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INTRODUCTION

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The recent Greek economic crisis, that formally broke out in 2010, is one of the major economic episodes that appeared in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 global economic crisis The Greek crisis was soon followed by those of several other euro-periphery economies. These incidents cast doubt over the overambitious project of the European Monetary Union but also of the European integration as a whole. Notably, the severity and the length of the Greek case surpassed those of all other ones. As a response to these the European Union's elites have resorted to the imposition of austerity Economic Adjustment Programmes on these countries. These programmes led to severe recessions and even more severe poverty and immiserisation of the working and middle-classes in the recipient economies. At the time that this issue is published, EU's official bodies pronounce that the crises of the other euro-periphery economies crises have been checked. However, these official pronouncements are justifiably disputed either from the IMF and circles emanating from the US or from Marxist economic analyses. Similarly, the same official bodies also maintain that the crisis of the European integration is under control, despite major blows – such as the Brexit – in the European integration project.

In this landscape, in 2018 (eight years after its eruption) the Greek crisis continues to simmer. Moreover, the previously latent conflict between the two major instigators of the Greek Economic Adjustment Programmes – the IMF (expressing to a great extent the interests of the US) and the EU – came in the open. A crucial part of this controversy is whether the Greek economy is coming out of the woods or not.

Behind all these differing views lay different analytical perspectives and antagonistic class interests. Unsurprisingly, from these different perspectives stem antagonistic policy proposals.

At a superficial level, the Greek crisis appears as a crisis of high fiscal deficit and high current account deficit ("twin deficits" crisis). Both Mainstream and Radical explanations remain at this problematic level of analysis that focuses solely on the sphere of circulation. Henceforth, they consider the Greek crisis as simply a debt crisis. On the contrary, Marxist explanations argue forcefully that the debt issues are the expression of more profound problems that lay in the systemic structure of Greek capitalism and particularly in the sphere of production.

The Mainstream analyses (originating in the contemporary fusion of softy neoliberalism with New Keynesianism) follow faithfully the New Keynesian Twin Deficits Hypothesis that argues that it is the fiscal deficit that causes that of the current account. Furthermore, they attribute both the fiscal deficit and the falling productivity (that, separately, deteriorates the trade account and aggravates further the current deficit) to excessive wage increases. Consequently, the Greek crisis is blamed on conjunctural factors (policy errors) and not on structural and systemic ones. In this way they absolve capitalism from any inherent tendency towards instability and crisis and the European integration from any deformation of the productive and economic structure of the euro-periphery economies. Simultaneously, they whitewash their previous optimistic accounts of Greek capitalism and their failure to forecast its crisis. Following from this analysis, the Mainstream explanations maintain that the solution of the crisis passes mainly through fiscal consolidation and "internal devaluation" (that is wages reduction) that would make Greece creditworthy and competitive again. The majority of them cynically and unrealistically posit labour as the main culprit of the crisis and support the EU-ECB-IMF troika's capitalist restructuring strategy as materialized in the austeritarian Economic Adjustment Programmes. A minority voiced some dissenting views – mainly regarding EMU deficiencies – but also accepted these capitalist restructuring strategies with minor modifications. Consequently, Mainstream perspectives fail to appreciate the fundamental structural dimensions of Greek capitalism's crisis and instead relegate it either to policy errors and/or to weak structural deficiencies. On top of that, they consider the Greek crisis as independent from the 2007-2008 crisis, which they understand as simply a financial crisis. Last, but not the least, both their main empirical arguments (i.e. that the fiscal deficit caused the current account deficit and that exorbitant wage increases derailed both the fiscal and the trade balance) are not verified.

In a similar vein with Mainstream analyses, Radical analyses consider the Greek as simply a debt crisis without roots in the sphere of real accumulation. Where they differ is that they usually reverse the causality of the Twin Deficits Hypothesis and attribute the Greek debt problem to the alledged neo-mercantilist structure of the EMU (that aggravates the trade balance of the euro-periphery economies). Consequently, they reject the troika's austeritarian Economic Adjustment Programmes and opt for a more anti-cyclical and less anti-popular management of Greek capitalism. The majority of them accepts the problematic financialisation thesis which focuses on the financial system and neglects inordinately the sphere of production. Thus, while they relate the Greek crisis to the 2007-2008 global crisis, they consider the latter as merely a financial crisis. In addition, they disregard completely crucial elements of capitalism's modus operandi (primarily capital's profitability). Hence, their explanations of the Greek crisis recognise only weak structural causes (focusing solely on the deficiencies of the EMU) and their policy proposals are equally short-sighted in their quest for a more humane capitalism in times of severe crises and acute class antagonisms.

Marxist analyses take a more nuanced stance and argue that behind the debt problem lay serious structural problems of Greek capitalism. These problems of the sphere of production cause the deficits in both the fiscal and the current account balance. In contrast to the abovementioned approaches, Marxist analyses focus on the sphere of real accumulation and discern there the causes of the Greek crisis. In a nutshell, they identify its origins in the inherent crisis tendencies of the capitalist system (as materialized in a direct or indirect falling profitability) and mechanisms of international exploitation that affect the exploited economies both qualitatively (particularly through their productive structure) and quantitatively (through their balance of payments). They consider Greece's participation in the European integration (primarily in its Common Market and only secondary in the EMU) as a crucial pivot in these international mechanisms. Concomitantly, their policy suggestions begin with the withdrawal from the imperialist European Union and extend till the transition to a socialist economy.

The essays included in this special volume of *East-West journal* attempt to shed light to the Greek economic crisis. They cover a wide range of Marxist and heterodox approaches, following a different perspective regarding the interpretation of the crisis, the proposals for its overcoming and its consequences. Both the interpretation and the proposals for the overcoming of the crisis focus on the production sphere, while crisis consequences focus on the working classes population.

Demophanes Papadatos in the first essay ("Is the current crisis of Greek Capitalism a crisis of a financialized economy?") presents a critique of the financialisation approach as an interpretation of the Greek economic crisis. Papadatos rejects the argument that the current Greek crisis is a financialisation crisis, since according to the criteria of the Marxist theory the Greek financial system and consequently the Greek economy as a whole is not a financialized economy. Moreover, it has not been a financialized economy in 2009 (that is during the time of the eruption of the Greek crisis). As Papadatos shows, the limited proliferation of new financial instruments after 1993 did not produce those forms of interest-bearing capital that dominate capitalist accumulation (through their intensive and extensive use) that are consonant with the financialisation hypothesis. To put it simply, Greek capitalism remained a bank-based one.

Stavros Mavroudeas and Stergios Seretis in the second essay ("Imperialist exploitation and the Greek crisis") argue that the long duration crisis of Greek capitalism has two intertwined causes: the internal and the external. The internal cause stems from the falling profitability trend caused by the increase of the organic composition of capital. The external cause stems from the economic imperialist exploitation of Greek capitalism by the more developed and hegemonic capitalisms of the EU. Economic imperialist exploitation implies the transfer of value from the exploited economy to the exploiting through "broad" unequal exchange (that is unequal exchange caused by the difference in the organic compositions of capital between the two economies). The exploitation mechanism is investigated by measuring directly the value transfers between Greece and two other EU economies (Spain and Finland). The findings of this investigation support the Marxist argument that Greek capitalism is subject to economic imperialist exploitation by the more developed EU economies through value transfers caused by "broad" unequal exchange.

In the third essay ("The role of technology, distribution and demand in the development and crisis of the postwar Greek economy"), Thanasis Maniatis and Costas Passas examine the behaviour of the net rate of profit and its constituents in the Greek economy over the 1960-2013 period. Over the entire 54-year period examined the rate of profit in the Greek economy has exhibited a clear negative trend. Using structural break tests the study distinguishes the post-war era into four medium-run and five short-run periods. After decomposing the rate of profit into a technology, a distribution and an effective demand component it is found that Marx-biased technical change (rising capitalization of production, i.e. falling output-capital ratio, despite the rise in labour productivity) was the primary reason for this fall in the entire period; while distribution also being important during the stagflation crisis of the 1970s. The role of aggregate demand and capacity utilization is limited except for the period of the current crisis when the state and capital have adopted drastically restrictive policies which have affected seriously profitability in a negative way.

George Economakis, George Androulakis and Maria Markaki in the fourth essay ("The Marxian 'law' and the current Greek economic crisis") challenge the validity of the interpretation of the recent Greek economic crisis on the basis of a direct manifestation of the Marxian "law" of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall due to the rising organic composition of capital. It is argued that, the "extraverted" model of development of Greek capitalism (leading to systematic transfers of value to the imperialist countries) formed the foundations of the current Greek economic crisis in the conjuncture of the global economic crisis. Thus, the central thesis of the study is that the Greek economic crisis is a crisis of "unevenness" and imperialist exploitation, within the EU-EMU frame, which has appeared as an underconsumption crisis in the conjuncture of global economic crisis. However, such a kind of crisis implies an indirect manifestation of Marx's "law".

Charalampos Economidis and Apostolos Economides in the fifth essay ("Using the Social Accounting Matrix to understand the Greek economic crisis") compile a Social Accounting Matrix for 2010 (a decisive year for the period of crisis of the Greek economy), which can facilitate the understanding of the Greek economic crisis. The Social Accounting Matrix shows the changes in the various types of income of institutional agents. From the data contained in the Social Accounting Matrix, it emerges that in 2010 while Net National Income and Net Disposable Income have both declined for the entire economy, this decline is not evenly distributed across each institutional agent. In particular, although the income of Households and General Government shows a decrease, the income of Non-Financial and Financial institutions exhibits an increase. From the above, it is concluded that one characteristic of the crisis is that the recession derived primarily from the reduction in income of Households and General Government.

Theodore Mariolis in the sixth essay ("The Foreign-Trade Leakages in the Greek Economy: Evidence from the Supply and Use Table for the year 2010") sheds some new light on the foreign-trade "leakages" in the Greek economy for the "pre-adjustment" year of 2010, using input-output table data and constructing a system of relevant indices. The findings suggest that, due to profound intersectoral imbalances, a well-targeted effective demand management policy could be mainly based on the service and primary production sectors, which include twenty commodities with revealed comparative advantage and ten from the eleven key-commodities of the whole economy. However, industrial policy is also needed, given that the industry sector includes only three commodities with revealed comparative advantage, is heavily dependent on imports and characterized by negative gross domestic savings, low intra-commodity specialization, and unfavourable demand multiplier effects. Industrial policy could primarily focus on nine industrial commodities that exhibit particularly high direct import dependency of capital goods.

Dimitris Paitaridis in the seventh essay ("Division of labour, productivity, and competitiveness of the Greek tradable sector") compares the evolution of productivity for the domestic tradable sector vis-à-vis the Eurozone countries and its impact on cost competitiveness, during the period 2000-2014. The results of the analysis indicate that in the case of the tradable sector, the greatest part of the productivity divergence is attributed to differences in intra-industry productivities and not to a less favourable division of labour. These differences in intra-industry productivity are the main cause for the modest decrease in unit labour cost despite the major decline in the nominal unit wage that was imposed by the austerity policies, and this is why the austerity policies fail to restore cost/price competition. Moreover, the Mainstream identification of unit labour cost with the cost/price competitiveness neglects other components of the final price (such as the profit margin of the firms). The profit margin of the tradable sector of the Greek economy exhibits an increase during the crisis period which possibly undermines cost competitiveness.

In the eighth essay ("Unpaid overtime as an index of employers' relative power"), Alexis Ioannides and Stavros Mavroudeas investigate the currently increasing phenomenon of unpaid overtime, in two countries, Greece and the Netherlands, before and during the last economic crisis. The reason for the choice of these two countries is the major difference between them with regard to conditions of employment, trade union protection and the consolidation or not of labour rights of part timers. Part-time workers in Greece are among the worst protected employees with precarious work, unlike part time workers in the Netherlands that do not differ from their full-time colleagues in these terms. The comparison of the two groups in those two countries indicates that part-time workers in Greece have much greater chances for unpaid overtime compared to the rest of the workers. This finding reinforces the idea that unpaid overtime is not the result of employees' free choice but that of pressure exerted on them. This pressure from the part of employers is much more effective when workers are most vulnerable.

Stefanos Papanastasiou and Christos Papatheodorou in the ninth essay ("The Greek Depression: Poverty outcomes and welfare responses") examine poverty outcomes and social protection developments in Greece over the period 2008-2015. The empirical findings reveal the dramatic deterioration of the living and welfare standards of a large section of the population in Greece during the years of austerity policies that are dictated by the EU-IMF Memoranda and recession. In Greece, the poverty-related problems have accumulated and social protection is becoming of a residual type as dictated by the Memoranda. By focusing on extreme sorts of poverty, decision-makers shift the attention away from promoting total welfare and also away from the large pool of the less well-off to the more limited case of the extremely poor. However, the analysis shows that poverty and deprivation have reached critical levels even among the main body of the Greek population (especially the middle strata). These policies lead to a systematic transformation of the Greek welfare system to a liberal one.

In the tenth essay ("Social and Solidarity Economy and the Crisis: Challenges from the public policy perspective"), Sofia Adam unfolds diverse and often competing conceptualizations of Social and Solidarity Economy (e.g. the non-profit approach based on the Anglo-American charity tradition, the continental European social economy approach and the solidarity economy approach) through their manifestations in concrete public policy agendas with particular emphasis on the recent introduction of the new legal framework in Greece (Law 4430/2016). According to Adam, the law on Social Solidarity Economy in Greece is expected to restore the lost leftist orientation after the signing of the new Memorandum with the international lenders, inasmuch as it overemphasizes the radical orientation. However, the room for manoeuvre against austerity is small and this seriously curtails the ability to privilege Social and Solidarity Economy practices over capitalist enterprises and to develop mutually beneficial synergies with the wider public sector.

Finally, in the book review ("Stavros Mavroudeas' (ed.), *Greek Capitalism in Crisis: Marxist Analyses,* London, Taylor and Francis, 2014, 236 pp., ISBN: 978-0-415-74492-8"), Thanasis Argyriou presents the collective volume *Greek Capitalism in Crisis: Marxist Analyses,* edited by Stavros Mavroudeas. According to Argyriou, this collection of essays provides a handy toolkit to anyone who wants to question empirically and theoretically the validity of both mainstream and heterodox explanations of the Greek crisis. What distinguishes it from others is the provision of unique empirical evidence and theoretical accounts on the Greek crisis, produced within the framework of the classical Marxian approach, which identifies the sphere of production as the locus of scientific endeavour. Loaded with almost eighty figures and tables, and various empirical applications, this book provides extensive empirical documentation and analytical insight.