

“We Come from the Future”:

Legacies of Authoritarianism and Urban Unrest in the Age of Neoliberalism¹

Nicholas Papakis

npapakis@uwm.edu

On December 6, 2008 Athens-Greece was taken by a massive wave of riots where thousands of people went to the streets to demonstrate the killing of a fifteen-year-old high school student by the police. The riots quickly escalated to the other major Greek cities and they lasted for three weeks with unprecedented participation and intensity. The government’s response has been characterized as hostile against every voice of protest, especially against peaceful demonstrations. In addition, far right-wing organizations made a provocative appearance in assisting the police forces in the violent suppression of the protests. The December events are not merely another case of state authoritarianism, they also reveal several limitations: first on the part of the state to control opposition, and second on the part of the protesters to articulate comprehensive and concrete political objectives. This paper examines the uprising as a contemporary urban movement related to issues of deregulation, privatizations, poverty, and lack of political representation, shaped and articulated in a framework of continuous historical political cleavages.

The December 2008 riots in Greece, although unprecedented in terms of participation, geographical scope, intensity, and duration, had not been totally unanticipated, and certainly did not take place in a vacuum. Current socioeconomic conditions in Greece embody contradictions which the current economic crisis brings out in a larger scale. However, austerity measures, unemployment, reduction of social services and quality of life in general, are all phenomena whose presence dates back to the 1980s. Therefore, a brief overview of the origins of the current socioeconomic conditions and historical-political background may facilitate a more comprehensive analysis.

¹An earlier version of this article was presented at the 14th Urban Studies Programs Student Forum held in April 2009. I would like to thank the Awards Committee of the USP for the award, as well as the organizers of the Urban Studies Programs Student Forum Mary Hoehne and Margaret Zienkiewicz for their assistance. I am also grateful to Professor Philip Shashko and Stacey Oliker for the discussion that followed and above all for the thoughtful criticism, comments, and suggestions. Special thanks also to Professor Kristin Sziarto for her support and substantial contribution to the development of this article. “We destroy the present because we come from the future” is a statement of protesters from the occupied ASOEE (Athens University of Economics and Business), Found at: http://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article_id=949735

From the events and the general character of the protests can be inferred that the phenomenon appears to be one of venting public discontent with current sociopolitical and economic conditions. A range of issues - economic stagnation, widespread corruption, a troubled education system, rising poverty, economic insecurity - were thrust to the fore as thousands of Greeks spilled onto the streets to protest against the government. Although the majority of the protesters were students and young people, there has been an unusual high level of participation and support from older generations, indicating a wider discontent with mounting unemployment and poverty (more than twenty percent of the population lives below the poverty line). Privatization measures that have been implemented in the past - despite the fierce resistance from citizens, trade unions, and political organizations- along with the opening of markets and the destruction of the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, have been deemed responsible for the spectacular rise in unemployment and the degradation of living standards. Such an increase in unemployment has particularly hit the younger population putting Greece at the top countries in youth unemployment in the Euro zone.

Economic overview of modern Greece

Greece emerged from the Second World War and its ensuing civil war from 1946-49 a destroyed country with extreme poverty and severe social maladies. Nevertheless, in the period from the late 1950s to late 1960s, it experienced spectacular growth (the highest in Europe) and economic prosperity (OECD, Historical Statistics, 1995 edition, Tables 3.1 and 4.8). However, the distribution of benefits was not evenly spread by any means, and as Prime Minister George Papandreu famously said in the early 1960s "In Greece numbers thrive but people suffer" (S. Thomadakis, 1997). The small population with its limited purchasing power could not absorb the output and productivity growth, and the economy necessarily acquired an export orientation, where the main products exported were agricultural, light industrial products, and services (ibid.). The corresponding agricultural, light industrial and service orientation meant that heavy industrial and large scale investment never took place in Greece. As a result, the economy has traditionally been dominated by small enterprises dependent heavily on an external market (ibid.).

En route to its economic recovery and future prosperity, Greek administrations from the very 1960's strived to include the country into the newly formed European economic structures. The anticipation had been that structured economic growth would alleviate social maladies and discontent and eventually justify the mass injustices and acts of violence of the civil and post-civil war era. Greece joined the European Economic Community (predecessor of the present European Union) as a full member in 1981. The election of a socialist government the same year marked the end of a period of four decades marked by political strife, instability and authoritarianism which had begun with a dictatorship in 1936 and ended with the fall of another dictatorship in 1974. The European membership and the new socialist government signified a historic turn towards economic growth and consolidation of formal political democracy. This turn resembled similar courses of political action experienced during the same period in Spain and Portugal, as well as in several Latin American countries in the 1980s (Holman, 1996).

Besides the similar political trajectories experienced by all these emergent democracies in countries with a long authoritarian tradition, they also encountered quite similar economic policy concerns related to debt explosion and economic development. Their post-war economic development was primarily based in debt explosion, which acquired alarming proportions in the 1980s. This balance of payments and budget deficits, led to the adoption of fiscal austerity policies. The asserted aim and long term strategy of the governments of that era was long term economic development through the creation of a favorable business climate identified as a stable social, economic, and political environment conducive to new investment opportunities for private capital. (Fotopoulos, 1992; Thomadakis, 1997; Diamandouros, 1997).

Fiscal austerity measures in Greece were initially introduced in 1985. These measures brought into line the Greek government's policies with wider European Community economic development strategies (Tsoucalis,1991). These policy guiding principles can be summarized as: rationalization of state structures, elimination of control on prices and interest rates, deregulation of financial systems , privatization of public enterprises (including health, higher education and certain routine administrative functions), the introduction of a flexible labor force which swiftly adapts to business requirements to reorganize work as needed, the free mobility of labor within and across countries, anti-union legislation, and a general framework of policies and practices that involved integrated financial markets which facilitate corporate strategies of multinational companies that allow them to operate on a homogeneous market environment in a effort to remain internationally competitive (Diamandouros, 1997; International Labor Organization (ILO) (1995), Summary of Proceedings of the Impact of Globalization on the World of Work, International Labor Office, Bangkok,) . Thus the political and social restructuring as well as the future development of Greece was left once more to the market forces alone (Fotopoulos,1992) .

Nevertheless, these policies have produced social discontent and regularly encounter resistance either by the general population, or by more organized interests. The containment or elimination of several public sector services has never been convincing or desired by several segments of the population. Because of historical-political imperatives the Greek civil service and state controlled enterprises have been the largest employers in the country (Diamandouros, 1997). The proposals and implementation of wide-ranging privatization of public enterprises and sub-contracting of many of the services for the ones remaining under state control, meant the elimination of a large number of public sector employment (along with all the benefits public sector jobs provide). These decently paid, relatively secure positions are currently replaced by precarious, often limited term employment, providing dismal or no benefits, under poor working conditions and almost non-existent unionization. Apparently, a large part of the working population may have serious reservations about the privatization procedures and plans. And of course, the privatization of public services mean elimination of the social wage and deprivation for the country's growing disadvantaged population of basic services and reduction of living standards (Vergopoulos, 2005).

From a national business standpoint, the state has traditionally played a major function in the Greek economy. From the “post-war miracle” era to present, the state has been deemed as an omnipresent, regulating, and protective mechanism, which have been closely linked with domestic business interests (Thomadakis, 1997). It is worth mentioning that small businesses have been particularly hit since the accession of Greece to European Community structure, since the dismantling of protective mechanisms led to the increase in imports from other EU countries (Tsoukalis, 1991) and a further deterioration in the external deficit. Taking into account the magnitude of the self-employed sector (small businesses in Greece amounts to 40% of the labor force (Diamandouros, 1997)) and the small enterprises dominant in Greece’s economy, the elimination of state protection has been overwhelmingly distressing for large parts of the population (S. Thomadakis, 1997).

Deregulation, privatization, and the young

Currently, the present social crisis that the country faces is similar to other countries integrated in the internationalized economy. On the social level, the country faces an ever increasing gap between privileged groups for whom economic reforms provide an opportunity for personal gain, and the majority of the population which experiences job insecurity, underemployment, reduction of wages and benefits, unemployment, and poverty (Vergopoulos, 2005). The poverty rate for several years now has been around twenty percent, with a prospect to increase (Kikilias & Gazon, 2005), while there is also a high level of unemployment which affects particularly hard young people and recent graduates from higher education institutions. According to a press report by the Ministry of National Economy as of fall 2008, the unemployment rate for young adults was reported at the level of 24,3 (Ministry of National Economy, Press Report December 2008), although some economists put the real figure at about 30 per cent. (*The Independent*, Saturday, 13 December 2008). Currently, the country has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the Eurozone. This trend in unemployment among the young is one outcome of the privatization of the largest, most dynamic and profitable segments of the public sector, along with the gradual dwindling of manufacturing and agricultural sectors (affected by the opening of markets). At the same time the current account deficit is at the level of fifteen percent of the country’s GDP, and the public debt is almost equal to its national output. This debt is to some extent affected by the astronomical cost of the stage of the 2004 Olympics in Athens, which has put another significant economic burden on public finances (Usborne, 2008). Currently the government is borrowing at very high rates in the world markets, while the payment of this debt will be carried later by the less privileged and more suffering segments of the society which by tradition are taxed more heavily than any other segment (Vergopoulos, 2008). In addition these needy populations will incur more severely the effects of the already proposed cuts in social spending and social services.

In brief, the alignment of the Greek economy to imperatives of a global model and the subsequent demise of manufacturing and agriculture has made the Greek economy heavily dependent on international services such as shipping and tourism. Greece’s tourism industry has already been hit by worldwide recent negative economic developments, and is currently experiencing a decline in the

number of bookings by tourist agencies. Similarly, in the shipping industry which controls nearly twenty percent of the world's merchant fleet, has been hurt by the lack of liquidity in the banks and the resulting decline in the cargo to be shipped (*Businessweek*, December 8, 2008). The banking system appears particularly hard hit by the finance crisis as well. Although the Greek banks are allegedly not excessively exposed to "toxic" investments, recently the government injected 28 billion EUROS to support the country's banks ([INO.com Headlines](http://www.ino.com). Found at: <http://news.ino.com/headlines/?newsid=20081015006884>). Greek banking is particularly sensitive to the problems of neighboring economies and financial markets, due to large investments and expansion in the Balkans, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine—all countries suffering severe financial setbacks.

To the contemporary bleak social and economic prospects for the young, another principal issue and a forerunner of the December 2008 events, has been the continuous attempt of the ministry of education to bypass and render useless article 16 of the Greek Constitution, and thus confer the control and regulation of higher education to market demands and mandates (Fotopoulos, 2007). The proposed privatization for tertiary education institutions has been a threat for free access to universities (as stipulated in the Constitution), and introduce income based criteria as to who will eventually have access to higher education (Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Associations, Defending the Public University, 8/1/2007). In addition, this change severely compromises research and teaching standards as well as academic inquiry and freedom, by subjecting them to market imperatives and powers operating abroad, and as such immune from any sort of public accountability (Ibid.). Further it has been argued that these measures would eventually lead to the devaluation of the state universities (unable to compete for large private funds), and eventually lead to the downgrading of the entire educational system by instituting market performance guiding principles and strict adherence of curricula to commodity production and market directives (Ibid.). Apparently, such a reform may have devastating consequences for academic endeavors, future graduates, and the country's scientific production. Also it may entail serious social repercussions since one of the few constitutionally protected venues for upward mobility (free education for all) would be (virtually) eliminated. It is worth mentioning that these educational reform mandates were prescribed initially at the EU's Declaration of Bologna for the creation of a European Space of Higher Education (The Bologna Declaration on the European space for higher education, Found at: ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna), and past rallies of the student movement have targeted EU directives to privatize education (Fotopoulos, 2007).

Historical account

Political exclusion and state repression related to deep political rifts originates as far back as the beginning of the 20th century. The first attempts of political exclusion were related to the participation of Greece in the First World War. The government supported the participation on the side of the Entente, while the king advocated neutrality (Voglis, 2002), and that created a schism between royalists and republicans. In the 1920's trade unionists and socialists appeared as new force into the national political arena, challenging both established political camps, and punished severely for the threat they deemed to present to the established political order (Close, 1993). During this era the first intense forms of political repression appeared, by and large taking the form of mass exiles, imprisonment, torture and

deprivation of political rights. In view of that, the period right after the Second World War, can be seen as a continuation of social exclusion policies enacted from regimes before the war, with much higher numbers of citizens imprisoned, tortured, exiled and executed in the post war era. In fact this is the beginning of a more systematic and well-organized effort at political repression and social exclusion on the part of the state, using much harsher means, while creating deeper political cleavages (Voglis, 2002).

Conceptually, we can categorize Greece's recent political history in two distinct periods in which forms of governance and political public perceptions and attitudes were shaped and transformed. The first period begins in 1936 military coup and the systematic institutionalization of a repressive undemocratic state practices, and ends in 1974, when a transition to liberal democracy was attempted (Tsoucalas, 1969; Close, 1993; Voglis 2002). However, legacies bequeathed by repressive regimes of the first period haunted and shaped political efforts and attitudes from 1974 to the present.

Although forms of repression of pro-democracy parties and the left in particular were a common theme in several countries in Europe during the interwar years, the end of the war epitomized the end of cruel autocracies and oppression. In contrast, for Greece the end of the Nazi occupation signaled the beginning of a long era distinguished by political strife, democratic deficit, authoritarianism, and state brutality. Right after the liberation of Greece from the Nazi forces, the country was predominately under the control of the National Liberation Front, which was the predominant resistance organization (Tsoucalas, 1969; Murtagh, 1994; Voglis, 2002). Soon after liberation the resistance forces began to engage in confrontation with Nazi collaborators and royalist elements and the British forces that were backing them (Ibid.). That was the beginning of a bloody civil war between the left and the right, which lasted from 1944 to 1949.

The right wing winners of the civil war established a repressive-undemocratic regime, and organized a police state and an oppressive sociopolitical control system in the name of anticommunism (Samatas, 2005; Ibid.). From 1949 to 1967, organized social and political interests were closely controlled by the throne, the military, and conservative governments (Sotiropoulos, 2006). Thus, the post war in Greece period is characterized by political oppression, regular harassment of political dissidents by police, military and para-military organizations, as well as extrajudicial killings of citizens and even elected representatives in parliament who happened to be deemed disloyal to the regime (Murtagh, 1994). Political activities of some left wing political organizations were officially banned. The repressive policies were implemented by the entire state apparatus, and in particular by the police and military (Tsoucalas, 1969). As a result, certain public perceptions developed about the bigoted and politically prejudiced role of the police (organized in gendarmerie and urban police) in public affairs. The main police duties consisted of surveillance and repression of political activities. The state security agencies used a network of informers in every social sphere to systematically watch individuals and collect information in special surveillance files (*fakeloi*), recording citizen's sociopolitical beliefs and actions (Samatas, 2005). Oftentimes, these informers and members of the security agencies were also members of para-state organizations that regularly terrorized, persecuted, and even executed citizens who they deemed leftist or leftist sympathizers. In their criminal activities, these members of para-state organizations enjoyed virtual impunity; typical evidence of an authoritarian and corrupted state, where

the rule of law is substituted by well-established systems of patronage, assisted by a weak and also corrupted judiciary, and where the security forces are protected by special legal immunity.

That was the situation until 1967. In April 1967, less than a month from scheduled elections (where a centrist government was expected to win with a landslide) a group of rightist colonels staged a military coup. They reigned until 1974. During the dictatorship, the sociopolitical situation became even worse. Now the repressive measures applied to every citizen who did not publicly exhibit loyalty to the colonels, and the miniscule civil liberties that were attained during the post civil war era completely disappeared (Katris , 1971).

The end of the dictatorship in 1974 denotes the beginning of the transition to liberal democracy, symbolized by the legalization of the Communist party. Aspirations for integration into the European Union made radical elements in the state apparatus (the inherited remnants of the post war regime), a liability for the new conservative government. Despite some limited efforts to bestow some legitimacy to the state by cleansing state organizations from extremist elements, these elements appeared well entrenched in several state agencies (Kassimeris, 2005). Although this time they were not as powerful as once were, their influence in state policies and practices was still visible and considerable, and undemocratic courses of action of the past had not disappear (Samatas, 2005; Close 2003). It is noteworthy that during the peaceful transition to democracy, the existing military and security apparatus remained to a significant degree intact from any riddance of vestiges of their ignoble past (Kasimeris, 2005, Iospress, *"The Defamed Post-Dictatorship Era"*, 2002). One of the reasons is the recruiting and filtering process that was strictly followed in the past for prospective candidates in these organizations. The loyalty of their members to the previous regime resulted in politically air tight apparatuses staffed and run with adherents of right wing political affiliation and ideology (Tsoucalas, 1969. Iospress, 2006). Even to this day, there are reports and evidence that such practices of selective recruitment and of domination of the security forces by radical right wing elements, are still present, well organized, and gather momentum (Iospress, 2006).

After the victory of the Socialist party in 1981, several serious attempts were made to ensure access to employment in the police and the military by all citizens regardless of their political persuasion. In addition, structural changes were introduced in the security agencies, which became unified in one organization, virtually eliminating the gendarmerie. In an attempt to alter the dominant collective memory-image of the police force as a unit of political repression (Philip Carabott(editor) Thanasis D. Sfikas , 2003), the new government changed even the design and color of police uniforms and gave a new name to the organization. All these changes and reforms encountered quite significant resistance from the conservative opposition and some members of the police, a reaction of an enduring political culture, cultivated for many decades. The significance of the political initiatives taken during the early 1980's can be seen in contrasting responses to the riots in December 2008 by different police union representatives (unionization of police was part of the organization's democratic restructuring).

This brief historical account illustrates the many expressions where past authoritarian institutionalized traditions represent significant challenges to newly established democracies, usually articulated in politically (and criminally) corrupt militaries, judiciaries, and security forces, further perpetuating citizen distrust toward the state. In fact, the post-dictatorship years were characterized by numerous challenges from politically active militaries to elected governments and political leaders as well to newly established state democratic structures, and the threat of a military coup has been present from 1974 to the mid 1980's (iospress, *Aspirant Dictators 1974-1983, 2007*, Haralambopoulos Yiannis, 2002) . That is also evidence of the continuation of past unresolved and uncorrected authoritarian practices which to some degree or another represent sequences and mechanisms that persist, operate, and evolve in the country's political processes to our days.

Challenges to the democratization process

As the country moves further away from its authoritarian past, many changes in the political scene may suggest that undemocratic policies and practices would gradually disappear. Indeed, progress toward democratization may be evidenced, although political developments at times, like the recent state reaction to civil unrest, appear quite alarming for the safeguarding and advance of civil liberties. The mere passage of time has not erased at all the distressing memories of social and political repression and the (still present) abusive practices of certain state agencies (Close, 2003) . In an effort to alter public perceptions and to repair the historically uncivil, corrupt, and in general negative profile of the state, several administrations have made attempts to erase painful memories of the country's brutal political past, however unsuccessfully. For the privileged elite and its political representatives, such an erasure would be quite expedient since this would allow it to implement identical policies under pretexts suitable to the current political realities. For the past and present victims of political and social marginalization, historical accounts of an inglorious and shameful past provide a precondition for political consciousness. Punishment, symbolic or real, of perpetrators, and investigations of past atrocities, has been quite limited (in contrast with most other European countries where the punishment of collaborators was more widespread, and the resistance had been acknowledged and honored) and selective of a few instances and individuals, leaving intact the institutions and structures that supported abuses in the past and in many instances still assure the continuation of such practices.

These very structures are of particular interest in any effort to analyze their necessity, continuation, and function in a contemporary historical context. Like in other numerous instances in Northern Mediterranean rim and Latin America, Greek authoritarian regimes asserted their legitimacy during the Cold War in the rhetoric of economic development and further integration in the international capitalist economy. However, within the post Cold War political environment, with one of the pillars of their legitimization (mostly) gone, the perpetuation of undemocratic structures and practices as well as the manufacturing of consent and the discouragement/punishment of dissent, are all based on the imperative of economic development in a global economic environment. The country's entry and full membership in European Union has been portrayed from the majority of political parties

as a paramount political accomplishment and a privilege, which, however, required several sacrifices and discipline to its political and economic imperatives.

Indeed, Greece's recovery from past oppressive and totalitarian governments has been associated from the very beginning with the country's membership in the European Union (then European Economic Community). For many years, full membership in the EU structures was viewed and prophesized as the only way for the country's full modernization, economic development, and democratization, as well as a safeguard for the introduction, consolidation and development of democratic institutions. Traumatic past experiences have rendered democratic restructuring attempts with disbelief regarding their actual outcomes. Indeed, liberal democracy for generations was an illusion never fully experienced and always threatened by the possibility of a dictatorship (Close, 2003. Iospress, *"The Defamed Post-Dictatorship Era"*, 2002. Iospress *"Aspirant Dictators 1974-1983, 2007"*., Haralambopoulos Yiannis, 2002).

Historically, every disruption of a parliamentary political process has been perpetrated by forces deeply entrenched in the state mechanisms, whose power oftentimes resided in parallel to state organizations. Therefore, the state has been perceived as corrupted and at the same time unable and/or inimical to alter repressive political structures. For that reason, another power, much bigger and more powerful was supposedly needed to subdue and restructure the Greek state; this role would be only played by the EU structures. The EU was viewed by the right as a safeguard against the communist threat, and by the majority of the left as a defense against another dictatorship or quasi-dictatorial state. As a result, the concept of European integration became a hegemonic one and it dominated the political discourse for over forty years. The political and economic implications of this concept can be traced in the alleged association of economic development and democratization (Holman, 1996). However, some close scrutiny may be needed to reveal the true relation between economic development and democratization; whether their association is real or fictitious, and how indeed economic development promotes democracy, and in the last analysis, whether democracy is a necessary precondition for economic development (Canterbury, 2005).

European integration, economic development, and democratic process.

In the last three decades, dominant political and theoretical discourse as well as popular political rhetoric worldwide revolves around the replacement of authoritarian states with market oriented liberal democracies. Most political contestations on national and international levels refer to democratic deficit in certain countries and regions, and more often than not make positive associations of democratic processes and economic development. The opening of the countries of the former eastern bloc to the markets and the downfall of several dictatorships (mostly) in Latin America raised the issue of the beginning of a democratic global transformation. Former communist countries and Third World authoritarian states jumped in the bandwagon of market economy and parliamentary political process as the only way to economic development (Canterbury, 2005). The opening of borders and the promotion of unfettered flows of capital and goods gave a global dimension to the ideological

imperative of economic and political transformation, which at this particular historical moment appeared as an inevitability with no alternative. On this basis of unavoidable transformation, many interventions (economic, military or both) by transnational organizations were justified and legitimized. Accordingly, global institutional structures appear to influence and impact the political order in countries which are incorporated into the system of global market economy, and it subsequently raises the question of the relationship between economy and politics, or whether economic development inevitably leads to democratic institutions, to wide political participation, and to the abolishment of political exclusion (Canterbury, 2005).

Democratization and economic development are prescribed as the only way to global integration, and failure to abide to mandates of economic and political reform, allegedly lead to further “backwardness” and isolation. The notion that economic development will eventually lead to democratic institutions has been mostly argued by modernization theory adherents, while dependency theory advocates disputed this alleged relationship (Canterbury, 2005). However, historical evidence does not corroborate such an association. Indeed, in cases of popular political mobilizations, democratic processes appear to be a hindrance to this particular type of economic development and prosperity (Silva, 1999). Interestingly, in many instances the threat of authoritarianism has been used as a means to justify its institution. In instances of prolonged economic crises and the social mobilizations they (potentially) may entail, democratic political institutions and courses of action often times have been considered as sources of instability and a great threat to a country’s business environment and as such a deterrent for investment. According to this line of argument, the recommended policies place the primacy of economic growth as a necessary condition for sociopolitical development, and economic growth requires integration into larger/transnational economic/political structures. Almost invariably, the allegedly “pro-growth” economic policies take the form of neoliberal reforms that are profoundly antidemocratic and which revert to an authoritarian mode of governance. In any case, arguments for authoritarian governance as a means of protection from other authoritarian threats and as means to economic prosperity, besides defying basic democratic principles, historically have been proven completely baseless.

Authoritarianism and economic growth

As has been mentioned above, authoritarian military regimes in the immediate post war period, flourishing in an era of economic and technological modernization, were quite common in South America and countries on the northern rim of the Mediterranean. These authoritarian regimes were notorious (and some still are) for their brutality, repression of political rights and social movements. In a political climate dominated by Cold War politics, the standard pretext for their existence and/or support from the free world countries has been the threat of an electoral victory of left wing forces or rebellion against existing sociopolitical structures (O’Donnell, 1999). In the decades following the end of the Second World War, many repressive regimes flourished during an era of economic and technological modernization. Besides the political justification of their repressive practices and totalitarian policies, the brutal and undemocratic character of these regimes

have regularly been justified inside and outside their boundaries as an imperative necessitated by economic reality. Apparently, certain views of such reality required particular structural adjustments that would dramatically widen the gap between the rich and the poor, reduce the already meager standard of living substantially, can be very unpopular and may well result in potential popular reaction. Since ruling classes do not relinquish their privileges without a struggle, undemocratic means of governance would be deemed indispensable. Customarily, a common political narrative of such authoritarian regimes revolves around social stability, anticommunism, and economic trade and investment opportunities (Schmitz, 1999).

At this point a distinction may have to be made regarding authoritarianism as a form of government, and note that it should not be associated only with totalitarianism and/or dictatorship. Authoritarian forms of governance may permit certain political parties and electoral processes, while subtly discourage political activities which may challenge the present regime and exercise effective control of civil society by incorporating civic activities into the ruling party or the state. In many cases a democratic outlook does not necessarily negate practices of extensive police surveillance in almost every realm of public (and not only) life, oligopolistic control of mass media, narrow and deficient democratic process, electoral systems which can be quite unfair and non-representative, legislatures closely affiliated with powerful interest groups, and corrupted state agencies. In general, the political ideology of authoritarianism appears to be that of political apathy, and its greatest threat that of a politically mobilized population, although there are a few phenomena of organized mobs and in rare cases larger organizations in support of authoritarian policies (Riley and Fernandez, 2009). In the last quarter of the twentieth century, and in the Western Hemisphere in particular, the removal of several dictatorships in Latin America and Southern Europe along with a reemergence of democratic governments gave the impression that authoritarianism appeared to be crushed and safely buried in the past. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence about the persistence and imminent presence of an authoritarian tradition in right-wing threats to democratic structures. These factions, who oftentimes use political violence to promote exclusionary objectives, do not necessarily seek to overthrow democratic systems, but they are able to influence and shape the discourse and practices of political institutions. In view of that, it becomes evident that a struggle for social justice and equality is an intricate effort that may encounter many unforeseen impediments. In subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways, authoritarianism is still a force to be reckoned with in many countries and regions (Payne, 2000).

The events of December 2008 in Greece

In order to provide some sort of context and political background of the events in Greek cities during the December of 2008, we may need to observe how the political situation was developed in the days before the riots. These developments represent a culmination of political processes which have begun long before the incident and keep continuing to this day. As was mentioned above (a few days before the killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos), on Thursday, December 4, there was a countrywide demonstration by students opposing the attempt of the government to violate the constitution and

transform the legal framework under which higher education institutions operate as part of an effort to privatize higher education. During these protests, riot police confronted the students in Athens, and viciously beat a student. On the same day several thousands of farmers in central Greece blocked the main thoroughfare which connects the north and south of Greece with their agricultural vehicles, in a protest of the government's economic policies.

In most of the reports the chronicle of the events begins with the killing of a fifteen-year-old student at the Exarchia district located at the Athens downtown area. On Saturday December 6th, around 9:00p.m., a police squad car belonging to the "special guard unit" patrolled the narrow and busy streets of the area, and engaged in some sort of word exchange with two bystanders. Although the skirmish appeared to be over, the special guards left the site of the incident, and parked the squad car at a nearby intersection, close to where a police platoon was stationed to guard a building where the Socialist party has its offices. Five minutes later, the two special guards returned on foot to the location where the verbal exchange took place, in order to arrest the two bystanders. This is where they encountered a group of teenagers, and after which one of the guards pulled out his gun and fired three shots at them. One of the bullets hit the fifteen-year-old high school student in the chest and killed him instantly. According to half a dozen eyewitnesses of the event, it was a straight shot at the teenager and a case of a cold-blooded unprovoked murder. The two police officers then walked to their parked vehicle, and departed from the scene. Twenty-five minutes later an ambulance arrived to take the victim and a few minutes later his death was confirmed. About an hour after the incident took place, demonstrations started in the area of the event and the nearby streets.

This particular district is a very dense, mixed-use and residentially diversified neighborhood, where a number of political figures, including the current president of the country (who incidentally during the demonstrations kept living in his house in this area, instead of the presidential residence) reside next to college students and newly arrived immigrants. It is noteworthy to mention that this is an area where a bloody uprising against the 1967-74 dictatorship took place (in the Polytechnic School that is located nearby), and since then it is known for its political activist culture and it is often times used as a refuge by victimized people like immigrants, women, minorities, and other disenfranchised groups. As a result, the social sensitivities and political instincts of the residents and regulars appear to be quite acute. In this particular area also several social advocacy organizations are located along with many small publishing enterprises and bookstores.

Before midnight, the demonstrations had spread out to the entire downtown area in a radius that encompassed the central Athens municipality, the adjacent municipalities and many other ones further beyond. The scene was described as warlike, with barricades erected in all major streets, and clashes between the police, using excessive amounts of chemicals, water cannons, stun grenades and severe physical aggression, and demonstrators, responding with rocks and makeshift petrol firebombs. Demonstrators fighting with riot police and other special police units occupied most university buildings, located at the city center. For several weeks, fierce and crowded demonstrations took place all over the country, in almost every prefecture, all major cities and islands, where demonstrators in their rallies

clashed with the police. The government kept on issuing warnings of escalation to urban warfare and in several instances threatened to mobilize military units. However, the police had a different approach and from the very beginning appeared keener on chemical assault. According to the Independent, in the first week of the protests the Greek police fired 4,600 tear gas canisters and by the end of the week had depleted their stock and searched to acquire emergency supplies from Israel and Germany.

The profile of the demonstrators appears to have been quite diversified. Although the majority and the leading figures were high school students along with university students, the protests drew a mixture of people of all age groups, and walks of life. According to reports from the press, a large number of high school teachers protested side by side with their students and the parents of the students, expressing their anger towards the overly aggressive tactics of the police. Very significant also has been the participation and support of most labor unions, and the country's General Confederation of Labor which organized and launched many protests along with strikes at a national level or by sector. In addition a large number of immigrant workers (many of them being the usual victims of police brutality) appeared among the demonstrators, in a rare opportunity to voice their concerns and unfair treatment by the state. However, the support and rally against authoritarian violent state practices was not confined to the streets of dozens of cities: in 23 prison complexes across the nation, inmates refused any food as a sign of bereavement, distress, and solidarity with the movement.

In the weeks followed, most of the university buildings in the country were occupied, along with several hundreds of high schools. Even in those high schools that have not been occupied, classes did not take place for the rest of the month because of the teachers' strike. The two most spectacular occupations were the one of the Acropolis site, displaying a sign with the word 'resistance' in five languages, and the occupation by high school students of a national television station during the prime minister's national address regarding the current situation. To everybody's astonishment, instead of the prime minister's speech, the viewers saw high school students urging viewers to turn off their television sets and go to the streets to protest against state repressive authoritarianism and to express their solidarity with the movement.

A critical and worth mentioning occurrence during the first days of the public reaction to the murder is that some protesters expressed their fury by targeting and destroying mostly banks, fashionable, expensive and upscale stores, luxury car dealerships, and several dozens of police stations. Many protesters emphasized their intentional targeting of symbols of wealth and opulence, since these are deemed as a reflection and support of a social model based on excessive conspicuous consumption, social polarization, and repression for any expression of dissent. The government spokesperson from the very beginning referred to such incidents as non-political criminal activities of looters and he stressed that law-abiding citizens must show their condemnation against elements of chaos and anarchy. However, the head of the storeowners association, stating the organizations position, emphasized that no destruction of any property can be compared with the loss of human life. In the attacks on police stations, most of the protesters were high school students, teachers and parents, and had taken basically two forms. One form was that of a peaceful demonstration (usually

sitting in front of the stations and other public buildings), and the other of more aggressive attacks in which vegetables, stones and in some instances homemade petrol bombs were thrown at the buildings. However, the form of protest, peaceful or not made no difference to the police course of action: all of them were answered with utmost aggression, despite complaints by the teachers' union and parents.

Meanwhile, many participants in the demonstrations were arrested, and they are prosecuted as terrorists. The accusation is based upon a new legal framework that has been introduced in Greece as well as in every EU member in the wake of the international anti-terrorist campaign of 2001, and it was reinforced even further prior to the Olympic games of 2004. In a few words the participation in a public protest is deemed as an act of terrorism that carries severely heavy sentences (in many cases up to eight years). Many occupations of public buildings and other sites took place immediately after the beginning of the clashes and the first arrests, demanding the release of the arrested protesters. At the same time reports from their lawyers describe abusive treatment and practices on the part of the authorities towards arrestees, their families and their attorneys. Incidents of this sort are not exceptional, but the regular practice of Greek security organizations. Even after the collapse of the last dictatorship in 1974, the country has frequently experienced excessive and abusive force by the authorities. In the past few years alone several incidents of abuse have been gone to European court and several international institutional bodies and human rights organizations frequently accuse the Greek state for its abusive practices.

The reaction on the part of the state was not unlike any other in the after war years; the state mobilized the police which as usual made a showcase of violence and cruelty. There were proposals from several ministers for the mobilization of military units, however this could be a fatal blow to the already frail government because the last time something of this sort happened was during the dictatorship. Interestingly, the leader of the SIRIZA party, revealed in a parliamentary session the actual plans for use of the military in cases of civil unrest (*Eleftherotypia*, 01/09/2009). Traditionally, every time there is a right wing administration during protest events, no matter how peaceful these might be and irrespective of the participants (often times there are old and even ailing pensioners, in this instance many twelve to fifteen year old students), a number of right wing provocateurs and unlawful entities assist in the work of the riot police. There are numerous incidents of deaths and severe injuries caused by these groups in the past as well as in recent years (Tsoucalas, 1969; *To Vima*, 09/18/2005). Almost always perpetrators of these crimes get away with no arrest or some minimal symbolic sentence. In the city of Patra in 1991 one of these far right organizations murdered the academic Nicos Temponeras, reminding that the para-state organizations by no means are a thing of the past. Incidentally, in December 2008 and in the same city while huge protests were taking place, these groups appeared again, pretending that they were store owners who try to protect their properties and thus justify and explain the police cooperation with them. These groups appeared in some other cities as well, including Athens, although in the city of Patra appeared to have an unusual presence and tolerance by the police and judiciary. The mayor of the city (which is the third larger Greek city) condemned these elements and identified them with the para-state right wing criminal gangs. In memory of the past, and enraged by the

present incidents, on Friday, 9 January, 2009 a long-planned education protest march took place in Athens (*Eleftherotypia*, 12/24/2008). The rally was organized to coincide with the anniversary of the 1991 murder of Nikos Temponeras. Participants stated that they protested against police repression, a corrupt political apparatus, the education reform and a social system that offers not much hope (*Kathimerini*, 01/10/2009). Also, the Greek department of Amnesty International canceled the scheduled celebrations on 10 December for the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in response to the police violence in Greece (Amnesty International, 2008).

Civil unrest in a wider framework

The core motives of the civil unrest in Greece, and the broad range of issues brought forward during the protests were of a more universal nature, but at the same time the particular form of the protests had many local characteristics. After all, the participants experience the general global socioeconomic dynamics articulated in a local context. Accordingly, their perceptions and subsequent actions are influenced and shaped by historical and cultural local particularities. In this context, globalization appears not an abstraction or the expressed will of external forces which require localities and individuals simply to respond or adjust to pressures. Globalization is in fact articulated locally and realized in the every day activities that occur within cities and other places. Grassroots politics are not immune to globalization. The shape and form of local activism is informed by events and processes that occur elsewhere but are nonetheless intrinsically connected to problems and possibilities at home (Kohler & Wissen, 2003). Nevertheless, from press reports and analyses to public reactions worldwide, the events in Greece were interpreted as a collective response to political/economic changes associated with neo-liberal policies globally, and from demonstrations of support that took place in several parts of the world (including London, Paris, Rome, Istanbul, Dublin, Berlin, Frankfurt, Madrid, Barcelona, Amsterdam, The Hague, Copenhagen, Bordeaux, and Seville) we can infer that many ostensibly diversified populations unequivocally identified with the struggle of the people in Greece. In fact, the most immediate political effects of the protests did not take place in Greece but in France. Only days after the outbreak of civil unrest in Greece French president Nicholas Sarkozy was forced to postpone a long proposed educational reform because of fears that Greek riots could spread in France. Here the global and the local certainly appeared to be mutually constituted.

In the wake of the protests in Greece, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn warned of economy-related riots and unrest in various global markets if the financial crisis is not addressed and lower-income households are hurt by credit constraints and rising unemployment (*Reuters*, 12/15/2008). In an interview to the German newspaper *Die Welt* on Saturday February 7, WTO chief Pascal Lamy warned of looming political unrest triggered by the global economic crisis equal to that seen during the 1930s. In particular he warned that "The crisis today is spreading even faster (than the Great Depression) and affects more countries at the same time," adding that political instability is the great danger. "This crisis weighs heavily on politics and puts peace in danger," he said (Lamy, Pascal. 2009.). On the same note we read in *The Guardian*, on Saturday 31 January 2009: "France is paralyzed by a wave of strike action, the boulevards of Paris resembling a debris-strewn

battlefield. The Hungarian currency sinks to its lowest level ever against the euro, as the unemployment figure rises. Greek farmers block the road into Bulgaria in protest at low prices for their produce. New figures from the biggest bank in the Baltic show that the three post-Soviet states there face the biggest recessions in Europe. It's a snapshot of a single day – yesterday – in a Europe sinking into the bleakest of times. But while the outlook may be dark in the big wealthy democracies of western Europe, it is in the young, poor, vulnerable states of central and eastern Europe that the trauma of crash, slump and meltdown looks graver” (Traynor, 2008). Apparently recent economic developments do not make everyone as enthusiastic about neoliberal economic principles, as maybe it was the case once. In Riga, Latvia more than 10,000 people protested against policies of the Latvian government in its efforts to control the economic crisis. The initially nonviolent protest turned into a late-night storm as a large number of protesters moved towards the parliament, and engaged in battle with police. The next day there were similar events in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. Latvia looks like the most vulnerable country (after Iceland) to be hammered by the financial and economic crisis. The EU and IMF have already mounted a €7.5bn (£6.6bn) rescue plan but the outlook is the worst in Europe. The biggest bank in the Baltic, Swedbank of Sweden, yesterday predicted a slump this year in Latvia of a whopping 10%, more than double the previous projections. It added that the economy of Estonia would shrink by 7% and of Lithuania by 4.5%.

It remains to be seen how societies, which twenty years ago put their faith in capitalism and the prospects for capitalist development, will react to recent economic meltdowns and the social repercussions that may follow. Some people already feel betrayed, expressing their disillusionment in the biggest protests across the former communist bloc since the days of people power. Although the Baltic protests are by no means anti-capitalist, it is interesting to see what kind of capitalism these populations will look upon in the future as public perceptions evolve and are shaped by the current crisis and the downfall of several model cases like Iceland. In Iceland, a test case of how one of the most successful societies on the globe suddenly failed, after the collapse of the neoliberal right wing government, the IMF's bailout teams have moved in with \$11bn. Meanwhile a caretaker government has taken over. For many years Iceland has been considered as one of the world's most developed, most productive and most equal societies. While the country is in a state of collapse and the national currency appears to be finished, for the moment the hard left Greens are the most popular party (Traynor, *The Guardian*. 1/31/2009)

During the Greek unrest, a number of newspaper commentaries in Europe have indicated that the events in Greece are a portent of what may come in other countries. In December 8, 2008 an analysis in the Italian daily *La Repubblica* noticeably attributed the riots in Athens to the economic crisis, and warned: “The storm of riots that has convulsed Greece for the past two days is the first violent reaction in the West to the economic crisis and the inadequacy of government measures to combat it ... The tragic episode on Saturday ... must be seen in the context of the crisis and the fears it has stoked among weaker segments of society ... This Wednesday [the day of the general strike] could be a decisive day for Greece: the first major gale with which the economic storm has hit the West.” Similarly Britain's

Daily Telegraph, cautioned investors to pay serious attention of the events in Greece citing that “Investors are wrong to ignore the Greek riots.” It says of the clashes and demonstrations in Greece: “That may sound like a little local difficulty. But the tensions created by unemployment, marginalized youth and incompetent governments are far from exclusively Hellenic” and warns “Similar outbreaks are possible in other countries. Recessions are always tough on the young. ... Social protests have sometimes changed the world. Think of the French and Russian revolutions. But even lesser shifts can cause trouble for investors.” (Courcoulas, 2008).

Besides its strictly economic aspect, this crisis reveals a wide array of political issues that even though they have hibernated for sometime, a single episode allowed them to come to the surface. Throughout the riots, and for the first time in many years, issues which question the role of the state, the government, the elected representatives and the existing political parties, were articulated on a mass scale; sixty percent of a poll’s respondents considered them to be part of a wider “social uprising”(*Eleftherotypia*, 03/11/2009). The events from the very beginning reflected a mass political contestation, that was not limited to discontent with the current administration but to the whole political system whose democratic nature has been critically doubted. The citizens’ vilification and criticism involve a system based on two political parties, which for over fifty years have dominated the country’s political landscape and have been transformed into family dynasties.

Through client political relations based on corruption, favoritism and exchange from the higher levels of political life to the rendering of basic social services, political representation has been based on fostering political relations of dependence with citizens, civic organizations and political parties. Via this process, political classes use and abuse a bureaucratic state mechanism to secure their re-election. In fact, political organizations and parties for many years have been so much immersed into this political culture, and for a long time now they gradually appear to have lost any predisposition for political inclusion of the growing disenfranchised population. In the face of the events of December 2008, the quandary for these organizations was who would be able to control the thousands of people protesting all over the country. Suddenly, they realized the level of alienation and antagonism that has existed for a long time between them and a quite significant part of the population. This refers as well to the parties of the left, which in an almost unparalleled expression of animosity and rivalry for capturing a larger share of the body of voters, became either advocates or harsh critics of the movement, attacking each other for either political expediency or conformism.

Via their protest, a large number of people expressed a willingness to participate in public affairs outside the dominant political process, defying the restrictions imposed by it for its own protection and perpetuation. Considering that the majority of the protesters were teenagers, students and young people in general is another alarming element for the political establishment. Since many of them had their first political experience during these quite dynamic events, without the control or direction of any political party, and confronted with utmost defiance the more repressive and brutal state agencies, the chances of their integration into the conventional political establishments appear quite difficult and remote. Current economic conditions that make the prospects for their future economic and social

development quite bleak, further create perceptions of alienation, suspicion, mistrust and resentment with dominant institutions, processes, and narratives about progress, fairness, and prosperity. In this context, and because of the fact that past rallies of the student movement were particularly targeting EU directives to privatize education, the movement acquires political significance, as an indication of and generative event in an ongoing transformation of political perceptions regarding transnational institutions.

In view of that, the December 2008 unrest appears to be a manifestation of a social crisis; a crisis of values and beliefs, which emphatically questions the very foundations of the social system and its institutions. Similar events in other areas of the world show a display of accumulated anger among the non-privileged social strata that are suffering the most from the ongoing global economic crisis, and are called to bear the burden of the proposed recovery plans. A common characteristic of all protests is a rage rooted in the realization that hard work, personal sacrifice and educational achievements in our times do not provide higher standards of living, often associated with higher consumption levels. An immense feeling of disillusionment with promises for better days ahead appears to prevail in the public psyche, when the largest share of the social wealth is appropriated by a tiny percentile of the population, and when a vast and still growing percentage of the population is condemned to live under precarious conditions of insecure subsistence or utter poverty. Moreover, the whole model of economic development, which for many years has been meticulously analyzed, praised, and prescribed to the less fortunate or more ambitious, appears to be the sole perpetrator for the current predicaments.

Social commentator, urban theorist, historian, and political activist Mike Davis in an interview in the Greek daily *Eleftherotypia* published on 12/28/2008 asserts: "...the civil unrest in Greece is an explosion of rage. There is no place in these riots for messages of hope or optimistic resolutions. There are not any utopian claims and objectives of the 1968 era type or wishful thinking like the anti-neoliberal globalization movements. This is what agonizes heads of states and organizations worldwide; not the broken windows and the molotov firebombs." Apparently, there is plenty of evidence worldwide that in many societies there has been a latent rage accumulated for many years, which without a warning, was triggered by an event which in many other instances passes almost unnoticed (for example, a case of police abuse). Such an event may make this rage manifest itself in an explosive uncontrollable manner. The issue at hand is whether political organizations are aware that the seeds of wide civil unrest are already planted. This young generation appears to feel betrayed by its predecessors.

All over Europe there is a realization by the younger generation that they will experience standards of living far below the ones enjoyed by their parents. Similarly, their parents watch their quality of life becoming degraded every day, with no end on the horizon (Vergopoulos, 2008). This appears to have been the case in Greece on December 2008. The young people who protested in the streets of Greek cities every day for almost a month, indeed appeared to come from the future, since they perceive their future already exploited and taken hostage for the sake of big and quick transnational profits. The social, political, and economic system that they live under does not have any

provisions for their future. Consequently, we witness violent expressions of rage against symbols and institutions of a social configuration that has been proven relentless against their lives.

However, here we need to make a distinction; this type of violence does not turn against life—in contrast to state violence. In this particular murder, the police officer aimed and killed a person who the officer deemed (based in his testimony) as an enemy of the state. The case is by no means an imprudent act or a personal matter, but one more incident in a battle where a highly trained and very experienced police officer has learned to deem as a war with an internal enemy of the state. In stark contrast, the violence of the protestors turns only against either the symbols of economic and political power (banks, transnational corporations, government and police departments, etc.) or against symbols of consumerism, of exclusion, and of exploitation. Civil violence by no means can possibly be confused with individual, terrorist, and criminal violence, mostly because of its root causes and the motives. Civil violence does not seek revenge, punishment, and instill fear, it does not have a personal or profit motive, it does not intend in loss of life, and instead all the above, it has always claims to the state (Katz, 2008).

As this particular confrontation has shown, this is a manifestation of a new type of political contestation. We may observe similarities with the French riots in 2005 as the trigger of the events in both cases was extrajudicial killings in a display of police abuse and brutality. We witness momentous mobilizations of a hopeless population that for many years has experienced increasing economic and social marginalization without any access to formal political representation, and the complete absence of established political organizations in the formation of a massive and exceptionally dynamic social movement lacking political leadership.

Apparently, these movements entail uncharted waters for conventional political practice. In both cases (as probably in several others, not so extensively publicized) traditional political organizations appeared incapable of either recognizing the root causes, motives and the unfolding social dynamic, or connecting with new social forces struggling for political representation, such as immigrants and other minorities. The rapid mobilization of people showed that they already shared a common understanding of the situation, a common judgment of who to blame, and the belief in possibility of translating their frustration into collective action. In Greece the political force, which seems to have more awareness and political insight of the emergent situation and which appears to be on the lead of the protests, happened to be some anarchist groups. This is no surprise, since for many years several organizations, marginalized from the political mainstream, have fostered close relations with oppressed social groups; they assist and provide political support and representation as well regularly protesting via formal and informal channels on their behalf. Thus, through the years these political associations acquired political legitimacy in growing segments of the population (and even beyond them). Their political assemblies, which by and large have been out of sight, appear to exert quite significant influence in mass social movements, in an era where the legitimacy of long-established agents of political representation suffers continuing setbacks because they appear completely unable to comprehend and assess the severity of the ongoing social transformations, and as a result this put in doubt their future relevance.

Social explosions of this sort frequently have been criticized and derided as non-political, and using “blind violence” against property. As it was made clear from the very beginning, the fury and anger that was expressed in the destruction of high-scale consumption chains and banks was a manifestation of a protest against symbols and institutions of neoliberal restructuring. The same appears to be the case with the attacks on police stations, as they are widely perceived as the agents of a historically repressive political apparatus. Along these lines, frequent mentions were made in several commentaries to the events of May 1968 in France. Interestingly, in comparison between May ’68 and this type of movements several similarities and significant differences appear to exist. The character of social movements in the 1960’s was one of optimism for the creation of a more fair and egalitarian society, it had specific (albeit utopian) demands and their objectives were determined collectively via organized political processes. In civil unrests of the sort described in this paper, the political objectives and courses of action are determined on a basis of formally unorganized and collectively subconscious opposition and antagonism for established institutions and the ideology they espouse and represent. Unlike the 1968 era, in today’s protests the general feeling and drive of the protesters is not one of optimism about the future, but of pessimism, frustration, hopelessness, and rage; and thus the violent character that has been predominant in these demonstrations.

However, today, like in 1968, the absence of political parties, trade unions, and other established political organizations from the mass movements is striking. Although, several of these organizations occasionally state their sympathy and support for the protesters, they (intentionally or not) fail to identify and connect with the movement, provide political leadership, and capitalize in the overpowering political and social dynamics, in order to attain larger strategic objectives. As can be easily derived from the above analysis, the character of the Greek civil unrest in December 2008 had a certain anti-capitalist insinuation, which to a large extent was indicated and articulated in the counter violence that ensued. Nevertheless, this counter-violence entails several positive as well as negative aspects. The positive element can be traced in the popular and spontaneous expression against symbols of the dominant social structures and institutions. However, this spontaneous energy and fervor has not been a part of a widespread political vision, a common platform and strategy, and as such may well proceed to its diffusion and eventual suppression by state violence encouraged and assisted by established political interests. It remains to be seen, whether and how this void of political representation may be fulfilled, and what direction it may possibly take.

References

- Amnesty International. Retrieved December 15, 2008 from <http://www.amnesty.org.gr/news/2008-12-09-1.htm>.
- Canterbury D. C. (2005). Neoliberal democratization and new authoritarianism. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005.
- Close, David H (editor), "The Reconstruction of a Right-Wing State", in "The Greek civil war, 1943-1950 : studies of polarization". Publication: London ; New York : Routledge, 1993.
- Close, David H (editor), "The Legacy", in "The Greek civil war, 1943-1950 : studies of polarization". Publication: London ; New York : Routledge, 1993.
- Close David, The Road to reconciliation? The Greek Civil War and the Politics of Memory , from Philip Carabott; Thanasis D. Sfikas (editor) ,The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences, , Ashgate Publishing. 2003.
- Courcoulas C. (2008, December 12). Investors are wrong to ignore the Greek riots. Telegraph. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>
- Diamandouros Nikiforos P. , "Greek Politics and Society in the 1990s", in " *The Greek Paradox- Promise vs. Performance*", Editors: Graham T. Allison and Kalypso Nikolaidis. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1997.
- Eleftherotypia [Greek daily] www.enet.gr
- Fotopoulos T., Economic restructuring and the debt problem: the Greek case, *International Review of Applied Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1992) .
- Fotopoulos, T. The struggle against the privatisation of education in Greece. *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, 3 (2(2007).), Retrieved February 5, 2009 from http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol3/vol3_no2_Takis_education_Greece.htm
- Haralambopoulos Yiannis, " Critical Years- Struggles for Democracy 1936-1996", Proskinio 2002
- Holman, O. (1996). Integrating Southern Europe: EC expansion and the transnationalization of Spain. New York: Routledge.
- INO.com Headlines. Found at: <http://news.ino.com/headlines/?newsid=20081015006884>. Copyright 2009 INO.com, Inc.

- Lamy, Pascal. 2009. Interview, Die Welt : 7. February 2009. Available on Line at:
http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article3162836/Protektionismus-ist-eine-zu-simple-Antwort.html
- International Labor Organization (ILO) (1995), *Summary of Proceedings of the Impact of Globalization on the World of Work*, International Labor Office, Bangkok.
- Iospress. Retrieved February 5, 2009 from <http://www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20061210.htm>
- Iospress, "The Defamed Post-Dictatorship Era", 2002 from
<http://www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20061210.htm>
- Iospress, "Aspirant Dictators 1974-1983, 2007". 2006. Retrieved from
<http://www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20061210.htm>
- Kassimeris George, "Junta by Another Name? The 1974 *Metapolitefsi* and the Greek Extra-parliamentary Left", *Journal of Contemporary History* 2005 SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, Vol 40(4), 745-762.
- Kathimerini [Greek daily] www.kathimerini.gr
- Katz M. B. (2008). Why don't American cities burn very often? *Journal of Urban History*, 34 (2), 185-208.
- Katris John A, "Eyewitness in Greece-The Colonels Come to Power", St. Louis Missouri/New Critics Press Inc. 1971
- Kikilias E. And Gazon E. (2005). *Regional aspects of poverty in Greece*. Athens, Greece: National Center for Social Research Institute.
- Kohler B. and Wissen M. (2003). *Glocalizing protest: Urban conflicts and global social movements*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27 (4), 942-951.
- La Repubblica. [Italian daily] <http://www.repubblica.it>
- Ministry of National Economy, Press Report. December 19 2008.
- Murtagh Peter, "The rape of Greece : the King, the colonels and the resistance". London ; New York : Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- OECD, *Historical Statistics*, 1995 edition, Tables 3.1 and 4.8.
- O'Donnell G. A. (1999). *Counterpoints: Selected essays on authoritarianism and democratization*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Payne, L. A. (2000). *Uncivil movements: The armed right wing and democracy in Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Reuters (2008, December 15). Greek police teargas youths in 2nd week of protests. Retrieved December 15, 2008.
- Riley D. and Fernandez J. (2005). Fascism, authoritarianism and post-authoritarian democracy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, PA, Aug 12, 2005. Retrieved February 5, 2009 from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p22280_index.html.
- Samatas M. (2005). Studying surveillance in Greece: Methodological and other problems related to an authoritarian surveillance culture. *Surveillance & Society*, 3 (2-3), 181-197.
- Schmitz, D. F. (1999). *Thank god they're on our side: The United States and right-wing dictatorships, 1921–1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Silva E. (1999). Authoritarianism, democracy and development. In R. N. Gwynne and C. Kay (Eds.), *Latin America transformed: Globalization and modernity* (pp. 32-50). Oxford: Oxford University.
- Sotiropoulos D. A. (2006). The remains of authoritarianism: Bureaucracy and civil society in post-authoritarian Greece. *Médias d'Iran et d'Asie Centrale*. Retrieved February 5, 2009 from <http://cemoti.revues.org/document188.html>
- To Vima [Greek weekly] www.tovima.gr
- Traynor I. (2008, January 31). Governments across Europe tremble as angry people take to the streets. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/jan/31/global-recession-europe-protests>
- Thomadakis S, "The Greek economy: Performance, Expectations and Paradoxes", in "The Greek Paradox- Promise vs. Performance", Editors: Graham T. Allison and Kalypto Nikolaidis. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1997.
- Tsoucalas, Costas. (1969). *The Greek Tragedy*. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Tsoucalis Loukas, "The Austerity Program: Causes, Reactions, Prospects", in "Greece on the Road to Democracy: From the Junta to PASOK 1974-1986", edited by Speros Vryonis Jr. Arisede D. Caratzas, 1991.
- The Independent*, Saturday, 13 December 2008.

Usborne, S. (2008, August 19). After the party: What happens when the Olympics leave town. The Independent. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/after-the-party-what-happens-when-the-olympics-leave-town-901629.html>

Vergopoulos K., "The youth riots", Eleftherotypia(Greek daily), 12/19/2008.

Vergopoulos Kostas, "The Plunder of Wealth- Money, Power, Corruption in Greece". Livanis, Athens 2005.

Voglis Polymeris, Becoming a subject : political prisoners during the Greek Civil War /. Publication: New York : Berghahn Books, 2002.