The Greek Crisis As The Result Of A Protracted Internal Conflict.
The case for a participatory framework of restorative justice and social engagement

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Abstract

The Greek crisis has been at the center of European Union’s deliberations for the past few years, with the financial facets of the problem monopolizing both domestic and European policies. In this paper, it is argued that the financial collapse is a manifestation of a greater sociopolitical pathology, which extends back in time to the unresolved dynamics of a protracted, intractable internal conflict. The dynamics that produced this crisis, and provided fertile ground for mainstreaming the sociopolitical extremes, are analyzed both at individual and intergroup levels, through an interdisciplinary approach with components of Social Psychology, such as identity and mortality salience, along with complexity and systems-thinking methodology. The analysis is complemented with a general Conflict Resolution framework that uses elements of restorative justice and civic engagement. The issue is approached from a micro-meso perspective, with the explicit assumption that macroscopic influences, such as the role of the European Union, the US financial crisis and the international markets, affected a preexisting intricate web of internal socioeconomic and political dynamics.

Introduction

The collapse of the Greek economy in 2010 has been extensively referred to as the “Greek Crisis.” The word “crisis” denotes a period of disruption in the normal state of a system. Based on this definition and looking back into the history of modern Greece, from the end of World War II, to the civil war, dictatorship and to “metapolitefsi,” it is argued that the post-metapolitefsi prosperity bubble was instead the original crisis, meaning that it was a period of delusive normalcy and nothing more than a fallacy. The phantom development of the 1980s was achieved at the expense of a fragmented society, which built a new reality turning a blind eye to its bleak past. This faulty new beginning was the continuation of a malignant, resilient sociopolitical system, which kept feeding and being fed by a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle of ubiquitous grievances and protracted rivalries. Had the Greek political establishment, along with the society-at-large, seized the historical opportunity of metapolitefsi to address the toxic polarization, reflect on the multitude
of unresolved grievances and participate in establishing a state free of the burdens of
the past, the 2010 crisis might have never been – at least not in such a catastrophic
shape and form. At that point, Greece had a dire need for a comprehensive
reconciliation process, similar to post conflict societies, in order to face the skeletons
in its closet, reflect, heal and move forward. Instead, the prominent political actors of
the time deliberately opted for an aggressive, polarizing, confrontation strategy
(Kalyvas, 1996). This strategy was solely based on the individual rationality revolving
around a kinship-like mentality, failing to embrace the paramount importance of
group rationality in densely interdependent social networks, such as a modern state.
According to Lyrintzis (1987) both PASOK and ND, the two dominant parties for
about three decades, went on to use a “discourse which presented the social and
political space as divided into two opposed fields”, both of which were vehemently
claimed to be completely incompatible (as cited in Kalyvas, 1996). This seems to
reaffirm Adamantia Pollis’ much earlier claim that “rationality, impartiality,
objectivity, and the validity of compromise will remain alien to Greek politics”
(1965).

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**Polarization**

At this point it is important to define the use of the term “polarization”
vis-à-vis the Greek reality. The chronic polarization of the Greek society
denotes a deeply established lineage of political cleavages which have
obtained different shapes over the years. According to Moschonas (1995),
there have been three main political cleavages in the post-civil war era,
namely: Leftists – Nationalists (Ethnikofrones), Liberals – Conservatives,
Anti-Right – Right and currently this may be Anti-Memorandum – Pro-
Memorandum and/or a combination of the above. It is important to note that
polarization itself may not actually be harmful for a political system, as a
matter of fact there are numerous political models that embrace its importance
as the means to productive competition and progress. The difference is that, in
Greece, virulent polarization inflamed the toxic divisions in the preexistent
complex web of unresolved rivalries from the civil war, the pre-junta period
and the dictatorship itself, becoming a mainstream cultural trait and further
institutionalizing a series of pathologies. It is therefore this notion of a
protracted lineage of profound cleavages that define polarization in Greece, as
part of a fluctuating intractable internal conflict.

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Unfortunately, the “bureaucratic clientelism” that accompanied the
polarization was quite familiar to the Greek political system even before junta, and
after metapolitefsi it was further legitimized by the mass partisan mobilization of the
populace. The Greek citizen became accustomed to this particratic culture. This
turned out to be detrimental for the financial state of Greece, since the public sector
became a vehicle of corruption in a “transactional democracy” where electoral vote
was monetized, further corroding the already disintegrated society. It is no
coincidence that around the same period -from 1979 to 1985- the “total indebtedness
rose from 8 to 42 per cent of gross national product” (Mazower, 2010) only to
maintain its booming trajectory for years to come. Therefore, it is argued that the
historical bifurcation point that sent Greece down a constantly deteriorating spiral,
can be historically placed at the early years of the Third Hellenic Republic. The psychological forces upon the greater population after junta were of such tremendous proportions, after decades of intense historical events, that extreme polarization might indeed have been inevitable without a restorative process, especially given the absence of enlightened political leadership. The vicious circle of clientelism was only interrupted by the collapse of the Greek economy and the subsequent dramatic measures, which turned into an almost overnight awakening for the Greek society, instantly revealing the chronic role of the dominant political forces that ruled for thirty-five years. The resultant delegitimization of any kind of authority, however, is a very dangerous notion - a democratic cancer that may send the Greek state down a very slippery slope. However, the increasing social tensions of this Crisis, may also denote another major bifurcation point. The pressure inside the Greek pot has been constantly increasing, which may also mean that we are facing a unique opportunity to place a safety valve on its lid and use the pressure to ferment a new social paradigm, shedding the pathologies of the past. The goal of this paper is to explore the main social dynamics that have been fostering the Crisis, suggest a Conflict Resolution framework and investigate the conditions of ripeness for its implementation. This framework is far from complete but presents a basic structure for discussion about what the aforementioned process could look like.

We shall use three themes as lenses to analyze the social dynamics inside the Greek pot: the roles of identity, fear and complexity, which are deemed as critical in understanding the developments leading up to the modern Greek Crisis.

Identity

According to Lipowatz (1989), there are six particular elements characterizing the Greek identity: “the failure of modernization of the society by endogenous forces”, “the reverse relationship between nation and state”, “the defensive syndrome of self-exclusion from the international affairs”, “the complicity between Church and State”, “the transposition of internal problems onto national issues”, “the perpetuation of the mythological mentality”, “the denial of controversial reality”, and finally the “division of identity between Europe and the East”. Lipowatz captures an essence that transcends from these six elements in one specific identity clash, which he calls “the pseudodilemma between “tradition” or “modernization”. These two concepts comprised a myth, obstructing the seamless sociopolitical and cultural evolution of Greece. He also points out the fact that the Greek nation preexisted to the state, in contrast to France, and that even though the intellectuals of the 18th century, as well as the early 19th, prophetized Modernism and Enlightenment, at the end, the omnipotence of the clientelistic system ended up defining the Greek identity. This clash between introvert nationalism or traditionalism and modernism has been pivotal between the two opposing social forces, in various forms throughout the history of the Greek polarization. Low tolerance for outgroups has been at the core of this clash, embedded in the defensive denial of pseudo-traditionalism.

Roccas’ and Brewer’s Social Identity Complexity theory helps us understand the mechanics behind the low degree for tolerance in group dynamics and conflict, both intra and interpersonal. It refers to the degree of identity overlap “perceived to exist between groups of which a person is simultaneously a member” (Roccas, Brewer, 2002). The defining difference is the size of multiple ingroup overlap, with high overlap signifying a rather simplified “identity structure”, while a broad membership across multiple ingroups of low convergence signifying a more complex “identity structure” (Roccas, Brewer, 2002). The degree of one’s identity complexity
relates to one’s degree of outgroup tolerance. According to Brewer and Pierce (2005) “perceived overlap among ingroup memberships [is] negatively related to ingroup inclusiveness and tolerance for outgroups, such that individuals with high overlap (low complexity) [are] less tolerant and accepting of outgroups in general than those with low overlap (high complexity).” For example, a gay, Republican, Buddhist from Greece who lives in Los Angeles, is believed to have significantly higher outgroup tolerance than someone with a rather uniform identity structure and high overlap. The, until recently, predominant homogeneousness of the Greek society resulted in a rather low complexity identity for a large part of the population, especially for the individuals who self-identified themselves strongly with some of the main parties. In contrast to the highly polarized US system, with its immense percentage of chronically abstaining voters, Greek polarization of the 1980’s was characterized by mass mobilization. For most of the society, party affiliation and political beliefs were more than just a political statement; they were a salient dimension in the individual’s principal identity. Imbedded party loyalty was even more encouraged by the political elite with its vitriolic narrative perpetuating the conflict, as the means to promoting its own political agenda. Since party followers had acquired the affiliation with particular political fields or fractions as the main dimension in their identity, which was a pillar in one’s self image, conflict was quite forceful. Memorialized conflicts from the past merged with perceived attacks against one’s very sense of being, in the present.

Another result of this group dynamic was the further deepening of the division due to homophily - the tendency of an individual to associate with similar others - which favored the kinship system of clientelism, producing a new circle of grievances between collective identities. This system became the vehicle for the institutionalization of corruption, characterized by structured nepotism and making any hint of meritocracy a quixotic ideal. The transactional relationship between electorate and elected representatives, might as well relate to the rural past of the Greek society, where the “reciprocal duties and obligations determined interpersonally accord the authoritative figure-be he a village elder or a national political leader-deference on the part of those of inferior status” (Pollis, 1965). The sense of deference on behalf of the elite and the inferiority culture of the polarized electorate merged into the collective identities of the populace, allowing little space for challenging misappropriated uses of authority and related pathologies such as corruption. Before analyzing the role of collective identities further, it is important to appropriately address the role of corruption, since it is pivotal in the physical manifestation of clientelism and intragroup favoritism.

Corruption

The dominant moralistic view on corruption is that it is tantamount to inefficiency, illegal profitability, inequality, injustice and in many cases underdevelopment. Since corruption is deemed to be a central issue in understanding the Crisis, it would be better to approach the phenomenon as objectively as possible, while trying to keep moralistic influences at check. This way we would be able to appropriately estimate the extent of its impact before making any further assumptions. In his paper “Corruption and Political Development: a cost-benefit analysis”, Joseph Nye (1965) attempts to do just right that, while acknowledging the rather intangible nature of the phenomenon and the lack of reliable and quantifiable research. His definition for corruption is: “behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public
role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gain; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence”. His definition is a snapshot of the basic dimensions of beraurocratic clientelism in Greece, covering bribery, nepotism and misappropriation, especially when considering party ties and unknown networks as private cliques. For Nye, even though corruption is endemic in modern governments, there are cases where it could even be beneficial. He argues, for example, that corruption in a developing country, at the lower level, can help a developing economy circulate capital. He points out that the exact form of corruption differs depending on the context, with particular distinctions between developed and developing countries. Greece’s paradoxical identity crisis between West-East, an earlier key point of Lipowatz, also manifested itself in the way corruption has been institutionalized. Even though one can begin to see the commonalities on the extent of corruption with non-western democracies, Greece shares none of the benefits given its developed status. The probabilities of corruption benefiting development in a consolidated democracy, with the extent of corruption experienced in Greece, simply allow no room for speculation. Capital outflow, loss of legitimacy, reduction of administrative power, are just a few examples of how corruption devastated Greece.

Greece’s chronic corruption had been both from the top down, as well as the bottom up. The use of past tense is meant to imply the current open condemnation of corruption, by both public and elites, more so than the actual present state of the problem. Overall, the Greek citizen felt mostly dependent with the party itself, rather than the polity. The sense of collective positive interdependence that characterizes healthy democracies never actualized in Greece, since it is part of the aforementioned, according to Lipowatz, un-materialized modernization process or what we call nation or state building. On the contrary, malicious polarization distanced the society from the notion of the state, since the latter was associated with whoever was in power at any given time. Having said that, it is important to clarify a few critical dimensions of corruption, which have been mixed in the fog of the crisis. It would be hubris to equate the traditional “baksheesh” to speed up a process to the injurious norm of public officials’ bribery in exchange for detrimental terms in contracts with the state, or the de facto culture of subcontractors inflating costs for public works, considering the public budget the gift that keeps on giving. Incendiary statements, such as the recent "we ate them together" by the unsurprisingly highly controversial Mr Paggalos, are representative of some critical logical fallacies that have been dominating public rhetoric. Such statements are deleterious for the following reasons: 1. They elevate oneself on a pseudo high moral ground, without any intention for introspection and past failure wisdom. Individuals with major roles in the political landscape for many years, even decades, have shown no intention for reflection and taking responsibility to any extent, thus exacerbating delegitimization and creating ripeness for the rise of incendiary extremes as expressions of resentment towards the unremorseful establishment, 2. The accumulated cost inflicted upon the public budget in the long term from mismanagement, either by negligence or intentionally, along with the grave cost of the agreed terms for the misappropriated deals by the elite, is orders of magnitude higher even than the bribery itself and its extent is currently unknown, 3. Such statements fail to
actually address in an effective manner the significance of the damage inflected by government contractors, certain privileged self-employed individuals, and financial delinquents scamming public benefits by equalizing the traditional, almost benign, speed up fee or traffic violation cancellation, with the cataclysmic effect of the deep state corruption. 4. Generalizes a large majority of salaried or pensioned Greeks who had minimal role in evading taxes and burdening the public budget, under an unfair category with disproportionate responsibility, mainly due to their previous voting records and minor, again, almost benign, participation in political favors or “rousfetia”, 5. And most important, such incendiary rhetoric is highly provocative towards the public sentiment, in an already volatile period and even though it touches upon the vital role of reflection, it only makes it even more difficult to become a reality, which is a typical stance of a spoiler.

For the longest time, Greeks have been entrenched inside their collective identities, which organically developed over time as an important component of group life, becoming a barrier to reconciliation (Coleman, Lowe, 2007). “As conflict escalates, the opposing groups can become increasingly polarized through ingroup discourse and outgroup hostilities, resulting in the development of polarized collective identities constructed around a negation and disparagement of the outgroup” (Druckman, 2001; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Hicks, 1999; Kelman, 1999; as cited in Coleman & Lowe, 2007). These barriers were also part of the formal educational system, and, quite often, were used to foster party identities in a younger demographic. The significance of the aforementioned salient identity dimensions in reference to the collective identities of the ingroup is of paramount importance for the individual. This is because it is directly related to the fundamental need of belonging as a source of self-esteem. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974) argues that the ingroup members result into outgroup discrimination as the means to enhance their self-image. Therefore, the acquired pride relates to the very core components of one’s psyche, making the intergroup clash a very private matter that surpasses the issues in hand, allowing minimal space for rational judgment. Over the past sixty years, these collectives identities have been at the very center of the polarization, both politically and societal. This also applies today, both for the political extremes, as well as against the new outgroups formed by the recent migrant communities.

In the 1980s, party loyalty eventually became a personal matter with perceived power being considered a limited resource. This kind of blind loyalty relates to professor Pollis’ view over the transactional relationship of the Greek citizen with its polity: “a concomitant of the population's submissive attitudes toward authority and the expectations of fulfilment of the leaders' obligations toward them, is the absence of a sense of participation in the political processes and hence of responsibility for the government's actions” (1965). In other words, the submissive, collective political identity of the modern Greek citizen revolved around the concept of “Idiocy” or “Ιδιωτεία”. An idiot, in Athenian democracy, was an individual indifferent to public affairs; a citizen exclusively concerned with one’s private affairs (Parker, 2005). In the US, the chronically low voting turnout is directly related to the notion of idiocy. However, it is argued that this concept also applies to the dominant Greek culture of considering oneself as politically active only to justify one’s involvement with the ulterior motive of reaping the benefits of party/ fraction favoritism. In the 1980s and
1990s, this meant that one used to mask one’s private interests under the premise of party involvement, without real concern over matters of collective prosperity. Unfortunately, the recent appeal of Golden Dawn is a fresh manifestation of the above, disastrous but rather familiar for the Greek society, notions. Golden Dawn’s populist strategy, which has been extensively underestimated and arguably mishandled by the mainstream establishment, has been quite successful because it was able to catch the wave of resentment and capitalize on the aforementioned dynamics of idiocy, collective (national) identity and above all, fear. In Greece, traditionally, “the national identity has been defined defensively in relation to hostile ‘other.’ This hostile other is variously considered to be neighbors, the West, the minorities, the immigrants, and so on. This nebulous and external ‘other’, like Cavafy’s barbarians, fostered the construction of a strong sense of belonging based on a conviction as well as fear” (Tziovas, 2003). Foreign interventionism, what Greeks call the “foreign finger”, has indeed been a major influence in domestic affairs, especially up to 1967 (Mazower, 2010). For the past decades, however, it has also been almost exclusively used as an abstract entity to alleviate individual responsibility, as part of a manipulating partisan strategy. The deep involvement of the international lenders in domestic affairs, for the past few years, has once again activated this defense mechanism. In many cases, the actions of our international counterparts have justified the aforementioned reactions, however it has also often been nothing but a crutch for the shortcomings of the political elite. It is therefore important to appropriately deconstruct the role of fear as political leverage, even though our relationship with our mortality often allows little space for rationalization.

**Mortality Salience (MS)**

Fear has been at the core of the preservation of the Greek identity. As mentioned earlier, it relates to three of the main characteristics mentioned by Lipowatz, namely: “the defensive syndrome of self-exclusion from the international affairs”, “the transposition of internal problems onto national issues” and “the perpetuation of the mythological mentality”(1994). The realization of our own mortality is an emotional milestone and its impact escorts us throughout our lives, hidden in the shadows of our subconscious. Terror Management Theorists (TMT) Solomon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Lyon and Rosenblatt (1989) support that “cultural conceptions of reality serve the vital function of buffering the anxiety that results from awareness of human vulnerability and mortality”. In an interview in Scientific American back in 2008, Professor Solomon explains that “making death salient, intensifies people’s strivings to protect and bolster aspects of their worldviews, and to bolster their self-esteem. The most common finding is that MS increases positive reactions to those who share cherished aspects of one’s cultural worldview, and negative reactions toward those who violate cherished cultural values or are merely different”. TMT suggests we need to feel that we are “valuable members of a meaningful universe” (Solomon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, 2000). Therefore, it is postulated that the effect of Mortality Salience on human behavior has an intense impact on the level of distrust and subsequently on outgroup tolerance. Solomon has elaborated further on the capitalization of MS in the form of fear mongering as “strategic use of fear to advance political agendas” (Scientific America, 2008). This dynamic is deemed as an essential component in the increasing polarization of consolidated democracies, and is also certainly the case for Greece. It has been a valuable tool for leaders who preserve and manipulate existential threats in order for people to be more susceptible to their charisma. As a matter of fact, Cohen et
al. (2004) proved that in mortality salient conditions, charismatic leaders are favored over task-oriented and relationship-orientated ones. In order to test their initial hypothesis, Cohen et al. had participants read campaign statements for three fictional candidates, after either a MS or a control induction. The three statements were: the charismatic leader stated “You are not just an ordinary citizen, you are part of a special state and a special nation . . . .”, the task-oriented leader stated: “I can accomplish all the goals that I set out to do. I am very careful in laying out a detailed blueprint of what needs to be done so that there is no ambiguity”, the relationship oriented leader stated: “I encourage all citizens to take an active role in improving their state. I know that each individual can make a difference . . . .” (Solomon, 2008). Afterwards, the participants were asked to vote. The results were staggering; while the control condition gave the charismatic leader a mere 4%, with the rest of the votes distributed evenly between the two other leaders, the MS inducted condition produced almost an 800% increase in votes for the charismatic leader with “votes for the task-oriented leader unaffected, but the relationship oriented leader’s votes significantly declined” (Solomon, 2008). This helps us understand one of reasons why Golden Dawn has drastically increased its appeal the past few years, both because of capitalizing on existential fears, as well as cultivating the deficit of hope. It comes as no surprise that, for decades, the large charisma pool of the Greek political elite has been perpetuating the foggy web of external and internal threats both internally and externally – from Communism, Leftism, Nationalism to NATO, the USA, EU, Turkey and finally to abstract capitalist interests or in the case of Golden Dawn, most of the above plus Zionism. All the looming threats seem to merge with the immense complexity of the situation, swallowing one’s perception.

**Complexity**

The very brief narration of some of the history leading up to the current situation in the beginning of this analysis, along with the fundamental role of identity and fear, provide us with just a glimpse of the greater gamut of components in the Greek quagmire. If there is one word that best describes the situation as a whole, that is “complexity,” and this is not surprising. Complexity and conflict go hand in hand. There two ways that complexity is being approached in this analysis. At first, we shall briefly analyze it on an individual level, describing one’s relationship with deciphering the complexity that we all experience in our daily lives, from interpreting stimuli, to processing difficult problems and conflicts. Secondly, we shall examine the role of complexity, as a systemic property of social systems, in governing protracted conflicts and how social networks are being trapped inside them.

**The self**

Our entire lives we try to make sense out of the chaos that surrounds us. Perception is a broad notion describing the internal process of receiving and interpreting information. The subconscious framing mechanism involved is as complicated as consciousness itself. Argyris and Schön (1974) argue that we "make sense of our environment by constructing meanings [...] and these constructions in turn guide actions". An extensive mind map dictates our course of action, based on our experiences, education and socialization, and rarely the theories that we claim to espouse. This map is being constantly formed and developed throughout our lives, with our education playing a pivotal role in its shape. Our minds work metaphorically, relating whatever we come across to our mind’s cartography as we seek coherence.
and predictability by associating our present experiences to our past ones. The mechanism of “coherence seeking is simply a necessary and functional process that helps us to interpret and respond to our world efficiently and (hopefully) effectively” (Coleman, 2011) This way, our mind is able to rapidly categorize and instantly respond to the infinite amounts of information received at every moment. Thousands of years ago, this was a critical mechanism of survival, since we could escape from a predator just by seeing a tiny piece of it hidden in the bush and instantly knowing what it is. However, this process fails us when it comes to highly cognitive processes, complex communication, problems and especially conflicts. This is true due to a large number of inherent limitations, such as perceptual and cognitive distortions. Stressful situations, for instance when our mortality is salient by being exposed to the rhetoric of a charismatic leader, or when we perceive our core identity being threatened, overwhelm us and activate our strong ‘press for coherence’. This need is a fundamental Gestalt principle that aims at reducing “the tension, disorientation, and dissonance that come from complexity, incoherence, and contradiction” (Coleman, 2011). Most of the Greek society and MPs have been stuck inside a protracted dynamic, influenced by the complex web of contradicting challenges. Financial insecurity, unemployment, remnants of the civil war, immigration, Troika’s pressure, they all join forces unknowingly, as they experience the collective impact on their perception. In addition, the lightning fast pace of information and our growing interdependence as members of a borderless community have dramatically increased the complexity of today’s world, demanding one to embrace uncertainty. The same dynamic that demands one to embrace incoherence is also responsible for the oversimplification of one’s perception as a defense mechanism sponsored by one’s very own fears. Balance is required since “either extreme…complexity or oversimplified coherence is problematic. But [unfortunately] in difficult, long-term conflicts, the tide pulls fiercely toward simplification of complex realities” (Coleman, 2011). Greeks have been experiencing the force of this tide growing, especially over the past few years. The almost incomprehensive complexity of the crisis, the degree of cognitive dissonance of people questioning their own identity, along with the information bombardment that characterizes this day and age, have activated a very strong press for coherence in the Greek society. This mechanism causes us the individual to instantly categorize whatever one comes across into one of the preset assumptions, in order to comprehend it and move forward. If for example, other’s use of language reminds one of a very specific grievance or political association, one tends to perceptually collapse whatever characterizes the other into a simple, coherent stereotype, regardless of its inaccuracy. The subsequent interaction is based on that, often vehement, assumption and in many cases conflict emerges. The collapse of complexity, either in the micro perspective of oversimplifying perceptions or the macro meaning of self-organizing components of a systemic reality, seems to be the reoccurring theme in protracted conflicts. Therefore, the next question is how can one understand and address the complexity of this perpetual conflict in a macroscopic level.

**Groups and complex conflicts**

Systems thinking and complexity science provide us with the tools to better comprehend how these impossible conflicts operate. Research has shown that protracted, intractable conflicts are among a small number of enduring rivalries that seem immune to traditional means of resolution. Actually, about five percent of conflicts end up being intractable (Coleman, 2011). The problem with these conflicts,
however, is that even though their number is small, they are the most vicious in terms of intensity and endurance, and almost impossible to resolve by mediation or dialogue. They are a different animal altogether. The Greek internal conflict is a representative example of this small number of conflicts, whose resolution seems like a Sisyphean task. Out of the 57 essences of deeply rooted conflicts, 43 of them are directly applicable to Greece (Coleman, 2011). Professor Coleman points out that intractable conflicts “are the result of complex system dynamics created by many different elements interrelated in a weibly fashion that come together into one strong, coherent conflict” or one malignant, resilient system (2011). The collapse of complexity drives such conflicts. Viewing conflict as a system has been a very useful way to enhance one’s understanding over the various dynamics governing its behavior, and above all, its nonlinearity. The Aristotelian concept of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, has been largely neglected by the traditional fields of conflict resolution and social sciences writ large. Dynamical Systems Theory (Coleman et. al., 2007), developed by an interdisciplinary team of academics and practitioners from Columbia University, George Mason, and Universities of Florida and Warsaw, sheds light to the non-linear behavior of such systems by incorporating key concepts of complexity science. The use of systems thinking in frameworks such as DST provides the unique opportunity to identify the interdependencies between the core elements of a system, evaluate the unintended consequences of the individual components of an intervention and finally maximize the collective impact across an array of efforts.

DST is part of a cultural transition throughout a number of fields, from academia to business, medicine, even governance, which embrace the importance of desiloization and interdisciplinary thinking for solving the most pressing, complex challenges of our time. It uses the notion of attractors, a basic principle of complexity science, in order to address the non-linearity and the resiliency of these conflicts. An attractor is a “subset of potential states or patterns of change to which a system’s behavior converges over time” (Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010). This metaphor is meant to represent the fluctuations of the conflict over time and its inability to escape from the forces and structures that have been shaping the attractor. The main idea is that while the attractor [Figure 1] – represented by a crevasse - that feeds the conflict is still dominant (negative attractor - N), the system – represented by a ball – cannot move over to a positive state (positive attractor - P); it can only temporarily shift but will eventually yield to the power of the attractor (Coleman et. al., 2007). The solution for sustainably resolving these conflicts does not lay on the disputed issues but on the transformation of the shape of the attractors by empowering whatever structures and relationships promote positive stability (P), while breaking down the “ensemble of dynamics” that feed into the conflict perpetuating attractor (N) (Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010). This combination is able to reshape the attractor landscape, making the system shift into the now deep positive attractor, while the weakened negative attractor becomes unable to apply enough force to drastically affect the system (Coleman et. al. 2007). The vast complexity of issues and dynamics of the conflict interact with each other.
and form individual feedback loops, which collectively shape the attractors. By identifying the conflict enforcing (positive) feedback loops and introducing and empowering conflict inhibiting (negative) ones, one can engineer the very shape of each attractor, positive and negative. For this exact reason, DST employs a methodology of feedback loop mapping in order to depict the non linear web of causality amongst the various facets of a conflict such as themes, events, occurrences and so forth. When a system is characterized by a plethora of positive (enforcing) feedback loops and a weak set of negative (inhibiting) ones, then the negative attractor is quite deep/strong, while the positive one is shallow/weak. This is a resilient system trapped in a malignant state. The terminus-ad-quem would be to eventually reengineer the attractor in order to have a resilient system in a positive state, which can be withstand external shocks without shifting back into a negative state (strong positive and weak negative attractors). The sociopolitical conditions of Norway or Switzerland are examples of a resilient positive system, while Greece’s state is an example of a malignant, resilient system. On the other hand, the perpetual cycles of financial crises in many markets every 7 or 15 years, depending on the criteria of what constitutes a crisis, is indicative of an unstable system with competing attractors.

Feedback loop Map

A conflict feedback loop map was designed using elements of the above analysis [Figure 2]. This is the product of subjective mapping, with the caveat that it represents the situation as perceived by the author with the intent to demonstrate the process. A comprehensive map would be better produced with the collaboration of individuals representing different stakeholders, thus including a more holistic, well-balanced view.

Figure 2.
Feedback loop mapping has been used not only to understand systems and educate policies, but also as a tool for participatory processes. The facilitator can use it to create a safe procedure for stakeholder engagement. The various stakeholders can then be assisted in mapping an issue, their perceptions over it, grievances and past events, identifying how all these interacted and collectively affected the situation. The different groups can then present their maps and share perspectives over how the same parameters of the problem affected each other. This participatory method can, over time, introduce complexity back into the perception of the parties, share perspectives and educate the intervener in various levels. This is different from objective mapping with quantifiable parameters, which was not appropriate for the purpose of this paper.

Regardless on the subjectivity of the actual context of the map, a distinct overall theme emerges. After considering the Greek crisis as part of a greater internal, intractable conflict, and mapping the enforcing and inhibiting feedback loops, one can see that the enforcing loops (in solid black lines) dominate the map. This is a clear indication of the intractability of the problem and the amount of effort needed to disrupt its malignant state. Participatory mapping with key stakeholders is required in order for one to be able to further understand the intricacies of this issue from multiple perspectives and such an initiative is currently being explored. Out of the wider range of feedback loops, attention is given on the hubs, which are points of energy for either the positive or negative attractors. These hubs have particular importance, since they are critical in the perpetuation or mitigation of the conflict. In this case, there are three enforcing (positive) hub themes identified contributing to the resilience of the system along with three main supporting themes/dynamics, and they are categorized as “Post-Civil, Post-Dictatorship and Toxic Partisanship Grievances”, “Structured Polarization”, and “Structured Corruption” [Figure 3]. The themes/dynamics are Idiocy, Education and Delegitimization, which were analyzed earlier.

![Figure 3](image-url)
This web of interrelated, perpetuating features of Greece’s protracted intractable internal conflict eventually produced the financial crisis on one hand, due to the implications of chronic institutionalized corruption, while on the other hand they created an intense social justice void - a massive sentiment of utter lack of justice, fairness and merit. The accumulated public resentment along with the irresistible force of the perceived lack of fairness dictated the new social contract between people and state. This allowed the extremes, namely Golden Dawn, to take advantage of the appropriate political timing, and reinvent a deceptive conventional image that would appeal to the populace. The charisma of certain leading figures of the extreme right wing party was the additional element that sealed the deal and, with unarguably careful planning, boosted its percentages in unprecedented levels. The earlier point of underestimation of the problem by the political elites relates to the complexity of the social dynamics in place that keep Greece trapped in this entrenched conflict and feed Golden Dawn’s following.

At the introduction, it was argued that we should focus on harnessing the opportunity for using the increasing social tensions towards a new social paradigm, instead of taking the risk of a wide scale escalation of the accumulated grievances. This process would aim at the immense social justice void, created by the crisis. The implementation of such a process depends on the ripeness, or lack thereof, in the current conditions. Therefore, we shall briefly explore the notion of ripeness and present what an approximate participatory framework could look like.

**Ripeness**

Ripeness is a very influential notion in the field of conflict resolution. As Coleman et. al. (2008) note, “this condition is thought to be brought about by the perception of two essential elements: a mutually hurting stalemate between the parties, coupled with a mutually enticing opportunity.” However, when it comes to prolonged conflicts, the barriers and constraints to reconciliation are immense. “People’s willingness to be engaged in a [reconciliatory] process, however well intentioned, must always be understood in the context of what beliefs it threatens, and how engagement may be interpreted in light of these deeply established truths”(Coleman et. al 2008). According to Coleman, the pragmatic limitations for fostering ripeness in intractable conflicts like Greece, are related to emotional, cognitive, political and cultural constraints, which make any single action, even by ripe high power individuals, unlikely to succeed. Therefore, it is important to intervene on a systemic level with a holistic strategy disassembling the negative attractor of the greater system. Eventually, after a tipping point, “radical change may occur in sentiments, attitudes, or behaviors (of individuals or groups) (Gladwell, 2000 as cited in Coleman et.al.).

Greece may now be at such a tipping point. People have been experiencing polarization and corruption fatigue. “The legitimacy of the political system is seriously challenged as a significant part of the population identifies a democratic deficit in the management of the crisis and is confronted with a very bleak and worrying image for the future”(Lyrintzis, 2011). This is a perceptual slippery slope, containing some very disturbing ghosts from Greece’s past. Ripeness is related to both the appropriateness of the conditions to accept and foster change, as well as the degree of what is at stake. The latter is undeniably monumental. Greece cannot simply afford, at this point, to turn into an even more introvert state, completely oblivious to the evolving collective reality of the global village. At the same time, it cannot afford to maintain its old habits. For the longest time, people could perhaps have complained
occasionally for the role of the establishment, while abstaining from reflection and reaction. This generic blame also justified inaction. According to System Justification Theory (Jost & Hunyady, 2002), individuals tend to justify the system, thus rationalizing its existence through their inaction and preserving the status quo. The immense delegitimization of authority has definitely alleviated this constraint. Civil disobedience movements have been formed, even though not as inspired or organized as in other instances, and protests have been consistent, incorporating a new demographic of active citizens. A recent study by Dr. Chryssochou, Papastamou and Prodomitis (2013), found that in Greece, during the crisis, people have “multiple ways of reacting that go from radical and even violent practices towards individual solutions and depression. These reactions are differently predicted by people's position, feelings of vulnerability and sense of grievances and by different emotions.” The fragmented results of the recent elections are also tightly related with this trend. All of these together denote a motivation seeking guidance and real change. On the other hand, the accumulating resentment has been feeding the pressure inside the Greek pot, making this unconstrained reality highly unpredictable. Social networks and the dynamics governing their behavior are non-linear; change or conflict can manifest abruptly in a galloping pace. One of the triggers for such a logarithmic manifestation of conflict is the crucial role of relative deprivation. According to Relative Deprivation Theory (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984) an individual, or a group of individuals, constantly sense any incongruence between actualities and their perceived threshold, or a level of reference, for their entitlements. In other words, if one receives less that one’s considers (emotionally, financially etc.) being entitled, then conflict can emerge. “It is important to note that it is not the actual position of people that leads them towards radical actions but their perception of this position in relation to others which relates to a sense of relative deprivation” (Chryssochoou, Papastamou and Prodomitis, 2013). This can happen either because resources diminish, while the comparison level remains the same, or because entitlement’s level of reference increases. Greece has been facing the most drastic of combinations, with both received resources plummeting and expectations rising, due to the interconnectedness of our societies, especially at a EU level. Therefore, the motivation for change due to this disparity, along with the lack of any justification due to the complete delegitimization of authority, have created ripe conditions for change. This is one of the reasons why one can argue that Greece is at a potential tipping point. The actual form of that change is uncertain, may that be productive or destructive. Revolution in a violent form can indeed be a necessity for overthrowing authoritarian regimes, however this is not the case for democracies, no matter how revolutionary trends may be romanticized. How about if there was a structure in place that helped direct these emotions and harness their power towards a collective, productive, transformative change and reflection? How about if there was a process in place that could reveal Greece’s Mandela from within the society?

The below framework is an example of what such a structure could look like, in order to manage the transition towards a productive direction and begin to reestablish trust. Trust is the pillar of modern democracy -unfortunately highly neglected, even inexistente in Greece - and this even translates in a quantifiable manner. In the below graph (Figure 4), one can notice the correlation of trust and GNP/Capita, something that Greece now desperately needs. The position of the author is that it is possible to seize this opportunity and encourage change through a series of inclusive, participatory processes, unprecedented for Greek standards. The below framework simply demonstrates a basic structure of such a series of initiatives. In
reality, such a framework would be produced through a long series for carefully planned participatory facilitations, which would include legitimate representatives from major stakeholders.

Figure 4.

The framework.

The following participatory framework [Figure 6] is being informed by the above analysis [Figure 5] and acts as a discussion starter, rather than a comprehensive, applicable plan. We call it “Comprehensive Participatory Framework of Restorative Justice and Social Engagement” or simply Agora21. It contains three initial stages that aim towards developing legitimacy for the initiative in the eyes of the public. Afterwards, there are four phases with different goals per phase. The sequencing of these phases is also important to be carefully designed, with ripeness and public legitimization in mind.

At the initial stage, there needs to be an elaborate stakeholder analysis. This analysis will identify key actors in the Greek sociopolitical context at large. Prominent, respectable individuals would then be identified within each group, in order to guarantee respective constituent legitimacy. More detailed selection criteria would have to be set in place, however the ultimate goal is to avoid including spoilers, and cooperate only with unworn, reputable delegates. A key characteristic for a potential member of this initial group would be her leaning perspective, the ability to focus on what is at stake and the importance of the superordinate goal. Some of the groups that need to be represented in this process include: Academia, Art Community, Civil Society, Entrepreneurs, Religion and Journalists. Political figures are not being included due to the degree of authority deligitimatization, however it may be possible for individuals with wide appeal to major groups, or even better across fractions. The
organization will have set in place microculture building strategies, which will aim at having these individuals develop a group identity as network weavers, inspiration beacons, and visionaries of a new Greece, who share the same commitment for fruitful cooperation, truly harnessing the power of productive conflict and appreciating each other on a fundamental basis. The vision would be for prominent individuals to eventually yearn to be part of this group, due to the respect and public appeal it emits. Membership in this esteemed group would be a highest social honor based on true, undisputed merit – comparable to “The Elders”. This contains an inherent marketing component, which shall not be currently addressed for succinctness.

The next stage, focuses on incorporating the participation of the people, in order to begin fostering legitimacy and ripeness by instilling a sense of public ownership and transparency. Open, online voting would select from the above pool of individuals the first ones to represent each stakeholder to the next phases. The resulting groups of Agora21 facilitators will have a balanced representation from all corresponding stakeholder groups, and shall be responsible to manage the four main phases of the initiative. The remaining facilitators will eventually rotate, substituting the initial composition. Each phase shall take place at a very carefully selected space, preferably of particular historical importance. It is crucial to draw as many positive references as possible from Greece’s past, in a humble, grounded way, and incorporate them into the processes, in order to instill inspiration and capitalize on the superordinate identity of common heritage. Technology will be also utilized appropriately in order to maximize public engagement and demographic penetration.

The phases which Agora21 facilitators would be trained to facilitate are:

1. Education. This first phase focuses on the importance of being conscious of one’s relationship with oneself and one’s impact on the other. Trust, positive interdependency and civic education are crucial components of a healthy society, ever since the Athenian Democracy. This commission will assist in coordinating participatory workshops that train trainers on the significance of reflection, conflict/emotional/cultural intelligence, cooperation, intellectual opposition, healthy competition, positive interdependence and trust in a modern society. The initial goal would be to create, and if possible fund, an expanding network of educators, inspired to deliver these workshops at schools with primary focus at high school seniors, who are about to enter the society as active citizens. The material would have been incorporated into a highly engaging method of teaching, which would inspire the students/participants and provide them with tangible tools and feedback.

2. Civic Education. Unfortunately, there are no structures in place to encourage and develop social participation and civic leadership. In this phase, people will post their thoughts, proposals, art etc regarding the current state of Greece, the grievances of the past, and its future. All proposals will be submitted online at a state-of-the-art social platform, available for open voting. The public voting shall select which ones will be presented in a safe, participatory, public setting, open for discussion, in various forms such as open space, townhall meetings, TED talks and art exhibits.

3. Reflection. Reflection of one’s role at a protracted conflict is crucial. This unusual phase will encourage individuals to submit their stories online and present the case to openly describe how they participated in this prolonged series of cleavages. This could be carefully designed to begin with a series of highly recognizable individuals who would be willing to drop the mask and truly expose, in a humble, heartfelt way, their inner thoughts about how they contributed in today’s situation.
4. Truth and Reconciliation. This might be the most controversial phase, requiring careful sequencing, coordination and design. Truth is that the current model of retributive justice does not address the grievances of the people when it comes down to i.e. corruption. In Tsouchatzopoulos’ case, there is a significant part of the population that is unsatisfied with its handling. It can be claimed that this is true because of the distance between Tsouchatzopoulos’ punishment and the sense of justice of the people who have suffered from severe financial measures. The value of facing whom you consider responsible for your suffering, being heard, acknowledged and even be given a public apology is profound. The author believes that there is a great opportunity to create a non-binding, symbolic, process along the lines of the traditional restorative justice committees such as Truth and Reconciliation. People from all social groups would submit their proposals online for public voting about what they want to say and how they were affected. There could be the possibility of being able to call specific individuals, such as public figures, to participate and listen how their actions affected whomever is presenting and perhaps acknowledge and respond and/or apologize.

Conclusion

The Greek crisis is a vexed, complex issue. One can approach the same topic through a myriad of lenses. Regardless of the point of view, the necessity for radical change seems to be unanimous. Lyrintzis characterizes the first decade of the twenty first century as a “lost decade”, “in the sense that a very good opportunity to introduce reforms and to reverse the course leading to bankruptcy had been lost” (2011). One can also claim that the second decade could end up being even worst, if the current opportunity for reflection and real, structural change is also ignored. The cynicism and indifference of doing business as usual not only hinder our progress but also pose a great threat towards our capacity to face the immense challenges of the future. Greeks need to come up with new, innovative ways to collectively reignite the modus operandi of the political discourse and generate the appropriate social capital within the society, in order for the system to shift its balance towards a positive state. The political system, along with the society-at-large, need to move away from the old fashioned Pyrrhic Victory mindset of zero sum game governance. The transformation of the broader conflict network is a key component in breaking this pattern. An effective transformation of this magnitude demands a holistic approach that is able to substitute the current resilience of a counterproductive system by a resilient positive one. The whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts. Only by embracing the nonlinearity of the systems of actors, problems and interventions, can one ensure that the best decisions can be made that will allow the society to realize its immense interdependency and reach the ultimate goal of taking ownership over its greatest woes, in pursuit of the elusive goal of protracted prosperity.
GREECE’S PROTRACTED “COLD INTERNAL CONFLICT”

KEY FACTORS

DELEGITIMIZATION
OF EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE, AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES
ALONG WITH MAINSTREAM PRESS
IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC.
PROFOUND LACK OF CIVIL SOCIETY–STATE INTERDEPENDENCY SENTIMENT.

EDUCATION
DECADES OF SOCIALIZATION THROUGH A SEA OF CONFLICTING NARRATIVES.
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM DISSOLVED BY INHERENT TOXIC PARTISAN CULTURE.

“IDIocy”

IN ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY, AN “IDIOT” (idiotês) WAS ONE WHO WAS INDIFFERENT TO THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS, A NON-ACTIVE CITIZEN WHO WAS EXCLUSIVELY CONCERNED ABOUT ONE’S SELF-CENTERED PRIVATE AFFAIRS. THE NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS OF THE MODERN TERM STEM FROM THAT DISHONORABLE NOTION.

MOST OF THE GREEK SOCIETY OF THE THIRD HELLENIC REPUBLIC, ALONG WITH MOST OF THE ACADEMIA AND ART SOCIETY, HAVE BEEN CHRONICALLY CHARECTIZED BY “IDIocy”, AND IN SEVERAL CASES HAVE EVEN CONTRIBUTED TO THE DETERIORATION OF THE COLLECTIVE REALITY.

Figure 5.
RUNNING HEAD: GREEK CRISIS, A PROTRACTED CONFLICT

COLLECTIVE ACTION STRATEGY

1. Initial Selection of Facilitators Candidates Pool:
   Stakeholder network mapping/analysis will help compose pool of prominent individuals with respective constituent legitimacy. Crucial selection factors: No spoilers / reputable / unknown. Include only leading individuals / network weavers.
   Candidate pool shall represent major ideological groups from:
   + Academia
   + Art society
   + Civil society
   + Entrepreneurs
   + Religion
   + Journalists

2. Final GrassRoots Selection of Facilitators:
   From above pool via online voting process.

3. Balanced Groups of Facilitators Manage the Proceedings for the Activities of AGORA, which are divided into four commissions/phases.

- Education
- Civic Leadership
- Reflection
- Truth & Reconciliation

People from all social groups submit their thoughts, proposals, art etc. regarding the damage of toxic partisanship, corruption, nepotism and injustice and the way(s) for the Greek society and state to heal and move forward.

All submissions shall be posted online for public vote on which ones should be presented in an open meeting (i.e., open space, townhall, TED-type talks) for public discussion.

Online voting shall select which reflections will be presented publicly in a safe setting, open for public discussion.

People from all social groups share the stories of how their own actions fueled toxic partisanship, corruption, nepotism and injustice towards their fellow citizens. They may also submit any name(s) of individual(s) who they consider as having been particularly affected.

Public meetings to be held in venues of particular historic symbolism

Submissions via online AGORA platform, either in written form or as YouTube videos

People from all social groups share their past and present grievances and stories of how toxic partisanship, corruption, nepotism and injustice have affected them, along with the name(s) of individual(s) that they consider particularly responsible.

All submissions shall be posted online for public vote on which ones will be facilitated by the commission, in a safe setting, open for public discussion.

The alleged perpetrator(s) will be kindly asked to witness the testimony regarding the impact of his/her actions. S/he will have to acknowledge, respond and/or apologize. The process is solely restorative and non-binding.

Figure 6.
References


