

СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ И СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ДИНАМИКА

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The Janus faces of (anti-)corruption rhetoric in Greece

E. Lambropoulou

Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Dpt. Sociology, School of Social Sciences,
136, Syngrou Ave., Athens, GR — 17671, Greece

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The article outlines the use of corruption rhetoric in Greek politics based on official reports and press publications in selected years and examines the functions it fulfils. In the beginning of the article, an overview of international research and its contextual background about corruption is provided. The absence of historical accounts in the (anti-) corruption literature is noted and an overview of factors that have been correlated by researchers with corruption is given, such as degree of democracy, (de)centralization of the political system, media scandalization, etc. The article briefly presents the approach of Greek analysts to the topic. Issues concerning old and new forms of clientelism, which held the most interest for Greek academics, are analysed. Also, the discourse analysis carried out and its findings is portrayed. The analysis reveals that politicians' corruption rhetoric operates primarily as a strategy that is capable of undermining the morale of the main political opponent(s) and occasionally as a method of ensuring electoral supremacy. The rather unhelpful attempts of the Greek governments to improve the position of the country in the anticorruption universe by introducing successive legislation, new bodies and institutions to control corruption, while disregarding the fact that the main efforts should be focused on Greece's market image are illustrated. A positive change in the country's image in the market came incidentally during the last few years of the Greek economic crisis thanks to neoliberal economic policies under the tutelage of foreign lenders.

Keywords: political antagonism, anticorruption rhetoric, electioneering, neoliberal policies.

Introduction

The present article does not intend either to analyze corruption in general or to present views, theories or academic approaches about the topic. Moreover, it does not intend to conduct an inquiry into the nature of corruption 'as such' in Greece, but into the use

and effect of corruption rhetoric in Greek politics. Thus, it concentrates on a certain target group, politics/politicians, and cases related to it. The driving question is the function of corruption and anticorruption rhetoric in Greek politics and whether anti-corruption policies enforced by successive Greek governments aim to actually limit corruption or to create a confused sense of accountability by producing endless legal ‘reforms’ to face recycled or alleged scandals.

The contextual background of the empirical research — Political patronage and clientelism

Thousands of books and hundreds of thousands of journal articles have been published on corruption in more than 50 languages during the last few decades. The majority refer to developing and transitional countries and the rest to the industrialised countries, while only a small part are either global or regional. In (anti-)corruption literature, the absence of historical accounts of anti-corruption policies is remarkable. It is estimated that less than one percent of the literature deals with historical data of the country analysed. Macro-analysis of corruption was similarly until recently missing from the economic literature in the industrialised countries [1; 2].

A number of empirical studies have explored the possible correlation between corruption and democracy. Martin Paldam in his study found that democracy seems to relate inversely to corruption, but the independent effect of democracy on the level of corruption is uncertain [3; 4].

In a comprehensive cross-national study on the causes of corruption, Daniel Treisman found that the degree of democracy in a country has no significant impact on the perceptions of corruption, but the life of democracy in the country [5–7]. The regression results suggest a painfully slow process by which democracy undermines the foundations for corruption.

Another significant factor was found to be the power allocation between the centre and the periphery. Some scholars maintain that concentrated power is an aggravating variable in corruption. Due to social pressure, local officials may be less prone to corrupt activities against people from their own areas [5–7]. By contrast, other researchers contend that decentralised political systems are more “corrupt”, since the potential offender needs to influence only a part of the government. In addition, in a fragmented system, there are fewer centralised forces and agencies to enforce transparency. Corruption in some countries (e.g. the Philippines and Thailand) has become more decentralised and uncoordinated [8, p.101]. Recent research suggests that government size is another variable influencing corruption. A study with data from 82 countries found that increase in government size leads to a decrease in corruption *if* the democracy level is sufficiently high [9].

Other studies [10; 11] on corruption did not come up with significant changes in crime rates but a shift in public opinion on corruption, reflected in the press, in penal justice and legislation. It means that corruption has not necessarily increased, but its scandalisation and disapproval rates have risen greatly in the discourse at the national, as well as at the international level. Anticorruption rhetoric became popular and operates like a new “religion” in the context of global politics and the market economy [12; 13].

Discussions on corruption with the publicity given by the media are also a very effective means in political conflict and the establishment of new elites [14]. A relevant study

examined the relationship among inequality, poverty and corruption together with the elite integrity [15, pp. 389–391]. It found among others things that high social mobility, change of elites in power relations, control and accountability of upper social strata and of public administration, in relation with generalised trust in institutions and strong feelings of safety about the quality of democracy, operate against corruption. Contrarily, low social mobility, unchanging elites, limited social control of the upper levels of society, collective non-differentiated orientations of the population, as by the subordination to the authority of e. g. religious leaders, low citizens' trust and high feelings of insecurity facilitate “corrupt” relations [16], reproducing a “culture of inequality” [15, pp. 398–399, 407–409]. These relations attempt to cover the shortcomings of trust and place limits on the decision making power of public authorities.

There is an increasing amount of analysts attempting to describe corruption in Greece. Most of them use older political studies or studies that focus on the development of democratic governance and the Greek state [17–19]. Empirical research, apart from the work of TI (CPIs, Global Corruption reports), the research of the local branch of TI (TI Hellas) carried out occasionally by an opinion polling company (Public Issue) and the Eurobarometer by the European Commission, does not exist [20–22]. Political patronage, clientelism and rent seeking have been the main topics of the analysts' discourse since the 1980s, with some variation, and this concept is still being used today.

The rest of the studies refer to legislation and prevention at normative level (e. g. pre-conventional judicial control). Suggestions are made concerning legal and organisational improvement, the need for stricter laws, and the roles of specific institutions are examined, such as the contribution of Ombudsman and the effectiveness of General Inspector of Public Administration on fighting corruption, etc. Moreover, few studies attempt to examine corruption or the construction of corruption reality and perceptions in relation to Greek society.

Only a small number of all these studies show some scepticism as to what the term corruption actually means. Predominantly, corruption is associated with economic and political development, which, in turn, is associated with political patronage and clientelism. Other approaches, in the main ontological interpretations, are those that focus on the modern or postmodern state, the political system and globalisation. Most studies analyse *political* corruption, which is the abuse of public power for the personal interests of politicians [23, pp. 8–14]. In the national corruption literature, corruption is simultaneously connected to a series of other unfavourable perceived phenomena, such as public distrust of the political system, reproduction and reinforcement of social inequality, value erosion, violation of human rights and of democratic principles as a cause and result [24; 25].

In political science, patronage means that the patron (politician) provides various resources or privileges to the client (voter), bypassing the formal mechanisms and regulations for their provision; the client on his/her part, provides political support for the patron. Such relations entail reciprocity and mutuality [26]. In the international literature, there are several definitions of political clientelism. According to Hopkin, “clientelism is a form of personal, dyadic exchange usually characterized by a sense of obligation and often also by an unequal balance between those involved” [26; 27, p. 2].

The same author distinguishes between “old” and “new” clientelism. The former is regarded as operating mainly in developing countries and involves patron-client proximity and exclusively selective benefits [27, p. 8]. In contrast “new” clientelism entails less prox-

imity in patron-client relations and is characteristic of more advanced economic settings. Besides, in “new” clientelism the patron is less autonomous, being an integral part of the party organisation and bureaucracy; in this type, the *real* patron is the party organisation.

According to several Greek authors [28; 29], “new” clientelism corresponds better to contemporary Greece. The new form refers not to individual clients but to organised interests, which provide political support (e. g. through the media, financing, or other means) to certain politicians or parties for certain privileges and benefits. This type of political clientelism is regarded to have prevailed after the 1980s, along with the re-organisation of political parties. Thus, while “old” clientelism is connected with poverty and social inequality, “new” clientelism is associated with the expansion of the role of the state in the economy and society [30]. High-income voters tend to support a party or candidate (e. g. with campaign contributions) on an ad hoc basis in return for a (non-)excludable good, which will tend to benefit them more than others.

As previously mentioned, although the “old” type of clientelist relations is regarded as a reason for the increase in social inequality and discrimination against people who are not part of intense clientelist networks, the “new” type absorbs social inequalities, producing conflicts and strain, and balances the state of confusion and uncertainty through rent seeking. In this sense, it is an institutionalised form of social organisation and behaviour, which is indirectly legitimised [31, p. 100].

Consequently, clientelism is not an inherent characteristic in the sense of value or culture but the product of historical events, political organisation and functions of the state mechanism during its development [30, pp. 252–253].

Methods and analysis

Multiple sources in different time periods are used in the present study to illustrate the operation and the function of corruption verbosity in Greek politics, with the support of the media in the reproduction of this debate.

The primary research data (2006–2009) derive from a European study in which the author¹ participated from January 2006 until July 2009. The EU research study led by the University of Konstanz (Germany) and was about the construction of corruption in certain European countries [32]. Politics (2003–2009) were among the various groups examined in the national research due to its special interest. Interviews with specific target groups have been carried out, case studies have been analysed, along with Parliamentary proceedings, Ombudsman and Inspectors Controllers Body reports (SEEDD), reports of the Parliamentary Committee on Institutional Issues and Transparency, electoral programmes of political parties, articles from three daily newspapers of high circulation, legislation and Court decisions, Reports of the Police Division of Internal Affairs, NGOs Reports, Findings of investigations of General Public Prosecutors and of party committees etc. The qualitative analysis of TG politics was continued by the author until 2020 on particular cases (selectively Parlia-

¹ The research was carried out in close collaboration with my colleagues S. Ageli (MA), E. Bakali (MA, Ministry of Interior and Public Administration), N. Papamanolis (MA, Ministry of Interior and Public Administration), and temporarily supported by E. Bakirli (MA), Dr. Th. Iosifides (Assistant Prof., Univ. of the Aegean), P. Salihos (MA), and Dr. Garyfallia Massouri. The text-analysis of the Target Group Politics used by the present article was carried out by Nikos Papamanolis and the author, with the support of Theodoros Iosifides.

mentary proceedings, Plenary's and Committee's Audio & Video Archives of the Television Station of the Hellenic Parliament, and media outlets 1989–1991, 2009–2010, 2018–2020). The main findings of a part of the extensive national research are integrated in the remaining findings of the personal study of the following years.

The assumption held within the primary research was that the definition of corruption developed in political and administrative institutions rely on a 'top-down' procedure. This concept of corruption is both in the theoretical as well as the practical sense insufficient. The considerably variable perceptions of corruption have significant influence on a country's respective awareness of the problem and thereby on the success of any preventative measures [33].

For this reason, a 'bottom-up' procedure has been carried out. The 'bottom-up' definitions are anchored in social patterns of perceptions that actors unconsciously or not apply. Therefore, they must be reconstructed from parliamentary, administrative and other official documents and from protocolled statements of the target groups; as previously mentioned, for the present article the groups of interest are only politicians. Consequently, the documents have been qualitatively analysed (content analysis, software Atlas-ti) according to the principles of Grounded theory methodology [34].

Grounded theory (GT) is a research method concerned with the generation of theory, which is 'grounded' in data that has been systematically collected and analysed. It is used to uncover social processes, i. e. social relationships and behaviours of groups [35; 36].

Thus, the article is based on research which had a dual focus: both on the formal, institutional *and* on the informal, practical level. The counter-corruption policies *and* the social-cultural and sociopolitical contexts they work in will be analysed in order to investigate how well 'institutionalised' prevention measures are being incorporated into daily political practice [33].

In addition, apart from the material of the primary research, the present article uses reports by national audit bodies and services, as well as by international organisations (2009–2020), and finally by national and European media publications (2003–2009; selectively 2009–2020).

The examination of the possible functions that corruption rhetoric fulfils in politics is based on Merton's latent and manifest functions idea [37, pp. 73–138], which challenged the doctrine of functional indispensability [38, cited in 37, pp. 76, 84] of functionalism [37, pp. 79–91]. Merton stated that "just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items" [37, pp. 87–88]. According to Luhmann, though, function is not a special case of causality "but a regulative formula of meaning that organizes an arena for comparisons of equivalent solutions" [39, p. 17; 40, pp. 3–4]. Alternatively, it can be described as the unity of the action arranging different ideas under a common one [39; 40].

Therefore, the functions fulfilled by the (anti-)corruption rhetoric followed by the legislation for corruption prevention and control will be analyzed.

Findings

Actually, the first case of corruption in recent history that poisoned the Greek citizens' faith in politics and justice was in the early 1990s by the commitment to trial of the then Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, and ministers of his government. He was

connected to a multimillion dollar scandal involving a private bank², and accused of facilitating the embezzlement by ordering state corporations to transfer their holdings to this bank, where the interest was allegedly skimmed off to benefit his government party. It was the first time in the history of the New Greek state that a political leader and what is more, a Prime Minister, was accused of corruption.

Trust was also shattered by the repeated statements of the opposition about legal issues regarding the above case(s) long before the decision of the ad hoc Special Court³, ordered by the Greek parliament. In Parliament the Prime Minister accepted the political responsibility for the case by acknowledging the wrong handling of his government in investigating the scandal; he also accepted the consequences for the bank but did not accept the criminal ones. He did not accept the indictment and refused to appear in court.

The trial started in March 1991 and finished in January 1992. The Prime Minister was acquitted of all charges after a 7–6/13 vote during the trial. Besides, in the course of time it became clear that the accusation of the involvement of the Prime Minister for passive bribery was orchestrated by the leader of the main opposition party for party political reasons.

During the twenty years that elapsed after this notorious case, it became routine for the main opposition party to bring ‘scandals’ out in the open and accuse each government of corruption, and the reverse; the government in power would accuse the previous government of corruption. This would take place particularly whenever a government found itself in a difficult position as it would distract the citizens’ attention from its political choices, failures or problems. The scandalisation of political life and the deleterious impact that it has on eroding and destabilising people’s trust in democratic institutions are ignored.

But only after 2004 the accusation of scandals returned to *corruption* rhetoric [41] and become a serious issue along with the increasing discussion of the impact of the Transparency International (TI) releases at the international level and primarily the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores, which ranks countries based on how corrupt a country’s public sector *is perceived to be*, according to the views of experts and business executives. The arise of the corruption rhetoric also coincides with the Siemens scandal, which broke out in September 2005. The Siemens AG cases in Greece refer to the illicit deals between Siemens and Greek government officials during the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens regarding the purchase of security systems, in addition to purchases made in the 1990s by the dominant telecommunications organisation in Greece (OTE). Siemens was involved in illicit payments in many countries around the world to secure contracts (e. g. Italy, Libya, Liechtenstein and elsewhere). The Siemens scandal was important because it was a global case of corruption orchestrated by a foreign company, not a national one, in order to gain market share and increase its prices in the country.

The discourse about corruption should be distinguished between those expressed in public rhetoric and the ones expressed in personal or private discourse, where there is no audience and eventual voters. The research used in this essay refer to the public discourse of political decision makers. For the public discourse, official documents have been

² It is known as ‘Koskotas scandal’ from the name of George Koskotas, a Greek-American millionaire who was indicted for charges of forgery and embezzlement in 1988.

³ Art. 86 of the Greek Constitution. <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20aggliko.pdf>. (accessed: 11.07.2021).

analysed: namely, either texts referring to corruption and ‘scandals’⁴, or texts referring to selected case studies⁵. As already mentioned various official documents (e. g. protocols of parliamentary debates, statements and programmes of political parties, strategy papers issued by national anti-corruption organisation, public statements), court decisions, guidelines for investigating and prosecuting indictable offences, news reporting, background reporting, have been studied and content analysis has been carried out.

The language of politicians in the public documents analysed is sentimental, aggressive, severe, denunciatory or demagogic. There are occasionally dramatic and exaggerated expressions used, some of which were even mind-blowing, while moralistic rhetoric is present [42].

Our research has shown that politicians in general, in both research periods, identified corruption with “scandals” in politics, or in the interface of politics with the private economy. Most of them did not promote any clear-sighted and dispassionate discussion. MPs and principal party leaders of the two big parties of the first research period occasionally called for “organised reaction” against corruption by society to prevent the “evil” and the outbreak of the “disease” [“the dry rot of democratic institutions and society”]. They used the word “misgovernment” “merging of interests”, and “opacity” rather than corruption, but when a specific case emerged, they either denied responsibility [“such things happen ... they are inevitable ... unavoidable”] or their discourse became mostly party-political (fixed expressions repeated such as “very serious case”, “rotten/decayed status-quo”, etc.), an instrument to blame the other party whenever thought being useful [“major political issue”, “country’s misery”, “indifference of the government”, “deliberate negligence”, “government’s- inertia... — complicity... — laziness”, “tolerated..., fostered..., deluded... by the state (your party-political state)”, “electioneering”, “nothing is forgotten”, “you (i. e. the government) will find us (i.e. the opposition) before you”; “You made the country an ‘unfenced vineyard’ to illegal immigration”; “You made the country field for mafia activities”; “moral hypocrisy of the government”, “degradation of democracy’s quality”, “significant issue of moral order”, “the government regards the state as loot”] [43].

In summary, corruption rhetoric has been systematically used as a ‘weapon’ against the rival party at whatever cost, and for the representation of the other side as a protector of the peoples’ interests. The same applies to the following years.

For example, in December 2009 at the start of the debt crisis, the then recently elected Prime Minister (October 2009), George Papandreou, said in an interview with the BBC that “systemic corruption” and “clientelism” had created a lacking sense of the rule of law in the country and accentuated issues such as tax evasion⁶. He called the previous administration⁷ “reckless and corrupt”⁸. Meanwhile, his government’s plan to quell Greece’s

⁴ E. g. reports of the Parliamentary Committee on Institutional Issues and Transparency, 2000–2005; electoral programs of political parties.

⁵ Parliamentary proceedings, 2001–2005; 2018, 2020; prosecutors’ findings and court decisions, 2001, 2002; newspaper articles, 2003–2005; 2009–2019; findings of party committees, 2001; MPs’ interviews and statements either in the Press or reproduced by the Press on relevant issues and on the selected case studies. The interviews’ analysis of the target group Politics is not included in the article.

⁶ Greece PM Papandreou sets out Anti-Corruption Plan. BBC News (15.12.2009). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8413391.stm>. (accessed: 01.07.2021).

⁷ The previous administration was replaced by his Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) in October 2009.

⁸ Greece ‘Not looking for bailout’, Papandreou tells BBC. BBC News (21.2.2010). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8526736.stm>. (accessed: 01.07.2021).

economic crisis would combat both systemic corruption and clientelism, as well as ‘red tape’ issues.

In February 2018, the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras himself, brought the *Novartis* case to parliament, where the multinational pharmaceutical company was accused of paying kickbacks to high-profile politicians. The allegations were based on the supposed testimonies of three whistle-blowers. The case concerned two former Prime Ministers, as well as eight ministers, all from the previous coalition government (2012–2014) who have been the opposition of Mr. Tsipras since 2015. Active and passive bribery, as well as disloyalty are some of the law violations mentioned in the case-file.

Since it appeared that sufficient evidence for the charges was lacking and that whistle-blowers were not legitimised because their stories were either fabricated or they themselves were involved in the scandal, the case files were closed one after the other by the prosecutor. The government responded by reopening the case in January 2019, as it presumably saw its voter ratings significantly drop in the face of the upcoming elections (July 2019). The opposition parties, New Democracy and Kinima Allagis⁹, were the first to react, revealing an alleged conflict of interest for the Secretary of the General Secretariat against Corruption. They also hinted at the abuse of power by one of the Cabinet minister’s close advisers. The atmosphere in Parliament became explosive with arguments taking place daily. Some examples of the language used are: “The ridicule of the gang continues”; “The hoods will come out, society does not believe it”; “The slanderers will account for”; “We are not going to withdraw in any way and for anybody”, “lousy slanderers” “ridiculous indictment”, “mudslinging”, “pitiful plot”, “black page of democracy”, “character assassination”, “[the opposition party] has dragged the political life of the country through the mud”¹⁰.

Such use of public speaking with an exaggerated style intended to impress and maintain the low level of trust in the country’s political system by the citizens, especially during the debt crisis. According to the results of the 7th wave of the World Values Survey (September 2017), it turns out that just 7 % of the sample (1,200) trust the political parties, 13 % trust the government and regrettably 14 % trust the Parliament [44, p. 16]. The highest trust is in the universities (82 %), the army (80 %) and the police (71 %). Even before the crisis, as the 5th wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2010 has shown, the Greek sample (n: 2,591 to 2,692) has low trust in the political system, i. e. politicians, political parties, and parliament. On a scale of zero to ten, where zero is ‘no trust at all’ and ten is ‘complete trust’, 37.8 % have no trust at all in country’s parliament and 37 % have low trust (1 to 3), in politicians 48.6 % have no trust and 37.7% have low trust, and 48.4% have no trust at all in political parties, while 37.3 % have low trust [45, according to the calculations made by the author]. In previous ESS waves (4th 2008, 1st 2002), total distrust/dissatisfaction were in any case lower (8.5–18 %) [46].

The absence of trust in politics and politicians does not equate to a contestation of democracy, which continues to be of great value to the Greek citizens (‘Importance of Democratic Governance’, 98.3 %) [47, Table B13.4 /E250, pp. 94, 97]. Satisfaction with the functioning of the government is, as expected, low: 4.2 on a scale of one (not at all

⁹ This means “Movement for Change”. The coalition was founded in March 2018 between the party of PASOK and two other smaller parties.

¹⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (21.2.2018; 18.5.2018; 19.5.2020; 22.7.2020); Vouli TV, Archives. <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Enimerosi/Vouli-Tileorasi/Tv-History/>.

satisfied) to ten (very satisfied), as well as the rank of the perceived democratic governance in Greece, which is 5.4. These two variables are statistically significant (paired t-test, p-value = 0.00). Therefore, it seems that in the Greek sample a significant relationship exists between the perceived lacking democracy in governance and the dissatisfaction with the functioning of the political system [44, Figure 15, p. 23].

In relation to this, Greece's rank in the *Democracy Index*¹¹ of the Economist Intelligent Unit in 2019 is 7.43 out of ten, and in 39th place out of 165 countries [48, Table 2, pp. 11, 51], with the lower value at 'functioning of government' (4.86), lower than in the previous year (5.36) [49, pp. 13, 14, 37]. In *Democracy Index* 2018, Greece's overall score was 7.29 out of ten, and in the same place (39th) out of 167 countries as next year. For comparison, in 2006, its rank was 8.13 and in 18th place out of 167 countries [50, Table 1, p. 3].

Returning to the results of the research, the cases which have been examined have shown that corruption charges against members of the elite, mostly by the elite members, follow when power is transferred from one to the other. This makes the otherwise hidden conflicts between different groups within the elites visible. The charges attempt to demonstrate the change of power and supremacy, but rarely result in actual prosecution and sentencing. Such charges are supposed to cover the gap of trust and control the decision process of various organised groups of power (state and private). The irony is that on the one hand, they try to cover up the gap of trust, while on the other, the moralised discourse on corruption destabilises the trust and liability of the political system. What, when and how corruption will be defined and be an issue of legislation depends to a great extent on the power allocation in organisations, institutions and political games as well.

Legislation and law enforcement concerning corruption: anticorruption's revolving door

Over the years, Greece has actually employed a robust anticorruption legislation concerning the *public* as well as the *private sector*. It has also ratified all relevant conventions of the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations, integrating them gradually in the national legislation. In addition, successive laws have been issued for transparency in party financing and against political corruption. On its own initiative Greece also established several institutions for the prevention and control of corruption in the public services. Examples include: the Police Division (i. e. Service) of Internal Affairs in April 1999 with further authority to investigate charges of bribery and extortion of all civil servants; the General Inspector of Public Administration in December 2002; an extension of the Ombudsman's responsibilities in January 2003 and many others that followed.

However, regardless of the country's improvements at the normative and administrative levels to prevent corruption and promote transparency, its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score has not increased, instead it has been constantly decreasing. In particular, Greece's score on the CPI went down from 5.05 to 5.01 in the period from 1988 to 1996 and plummeted in the following years to 3.8 in 2009. During the economic crisis,

¹¹ The DI is based on the scores of 60 indicators referring to: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture.

the score fell further to 3.4 in 2011 (80th place out of 183 countries), rising in 2012 to 3.6, further to 4.5 in 2018, and finally 5.0 in 2020, still below the score of the 1990s [51].

Although Greece's ranking on the TI index is low, indicating that experts and business executives perceive the country's public sector to be corrupt, as referred to above, the results of the European Values Surveys of 1999/2000 and 2008/2010 show that over 90 % of Greeks considered 'corruption-bribery' in the group of highly disapproved behaviours, over 81 % confirmed that citizens must *always* abide by the law, and over 87 % criticised behaviours such as 'cheating on taxes' and 'not paying fare' [52, v231; 53, v239].

Meanwhile, Justice Statistics reveal that the number of 'crimes against duties and service' (i. e. 'corruption' of public administration and civil servants) has been very low for a long time; they represent 0.01 to 0.02 % of the total recorded offences between 1980 and 2005, while from 2006 to 2019 these crimes range from 0.04 to 0.12 %, and 0.09 to 0.12 % of the convicted after 1998 [54, Table B1 Crimes, Table B4 Convictions]¹².

Similar are the findings of the various control bodies against corruption. Indicatively, during the period 2011 to 2016 only a low rate of the 8,614 cases [55, p. 31], which have been submitted to the General Inspector of Public Administration, referred to corruption; they represented 0.6 to 4 % of all cases over the seven year's period and 2.4 % of the 1,123 cases in 2017 [56, pp. 28,34]. The rate was even lower between 2004 and 2010, but in any case it has to be taken into account that the field was not overregulated, as it is now, which directly affected prosecutions and convictions [57, pp. 28, 39; 58, pp. 26–27]. Furthermore, in the 2015 and 2016 Inspectors-Controllers' reports — where all prosecutions (from drug use to moonlighting) made against civil servants and police officers and categorised under 'corruption crimes' are included (n: 267 and 310 respectively) — bribery, disloyalty, embezzlement, forgery and money laundering represent 10.7 % and 13.4 % of the prosecutions [59, pp. 344, 346–347; 60, pp. 273–274].

In May 2013, the issue of Law 4152 introduced a National Coordinator on anticorruption, along with a supporting Committee of government executives and high ranking civil servants, heads of anticorruption services, and a small Advisory Body of experts. For the institution of the National Coordinator the general framework of the 'Roadmap for the fight against corruption' [61] was taken into account. The roadmap was a governmental commitment and an integral part of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2012, between the representative of the European Union Task Force for Greece (TFGR)¹³ and the Ministries of Administrative Reform and e-Governance, Finance, Justice, and Public Order. The National Coordinator was directly accountable to the Prime Minister and was head of 12 competent control services and independent authorities involved. The TFGR focused its attention, among others, on "helping the various Greek institutions involved with anti-money laundering and financial crime [...] to fight *tax evasion* [...] and on the adoption of a legal and procedural framework to combat corruption in the tax administration" [62](emphasis by E.L.).

In March 2015, the new government, elected less than 2 months before, replaced the National Coordinator by the General Secretariat against Corruption with thirty em-

¹² Due to case overloading, courts haven't sent data on convictions to the Statistical Authority since 2011, despite the continuous pressure of the Ministry of Justice and the Statistical Authority.

¹³ The TFGR was launched by the then President of European Commission Mr. Barroso in July 2011 to provide and coordinate the technical assistance that Greece needed to comply with its commitments in relation to its economic adjustment program.

ployees (15 civil servants and 15 assistants from the private sector for a period of three years) [63] being in charge of a general secretary under the Deputy Minister of Justice (Law 4320/2015). And again, in August 2019, the new elected centre-right government, soon after it came to power in July 2019, abolished six control bodies and replaced the General Secretariat by an independent authority, the National Authority of Transparency (EAD, Law 4622/2019, art. 82). This has been the Greek government(s) most recent efforts against corruption to date.

In 2016, the OECD, Greece and the European Commission launched a joint project to increase integrity and reduce corruption in the country through technical empowerment of the Greek authorities for the implementation of the revised 2015 National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) by the government elected in the previous year. Emphasis was placed on fighting corruption in the private sector, strengthening law enforcement, raising awareness and supporting capacity building. The project finished in January 2018 [64].

Economic liberalization

Greece's very low ranking on the CPI index, regardless of its attempts to facilitate transparency, to establish numerous control bodies, its high disapproval ratings by citizens, and the endless criticism from the media is not easy to explain on first sight. CPI is judged increasingly in terms of economic development [65], while corruption is treated primarily as a problem of political and economic liberalisation and is used in considering a nation-state's mark in the index of economic freedom.

One of the main data sources for the construction of CPI is the Sustainable Governance Index (SGI) of Bertelsmann Stiftung. The SGI instrument contains a range of indicators of *executive capacity* and *executive accountability* rated by national experts, in order to present those countries that show the best *governance performance* and those countries that show deficiencies. Thus, while in 2011 the score of Greece in governance was 4.54 (SGI ranking 31st out of 31 countries), three years later, in 2014, in the middle of the crisis, the governance score increased slightly to 4.91 (38th/41 countries), whereby executive accountability changed from 4.93 to 5.6 and executive capacity from 3.99 to 4.31 [66, p.17]. In 2018, the governance score increased further to 5.36 (SGI 32nd/41 countries), with executive accountability rising to 6 and executive capacity to 4.7 [67, pp. 134–136]. In 2020, the scores are slightly higher, since the governance score rose to 5.64 (SGI 34th/ 41 countries), with executive accountability increasing to 6.5 and executive capacity to 4.8. The improved SGI score affects the CPI score and explains the improved ranking of Greece after 2012 referred to above. It has further to be noticed that Greece went up 14 positions since 2012, and is among the countries which have significantly improved their CPI score according to TI [68, p. 1]. Meanwhile the quality of democracy and its relevant indicators don't seem to have an impact on CPI, because not only in the Economist Intelligent Unit's Democracy Index [48, 49], but also according to Bertelsmann Stiftung, Greece's score with regard to quality of democracy (28/41) [67, Figure 2, p. 15], is declining after 2014 (6.76–7; rule of law 6.5, corruption prevention 5, media independency 6, popular decision-making 2 out of 10) and only in 2020 (24/41) succeeded to reach the score of 2014 (7, rule of law 6.8, corruption prevention 5 remained the same, media pluralism 5, popular decision-making 2 out of 10) [69].

After all, the slight improvement in CPI seems to have occurred not because of effective control, but due to the extended liberalisation measures of the market under the tutelage of the foreign lenders during the economic crisis, expressed as better governance performance reflecting the perceptions of business people, who rate transparency's performance of the country.

At the same time, the authorities against corruption have increased in numbers. As already mentioned, the *Coordinator on anticorruption* position became a *Secretariat* with a staff of 30 and the Secretariat lately became an *Independent Authority* with 503 employees, 18 directorates and six regional services. At present, Greece, apart from the Authority has three judicial bodies also tasked with fighting corruption, and over 20 bureaus of administration are responsible, among others, for the supervision, control and prosecution of corruption.

Moreover, there are 13 units of internal control in each ministry, as well as four supervising institutions, such as the Bank of Greece and the Capital Market Commission, who are all part of the anticorruption apparatus in Greece [70]. In total, approx. 85 bodies operate in Greek public administration, having as main task or supportive role to the fight against corruption.

Thus, it is obvious that new departments have been added to the old ones to fight corruption and exercise internal control corresponding also to the demands of the European troika¹⁴ representing the loaners and used by the governments ostensibly to increase their accountability, but actually to serve party politics. The result is an extended bureaucratic mechanism that is expensive for taxpayers and brings questionable effects, as was seen above. The ethics of politicians haven't changed and citizens' trust in the Greek political system hasn't increased [21, QB15, QB7; 71, pp. 9, 11].

Discussion and open questions

The goal of this article was not to find the causes of corruption in Greece; instead it aims to portray the function of politicians' rhetoric in the 'construction' of corruption. From the research, many instances of the use of corruption- and anticorruption-rhetoric by politicians have been identified, in order to damage the morale of political opponents and present themselves as corruption fighters, archangels of transparency, interested in the good of the 'people'. The examined cases' documents have shown that discrediting the citizens' trust (being regarded as 'voters') and undermining the morale of the opponent are the main functions of the discourse of the rival parties.

As already outlined, since the 1990s anticorruption reform has become an important political cornerstone of every Greek government over the years. European Union and international conventions, along with the legislation set by Greek governments, created a comprehensive anticorruption legislation and introduced administrative reforms to promote transparency. Despite that, Greece was unsuccessful in improving its score on the

¹⁴ A term used, especially in the media, to refer to the decision group formed by the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB). They were responsible to engineer, administer, and monitor aid packages in the context of the "bailouts" of Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal due to their prospective insolvency caused by the world financial crisis of 2007–2008. <https://www.esm.europa.eu/publications/safeguarding-euro/enter-troika-european-commission-imf-ecb>. (accessed: 11.07.2021).

Corruption Perceptions Index. Moreover, legislation did not boost the citizens' trust in political institutions. This is because politicians' have used (anti)corruption rhetoric primarily as a strategy capable of undermining the morale of the main political opponents, without hesitating to internationally present the country as an example of 'cavernous corruption'¹⁵ [72]. The constant projection of scandals, illegal activities, economic measures and infinite legal 'reforms', accompanied by statements and declarations which remain ineffective but are simply made to attract public interest and show that the political system is decisive, does not actually increase trust nor Greece's ranking in the common corruption indices. On the contrary, it destabilises trust [73, p. 139], and this even more when the aforementioned practice is used between different power groups or between political opponents [74]. A low level of trust in the country's political system is fertile ground for this type of rhetoric, as well as the reverse; the rhetoric accentuates and reproduces a low level of trust.

Greece's score increased, however, after 2012 when the economic crisis was escalating and neoliberal economic policies have been enforced due to the debt crisis [75]. Thus, anticorruption itself proved to be profitable both sides, foreign lenders and Greek governments' micropolitics.

Notwithstanding all the above, the social integrity of political elites to the Greek social structure and their submission to social control is a major issue, which needs to be examined in the near future for a better understanding of corruption and corruption discourse.

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¹⁵ *Focus* (22.2.2010), "2000 Jahre Niedergang. Von der Wiege Europas zum Hinterhof Europas. Abstieg ist beipiellos. Wie konnte das passieren?"; by Klonovsky M., No. 8/10, pp. 132–136, available at: https://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/staatsverschuldung/wirtschaft-2000-jahre-niedergang_aid_482500.html. (accessed: 02.07.2021).

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Author's information:

Effi Lambropoulou — PhD, Prof. of Criminology; elambro@panteion.gr

Лики Януса в антикоррупционной риторике в Греции

Э. Ламбропулоу

Университет политических и социальных наук «Пантеон»,
Греция, GR-17671, Афины, пр. Сингроу, 136

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На основе официальных отчетов и публикаций в прессе рассматривается, как риторика коррупции используется в греческой политике. Описываются функции, которые она выполняет. В первой части статьи приводится обзор международных исследований и контекстуального фона коррупции. Автор отмечает отсутствие в литературе исторических примеров по борьбе с коррупцией и анализирует факторы, которые исследователи соотносят с коррупцией, такие как степень демократии, (де)централизация политической системы, скандализация в СМИ и т.д. Во второй части кратко представлен подход греческих аналитиков к данной теме. Рассматриваются вопросы, касающиеся старых и новых форм клиентизма, которые вызывают наибольший интерес у греческих ученых. В третьей части описывается проведенный автором дискурс-анализ и его результаты. Показано, что коррупционная риторика политиков работает в первую очередь как стратегия, способная подорвать моральный дух главного политического оппонента (оппонентов), а иногда и как метод обеспечения электорального превосходства. По результатам анализа автор делает вывод о бесполезности попыток греческих правительств улучшить положение страны в антикоррупционном мире путем принятия законов, создания новых органов и учреждений по борьбе с коррупцией, игнорируя тот факт, что основные усилия должны быть направлены на улучшение имиджа Греции на международном рынке. Позитивное изменение имиджа страны на международной арене произошло в последние несколько лет благодаря главным образом неолиберальной экономической политике под опекой иностранных кредиторов. *Ключевые слова:* политический антагонизм, антикоррупционная риторика, предвыборная борьба, неолиберальная политика.

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Контактная информация:

Ламбропулоу Эффи — проф., криминологист; elambro@panteion.gr