

At the 67<sup>th</sup> PSA Annual International Conference: *Politics in Interesting Times* (10-12 April 2017, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow), two Panels were co-organized by the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) in collaboration with ECPR's Southern European Politics Standing Group: 1) *New Security Threats in Southern Europe* and 2) *Social and Political Transformations in Southern Europe*.

## **REPORT ON THE PANEL**

### **NEW SECURITY THREATS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE**

By Marilena Simiti. *University of Piraeus*

The Panel *New Security Threats in Southern Europe* explored the causes, implications and responses to a range of so-called 'new security' threats, including migration, food insecurity, social upheaval and energy security. Dr Georgios Karyotis (University of Glasgow) commented on the papers as the Panel Discussant.

Dr Dimitris Skleparis (University of Glasgow) presented the paper: '**A Europe without walls, without fences, without borders': Greek migration and asylum policies amid the "migration crisis"**'. Dr. Skleparis argued that contrary to the prevailing narrative that the Greek government, guided by structural weakness, political instability, and uncertainty, ignored the Dublin Regulation requirements and let migrants and refugees transit unregistered to mainland Europe, leading finally to the EU's 'containment strategy', the government's policy was actually a coordinated and well-calculated strategy with a twofold aim: 1) to liberalize the country's repressive migration and asylum policies and to render visible the unfairness of the Dublin Regulation, 2) to gain leverage in the bailout negotiations. In order to support this argument the author analyzed Greece's migration and asylum policies in 2015 and the statements reported in the press made by officials of the newly-elected SYRIZA-led government. The author concluded that the actual outcomes and consequences of the government's policy choices were to a large extent negative. Thus the Greek government's desecuritization strategy proved to be ineffective.

Professor Petros Vamvakas (Emmanuel College) presented the paper: '**Migration, Food Insecurity and Populism from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean**'. Prof. Vamvakas' paper tried to evaluate the correlation between Food Insecurity (measured by food imports), demographic shifts (measured by patterns of migration) and political development (such as collapsing party structures and rise in populism) looking at changes in global structures His paper is part of a broader study that includes 45 states over a period of 30 years. Prof. Vamvakas argued that the contagion of state failure in the developing world and the rise in populism in consolidated democracies are outcomes of similar processes straining nascent or shallow institutional structures. Even though this pattern shares many similarities to the period of post 1890s, the post-2008 period is significantly different due to changes in the geopolitical architecture and intensified levels of global interactions. According to Prof. Vamvakas climate change and demographic shifts are primarily responsible for the tremendous changes in the economic and political environment at the start of the 21st century. This is especially evident in the

area defined by the littoral states from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean. He argued that for the last three decades from Greece to Venezuela the area has served as a geopolitical crossroad and peripheral to liberal democratic development, and has experienced similar shifts and outcomes, even though the trajectories have been different.

Associate Professor Marilena Simiti (University of Piraeus) presented the paper: '**Economic Crises and Urban Riots**'. The author presented initially a short overview of the literature on austerity policies and social unrest. She underlined that rioting did take place during the current economic crisis, however it occurred mainly at the margins of large scale demonstrations and rallies. Large-scale rioting did not become the predominant mode of collective mobilization. Episodes of large scale rioting, which are disconnected from more organized forms of contention, differ from rioting that takes place within a broader cycle of protest in regard to: 1) the organizational patterns, 2) the scale and 3) the protagonists of collective mobilizations. Large-scale urban riots usually share some common structural variables, such as unemployment, chronic poverty, income inequality, unequal consumer services, moral deprivation, police-community tensions, racial discrimination, etc. Urban riots, as the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the 2005 French riots and the English riots of 2011 illustrate, are primarily manifestations of enduring urban marginality and social polarization, than exclusive manifestations of economic crises. During economic crises social inequalities and the regime of urban marginality are usually magnified. However, urban marginality and social polarization may be elements cutting across periods of economic expansion and contraction. Consequently, an economic crisis is not a sufficient indicator of the outbreak of large-scale urban disruptions, unless one takes also into account the existing patterns of social and spatial polarization and the different forms they may take.

Mr. Vasileios Karakasis (Leiden University) presented the paper: '**The impact of “policy paradigms” on energy security issues in protracted conflict environments: the case of Cyprus**'. The author explored the factors that shape the decision-making of the policy-makers on the island of Cyprus, paying particular attention to the recently discovered gas reserves. He investigated which economic, geopolitical and historical parameters are taken into consideration before making a decision on energy security questions, especially when these unfold in a protracted conflict environment. Moreover, he researched whether policy-makers make a cost-benefit analysis in order to assess the best possible option as well as whether lessons drawn from the legacy of the conflict “enlighten” them in their decision. Finally, he tried to pinpoint the factors that make the policy-makers behave as “rational actors” or as “incrementalists”. To address this set of questions, the author used three sensitizing concepts – protracted conflict, energy security and policy paradigm- and collected data out of open-ended interviews with Greek-and Turkish-Cypriot opinion-leaders, policy-makers, analysts, energy affiliates and academics, conducted in 2014 and 2015. The author’s intention was to classify the statements and discourses he collected into two categories: “markets and institutions” and “regions and empires”. In the first category, inspired by the neoliberal paradigm, economic-laden arguments with respect to the monetization of the gas reserves are prioritized, while in the second one, motivated by the ‘neorealist paradigm’, political and geopolitical expediencies behind the energy discussion are highlighted. The author concluded with the challenges he has faced, due to the ambiguity of the material he had to deal with

as well as the fact that diplomacy cannot be fully captured by detached and representational observation.