIV-positive prostitutes need to be expelled, in order to stop posing a threat to Greek families”.<sup>69</sup>

Once again, the political message was heard by the totality of the repressive mechanism. A “sanitary provision order” instituted by Loverdos<sup>70</sup> was carried out by doctors of the Centre for the Control and Prevention of Diseases. Police forces started conducting preventive control sweeps on the street, rounding up women and compelling them to allow HIV tests directly in the police station. Those who tested positive were sent to the Department of Human Trafficking, Hellenic Police Subdivision Against Organized Crime, which is responsible for implementing the law on prostitution. Then they were led before the prosecutor. A prompt order by the prosecutor called for the disclosure online of mug shots, identities and private medical data – that is, their seropositivity – and initiated criminal prosecution against the women.

Prosecutions went forward against a total of 29 drug-addicted HIV-positive women. They were considered to be prostitutes and charged with the felony of grievous and intended bodily injury. The women were accused of practicing prostitution without taking protective measures, despite having full knowledge of their seropositivity, with the intent to propagate the virus and causing serious illness to their clients. After their statements, 16 were detained at Korydallos Prison. Let it be noted that these women were brought before court with medical masks on their faces, in order to complete the image of panic, ignorance and brutal racism of the society at large and its authorities.

But the minister had not foreseen that those thus deemed “unclean” would not prove to be illegal immigrants. On the contrary, almost all of the women now stigmatized were Greek citizens. The judges that handled the cases, whether at the stage of investigation or at the stage of ruling, did not follow a consistent pattern. Some of the women were detained for six months or more (up to one year), while others were released at the beginning of the process, under the restriction that they enter a rehab program. The charges against a number of the women were turned into misdemeanours (hazardous bodily injury) during pre-trial proceedings, while others were put on trial on felony charges.

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69. See <http://www.imerisia.gr/article.asp?catid=26510&subid=2&pubid=112787093>.

70. This is the Sanitary Provision No. 39<sup>a</sup>/2012 on the “*containment of the propagation of infectious diseases*” issued on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 by A. Loverdos, later abolished by former Deputy Minister of Health F. Skopouli and reinstated by current Minister of Health Adonis Georgiadis. On issues of constitutionality and the general problems posed by this provision, see, among others, Mallios ([www.hlhr.gr](http://www.hlhr.gr)).

Recently the Mixed-Jury Court of Athens, on a majority vote, delivered a verdict of innocence on all of the felony charges. Yet who exactly acquitted them? Out of the three judges and four lay jurors on the court, only one judge agreed that they should be acquitted, making for a majority together with three of the jurors. The two remaining judges, including the president of the court, as well as one of the lay jurors, voted to convict the defendants of grievous and possibly malicious bodily injury.

## 7/ JUDICIAL AUTHORITARIANISM AGAINST MINORITIES

In the following section we touch upon case law concerning the “nationally sensitive” issue of minority associations. For a very long time, down to the present, routine matters such as non-contentious proceedings for the legitimization of a civil association have developed into major and enduring controversies of safeguarding national interests and “rights”, with local prefects and the judiciary acting as the guardians thereof.<sup>71</sup>

The Greek judiciary has engaged in a systematic refusal to grant the right of association to a number of our co-citizens who define themselves as bearers of a minority identity, evoking the pretexts of public order and national security. This highlights the ethnocentric prejudices of the judiciary, who put *Raison d’État* above the law so as to safeguard a vague set of “superior” metaphysical goods and rights; *a fortiori* so as to render the minorities in question invisible, by any means possible – just as the “sanctity” of other metaphysical goods and sentiments is deemed superior to constitutional rights, as we saw above with the blasphemy cases.

All of the relevant cases brought before the Greek judiciary eventually reached the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The courts of first instance and the Greek Supreme Court systematically refused to legitimize associations bearing the words “minority”, “Turkish” or “Macedonian” in their titles, and have also ordered the dissolution of already existing associations after applications filed by local prefects. Four cases in particular have hovered around the Greek courts for years. Three concern the “Youth Association of the Prefecture of Evros Minority”, the “Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi”, and the “House of Macedonian Culture”, all of which Greek courts have refused to charter. In the fourth case, although the “Turkish Association of Xanthi” has existed since 1927, it was ordered to dissolve after a request by the local prefect. All four of the associations brought their cases before the ECHR,<sup>72</sup> which ruled in their favour on the grounds that the non-legitimizations or dissolution by the Greek judiciary were not “necessary measure[s] in a democratic society”, and that there was no “urgent social need” justifying the attitude of the national authorities.

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71. On this issue, cf. Tsitselikis 2012: 235, 242-252.

72. These are the cases *Sidiropoulos vs. Greece* (1998), *Bekir Ousta vs. Greece* (2007), *Hülya Emin vs. Greece* (2008), *Turkish Association of Xanthi vs. Greece* (2008), while a new application (No. 1295/2010) filed by the “House of Macedonian Culture” before the ECHR is pending.

Since 2008, however, Greece has failed to comply with the decisions of this international institution of justice, leaving the associations to remain without legal form. Greece has also failed to pass the legal amendments required for European case-law to be integrated without obstruction into the decisions issued by the Greek courts<sup>73</sup>. According to many commentators, this legislative failure is directly related not only to the issue of minority associations, but to the official attitude towards minority rights in general. It is also related – consciously or not – to the attitude of other States that have ideological ties with the minorities in question. What that means is a *contra legem* implementation of the principle of – an often preventive or asymmetrical – reciprocity.<sup>74</sup> “The position of the Supreme Court [one might also add: of the whole State apparatus] is based on the choice of an ‘ill-conceived reciprocity’, according to which the Greek State has the right to abuse in an unconstitutional way some of its citizens whenever this is viewed as reprisal against a foreign country”<sup>75</sup>.

## 8/ (NON-)CITIZENSHIP FOR SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS: THE JUDICIARY AND THE NATION

Before addressing an issue that was widely discussed recently, concerning the refusal of the Council of State to accept that second-generation immigrants have a right to Greek citizenship, it may be interesting to consider on a purely symbolic and ideological level the usual judicial practice of officially depriving convicted foreign nationals of the rights of a Greek citizen. This practice constitutes a fundamental legal paradox, since judges, in their inspiration, deprive foreigners of rights that the foreigners do not in the first place possess. Foreign nationals (that is, non-Greek citizens or citizens of an EU-member State) cannot obtain citizen rights *ipso jure*, as these rights are either a continuation or an integral part of nationality or of EU-member State citizenship, or are granted under very special conditions to third-country nationals living legally in Greece for a very long time.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the automatic imposition of this punishment on persons who have never obtained Greek nationality, or who do not even have a legal residence in Greece – the suspension of never-obtained rights – is a blatant legal paradox. It is all the more bizarre when this is issued against a foreigner as part of the same verdict that convicts this person (among other things) for illegal entry into the country!

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73. On the development of these cases and the relevant documents, see [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases\\_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=bekir@StateCode=@SectionCode=](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=bekir@StateCode=@SectionCode=).

74. On the implementation of reciprocity in issues regarding the minority of Thrace, see Tsitselikis 2007: 163-189.

75. Dimoulis 2008: 149.

76. This was the procedure instituted by the so-called “Ragousis Law” regarding the granting of citizen’s rights during local elections to third-country nationals who are proven long-time inhabitants; however, these provisions were also deemed unconstitutional by the Plenary Session of the Council of State.

This practice can be explained either as a ceremonial imposition of incidental penalties, carried out in a purely mechanical way, or as an expression of the will to shield the State against “dangerous aliens”. In this latter sense, by depriving them even of rights that they have never obtained, the authorities triumphantly ban them from the social and political field. This fear of an improbable threat makes all the more clear the fear of something socially reasonable and legally probable: that the children of immigrants might acquire Greek citizenship.

Shortly after the reformed Greek Citizenship Code was instituted (Law 3838/2010),<sup>77</sup> an Athens attorney (the same person who had joined other members of Golden Dawn in the aforementioned complaint that led to Savvas Michail’s criminal prosecution) filed before the Council of State asking the revocation of various provisions of the law. The Fourth Chamber of the Council of State, found the application admissible in its Decision No. 350/2011 and sent the case to the Plenary Session to judge the constitutionality of these provisions. The distinctive features of the Fourth Chamber’s decision regarding Law 3838/2010 are the following: a) the nation is conceived as a self-contained legal fact, separate from the people and materialized through the Constitution; b) the law of blood is elevated to the status of a Constitutional principle; c) because of the above, only an individual judgment on the “consciousness” of the person requesting Greek citizenship may give them a position among the Greek people, as long as the interested person’s parents have lived more than five years in Greece and the interested person has completed six years attendance in a Greek school; d) finally, since public authority is at stake in local elections, the franchise is limited to Greek citizens.

The distinction between the notions of people and nation on which the decision is based is not entirely new in Greek constitutional law, as it had been tested theoretically by the constitutional jurists of the Metaxas regime, who had to conclude by any means necessary that all authority in Greece emanates not from the people, but from the nation – and thus that national will may contradict popular will. This view is contrary to the democratic view of political community, instead favouring the metaphysical idea of nation over the political one. The law of blood, namely the acquisition of children’s citizenship through their parents, is an institution of the Greek legal order, as well as of virtually every legal order in the world. However, it is legally unprecedented to invest the “law of blood” with the status of a constitutional principle and claim that its violation leads to the “degeneration of the nation”.

The issue of citizenship essentially poses the question, “Who are we, the people?”. A powerful fraction of the judiciary answered this question on the basis of exclusion, not inclusion; in terms of fear and introversion. This fraction practically did

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77. This law introduced for the first time the possibility to acquire Greek citizenship not only through the law of blood, but also through the law of the soil. It fueled tremendous political reactions, which sometimes reached beyond hysteria and irrationality, and plunged an entire society into a collective yackety-yak about national purity, unflinching continuity through history and racialism.

so by subtly adopting extremist political views regarding a concern raised in the first place by the ultra-right, in the manner the ultra-right had intended; at the same time satisfying a major part of the governing majority. It is no accident, after all, that the president of the Council of State recently appointed by the government was previously the judge-rapporteur for the majority opinion in the Fourth Chamber's decision.

### *A temporary conclusion:*

It would be unfair to say all judges are under the sway of racist xenophobia, racialism or nationalism. In critical decisions that pose existential issues for all of us, as is the case with citizenship, the Greek judiciary has been divided, and the minorities have always been vigorous. The devaluation of established institutions, including the judiciary, is a contracted mission of the ultra-right, whether “constitutional” or not. Our task is to reinforce and support these institutions. To do so, one of our indispensable tools is critical reflection on judicial decisions.

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\* All titles originally in Greek unless noted otherwise.

# The Military

Dimosthenis Papadatos

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## 1/ THE MILITARY, THE ULTRA-RIGHT AND A “STATE IN WAR”: TENTATIVE CHALLENGES OF A DOUBLE BOUNDARY

“Some isolated incidents that have been publicly disclosed at various times cannot change the fact that four decades after the collapse of the dictatorship the military has been better immunized against ultra-right intrusion than any other security force.” This summarizes the common position of all those who participated in our survey on the military and who, for obvious reasons, prefer to remain anonymous. However, two transformative events dramatically cast doubt on the validity of such judgments: In the aftermath of the assassination of the 34-year-old anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas by the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn, it was revealed, among other things, that members of this organization had received unofficial training from military officers. Just one week later, a group called the Special Forces Reserve Officers Community (SFROC) announced online its intent to stage a coup d’etat within the week. This was seen as a factor of further destabilization, and mobilized the judiciary. On 28 September 2013, the announced day of the coup, there was of course no “establishment of a national emergency government under the President of the Supreme Court and guaranteed by the Armed Forces”, as the SFROC had demanded. What happened instead on that day was something unprecedented in Greek history in the period since the 1974 transition (the period of the “Changeover”). Security forces carried out the arrest of Nikos Michaloliakos, a member of parliament and the leader of Golden Dawn, as well as four other Golden Dawn MPs (out of a total of eighteen in parliament), and thirteen other leading members of the neo-Nazi party.

The members of SFROC have officially denied any relationship with Golden Dawn. Their activities were investigated by Supreme Court Prosecutor Efterpi Koutzamani, who ordered a preliminary examination. The minister of national defence, Dimitris Avramopoulos, also reacted immediately, ordering the first deputy chief of the Hellenic Armed Forces General Staff to start an investigation of the abandoned military camps in Mandra and Attica, and of old ammunition depots in Malakasa, Attiki – places that were identified by members of Golden Dawn as their training sites.

The subject of this chapter is the political-organizational and ideological role of the Greek military as a mechanism of State repression in recent years – which have

essentially witnessed a reversal in the dynamics that have obtained since the post-1974 changeover. We refer to the historical dynamics of the longest period in modern Greek history without wars or coups. In the case of the military, “the reversal of the changeover dynamic” refers to *tentative* challenges to the two boundaries that, on the one hand, divide the military’s peaceful work from its war preparations, and, on the other, keep the military inside its camps – that is, away from political life and from the duties of internal security.

While the background is radically different from 1996, when Greece found itself on the brink of war with Turkey because of a dispute over the uninhabited Aegean islet of Imia/Kardak, the ongoing debate (and contingency planning) concerning the demarcation of an Exclusive Economic Zone in the Aegean reveals, among other matters, that the “vision” of a war effort, even one devastating for the country (as proven in 1897) can still be taken seriously – not just in the militaristic fantasies of a neo-Nazi ultra-right, but also in the reasoning of the current prime minister’s far-right counselors – as a suitable “therapy”.

These trends can only be evaluated in their actual dimensions in connection with the State’s overall strategy. In this sense, then, the present study deals with: a) the particularities of the military’s participation, as a State repression mechanism, in the developing process of a “normalization” of social division and the fascistization of political life; and b) the trace left inside the military by the political and social antagonisms of the current period – in particular, the ties of elements of the military with a reinforced ultra-right, the “compatibility” of State defence policy with ultra-right politics and ideology, and the (ultra-right) politicization of subjects concerning both the military’s interests as such as well as the larger political agenda.

## 2/ INCOMPLETE DEJUNTAIZATION AND THE REVERSAL OF THE CHANGEOVER DYNAMIC

In 1974, with the overthrow of the Cypriot leader Makarios by the Greek junta, the Turkish counter-attack, and the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish military, Greece was left practically without a government. This was the catalyst for the collapse of the Greek dictatorship. However, the chief members of the junta were convicted as perpetrators of a “momentary” crime, and even if it had originally taken them almost three decades to prepare it... Immediately after, unrepentant military officers mounted renewed efforts to “reinstate” a dictatorship.

Until late 1974, the main issue for Konstantinos Karamanlis’ national unity government was the army. During this time, the prime minister went on to dismantle the major parts of the army officer corps still hoping for a reinstatement (followers of Dimitris Ioannidis, or “petty officers”; followers of Georgios Papadopoulos, or “the old Aprilians”; and “independents”, national-socialists, fans of Muamar Gaddafi, etc.). Karamanlis integrated the Navy and the Air Force into the Supreme Council of National Defence, thus changing the power balance inside

the Hellenic Armed Forces, and he opted out of NATO, in an effort to detonate social discontent and, more importantly, because of the Greek-Turkish conflict in Cyprus. This last move also signaled a change in the army's disposition, that is, in the long term, shifted its ideological orientation towards the "external" enemy and thus limited its aspirations for an "internal role".

Along with all of the above, Karamanlis also won the dispute over the departure of 163 tanks camped in Attica, despite the generals' objections (led by then Chief of Armed Forces General Bonanos), and put an end to the Greek Military Police, the strongest support of the short-lived Ioannidis junta that had followed on the departure of the original colonels. Finally, Karamanlis reinstated the responsibilities of the political minister of national defence, which the junta had constitutionally conferred on the military chief of armed forces. At the same time the chief dictators of the 21 April 1967 regime were, to their surprise, arrested. The aforementioned attempts to reinstate dictatorship did not end, however. The most important of them was made in February 1975, when a group of army officers prepared a military movement in Athens, Thessaloniki and Larissa, intending to overthrow Karamanlis' government, bring Greece back into NATO's military branch, and release the deposed dictator Dimitris Ioannidis, who had been imprisoned while awaiting trial.<sup>78</sup> This infamous "pyjama coup" ended with the arrests of 37 officers, who, according to then Defence Minister Evangelos Averoff, were mere "droplets": an insignificant minority of junta-lovers inside an otherwise democratic army. The term "droplets" has become a fixture ever since in the political vocabulary of the Changeover period. It represents the predominant official perception about the problem of the infiltration of the Greek State by ultra-right pockets. "Droplets" means that there is indeed a problem, but a small, almost insignificant one, which, therefore, can be tolerated and considered to be "within the limits".

As long as the issue of Cyprus was still unfolding, or at least was repeatedly claimed and declared still to be pending, the danger posed by the "droplets" was definitely downplayed, and the military's dejuntaization remained incomplete. At the same time, however, a reinstatement of the role played by the military before 1974 was simply unrealistic. The main reason was that the crisis of political representation had been resolved, as testified by Karamanlis' landslide victory in the first election after the reestablishment of democracy. Moreover, mostly because of the fallout from Cyprus, the military could no longer act as the "party" of the powers that be, since it had been disconnected from the immediate strategic, economic and political interests of the Greek bourgeoisie that, in a context of democratic stability, has always had the luxury of other outlets for political representation. There is also another important factor – social radicalism expressed almost on an everyday basis on the streets. This strong popular pressure proved crucial, and succeeded in frustrating whatever schemes there were to bring the country back to the "plaster" years.

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78. Cf. "Evangelos Averoff's 'droplets'", *Ethnos* newspaper, 14 November 2011.

In the years that followed, the military was restricted to its “defence” duties – that is, it remained inside the military camps, although not always inside the country. Its new role was thereafter to be defined by its place in the context of Greece’s international coalitions (NATO, EC/EU); by the overall international situation with the end of the Cold War, the “New Order” dogma, and the beginning of the “war against terror”; by Greece’s upgrading into a “force of stability” in the Balkan region; by the modification of the “Northern enemy” dogma and the formation of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel axis; by the reception of immigration flows starting in the early 1990s, the repression of which was undertaken – and is still performed – also by parts of the military; finally, and more generally, by the transformations in Greek nationalist ideology from 1974 until today.

On the other hand, the “democratic integration” of the military and, in parallel, the Greek ultra-right’s progressive abandonment since 1990 of its self-definition as a camp of junta-lovers do not mean that the military is excluded from the ultra-right political imaginary. The exact opposite is the case. Suffice it to mention here that the most important annual mobilization of Golden Dawn to date has been the anniversary of the Imia/Kardak dispute of 1996. This annual rally, though it began as a marginal one, has in the last few years mobilized 3,000 to 5,000 ultra-right supporters. The day more generally is treated as a pan-Hellenic “commemoration” in honour of Commander Christodoulos Karathanasis, Commander Panagiotis Vlachakos and Ensign Hector Gialopsos, members of the crew of a Hellenic Navy helicopter that took off on 31 January 1996 on patrol for a possible Turkish presence on the islet in question, only to crash on its way back to base.

A series of incidents indicate that the trend of ultra-right “politicization” of the military, though minor, is both detectable and, since the mid-1990s, remarkable. Specific examples include the flight of Group Captain Thomas Vrakas with a Hellenic Air Force spraying aircraft above Albanian territory in 1994; the participation of reserve officer Georgios Anastasoulis in the acts of murder committed by the armed ultra-right organization “Front for the Liberation of Northern Epirus” (FLNE, “MAVI”) on the Greek-Albanian borders, also in 1994; the participation of ultra-right members of the Greek Voluntary Guard in the Srebrenica massacre alongside paramilitary Serbian “brothers” (1995); the tumultuous reception of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the rioting during school parades, starring members of the “Department of Elite Special Force” in Corfu (1996-1997); the revival of junta-like detention barracks by Brigadier Xideris in Kos (2002); the role played by special forces reserve officer Dimitris Pipikios in organizing the usually violent anti-immigration demonstrations in Agios Panteleimon area of Athens (2009), in a neighbourhood that has ever since been a bastion of Golden Dawn; the racist slogans shouted by members of the Underwater Demolition Command of the Hellenic Coast Guard (here: “UDCCG”) during the March 25 military parade in Athens in 2012; and finally, the paramilitary formation of the “Patriotic Civic Guard” and the “Centre for Gun Control” in 2012.

These incidents confirm that during all this time there has always been a “special” and multi-dimensional relationship of the Greek ultra-right with the “hardest” of the

State's mechanisms. If one adds the ties of some of the protagonists in these incidents with the political realm, more specifically with the traditional political right wing, then this becomes more clear. Fifteen years after his flight above Albanian territories, Vrakas became a candidate of the New Democracy parliamentary election list in the largest constituency of the country, the "Athens B" constituency, during the 2009 general election. Makis Voridis, a defence attorney in the "MAVI" case and an active supporter of nationalist positions on the issue of "Northern Epirus" (southern Albania), as well as the official delegate of Jean-Marie Le Pen in Greece until quite recently, was later elected as an MP with New Democracy, became the spokesperson of the party's delegation in the Parliament, and finally received a minister's portfolio in the late 2011-early 2012 government. During the early 2000s he had worked as a celebrated TV panelist on issues of immigration and terrorism.

In the recent crisis years, as the ultra-right claimed a more active political role, this virtual immunity escalated in an unprecedented way: all but two of the coast guard members were acquitted of all charges. Members of paramilitary organizations became spokespersons for ultra-right associations in the media. A number of military officers with explicitly racist and anti-democratic views became ministers. Thus, "isolated" incidents such as those mentioned above are important in the continuum of downplaying, tolerating, and rewarding the "droplets". They reveal an increasingly strong anti-democratic current within the State apparatuses. In the last instance, they reveal a continuum between state and parastate only partly exposed by the recent dismantlement of Golden Dawn.

A highlight in these developments was covered in an article published in the Sunday newspaper *To Vima tis Kyriakis* in September 2012, according to which the chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff from 2009 to 2011, Frangoulis Frangos, had prepared for a coup d'état in 2011, which was averted only at the last minute.<sup>79</sup> (The report proceeded from an earlier French article published in *Libération* under the headline, "Papandreou chose the referendum in order to prevent a military coup," 5 November 2011.) According to the *Vima* report, during the autumn 2011 negotiations in Brussels towards the eventual agreement with the Troika on the so-called "Second Memorandum" and the terms of Private Sector Involvement (PSI) in Greek debt, the national defence minister of the government then under George Papandreou, Panos Beglitis, was barricaded as he entered a church in Thessaloniki. The incident was considered to have been organized by ultra-right groups and ultra-religious organizations aided by retired and active armed forces officers. The newspaper revealed that in the atmosphere of fierce "anti-Memorandum" and anti-government protests all over the country, which at the time prompted evocations of the "Arab Spring", the secret services had informed the prime minister about "suspicious moves" by ultra-right elements. Later, a nationalist right wing politician admitted in private conversations that a few days before these events, he had been asked by a retired army officer whether he would be ready to participate in a possible interim military government.

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79. See <http://www.tovima.gr/politics/article/?aid=477185>.

Frangoulis Frangos was dismissed as the military's chief of staff on 1 November 2011 in a surprise reshuffle of the Greek military leadership, one of the most sweeping personnel changes in recent years. Until then, however, the political authorities of the Ministry of National Defence had seen him accumulate "tremendous power" within the army, where he "promoted his own men in the Intelligence Division, in large formations and in critical units around Athens".<sup>80</sup> As chief of the General Staff, Frangos had prepared an operational plan regarding a possible destabilization of Athens by "gangs [of foreign criminals] armed with AK-47s". He had also warned about the potential "radicalization" of immigrants from an increase in "illegal immigration". He purportedly clashed with the defence minister in early 2011 because he had not informed the latter about "Callimachus", a military exercise in domestic crowd suppression organized under NATO auspices, because, according to Frangos himself, he had wanted to prevent any leaks to the press. (Frangos also later served briefly as interim minister of national defence in the caretaker government during the weeks between the two elections of spring 2012.)

The *Vima* report is significant in multiple ways. In the midst of a serious political crisis, and for the first time since the "pyjama coup", one of the leading and traditionally pro-government newspapers in the country linked the military to plans for a coup, while pointing to it as a political "actor" in the context of a severe political crisis. One year later, this article has yet to be officially denied, suggesting that in the military, as in all aspects of the Greek institutional "superstructure", the Changeover dynamic has been radically reversed – with all the dangers this implies for the Constitution.

### 3/ THE MILITARY AS AN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL POLICE FORCE

While a military that undertakes "police" duties is not a Greek particularity, and does not in itself pose issues of constitutional aberration, it does define a working framework and a "project description" for the military that points to public order rather than to national defence, moving the military out of the camps and lionizing military officers – as we saw in Frangos' case – in new fields.

On this basis, let us have a look at some more recent developments. On 2 April 2013, the special forces of the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Brigade were ordered out of the area of Kilkis, where they are based at Nea Santa, and found themselves deployed in central Athens inside the Ministry of National Defence, to face off against protests by unpaid workers from the Skaramagas shipyards. There had been an earlier active military deployment at the ministry in October 2012, when during another protest "assault" the shipyard workers reached the ministry's central building. Similar scenes occurred at other times during protests by retired mili-

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80. See <http://www.tovima.gr/politics/article/?aid=477182>.

tary officers<sup>81</sup>. A significant case in point regarding this new direction for the military was the “Callimachus” crowd suppression exercise, which took place on 3-4 February 2012 in the area of Argyroupoli, Kilkis. Again involving soldiers serving in the “PONTOS” 71st Airborne Brigade, the exercise rehearsed military operations to suppress demonstrations and civilian crowds in residential districts. As part of the exercise, which was video-recorded and posted online, professional soldiers dressed in riot police uniforms with full gear faced other soldiers acting as violent demonstrators, while army officers threw Molotov cocktails at them.

In a country where the military dictatorship of 1967 to 1974 has remained vivid in collective memory, the democratic reflexes of Greek public opinion proved to be alive and kicking. According to a question posed in Parliament by the Communist Party, “this exercise continued similar previous exercises. More specifically, on 13 March 2002 in Veria, on 13-15 June 2006 in Papagos, on 29 July 2009 in Nea Peramos, Attica, on 7-10 January 2011 in Polygyros, Chalkidiki, and on 31 March 2010 in Kosovo”.<sup>82</sup> Then Defence Minister Panos Beglitis replied that he had no knowledge of these incidents, adding that “the government and the Ministry would never acquiesce to exercises related to the internal socio-economic situation of the country”. Then government spokesperson Georgios Petalotis said that this was an ordinary exercise, aiming at “preventing crises, separating conflicting forces, stabilizing, rebuilding and assisting humanitarian operations”.<sup>83</sup>

As we saw above, several months later, but in any case during Beglitis’ incumbency, the dismissal of Frangoulis Frangos and many other members of the Government Council of Foreign Affairs and Defence (KYSEA) was connected with the “Callimachus” exercise, about which at least a part of the relevant political authorities seemed to have known nothing. As for the military authorities, the Armed Forces General Staff officially refuted the allegations, saying that the exercise in question had to do with “separating conflicting parties”. In one of his speeches, the 596 Battalion Commander revealed that because of the country’s participation in the Euro Army, the Hellenic Army has been obligated since spring 2011 to maintain two platoons for crowd suppression. Besides its “national” missions, the 71st Airborne Brigade is trained, evaluated and prepared to detach forces to the Balkan Battle Group (HELEBROC) and the NATO Response Force (NRF), which, according to new NATO doctrine decided during the Lisbon Summit, may intervene in national territories in order to protect the social and political regime wherever social unrest poses a special danger for it.<sup>84</sup>

Despite efforts to downplay the issue, the incident in Kilkis was discussed widely for several days. It is telling that during a Mega TV show, a special commentator

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81. Cf. “Commandos against workers”, *Eleftherotypia* newspaper, 4 April 2013, <http://www.enet.gr/?i=arthra-sthles.el.columns&id=354910>.

82. See “A military exercise-demonstration for combating demonstrators and suppressing human crowds, in Argyroupoli, Kilkis”, *www.kke.gr*, 2 August 2011.

83. Cf. “The Army is being trained to suppress demonstrators”, *tvxs.gr*, 10 February 2011.

84. See [http://diktiospartakos.blogspot.gr/2011/02/blog-post\\_09.html](http://diktiospartakos.blogspot.gr/2011/02/blog-post_09.html).

was invited to talk about the event – retired colonel Antonis Mylonakis, responsible for defence issues on behalf of LAOS, the far-right political party led by Georgios Karatzaferis, and currently a journalist in a daily EXTRA3 TV show very favourable to the ultra-right. Needless to say, Mylonakis fully supported the exercise.<sup>85</sup> It is also noteworthy that during the youth revolt of December 2008, the units of all three branches of the military around the country were put in a state of “yellow alarm”, implementing heightened measures of security “out of fear of rioting during the pupils’ mobilization”, as reported back then in a leading newspaper<sup>86</sup>. According to the same newspaper, these measures were activated following two consecutive orders by the then chief of the general staff, Dimitrios Grapsas, and included, among other things, increasing the military personnel of the Emergency Intervention Squads inside military camps and giving them more live-fire ammunition. Finally, according to a denunciation published by the “Spartacus” Free Soldiers’ Network, soldiers at the Nafplion Training Centre were ordered to line up in order to protect the gate of their camp during a peaceful workers’ rally organized in the context of the general strike declared by the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Civil Servants’ Confederation (ADEDY).<sup>87</sup>

#### **4/ THE ULTRA-RIGHT AND THE MILITARY: INSIDE, OUTSIDE AND IN PARALLEL**

On the ground defined by State strategy, the intrusion of ultra-right elements into the military, the creation of paramilitary networks, and the attempt by the ultra-right to establish relations of political representation with parts and persons of the military are not peculiar to Greece. In Greece, however, the incidents that reveal activities by ultra-right clusters within the military, as well as the formation of paramilitary networks, have been multiplied in the last few years.

##### **A | FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

The main reference of these clusters today is the website Defensenet.gr, which appears as a popular news and aggregator portal well-known even to children. According to Alexa.com, which tracks macroscopic international trends on the Web, as of 8 August 2013 Defencenet was the 30th most popular website in Greece and indexed by 2,395 other Web pages. Defensenet.gr appears to be favourable to Golden Dawn and often publishes communiqués by the organization, even in matters of national defence. Just a few hours after the murder of anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas by a member of

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85. Ibid.

86. Cf. “Yellow alarm in military camps out of fear of rioting due to the mobilizations”, *in.gr*, 12 December 2008.

87. Ibid.

Golden Dawn, one could read on this site: “They try to implicate Popular Association – Golden Dawn in the crime committed in Keratsini, for purely political reasons, whereas there is no evidence that the perpetrator had any political motivations whatsoever”<sup>88</sup>.

The site publishes its own reports on various subjects ranging from the military and defence to history, religion, technology and the environment. As far as defence and foreign policy are concerned, the administrators’ orientation may be seen clearly in their comment on the recent visit to Turkey by Evangelos Venizelos, leader of PASOK, minister of foreign affairs, and deputy prime minister in the Samaras government: “Having hastened to visit Ankara as a ‘pilgrim’ on the eve of the Turkish invasion of martyred Cyprus, and having made statements about ‘a modification of the Greek-Turkish borders’, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs was now welcomed by the Turks with a bucket of shit on his face, as they accused him of fomenting terrorists”<sup>89</sup>. At the same time, and despite its favour for an outfit as anti-Semitic as Golden Dawn, Defensenet.gr does not hesitate to hail the energy agreement between Greece, Cyprus and Israel as a “historic” one<sup>90</sup>, in line with Golden Dawn’s official position. Let us note, by the way, that the neo-Nazi party does not question the Greek pro-Israel foreign policy<sup>91</sup>, thus adopting discretely the official Greek defence strategy.

Another reference of this milieu is the weekly pro-Nazi militaristic newspaper *Stochos* (“Target”), which also runs a daily blog on matters of defence and security. *Stochos* first appeared in 1985 as a nationalist newspaper; its specific version of nationalism was described by its founder, Georgios Kapsalis, in an interview given in 1997 to Nikos Galanos, a member of the Nationalists’ Union of Rethymno, an organization well-known for its own history of violent fascist acts: “What the enemies have done to the Greeks, the Greeks will do to the enemies. What they have bloodily taken from us, we will bloodily take back; there is no other way”<sup>92</sup>. Between 2009 and 2012, the newspaper’s milieu made public interventions through the group “Uncommitted Patriots”, organizing and/or supporting, along with Golden Dawn, anti-Turkish rallies (e.g., against Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit in Greece) and anti-immigration demonstrations, making public statements against the citizenship bill, participating in irredentist events with slogans such as “Monastiri-Gevgelija, Hellenic Land”, etc. Since 2001, the publisher has been Savvas Hatziparaskevas, who is close to the current prime

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88. “Crime in Keratsini: They are politicizing it and pointing to Golden Dawn”, *Defencenet.gr*, 18 September 2013 (last accessed on 1 October 2013).

89. See <http://www.defencenet.gr>, 23.7.2013 (last accessed on 8 August 2013).

90. Cf. “A historic energy agreement between Cyprus, Greece and Israel”, <http://www.defencenet.gr>, 7 August 2013.

91. This direction is already suggested by the rather neutral formulation in the text of the party’s “Political Positions”: “Today that the natural gas of the Cypriot EEZ is at the centre of international interest, Hellas, and not Israel, should be the guarantor of Cyprus’ integrity”, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/kinima/thesis#ixzz2bQEhS1tj> (last accessed on 9.8.2013).

92. “The unpublished interview by the late Kapsalis”, [www.stoxos.gr](http://www.stoxos.gr), 13.5.20008 (last accessed on 8.8.2013).

minister. Let us remark further that *Stochos* saluted Antonis Samaras' election as president of the New Democracy party in 2009, deeming it a "revolution of the popular Right".<sup>93</sup> One year before taking up the newspaper's publication, Chatziparaskevas had been a member of the "Front Line", a formation led by the well-known neo-Nazi Kostas Plevris, a former collaborator of dictator Ioannis Ladas, connected with the secret services<sup>94</sup>, and an occasional collaborator of Georgios Karatzaferis, President of LAOS.

## B | FROM THE SPECIAL FORCES TO THE CABINET

The above does not of course exhaust the story of ultra-rightists inside, outside and in parallel with the Hellenic Armed Forces or their high-profile connections. On the world's most popular social media page, Facebook, just one of the groups, entitled "We want the UDCCG to shout again their slogans during parades"<sup>95</sup> has about 46,000 member-supporters. This is a rather modest indication of the appeal of the racist and chauvinist slogans shouted in spring 2010, at the centre of Athens, by members of the coast guard, the UDCCG, during the official military parade for the 25 March national independence celebration.<sup>96</sup> In December 2011, during the uproarious trial of the 39 accused officers that took place at the Admiralty Court of Piraeus, members of Golden Dawn, the "Uncommitted Patriots," and other ultra-right organizations rallied to manifest their support.

Frangoulis Frangos, the wannabe dictator according to *Vima* newspaper, who had also directed the Military Intelligence Service during the 2004 Olympic Games, was among those showing their support for UDCCG at the Admiralty Court. Despite his aforementioned removal as chief of the Armed Forces General Staff in November 2011, Frangos subsequently served a few weeks as defence minister in the interim government under Panagiotis Pikramenos, between the elections of May and June 2012. According to Frangos' irredentist views, Asia Minor is "a vital space of our country, and, though under Turkish domination, never stopped being the spiritual focus of our people". This may explain why his ministerial appointment was hailed "with cries of joy by the Greek ultra-right, from *Stochos* to Golden Dawn"<sup>97</sup>. The same circles had been only slightly less joyful a few months earlier, when Georgios Georgiou, a member of LAOS, had become deputy minister of defence in the "experts' government" (November 2011 to April 2012) under Loukas Papadimos. Such cases clearly indicate that in Greece, the choice of "experts above party affiliations" has a distinctive trait of militarism.

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93. O Ios [Team Virus], "Antonis Samaras' secret weapons", *I Efimerida ton Sintakton* newspaper, 25 June 2013.

94. Cf. Dimitris Psarras, "Ultra-right snakes in New Democracy's bosom", *I Efimerida ton Sintakton*, 19 March 2013. On the relations between Plevris and the secret services, cf. Klitsikas & Speranzoni 2003.

95. <https://www.facebook.com/GrOyk>

96. Cf. Dimitris Angelides "...And hatred", <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=145379>.

97. Cf. O Ios, "The vision of a 'new 1897'", *ibid*.

## C | CIVIL WAR DRESS REHEARSALS

Interestingly enough, video of Frangos' presence at the Admiralty Court in late 2011 was posted online by the Greek Centre for Gun Control.<sup>98</sup> This was the short-lived (?) umbrella organization under Theodoros Liolios, head of the paramilitary "Greek Civic Guard" and professor at the Military Cadets School<sup>99</sup>. Liolios, according to the press, had undertaken to "passionately defend the school principal and the cadets that disgraced the 2011 commemoration of 17 November 1973" by singing the anthem of the junta. In his attempt to justify this, Liolios attributed it to the cadets' humorous temperament, and went on to post the dictators' hymn on his own personal website.<sup>100</sup>

A little later, the "Greek Civic Guard" issued an open invitation addressed to "all those who have served in the special forces, to men and women highly trained in martial arts, and to all those who specialize in guarding VIPs" (17 October 2012). According to the press, this is "a group with close ties with Golden Dawn, if not identical to it", although its spokespersons insist that they only use airsoft weapons. However, they do maintain that their objective is "deeper, more special, more luminous and more complex", as they are training "for the hour of judgment".<sup>101</sup>

In another press report, one may find that the neo-Nazi "Greek Organization X" merged on 15 April 2012 "with the Patriotic Civic Guard" in order to form citizen squads on neighbourhood patrol. According to this report, "both Greek Organization X and Patriotic Civic Guard deny any relation or affinity with Golden Dawn. However, one of its three leaders, according to the April 2012 memorandum of association, was Georgios Apergis, a Golden Dawn candidate in the 2009 general election. Moreover, this same person offered at the Greek Organization X headquarters lessons in self-defence and training for street fights"<sup>102</sup>.

Preparing for their clash with the internal enemy, some neo-Nazi organizations upgrade and "internationalize" their paramilitary activities. Following the example of their fellow neo-Nazis who went to Srebrenica in 1995 in support of their Orthodox Serb "brothers" during the latter's effort to extinguish non-Serbian populations, the Strasserian neo-Nazis of the "Black Lily" group recently went to support Assad's regime in the Syrian civil war. It is also noteworthy that this operation has had good press coverage in *Democratia* newspaper, which echoes views of the current Greek prime minister's milieu.

Just as the Greek civil war remains a fresh memory for the ultra-right, so too with the much more recent dictatorship 1967 to 1974. In April 2013, a website spe-

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98. See [www.ekeo.gr](http://www.ekeo.gr).

99. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrQYVTesDME> (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

100. Cf. O Ios, "The time of civic guards?", <http://www.efsyn.gr/?p=69202>.

101. Ibid.

102. Yannis Papadopoulos, "Golden-Dawnists are not the only neo-Nazis", *Ta Nea* newspaper, 27 July 2013.

cialized in defence and military matters revealed that a second lieutenant in Samos, probably a member of Golden Dawn, engaged in pro-junta propaganda for the upcoming anniversary of 21 April 1967, asking soldiers: “What were the seven golden years in Greece?” and giving the answer himself: “The seven-year Junta!”<sup>103</sup> As we saw earlier, this is also the line of the Special Forces Reserve Officers Community (SFROC).

## **D | RESERVE OFFICERS’ CLUBS: THE PRIDE OF THE GREEK ULTRA-RIGHT**

The SFROC call for a coup on 28 September 2013 reminded that the main mechanism of influence for the Greek ultra-right is in the nationalist reserve officers’ clubs. These are officially recognized collectives that, according to our interviewees, have a wide range of activities, from propaganda to pure war operations. The clubs have made a name for themselves through participation in parades by special forces reserve officers’ contingents at national celebrations, and through dissemination of their extremist nationalist views, especially on the issue of Greek relations with FYROM (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia)<sup>104</sup>. The role played by reserve officer Dimitris Pipikios during anti-immigration protests in Agios Panteleimon and his support of Golden Dawn – as the star in a 2010 Golden Dawn commercial no less – are well known.<sup>105</sup>

The activities of these clubs are widespread throughout Greece. Important parts of them focus on the borderland regions, where their members endeavour to terrorize the minority populations of Northern Greece. According to the “Anti-War Internationalist Movement”, the regular army exercise “GRIVAS-DIGENIS” that took place on 19-20 January 2013 in northern Thrace had the objective of “confronting native rebels who try to undermine the operational capacities of conventional forces by sabotage and assaults against strategic targets ... All major exercises of Reserve Officers’ Clubs take place in Thrace – and, of course, everybody knows that the National Intelligence Service has full knowledge of it. An important part in them is played by Nazi Golden Dawn, either acting by itself or through the Reserve Officers’ Clubs”<sup>106</sup>.

## **5/ INTRA-RIGHT COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE INSIDE THE MILITARY**

The ultra-right presence within the military mostly reaches younger recruits and the lower ranks, as their greater distance from memories of the junta and

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103. Cf. “Pro-Junta propaganda by a second lieutenant in Samos”, *onalert.gr*, 2 April 2013.
  104. See [http://diktiospartakos.blogspot.gr/2009/07/blog-post\\_9556.html](http://diktiospartakos.blogspot.gr/2009/07/blog-post_9556.html) (last accessed on 1 August 2013).
  105. See [http://jungle-report.blogspot.gr/2010/10/blog-post\\_27.html](http://jungle-report.blogspot.gr/2010/10/blog-post_27.html) (last accessed on 1 August 2013).
  106. “Warmongers against the internal enemy”, *diktiospartakos.blogspot.com*, 30 March 2013 (last accessed on 8 August 2013).

dejuntaization objectively makes a more favourable seedbed for ultra-right propaganda, and because the ultra-right invests in power role models relating to youth. Also, the propaganda seems to be more effective among people with less education. Yet the influence of ultra-right militarist elements does not end there. Unfortunately, the relevant information usually becomes available *ex post facto*, after the death of the key players. This was, for example, the case with the late Brigadier Dimitrios Mourtos (retired), who was “honoured” with a Golden Dawn eulogy recognizing that “he was faithful to the principles of Golden Dawn [and] fought in a hostile situation for anything national”<sup>107</sup>.

A rather different case in point is that of Elias Pappas, a retired lieutenant general and the father of the current spokesperson for Golden Dawn in parliament, Christos Pappas. The son, the organization’s second in command, surrendered to the police voluntarily after the arrest of the Golden Dawn leader, Nikos Michaloliakos. The father occupied the last honorary position on the Golden Dawn candidates’ list for the 2012 election. This was the same person who, during the junta, “occupied crucial posts, such as director of the 2nd Office of the 3rd Army Corps”, as one may read in his son’s personal blog.<sup>108</sup> It is thanks to Elias Pappas that his son has been able to maintain contacts with the milieu of retired military officers who have been yearning for the junta’s return, yet do not approve of the “extremist activities” of the Michaloliakos fraction.<sup>109</sup> It appears that no matter who on the ultra-right succeeds to the mantle of the neo-Nazi party currently under dismantlement, a – formal, at least – confession of faith to democratic rule will be of great importance.

These two cases define a threshold. They show that despite the sudden political upgrade of the neo-Nazi ultra-right and the correlated absolution of the “droplets” of yore, neither the ultra-right as a political milieu nor its people inside the military find it easy to publicly declare their political credo. However, we saw earlier that a slow reversal of this trend has been underway.

In an effort to confront the influence of Golden Dawn and, more generally, the fragmentation of the mainstream political right wing, the current prime minister and leader of New Democracy collaborated before the 2012 election with members of the far-right party LAOS, which enjoyed a special itinerary and once significant popularity in ultra-right milieus, including the former LAOS MPs Makis Vouridis and Thanos Plevris. Members of New Democracy, such as Nikos Hidioglou (press officer at the Ministry of National Defence under former Minister Vangelis Meimarakis) also rallied themselves to the cause. Hidioglou, a columnist for the pro-junta newspaper *Eleftheri Ora* and for the openly pro-fascist *Eleftheros Kosmos*, also wrote *No to the Old City*, an allegorical novel describing the coup of a nationalist organization against an (anti-)Hellenic centre-left government<sup>110</sup>. In the book, the fictional government supports and is supported

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107. “Adieu, Dimitris, friend and fellow fighter”, [www.xryshaygh.com](http://www.xryshaygh.com), 10.1.2013 (last accessed on 7 August 2013).

108. See [http://xristospappas.blogspot.gr/2012/06/blog-post\\_8817.html](http://xristospappas.blogspot.gr/2012/06/blog-post_8817.html).

109. Cf. *I Avgi* newspaper, 29 September 2013.

110. See <http://left.gr/news/xfyllizontas-oikogeneiako-alm-poym-tis-nd#sthash.26qsp6J.dpuf> (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

by “illegal immigrants”. Hidirolou’s views against immigrants, the political left, the Changeover period, anti-fascism and human rights supporters have been laid down by the author himself in his articles, as well as in events organized by ultra-right magazines such as the pro-fascist *Patria*.

If this was the case regarding the political authorities of the military four years ago, today these trends seem to be reinforced at the level of the military officers. Commenting on the re-enlistment of military officers in March 2013, *Avgi* newspaper characterized it as “an opening of New Democracy to Golden Dawn’s ultra-right agenda”, explaining that “although KYSEA dismissed the chiefs of all three branches of the military, it did not dismiss the chief of Armed Forces General Staff, General Michalis Kostarakos, who via Twitter had unbecomingly saluted the racist provision brought to the Parliament by 85 New Democracy MPs suggesting that all entrants to military and police schools be ‘of Hellenic origin’”<sup>111</sup>. The article also reports that the final re-enlistment followed Kostarakos’ own suggestions.

The same chief of the general staff, Kostarakos was all over the press again a few days later, as *Democratia*, the newspaper close to the prime minister’s milieu, noted approvingly that on “the night of Holy Saturday, the Paschal troparion chanted by Archbishop Ieronymos was ‘covered’ by the National Anthem chanted vigorously by the contingent of the Naval Academy”. According to the newspaper, Kostarakos congratulated, again via Twitter, “the contingents of Military Schools that manfully chanted the National Hymn last night in Athens, during the liturgy of the Resurrection”, claiming that these students had acted upon an... order issued by Kostarakos himself, two years earlier<sup>112</sup>. The newspaper’s overtones and of course this statement by Kostarakos had obvious political implications, as the Greek-Orthodox archbishop is highly unpopular in right-wing and ultra-right milieus because of his more tolerant views on immigration. The “covering” of his voice was a symbolic challenge to his power and an expression of antagonism to the institutional representation of widespread anti-Memorandum and anti-parliamentary sentiments.

Along with this peculiar antagonism between the military, the Church and political authorities, with the background of a collapsing political system, there is also a growing competition for influence inside the military between New Democracy and Golden Dawn. In one of its many questions in the Parliament regarding uniformed officers’ pay cuts, with which Golden Dawn tries to promote itself as the most loyal “syndicalist” of the security forces and particularly the military, Golden Dawn MP Polyvios Zisimopoulos raised the issue of promotions for long-term army volunteers.<sup>113</sup> A few months later, another Golden Dawn communi-

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111. Georgios Meliggonis “KYSEA: Re-enlistment with... an ultra-right touch”, *I Avgi*, 8 March 2013. Kostarakos’ tweet said: “This is the right time to legislate the origin of the Mil. Schools’ entrants. They must be of Hellenic origin”.

112. Nikos Eleftheroglou, “They ‘covered’ even Ieronymos!”, *Democratia* newspaper, 7 May 2013.

113. See <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/koinovoulio/view/erwthsh-gia-thn-ierarchikh-kai-misthologikh-dikaiwsh-twn-ethelontwn-makras#.UfpfoG1hjlU#ixzz2aitwhwQQ> (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

qué stated: “New harsh cuts in the staff of our Armed Forces demonstrate the Troika’s plan to destroy our National Defence”.<sup>114</sup>

In this competition between New Democracy and Golden Dawn, there is also a minor player, the National Unity Association, led by retired Air Force officer Georgios Geroulis. This organization participated in the May 2012 election, receiving an insignificant 0.61 percent (a total of 38,286 votes), and as a result withdrew from the June 2012 election. Despite its weak appeal, the constitution of this organization reflects developments inside the military that are unprecedented for the Changeover period, with the specific background of this above-mentioned fragmentation of the traditional right.

In any case, it is clear that the rise of Golden Dawn, repeatedly recorded as the third most popular party in polls, cannot be easily challenged by smaller political organizations of the same orientation. Besides, it is not only its strong parliamentary representation that allows Golden Dawn to make such a persuasive claim of representing a part of the military. One has also to take account of its activism, which allows it to “communicate” in a more direct way with the ultra-right imaginary within the military. A case in point was a rally organized by Golden Dawn in July 2013 at the border stations of Niki and Evzoni, along the Greek-FYROM borders. Golden Dawn, led by some of its MPs, obstructed the passing of vehicles with MK (Macedonia) registration plates, and distributed irredentist maps that showed Greece occupying Macedonian territories belonging to FYROM.<sup>115</sup> A similar act was also undertaken a short while later, when a Golden Dawn squad led by Christos Pappas on 2 September 2013 occupied the Greek-Albanian borders at Kakavia, thus exploiting one of the favourite traditional themes of the ultra-right, the so-called “Northern Epirus issue”.

Golden Dawn’s objective in that case was not only to shout slogans and make a PR impact, but to deploy a particular “strategy of tension”, the fruits of which were already brought to light before. In November 2012, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Greek authorities that it “had been annoyed by the nationalist activities of Golden Dawn within the Albanian borders” and warned that “Albanian intelligence services will keep a close eye on Golden Dawn hereafter”<sup>116</sup>. Moreover, around the same time, the Public Prosecutor of Thessaloniki ordered an investigation regarding makeshift control points set up by members of the organization on vehicles passing the border in Doirani.

Golden Dawn members such as N. Exarchos, author of the book *Spear Task Force* (a

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114. See <http://www.newsbomb.gr/politikh/story/303445/hanea-epithesi-apo-troika-kai-sygyvernisi-stoys-stratiotikoys#ixzz2aiuOommA> (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

115. “Pain and suffering in mainstream newspaper *Macedonia* because of the Golden Dawn blockages along the borders”, <http://www.xryshaygh.com>, 21.7.2013 (last accessed on 1.8.2013). Such acts are almost an annual thing; in the past, Golden Dawn and *Stochos* had tried to shut down the Profitis Elias festival in Meliti, Florina, denouncing it as an “anti-Greek provocation by the Bulgarians and Skopjans”.

116. Nikos Michos, “Golden Dawn’s foreign policy – A plan to sabotage relations with Skopje and Tirana”, [tvxs.gr](http://tvxs.gr), 14.11.2012.

novel very similar to N. Hidioglou's *No to the Old City*), had already explained the purpose of such actions as far back as 2001: "The plan was simple. They would wait for the chance to come; they would 'manufacture' it if needed – some big foreign policy event, a retreat in a national matter, or a political turmoil. Such an atmosphere was indispensable, and then the SPEAR Task Force fighters, along with selected parts of the military and the police, would attempt the big overthrow"<sup>117</sup>.

## Conclusion

The purpose of our research has been to identify the currents that connect the military with a process of reversal of the democratization signaled by the Changeover – a reversal that, in conditions of crisis and an extensive "creative destruction", takes on fascist features. We have documented this role by showing synergies between parts of the military and the ultra-right that confirm two trends: a) a "violation of the boundary" between war and peace; and b) a "violation of the boundary" between the military's "political neutrality" and its active participation in political life and internal security against the internal and "outside-inside" enemy. We have privileged the terms "trends" or "currents" because, on the one hand, we did not want to underestimate certain "isolated incidents"; while, on the other, we did not want to suggest that these phenomena are dominant and the ensuing situation is final – far from it.

Let us be clear on this: the ultra-right is not the only player within the military, and it is far from the dominant movement. After all, this could not be the case in a country that participates in international institutions and is located in a region where any militarist experiment could very easily lead to unimaginable bloodshed. There are limits to both of the trends we have confirmed. For the high ranks of the military, the junta experience and the liberty of the Changeover period are still active, even if in an indirect way.

Naturally, one cannot explain everything through the military. As long as the Greek government continues to implement the policy of "creative destruction" dictated by the Troika, a further right-wing radicalization of the military (as with other institutions) remains a plausible outcome. It will also be further reinforced as long as New Democracy tries to win over Golden Dawn's electorate by occupying the latter's ideological ground, by limiting the differences between them exclusively to the level of economic policy. The SFROC's public scheduling of a Saturday coup d'état proved a simple joke. Within the Greek society, the specific causes that brought about the 1967 tragedy may have ceased to exist, yet there are other, similar ones that not only persist but also, in a context of a thorough restructuring of the economy and the society, are dangerously reinforced.

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117. O los, "The Changeover reversal", *I Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 21.7.2013.

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# The Church of Greece

Alexandros Sakelariou  
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## 1/ FROM THE HISTORICAL TIES BETWEEN NATION AND RELIGION TO THE LEGAL TIES BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH

Including the Orthodox Church of Greece in a study about the ultra-right and racism raises certain reasonable questions for anyone unaware of people and things in this particular field. The first and main question is whether the Orthodox Church actually is, and why it is considered to be, a State apparatus.

In the first place, the Constitution of Greece begins with a religious invocation: *In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity*. This fact alone proves not only a general respect for the Divine, but also an explicit reference to Christian religion and theology. This close connection becomes more apparent and specific in Article 3 (para. 1) of the Constitution: *The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ*. Although some have tried to present this provision as a manifestation of the Orthodox religious stance of the majority of the Greek people, or as an honour due to the historical and cultural contribution of the Orthodox Church (Venizelos 2000: 144-147), the need for its presence in the constitutional text has not been explained. Finally, Article 16 of the Constitution, which deals with education, stresses the need to develop both national and religious consciousness – which apparently cannot be any other than the Orthodox one. Yet these are not the only points that demonstrate the virtual statehood of the Church.

In the Charter Map of the Orthodox Church, which was voted as law of the State in 1977 (Law 590), it is mentioned (Article 1) that the Church of Greece and the Monasteries, as well as different Church organizations, are Institutions of Public Law, thus clearly parts of the State apparatus. Let it be noted that Jewish communities as well as Muftiships are Public Law Institutions too, but their relationship with the State is by no means the same as that of the Orthodox Church; more particularly, regarding Muftiships, their integration into the State served the obvious official objective of controlling the Muslim minority.

Furthermore, all laws of the Church are ratified and published in the Official Government Gazette, while priests are public servants and are paid by the State. It is worth

noting that, while payment of priests by the State was decided in 1945, their salary back then was very small and their essential recognition as public servants, fiercely claimed by the Church, took place only in 1968 (Emergency Law 469) during the junta, resulting also in their wage equalization.

The Church of Greece, then, is clearly a part of the State, albeit a quite particular one, as it enjoys a special and prominent position within the State apparatus. However, one should not conclude from this that the Church alone benefits from this close relationship; this is also true of the State itself, for which the Church functions as a complementary mechanism of legitimization and ideological prestige. There is, in other words, a relationship of *mutual appropriation* between them: it takes two to tango...

## 2/ THE CHURCH OF THE “SOCIAL REGIME”

It is commonly thought in some circles that the Church has no political ideology and is only interested in its spiritual work. Things, though, are obviously different, and this is not some kind of Greek particularity. The Church is a bureaucratic institution, attached to the Greek State and therefore in constant interaction with other institutions, organizations, social groups and lobbies, and this complex relationship is defined by its particular State form. In this sense, not only is it inherently impossible for its members to avoid the temptation of exposing their ideological influences, but this expression, especially when coming from superior officials, obtains a particular secular weight because of its State origin.

Already from the beginning of the 20th century, and during the interwar period, the Orthodox Church, following the lead of the Catholic Church,<sup>118</sup> turned against communist, socialist and leftist views and ideas with regard to educational matters (1911, 1925). The crucial historic moments, though, which prove the co-operation of the Church with fascist and dictatorship regimes, came with the two dictatorships: Ioannis Metaxas’ regime (1936-1941) and the Colonels’ Junta (1967-1974). It is telling that a few days after Metaxas’ dictatorship had been declared, the Church, in its magazine of the same name (*Ekklesia*), in a text entitled “The Prime Minister’s Reveille”, wrote in praise of Metaxas, mentioning that the President of the Government (he was not referred to as a dictator) had assessed the communist danger seriously threatening the Greek people, and that it was the first time that such a view – which would shape the future of Greece – was officially expressed.<sup>119</sup>

The 1967 military junta constitutes an even more typical example. Despite the immediate intervention of the regime in Church administration, the Church, again in its official magazine, spoke about the significant and noble vision of the prime minister (once again, Georgios Papadopoulos was not referred to as a

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118. See *Ekklesia* magazine, 33-34, 22 August 1936, p. 266.

119. *Ibid*, p. 266.

dictator).<sup>120</sup> The Archbishop appointed by the Junta took part in all the events organized by the regime, and, in fact, during one of them in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, he read a special prayer asking God to keep the lords (i.e., the dictators) well.<sup>121</sup> Under the junta, the Church succeeded in having a new Charter Map passed and gained several new privileges, the most important of which was the wage equalization of the clergy with public servants. In addition, it is interesting that in 1973, when Papadopoulos was overthrown by Ioannidis and the leadership of the junta changed, the archbishop was removed as well: Ieronimos was replaced by Seraphim. The latter, however, remained on his throne after the fall of the junta, since nobody asked for his substitution.

The Changeover, in other words, did not touch the Church at all, which kept up with its work and its presence without ever being “dejuntaized”, not even for the sake of appearances. Apart, of course, from the Archbishop, there were other prelates who held offices during the junta, and who continued to play a major part after 1974. Future Archbishop Christodoulos (1998-2008) was chief secretary of the Holy Synod during the Junta, and when, during his tenure as archbishop, this fact was mentioned, he replied that he was not aware of torture taking place during the junta and that he was not involved in the political reality of the time. The Press spokesman of the Holy Synod replied to the same accusations with the comment that during that time, “the Archbishop was immersed in his studies” (Vassilakis 2006: 63). Moreover, today’s bishop of Kalavrita and Aigialia, Ambrosios, had been a priest in the religious service of the Athens gendarmerie during the junta, a fact that did not prevent him from being elected as a bishop in 1978.

From the above, it is easily concluded that the Church of Greece always identified itself with the broader strategic choices of the so-called “social regime”. A right-wing state meant a right-wing Church. An ultra-right state? The Church would follow. Of course, there were exceptions: during the civil war, there were priests, and even bishops, such as Bishop of Kozani Ioakeim and Bishop of Ilia Antonios, who fought on the side of the communists or supported them openly and consequently were persecuted to the point of being dismissed (Karayiannis 2001: 77-89). Furthermore, under the junta many priests were punished by the Holy Synod for misconduct such as leftism, anti-national activism (The Synodical Circulars 2000: 39), admission of communist beliefs (The Synodical Circulars 2000: 269), etc.

As is the case almost everywhere, the Church by nature is a conservative institution, which in the passage of time has co-operated with dictatorial regimes and denounced communism and the left in all their versions. Therefore, the Church of Greece bowed to the ultra-right speech not so much for reasons of principle as for reasons of expediency. Of course, as in any such case, the institutional speech of the Church grew separately, creating its own *faits accomplis* in cooperation, and occasionally also in conflict, with the State. The fact that Greek

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120. See *Ekklesia* magazine, 3, 1 February 1968, p. 49.

121. See *Ekklesia* magazine, 10, 15 May 1969, p. 217.

priests are public servants should normally be a constraining factor regarding the expression of ultra-right positions on their part. Yet nothing of the kind ever took place. On the contrary, they have always used and still use the privileges of their State position in order to reproduce such views. The Greek particularity lies specifically in this.

### 3/ THE CHANGEOVER THAT DID NOT TAKE PLACE

After the restoration of democracy in 1974, the Church kept up with its work and action like before, without any ideological alterations and regressions, and with no administrative changes. On the contrary, the political parties were prompt to ask for its cooperation and, despite whatever disagreements and conflicts, eventually they did cooperate with it. For instance, PASOK in its “3 September” declaration talked about separating the Church from the State and nationalizing the property of monasteries, but did not actually implement any of that. An excellent case in point is PASOK’s minister of education and religion, A. Tritsis, who in 1987 attempted to materialize only a part of his party’s pre-election program, only to be pushed to resign – because of the Church’s reactions – by his omnipotent prime minister A. Papandreou, who at the same time “complimented” his minister with the monumental phrase, “he wrote history”...

The key factor in the total return of the Church to public affairs was the break-up of Yugoslavia a few years later, the exercise of self-determination on the part of former Socialist Republic of Macedonia (known today as FYROM) and its claim to the name “Macedonia”. On that occasion, the Church articulated its own public speech. It organized demonstrations along with other institutions, and called on people to participate massively. It is worth noting that a weak, at the time, Golden Dawn also took part in these demonstrations, managing to attract numerous new members, as they themselves admit today, especially from the youth. Throughout the Macedonian crisis, the Church acted as an initiator of national revolution, a part that still goes on today, whenever the issue comes to the fore.

One such example was the sermon of Bishop of Thessaloniki Anthimos on 14 August 2011, regarding the possible operation of a radio station in the municipal district of Meliti, Florina, which would broadcast in Slavic Macedonian language. Wondering whether the station may be an instrument of FYROM propaganda, the bishop hurried to warn in his sermon: “If they say yes and they do it, at least 40 to 50 buses have to get there, and along with the brothers in Florina and Meliti we will tear down the place, otherwise nothing will get done”.<sup>122</sup>

The Bishop of Thessaloniki did not start from zero to get to the point of urging his flock into nationalist pogroms in 2011. The rise of Archbishop Christodoulos and the

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122. See <http://www.hlhr.gr/details.php?id=563>.

domination of an uninhibitedly intolerant, nationalist and divisive speech during a whole decade was the actual turning point in the public presence of the Church.

#### 4/ AT THE MEDIA FOREFRONT: THE ULTRA-RIGHT REBAPTIZATION (1998-2008)

In 1998, Bishop of Dimitrias Christodoulos was elected Archbishop of Athens. The turn was immediate and obvious: silence and reticence gave place to secular extroversion. It has already been mentioned that during the Colonels' Junta Christodoulos had been the secretary of the Holy Synod, and he became a bishop just a few days before the fall of the regime. Yet his relation with ultra-right circles did not end there. Before he was elected archbishop, he had been writing articles for the ultra-right newspaper *Eleftheros Kosmos* and had close relations with the pro-junta newspaper *Stochos*, which kept praising and defending him after he was elected to the archbishop's office. In fact, before his election, in 1997, Christodoulos and 45 other bishops took part in a conference of *Stochos* in Lidoriki. Christodoulos concluded his speech there by saying that resistance is needed, "resistance to all evil, all that is not Christian, not Orthodox, not Greek", while he congratulated the paper's publisher for his initiative and described him as "Hellenocentric" and "of a Hellenic soul" (Vassilakis 2006: 79-80).

Even after his election, and despite the fact that, in some cases, his speech became less rough around the edges, he could not avoid revealing his old sympathies. In 2001, when he received the book of one of the ringleaders of the junta, S. Pattakos, Christodoulos replied to him in a personal letter in a particularly warm and heartfelt tone, talking about his genuine patriotic morale and his distinguished attributes and virtues, which had made history (Vassilakis 2006: 65).

In every opportunity, Christodoulos constantly referred to the nation and its need for protection, in the "New Age" and in the "new globalized order", against globalization, the West, the nation-nihilists, the phoney intellectuals, and a lot of other enemies. The peak of these attacks was the period of strain with the State on the issue of whether religion would be indicated on identity cards, when the Church organized two big protests in Athens and Thessaloniki and started collecting signatures in order to revoke the government's decision.

A consequence of the Church's clash with the government on the identities issue was also the informal support provided by the archbishop and the Church to the leader of the far-right political party LAOS, G. Karatzaferis, as a candidate for the Athens super-prefecture in the 2002 local election. This happened because New Democracy had supported Y. Tzanetakos, who was against the indication of religion and came from the left. In fact, when asked about it, Christodoulos replied that those who voted for Karatzaferis were not ultra-right supporters, just good Christians who reacted to Tzanetakos.<sup>123</sup>

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123. See [http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%93%CE%B5%CF%8E%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82\\_%CE%9A%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AD%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%82](http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%93%CE%B5%CF%8E%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82_%CE%9A%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AD%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%82).

One of the main fixtures of his public ethnocentric and nationalist speech was the superiority of the Greek spirit and civilization and the general conflict with the West (Vassilakis 2006: 99-102). As he would often stress, without Greece there would be no Europe, because even Europe's name and civilization are Greek. Let it be noted that, when invited to address European audiences, during international conventions and conferences, the archbishop would not describe the West as atheist and materialist, but rather he would speak of the de-Christianization of Europe in its totality and of the dangers of Islam.

The period that we have just examined is critical, because the harmonious cohabitation of the Church with the State was disrupted for the first time. The Church's speech grew more autonomous then, with obvious ultra-right tendencies, exactly because it had felt threatened by the modernizing political plan of Prime Minister K. Simitis' government, which it regarded as a threat to its power. Judging from the result, the Church grew more scared then than was necessary. This fear, however, pushed the Church's leadership to the adoption of an openly ultra-right political agenda, for the first time ever in a glorious break with the Greek government. Christodoulos' premature death in 2008 would reinstate the balance to the previous state of a conventional cohabitation.

## 5/ RELIGIOUS PANIC I: ISLAMOPHOBIA

The racist and intolerant attitude of part of the Church towards Muslims and the religion of Islam, as well as towards the Jews, has deep roots in the Greek history. With Islam as starting point, Ottoman rule in the Greek region and the subsequent erroneous identification of Islam with Turkey is the main reason for this attitude. The verbal racist attacks against the religion of Islam are frequent. In 1997, in a book by Archimandrite Dositheos Kastoris, which was published with a preface by current Archbishop of Athens Ieronymos, then-bishop of Thebes and Livadeia, it is mentioned that "in the course of the centuries there was no lack of false prophets ... of people self-proclaimed and not God-proclaimed. A typical example of a falsely called divine messenger, who was nonetheless very successful on the level of historical phenomenology, was that of Muhammad" (Kastoris 1997: 51).

This kind of racist attitude against Islam culminated in the period before the 2004 Olympic Games, when the issue of the erection of an Islamic mosque in Athens came to the fore again – an issue still pending, by the way, as the similar issue of the construction of a Muslim cemetery is also pending. At the time, it was suggested that an Islamic mosque be constructed in Paiania, near the new airport. The reaction of ultra-right groups, local institutions and the Church was immediate. The local Bishop Nikolaos stated characteristically that "if the government wants to show to the international community that we are modern and civilized as a people, let it first remove from Mesogaia, Koropi and Paiania the landfills that infect our lungs on an everyday basis and humiliate our country internationally, and then build this Islamist center that insults our spirit and history".<sup>124</sup>

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124. See [http://archive.enet.gr/online/online\\_print?id=21496004](http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_print?id=21496004).

Meanwhile, the Holy Synod had sent a letter to then Minister of Foreign Affairs G. Papandreou in protest over the issue, pointing out that the Church was not generally opposed to the construction of an Islamic mosque but it did disagree, on the one hand, with the location, because the tourists who would visit Greece would see a magnificent Muslim mosque right after exiting the airport; and, on the other hand, with the construction of a Centre of Islamic Studies, as was initially provided for, because this would be “dangerous”, as evidenced in other European cities, meaning by that the danger of terrorism.<sup>125</sup> The choice of the particular spot was unfortunate in any case, because it would not be easily accessible to the Muslims of Athens. The fact remains that construction was canceled, and to this date, Athens does not have an official place where its Muslim residents can pray.

In a more recent incident, after the attack against Christian Copts in Egypt on Christmas Day 2010, in his statement on 7 January 2011, the bishop of Piraeus, having described Muhammad as a “false prophet”, developed an analysis of the character of Islam according to which: “The character of Islam has been aggressive, and by the criminal acts of Islamists it is proven that it remains like this today. The sword and the knife are considered more convincing than the sermon and persuasion. Besides, the dissemination of Islam through Holy War was the reason of its domination”.

As it is “reasonable”, he connects the events in Egypt with the erection of an Islamic mosque and the presence of Islam in Greece, describing Islam as a catastrophic worship through a selective use of excerpts of the Quran: “Taking into account the above facts and what is provided in the religious belief, Islam is a destructive religion, incompatible with the provisions of the Constitution of Greece in force ... where in Article 13 freedom of religious consciousness is established, but only regarding religious traditions that are not opposed to public order and morals. Islamism a priori promotes crime, violence, terrorism and death as means of its dissemination...”<sup>126</sup>.

He also followed the same rhetoric when Muslims gathered in Kotzia Square in September 2010 to celebrate the end of Ramadan (date of statement: 10 September 2010): “The concession of the centre of Athens for the performance of religious rituals of a religion other than the dominant religion according to the Constitution is unacceptable behavior which afflicts the dominant religious faith of the State. The Greek State according to the Constitution in force is not a religiously neutral State ... From the above, it is concluded that Islam is a heavy delusion and its religious faith is not the revelation of the living God, but a flawed human construction that bears no relation to the truth of the Creator of the Universe, revealed in the Old Testament”<sup>127</sup>.

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125. See <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/9FB97297.el.aspx>.

126. See <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/9FB97297.el.aspx>.

127. See <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/9FB97297.el.aspx>.

The above examples are telling, and there are also others, less well-known, in which the same intolerant language and rhetoric are repeated, as, for example, in the statement of the bishop of Piraeus dated 30 June 2011, in which he again denounces Islam but also the minister of education, because she had approved the hiring of 250 religious teachers for the Muftiships of Thrace.<sup>128</sup>

## 6/ RELIGIOUS PANIC II:

Apart from the religious panic spread about Islam and the intolerant views expressed about this religion, a popular and lasting issue is the intolerant attitude towards Jews, which is usually disguised as “anti-Zionism”. This is an issue with equally deep roots in the Greek territory, as the Jewish community is one of the oldest in it. It is interesting that, in 1980, then Bishop of Corinth Panteleimon published a small book entitled *Jews and Christians*, which was also published in English in 1984. There he claimed that Jews try to corrupt religious people, and that they hate Christians and also Hellenism (1984: 12). In the same context, he pointed out that during the Ottoman Empire the Jews were allying with the Turks and tortured Christians, while during the 1821 revolution they had taken sides with the Turks (1984: 30-31). Finally, referring to the Israeli State, he considered it a fabrication and a threat to humanity (1984: 39-49).

In recent years, similar views are not rare within the Church. In a TV interview on MEGA channel (20 December 2010), Bishop of Piraeus Seraphim, after claiming that “there is a global view to destroying the institution of family... with single-parent families, same-sex couples...”, he concludes that “international Zionism is behind this whole story”, reminding viewers that “the Jewish lobby had paid a visit to Prime Minister Simitis in order for religion to be erased from identity cards”. The climax was surely his statement that “Adolph Hitler was an instrument of global Zionism and was funded by the Rothschild family with the sole purpose of convincing Jews to leave Europe and go to Israel to found the new empire”. Despite the reactions, the Holy Synod settled for a statement that the expressed views are personal opinions of the bishop of Piraeus, which he can freely express.<sup>129</sup>

It would be easy for someone to attribute the articulation of this Islamophobic and anti-Semitic speech to personal particularities. Indeed, such particularities do exist. The problem lies in the fact that some priests, by virtue of their position, think that they can say whatever they want without having to answer to anyone. In this way, both the Church is exposed and, most importantly, society is poisoned with the crudest forms of ultra-right speech.

## 7/ IMMIGRATION: RACIST SPEECH AND PHILANTHROPY?

Immigration is also a big issue on which the Church lays claim not only to an opinion, but also a role, as it seems to find it a privileged field of intervention.

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128. See <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/9FB97297.el.aspx>.

129. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLAUJCOGE1o>.

Attention, though: the Church never turns against the immigrant as a person; the person who suffers often enjoys the Church's charity, and this should not be underestimated. The Special Synodical Committee for Immigrants, Refugees and Repatriates is tangible proof of a radically different ecclesiastical speech and action to the one analyzed here.<sup>130</sup>

However, despite the fact that today the perception of the archbishop himself is to the direction of solidarity with the beleaguered immigrant population, sermons to the opposite have not ceased. Bishop Anthimos of Thessaloniki stated, regarding the (previous) government's immigration plan, that "if it is enforced, the country will turn black, we will be filled with Al-Qaeda Annexes", adding that "you cannot bring 700,000 Muslims in the country and make them Greek without asking the Church"<sup>131</sup>. The same Bishop, in a visit to Agios Panteleimon in Athens, stated that "his eyes were filled with black", apparently due to the great number of non-white immigrants.<sup>132</sup> It is obvious that ecclesiastical philanthropy to poor immigrants is not enough as long as Bishops infect public speech with open racism.

## 8/ SEXISM: THE "FLAW" OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuality does not escape the aggressive attitude of the Church. Regarding homosexuality, the late Archbishop Christodoulos had declared from the pulpit that it is an "obvious sin" and a "flaw",<sup>133</sup> an issue on which the Hellenic League for Human Rights had replied to him that "the real flaw is racism".<sup>134</sup>

Bishop of Piraeus Seraphim has been a protagonist in this issue too, as, in a statement issued on 21 March 2008 regarding homosexual marriage, he mentioned: "Upheaval and intense worry are dominant characteristics of the Greek society lately, with the effort of certain 'circles' to degrade and completely ridicule the highest ideal of the human person and their dignity. The stated intent of a small part of political institutions of the local government to act arbitrarily towards the provisions of the legislator, the common sense and moral order, by allowing same-sex marriages, is a manifestation of criminal insult, sacrilege and degradation of human life, since the paranoia of the psychopathological deviations of the genital realm, which go against nature and the human organism, is called progress ... We are convinced that an abuse of human freedom is being attempted, with the creation of a callous and morally vacant people".

In a more recent statement regarding the same issue (7 September 2011), he continues with similar rhetoric: "At the same time, the operation of a law preparatory committee, as published in the media ... on the shameful, vulgar, malicious and

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130. See <http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/commitees/metanastes/metanastes.htm>

131. See [http://www.romfea.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4168:--q-----q&catid=26:2009-12-18-08-38-40&Itemid=127&month=2&year=2010](http://www.romfea.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4168:--q-----q&catid=26:2009-12-18-08-38-40&Itemid=127&month=2&year=2010).

132. See <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article@id=218730>.

133. See <http://news.pathfinder.gr/greece/news/120026.html>.

134. See <http://www.hlhr.gr/index.php?MDL=pages@SiteID=468>.

filthy legislative initiative taken by the Greek Parliament regarding the tragicality of homosexuality and the reversal of human ontology, with the recognition of a non-existent other sexual orientation and the corrupting psychological and physical misuse of the organs of the human body ... is a devious mixture aiming at the demolition of the Nation's ideals and faith, and the decomposition of the social tissue".<sup>135</sup>

Even more recently, in 2013, Bishop of Thessaloniki Anthimos, in a press release regarding the Gay Pride of Thessaloniki, talked about an unacceptable, unpleasant and contemptible presence of homosexuals in Thessaloniki for the parade that took place on 14-15 June 2013, which he described as a carnival and a demonstration of passions. He maintained that it was a shame, a provocation and a symptom of corruption, and that the residents of Thessaloniki should avoid being exposed to such events, both them and their children, and that they should stress their fierce opposition to them.<sup>136</sup>

It is understood that in a country like Greece it is very hard for the Church to be positive towards homosexuality. There is a difference, though, between a condescending moral condemnation and an aggressive racist wording that places homosexuals on a lower level, both morally and socially. In essence, it implies their biological inferiority as well, thus adding to the creation of yet another moral panic.

## 9/ CHURCH AND GOLDEN DAWN: THE LAST LINK IN THE ULTRA-RIGHT CHAIN

For those familiar with the neo-Nazi field, Golden Dawn has never been a group with an Orthodox background and faith. A number of their older texts prove that they were more amenable to the ancient Greek religion of the Dodecatheon (twelve gods), and in some cases Northern pagan worship, than to the Orthodox Christian faith (Psarras 2012: 211-232). Of course, after Golden Dawn entered the political stage, and clearly for reasons of canvassing, this past was forgotten. Through public statements and texts on the party's website, an effort has been made for it to appear as a protector of Orthodox church and tradition. Like all political forces that get stronger, the neo-Nazis chose to flatter some priests of the Church of Greece. And, instead of repelling them, the priests enjoyed it too...

The first and most important public attempt of this kind took place in the autumn of 2012, when Golden Dawn took the lead, along with circles of and around the Church, in the protests and violent episodes outside Chytirio theatre, prompted by Terence McNally's play *Corpus Christi*, which was accused of blasphemy. The performances were finally canceled due to the constant rioting but also because

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135. See <http://www.imp.gr/home-4/anakoino8enta-deltia-typoy/anakoino8enta-deltia-typoy-2011/23-anakoino8enta-deltia-typoy-2011/156-anakoinw8en-xwrismos-ekklhseias-e8noys.html>.

136. See <http://www.imth.gr/default.aspx?lang=el-GR@loc=1@@page=176@newsid=670>.

of threats against the cast of the show (Christopoulos 2013). In this particular incident, Bishop of Piraeus Seraphim, along with four MPs of Golden Dawn, went to the Omonia police department and filed a joint complaint against the play. Golden Dawn, in fact, presented the incident on its website and stressed its support to the Bishop.<sup>137</sup> The Bishop himself, talking to *Agioritiko Vima*, said that he filed the complaint on his own and that the Golden Dawn MPs learned about it and came to express their support. He ended by saying that fascists are those who are hostile towards gestures that aim at enforcing the laws of the State – that is, the prohibition of blasphemy – and therefore not the members of Golden Dawn.<sup>138</sup>

Until April 2013, the Bishop of Piraeus had not even once turned against Golden Dawn and had not condemned its racist practices and attacks. Then, after an interview in which certain Golden Dawn MPs referred to their religious convictions, implying their sympathy for ancient Greek religion, Seraphim for the first time addressed certain public questions to Golden Dawn regarding their religious views. Golden Dawn did not reply. The bishop returned more aggressively, accusing the party of pagan ideas and practices, even of Satanism, which resulted in Golden Dawn answering back. The argument continues to this day, and it culminated after Pavlos Fyssas' murder on 18 September 2013. However, the fact remains that for almost a year, the bishop of Piraeus had not reacted to the dynamic presence of Golden Dawn in the Greek society and parliament, and had meticulously avoided condemning it.

There are also other bishops who stood by and are still standing by Golden Dawn. One of them is Bishop of Dryinoupolis, Pogoniani and Konitsa, Andreas. At an event for the victims of the communists at Grammos and Vitsi during the civil war, organized by ultra-right circles, Andreas spoke of Golden Dawn with the warmest words as the “lads in black shirts, the good fighting lads”, and closed his speech with the wish that they soon replace these black shirts with blue and white ones, meaning the colors of the Greek flag.<sup>139</sup>

Bishop of Kalavryta and Aigialeia Amvrosios, the same person who served in the religious service of the gendarmerie under the junta, has also expressed himself with very positive words about Golden Dawn. In one statement, he referred to some of its members' unfortunate actions, yet he also called them a “sweet hope” for the country and its desperate citizens. In no way did he consider Golden Dawn “a Black Night”, as another bishop, Pavlos of Sisanio and Siatista, one of its main critics, called it. This particular announcement by Amvrosios was also reproduced on the Golden Dawn website, with positive comments, of course.<sup>140</sup> It is also interesting that although Pavlos Fyssas' murder caused rage among many hierarchs, Bishop Ambrosios, while condemning the crime, did not

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137. See <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/enimerosi/view/sumparastash-chrushs-aughston-mhtropolith-serafeim-sthn-mhnush-kata-tou-b>.

138. See <http://www.agioritikovima.gr/eipan/11039>.

139. See <http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/09/02/bournazos-33/>.

140. See <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/enimerosi/view/epistolh-parembash-tou-sebasmiwtatou-mhtropolith-ambrosiou>.

condemn Golden Dawn as such, and even said that, within it, there are many serious individuals that should finally take on the role that belongs to them.<sup>141</sup>

There are, of course, also bishops who react to Golden Dawn's activity and try to separate themselves from it and criticize it in any way they can. The interesting and worrying part, however, is not these bishops who are negative towards Golden Dawn, but those who, ignoring or partly accepting its neo-Nazi and racist background, stand by its side and support it openly in speeches and sermons.

The Church as an institutional whole has not taken an official stance against Golden Dawn, perhaps in order to maintain the balance inside the Holy Synod, since there are those who support it as well. Although the Church in the past openly condemned leftist parties and organizations, now it tries to keep a neutral stance, to the point of misunderstanding, and this is one of the reasons why it is widely criticized (Zoumboulakis 2013: 14-15). Even after Fyssas' murder, the Church did not explicitly condemn Golden Dawn, and only issued a general statement of condemnation of violence, as it did after the murder of two members of Golden Dawn as well, thus keeping equal distances.<sup>142</sup>

## 10/ CONCLUSION: AN ATTEMPT OF INTERPRETATION

All the above show that the question whether there are ultra-right and racist perceptions inside the Orthodox Church is no longer a question. As it was stressed from the beginning, one may trace inside the Church racist perceptions and their public articulation, as well as nationalist ideological dispositions. This speech is officially expressed in a triumphant way, and this where the problem lies: the ecclesiastical leadership itself, whenever it does not endorse it, tolerates it. The Church of Greece is like a multi-faceted power party in which everyone says pretty much what they want, while being essentially driven by power. More particularly, the administration system of the Church is synodical, very different from that of the Catholic Church, for instance. This means that control is harder. Yet the fact remains that the basic issue is the maintenance of balance inside the hierarchy, and this is why there cannot be an institutional intervention or even a condemnation regarding what the different bishops say.

Yet why do certain bishops express ultra-right ideas without any sense of self-censorship? Why did they get to the point of supporting even Golden Dawn? The answer to this question is not easy. The Church is dedicated to protecting and serving certain principles and values that it has protected and served since old times, such as country, nation, family, property, etc. On the one hand, then, whoever is opposed and appears dangerous to these principles is fought and persecuted. On the other hand, whoever appears as their protector and defender turns into a potential ally.

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141. See [http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2013/09/blog-post\\_20.html](http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2013/09/blog-post_20.html).

142. See [http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/holysynod.asp?id=1706@what\\_sub=d\\_typou](http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/holysynod.asp?id=1706@what_sub=d_typou) and [http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/holysynod.asp?id=1722@what\\_sub=d\\_typou](http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/holysynod.asp?id=1722@what_sub=d_typou).

Thus, the relations of the Church of Greece with the ultra-right do not have any other particular characteristics besides the Church's close ties with the Greek State. As a rule, the more right-wing the State, the more right-wing the Church. On the other hand, when the State deviates from right-wing views and introduces ideas and proposals that threaten the status quo according to the Church, then the Church tries to bring the State back to the conservative route, occasionally by turning its ideological wheel to the ultra-right.

A crucial moment in which the Church of Greece almost cut loose from the mainstream political speech of the State was the so-called "modernization" period of social democracy, when K. Simitis was Prime Minister (1996-2004), exactly because it felt that the principles and values that it allegedly protects were threatened. During those four years, which culminated in the famous "identity cards affair" (2000), the Church appeared to stray from its long-term strategy of consensus, mostly because of the personality of the then archbishop, who basically went all political through his ecclesiastical office.

While it is easy to file Christodoulos' speech under what contemporary scholarship considers as ultra-right, one should not forget that essentially the archbishop's goal back then was to retain the Church's privileges in relation to the Greek State; he was mostly driven by political expediency, not long-term ecclesiastical strategies. This is what is most important regarding the ultra-right infiltration of the ecclesiastical speech.

The identity cards affair in 2000 was a victory, albeit a Pyrrhic one, of the Greek State in a strange and historically unprecedented arm wrestling with ecclesiastical leadership. Afterwards, not only were the privileges of the Church not limited, but they were expanded as the State looked for ways to appease the ecclesiastical bellwethers, part of whom were following a course of structural opposition to the government at the time.

During that time, the Church of Greece claimed the role of an autonomous and self-reliant political exponent, as it probably felt that its role was being questioned. The political cowardice that characterized mostly the second four-year term of Simitis' government, after the identity cards affair, actually encouraged the most extreme voices within the Church of Greece, who felt free not only to express themselves, but also to set their own particular agenda in political speech.

The basic problem, then, is the virtually acquired right of the officials of a State Church to have an opinion on everything, which is also based on the fact of their life-long tenure in their office, although they are State employees. The result is a speech that occasionally goes beyond what is acceptable, in matters privileged by the ultra-right, i.e. hardcore nationalism and even crude racism. The overall role of the Church as an institution that effects a mitigation of severe social suffering in the years to come, as well as the special position that ultra-right bishops may be able to assume in this process, will be a trial that will determine the final outcome.

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\* All titles originally in Greek unless noted otherwise.

# Conclusions

Dimitris Christopoulos  
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In summer 2013, when the above pages were being written, a veteran journalist, after I told him what this study was about, asked me: “*Of the four institutions you studied, the military, the Church, the Police and the judiciary, which one is more dangerous in this respect?*” This was a spot-on question, and an answer to it was by no means obvious. Thus, during the months that followed our study, and taking into account our results, we came to form the following answer: naturally, the situation in all four institutions is quite dangerous, but the hardest case is the Greek judiciary. Let us explain ourselves a bit.

The Greek Orthodox Church of Greece has many peculiarities and it is true that it can refine ultra-right ideologies by disguising them as religiously right, as has done too many times in its history (and this, of course, is not an exclusive feature of the church or of Greece, for that matter). However, although it is indeed deeply tied with the State, although it is indeed used to speaking on everything and anything, although it does indeed influence a large part of the public opinion by exploiting the privileges of its relations with the State as well as the historical depth of its relations with the Greek nation, its influence, finally, also has very clear limits. These are to be traced back to the self-evident division of power instituted in all modern nation-states since the 19th century. However powerful, the church cannot be the star of this story. That much is obvious.

The military, for its part, with its stained coup-d’état past of interference with matters of the Greek State, must be considered as largely unable to think in a constitutionally unorthodox manner during peacetime. Of course, if there is a lesson to be taught by the crisis in Greece during the last four years, it is that that nothing is historically evident, and that European plays do not always have a happy end, as is the common perception on the other side of the Atlantic. For this reason, we had better be on the alert, because, in conditions such as the ones lived in Greece today, democracy does not seem particularly appealing or particularly strong against its enemies, mostly thanks to the forces of the so-called “Constitutional Arc”, which have fiercely contributed to its degeneration. Nevertheless, as much as one must not underestimate the ultra-right perils, one must also not underestimate firmly based democratic defences and traditions that are by no means insignificant across the Greek State apparatus, including the military.

On the other hand, the Hellenic Police is indeed the most infected and long-exposed institution to ultra-right intrusion, and for this reason it has a lot of work to do in order to finally correspond to the full job description of a rule-of-law police force. However, one must not forget that the police is essentially a branch of the

executive. It is “State”, yet it also reports to the State. It is, or at least it can and should be, accountable, and it is under administrative and disciplinary control. In short, the police depends upon political choices made by the head of the executive, despite the fact that, as any other institution functioning in a context of relative independence, it has developed a specific culture and mentality. In any case, if the head of the executive decides to send a powerful message to the police branch, this message may arrive late, or it may be obstructed, or it may even be spoiled to a certain degree, but, at some point, it will certainly reach its destination. For instance, if in Greece today some police officers are punished and put to jail or are dismissed because, rather than hunting down Nazi criminals, they have been busy making friends with Nazi criminals and hunting down immigrants along with their new friends, one can be sure that many of their colleagues will refrain from doing the same, even if they actually wish they could. At the same time, if the police is trained in a proper way by liberal-democratic standards, results are certain to follow, whether sooner or later.

However, in the case of the judiciary, things are more complicated. The reason is that its institutional status within the division of powers, typical of every modern rule-of-law State, allows the judiciary to enjoy a special degree of independence, which is indispensable in order to be able to perform its functions. *The judiciary is a head per se*. It is nobody’s branch; it only represents the regime in the widest of senses. The judiciary is one of the three parts of government; indeed, its duty is to provide solutions to the problems of the two other parts. This is its vested right, yet this also creates the most serious difficulties as long as one remarks systematic judgments and views that exceed the liberal-democratic limits of any modern State. Let us, then, reread in a new, somewhat brighter light our rather summary introductory formulation: *This is why we do believe that the main issue of this study in Greece today concerns especially the Greek judiciary. This is not to say that the judiciary poses any particular danger to democracy, but that it does reproduce judgments and views that consolidate as the normative horizon (i.e., as the common view of what is just) of the Greek political community a culture that may be convincingly shown to share most features of the ultra-right.*

As a postlude, a more general remark may be in order. The stinking history of ultra-right intrusion into the Greek State has features that point to identifiable Greek particularities, as well as features that fully enter into a wider comparative frame of reference, where Greece is a typical case of transition in southern and southeastern Europe, that is, of the Mediterranean and Balkan legacy, which both form part of the wider European heritage. As Mazower writes, in *Dark Continent*: “Europe in the 20th century was not the natural home of freedom and democracy, but a frequently nightmarish laboratory for social and political engineering, inventing and reinventing itself through war, revolution and ideological competition”<sup>143</sup>. In this sense, the Greek ultra-right symptom is nothing but an extreme version of the European symptom.

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143. Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s 20th Century*, Greek trans. K. Kouremenos, Alexandria, Athens, 2001, back-cover.

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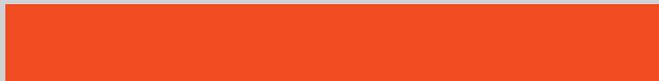
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