Twice a Sacrificial Lamb? Comparing the politics of anti-communism and austerity through the Greek crises of the 1940s and the present

Spero S.Z Paravantis
Department of History
University of Luxembourg

Abstract
Which values do governments hold most dear, what or whom are they prepared to sacrifice in order to serve those values, and what role does fear play in securing support for the demanded sacrifices? The introduction to the paper lays out the theoretical groundwork asking if the word 'sacrifice' can even be used, and if so, what implications does its use entail? This paper then proposes to apply an interdisciplinary framework and vocabulary through which the Greek crises and the politics affected and generated by them, can be compared. These are the overriding theoretical questions of this paper in its attempt to compare the politics in relation to the Greek Civil War with politics of the financial crises of the present. The proposed paper is interdisciplinary, based in International History, but including theories from Legal philosophy, Political Science and Sociology to apply another vocabulary and theoretical perspective.

Terms that are easily recognized and applied to supernaturally-based religious practice. What would occur however, if one were to remove the supernatural connotation associated with them (if possible) and apply them to an analysis of policy generation and implementation in the history of contemporary Europe? Could these terms provide another type of vocabulary for a historian to more precisely identify the motivations behind certain policy decisions? Using Greece as a case study, is it possible to decode the true motivations for following policies, even when evidence countering them may indicate a more effective course of action? In so doing, can an apparent underlying need of society in general to maintain sacred values be identified, whatever they may be? Can they then be used to justify bringing others to the same way of belief, in what may be considered an act of redemption? What happens when these notions are no longer being applied to individuals and instead begin to be applied to collectives? These are the underlying questions that this paper will address.

This paper will summarize first of all the theoretical background of using the above listed terminology, and will then briefly outline the crises of the 1940s and present in Greece, using the afore mentioned vocabulary. The presentation will expand on the statements made in the following sections, using concrete examples from both periods to support the use of the proposed terminology, and will conclude by asking whether or not its use is appropriate for such an analysis and comparison, and whether or not it be said that twice in the in the past 70 years, Greece has been sacrificed in support of policies designed and implemented from abroad?

The use of the Terminology

The argument centers on the use the word of ‘sacrifice’ as a way to describe what has happened to Greece during crises in the 1940s and today, and the ways in which ‘solutions’ were and are implemented and justified according to notions about 'the sacred' or 'the profane.' Woven into the analysis are theories about the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane,’ and how the politics relating to the Greek Crises have been publicized and supported /opposed based on their connection with one or the other. Authors like Gordon Lynch and Roberto Esposito have written extensively about the role that the sacred and the profane continue to play in what has been described as a
world in which ‘sacred forms of communication’ have not ‘dried out’ with modern society.1 As a result of this, and of the tendency to overlook the sacred in by ‘relegating’ it to theology or sociology, it is argued that modern society has a ‘blind spot intellectually’ looking at the sacred as being a fundamental part of modern life.2 In other words, not only are these policies not passed from a rational perspective, but they arise from a profoundly subjective point of view. Taking this theory as a starting point, this paper deals with theological concepts such as sacred, profane, heresy, redemption and corruption, and examines the role that they play in the development of international policy, specifically in relation to notions of sovereignty. Related to the use of 'sacrifice,' are the terms 'sacred' and 'profane.'

What is sacred? That which communicates to us or represents an unalterable truth about our existence. In this context, sacrifice is what is required in order to bring someone or something into this context. The sacred and the profane therefore become intrinsically related, but, they must not be thought of in terms of good and evil, but rather simply as on being the other's opposite. Additionally, ‘far from entering an age of rational enlightenment, society remains profoundly shaped by compelling moral, emotional identifications, with symbolic representations of the sacred.’3 Indeed, the words ‘sacred’ and ‘religious’ are often confused to be synonyms, when in fact they are very distinct concepts, that if properly defined can rectify the false assumption of the ‘secular individual as someone solely guided by reason and not prey to the unreflective passions of sacred commitment.’ On the other hand, those who say that only the religious contain anything sacred are also mistaken. The sacred means a way of communicating that which individuals claim to be ‘absolute realities that exert a profound moral claim over their lives.’ These ‘forms’ (or in the language of semiotics, ‘signs’) generate their own version of evil (the “profane”) and set ‘moral boundaries beyond which lie people who are regarded as “inhuman” or “animals.”’4 Therefore, the sacred is ‘a way of communicating about what people take to be absolute realities, that exert a profound moral claim over their lives...generating their own visions of evil “the profane” and establishing moral boundaries beyond which lie people who are regarded as inhuman or animals.’ Additionally, ‘sacred forms of communication’ have not ‘dried out’ with modern society, and as a result of this, and of the tendency to overlook the

2 Ibid., pp.11-13.
3 Ibid, pp. 9, 11.
4 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
sacred in the ways he describes it relating it to theology or sociology, and that modern society has a ‘blind spot intellectually’ looking at the sacred in this way. This is the case because anything labeled as sacred is often seen as primitive. However, the sense of ‘timeless and universal moral weight attached to these Sacred Commitments’ fades and becomes uncomfortable if we begin to see that they are in fact modern. Modern societies consider themselves as ‘secular and modern thinkers’ and as a result are objective, but this is not the case. The theory holds that we must acknowledge that our sacred commitments can ‘justify horrific violence and repression challenges our sense that these commitments are not simply good, but the way things must be.’

This last point is crucial, since the notion of Sacrifice was to make something holy (redeemed) but to do so necessitated not only separation, but also death. In pre-Christian times, animals were sacrificed ‘crossing over a threshold of ‘indistiguishability’ between the preservation of life and the production of death. To make an animal sacred, it must be cut off from the world of the living, it has to cross the threshold which separates these two universes; this is the point of putting it to death.’ Translated to the secular, it can be argued that this principle still exists and can be seen in the ongoing economic programs being applied in Greece. Though people are not being put to death to be sanctified, in many respects a way of life is. A state is being remade in a foreign-designed image, i.e; in order to be worthy of redemption, sacrifices had (or today have) to be made.

**Anti-Communism**

During the early years of the Cold War, Greece was used as a symbol of the ‘sacred’ notions of Western Democracy and Liberal Capitalism, versus the ‘profane / obscene’ notions of Communism and Dictatorship. From 1946 to 1950, the United States poured millions of dollars into Greece, to prevent it from falling into the Soviet sphere of influence. The religious character of the language used to explain and justify the West’s commitment to a non-communist Greece,

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5 Ibid., pp.11-13.
6 Ibid., pp.13-14.
8 Although the changes are being made with consent, how the consent is sought and the degree to which it is accepted are up for debate.
even at the expense of fair and representative democracy within the country itself, were used to support very non-democratic practices within the country.annerume, in return for following the West, ‘gifts’ were made to Greece in the form of reconstruction loans, and membership in NATO, but at the sacrifice of domestic freedoms and independent Greek foreign policy. Where in the 1940s the sacred and profane notions woven into the laws, treaties and policies made for and directed to Greece, were centered on the competing ideologies of Capitalism and Communism, today these ideas of the Sacred and Profane are centered on the word ‘austerity.’ Embedded in this word are deep seeded cultural and political values which are revealed by the laws passed and implemented in support or in opposition to it. How the sacred motivations behind these policies are uncovered, also indicates what they can tell us about the role they play in the development of economic policy and theories about sovereignty.

Austerity

Today, the economic crisis in Greece (and in Europe by extent) may be seen in a similar way, but by using different terminology, with domestic and foreign freedom (pensions, wages, public services, schools, universities, energy, monetary and foreign policy) being sacrificed in order to ‘qualify’ for foreign (IMF / EU) loans. Since the Eurozone crisis began in 2009, Greece is again being held out as a sacrifice, but this time for an economic policy inspired by the Ordoliberal school of economics from the 1930s. The word ‘austerity’ itself has become something of a sacred/profane word in contemporary European politics, being equated with morality and competence, as sacraments in the secular-religious beliefs held about the solutions to the current crisis. “if we just become more disciplined, more austere, less charitable”; these ideals, transformed and applied to ‘secular’ economics, but no less emotionally charged, with

9 For example, support of arbitrary detentions and deportations to Makronissos, and the non-persecution of collaborators. For more examples see: Ed Vulliamy and Helen Smith, ' Athens 1944: Britain’s dirty secret,' The Guardian (November 30th 2014) http: www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/30/athens-1944-britains-dirty-secret?CMP=share_btn_fb

10 Johan Van Der Walt uses 'gift' in a different way. He describes it as a hypothetical European alternative to austerity, where the exporting members of the Eurozone could establish a non-reciprocal arrangement through which aid was given freely, without (or with far less) restriction, thereby fostering solidarity. See his article "Mandela, Merkel and the courage to give," (2012).

11 The presentation will use concrete examples of policies that were implemented in support of anti-communism to back-up the theoretical arguments made here.
any challenge to them being opposed vocally and passionately by the supporters. ‘Austerity’ is presented and supported as the ‘cure’ to Greece’s ailments, even as the very forces that could very well destroy liberal democracy in Greece (not to mention a free and open market) rise as a result of these ‘sacred’ policies. The numerous developments in Greece since the implementation of 'austerity' are largely matters of public record, however, for the purposes of this paper, the important aspects to keep in mind are how these policies were implemented and justified, and whether or not the justification and support for them can be identified as being part of the sacred or profane, and whether or not they can (or are supposed to) lead to redemption.12 When speaking about austerity, by necessity we must also speak about the current German government, its policies and the other European governments that espouse similar politics.

In Germany, the CDU is a fusion of conservatism and Christian social values. Originally conceived as a way to join Catholic beliefs with democratic ideals, it has grown to incorporate wider 'Christian' and political views. Practically, Christian democracy is economically liberal and socially conservative, and it has retained numerous, if not overt, religious elements, especially in Europe.13 Therefore, at its very core, whether admitted as such or not, the 'pound of flesh' mentality, drawn from Catholicism's historical emphasis on worldly punishment for sins, the CDU in Germany has adopted the position that financial mistakes need to be atoned for with harsh financial penalties. Financial packages for Greece, Portugal and Spain have been extended further by the 'bail-in' policy for Cyprus where the government was forced to confiscate people's savings, and to block their ability to withdraw money from banks.

**Conclusion**

The devotion of certain governments to these principles extend to the people they govern, for, when the programs, implemented by the mentality explained by the sacrifice notion, fail to achieve the expected results, then the fault is not permitted to lie with those who proposed it, but

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12 Again, as stated in note 11 for the sections "anti-communism," the presentation will use concrete examples of policies that were implemented in support of austerity to back-up the theoretical arguments made here.

with those upon whom the ‘solution’ was imposed. They were not ‘austere’ (insert devout) enough to warrant salvation, and therefore deserve to be sacrificed. These notions also cut to the very core of Diplomacy and power relations.

What are the solutions then? If we are trapped in a circular reasoning cycle, turning our perceptions into ‘perceived reality’ using a theologically imbued political terminology which continually places upon ourselves and others a moral (whether overtly stated as such or not) duty to repay either in kindness or in punishment (I sacrificed, ergo you owe me, or I owe you, therefore I will sacrifice). The solution is to consciously place behind us the ‘tit for tat’ mentality that has proven disastrous thus far in human society, establishing levels of dependency, that while beneficial for a few, keep the vast majority of people ‘spinning their wheels' in a hopeless effort to repay a debt that can never be repaid.

The key aspect of the discussion about the terminology used to justify theses policies is whether or not Greece can be used an example for other countries; in the 1940s, to show that the methods that were applied in support of anti-communism were effective, today, whether austerity has worked. Did sacrifice lead to redemption, or did indulgence lead to corruption? Did the sacred lead the way, or did the profane lead them astray? The objective being that by highlighting the true motivation behind the policies of both eras, perhaps they can be better identified as such, leading to less rigid attachment to policies like them in the future.

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