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## Are we 'Nazi Germans' or 'Lazy Greeks'? Negotiating International Hierarchies in the Euro Crisis

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**CHAPTER NINE**

**ARE WE 'LAZY GREEKS' OR 'NAZI GERMANS'? NEGOTIATING INTERNATIONAL HIERARCHIES IN THE EURO CRISIS**[1]

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Forthcoming in Ayse Zarakol (ed) *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

This chapter argues that to understand international hierarchies, we need to examine not only the type of hierarchy, but also processes of internalization of − and resistance to − hierarchies. We will then discover that many hierarchies are not simply imposed from above, but that subordinate actors are often complicit in the ongoing production and negotiation of hierarchies. I begin this argument with the simple observation that some international hierarchies are taken for granted. Today, it seems obvious that there is a hierarchy in the Eurozone with Germany at the top and Greece at the bottom. Scholars, politicians and media see Germany as the leader and economic power-house of Europe, while Greece is represented as 'bankrupt' and 'dysfunctional' with high levels of unemployment. What we often overlook, however, is that it was not inevitable that these particular countries would occupy these positions in the hierarchy. Why Greece and not Italy, Spain or Ireland? We cannot explain why Greece became the poster boy for the Eurozone crisis based purely on its economic troubles − because Spain and Italy share similar debt problems as Greece and are just as closely monitored and subordinated to the austerity measures imposed by the IMF, the EU

and international lenders.[2] Likewise, while the German economy has been doing relatively well, it suffers from structural problems, including a growing number of working poor.[3]

The euro crisis has pushed national leaders to adopt policies and deepen European integration in ways that they would not otherwise have done.[4] Why? Economic scholarship has largely adopted what Ayse Zarakol calls an agentic/institutional understanding of hierarchy, focusing on the causes of the global financial crisis or the flaws in the architecture of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).[5] The problem becomes one of institutional design needing adjustment. In contrast, scholars in international political economy, sociology and anthropology have adopted a structural understanding of hierarchy, arguing that the euro crisis cannot be understood by economics and the institutional setup of the EMU alone. They have addressed the way in which the crisis is also ideologically constructed, focusing on the dominance of monetarism, ordo-liberalism and a particular idea of austerity.[6] Along these lines, scholars such as Fourcade, Antoniades and Hertzfeld have analyzed the stigmatization of Greece and the other 'PIGS' (the derogatory term refers to the economies of Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain, sometimes Italy is also included, leading to the acronym PIIGS).[9] It has even been demonstrated that the repetition of the acronym 'PIIGS' in public debates shaped the behavior of market actors toward these countries, such that increased media usage of the term 'PIIGS' was followed by increased changes in Irish bond yields.[10]

However, a focus on the character of the hierarchy – be it agentic/institutional or structural – only brings us some way in explaining the relative positions of Greece and Germany. In this chapter, I adopt a broad view of hierarchy, focusing on the interplay of mediatized discourses in the

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[2] Dooley 2014; Tzogopoulos 2013.
[3] Grahl and Teague 2013.
[4] Zarakol, this volume; Beach 2014; Tzogopoulos 2013; Rosato 2011; Schimmelfennig 2015.
[5] Soros 2012; Pisani-Ferry 2012; De Grauwe 2013.
[6] Rynner 2011; Blyth 2013.
[9] Hertzfeld 2013; Antoniades 2012; Fourcade 2013.
[10] Brazys & Hardiman 2015.

Eurozone, but contrary to a structuralist approach, I suggest that the ranking of states is an *interactive*, not unidirectional process, leaving more room for agency within international hierarchies. Self-labelling, including low self-esteem and anxiety about national status, is just as important (if not more important) than discourse emerging from top positions in the hierarchy. In other words, the euro crisis gains its public meaning through interactive dynamics that rank states by labeling them. It is the public naming and shaming in national and pan-European debates that not only construct, sustain and destabilize particular national stereotypes, but, as I will show, also shape a self-reflexive struggle over hierarchy in Europe. Both Greek and German public debates are deeply concerned with how 'the others' views 'us'.

This first part of the chapter explores why hierarchy appears awkward in multilateral institutions emphasizing sovereign equality. It shows how hierarchies are produced, upheld and challenged through stigmatizing and stereotyping labels. The second part of the chapter presents a survey of how German and Greek newspapers label – and thereby also rank Germany and Greece – and react to the way in which their countries are ranked themselves in a period of three months during the height of the euro crisis. The labels include Germany as 'Nazi oppressor and colonizer', 'strict teacher' and 'naïve victim' and Greece as 'colonized and oppressed – and possible neo-Nazi resistant', 'immature pupil' and 'moral sinner'. Each label positions the state very differently. Based on an in-depth analysis and contextualization of the stereotyping of self and other, the chapter suggests that rather than merely consolidating Germany's (and Northern Europe's) economic and political superiority and sustaining the subordination of Greece (and other Southern states); the euro crisis generates a series of more complex, self-reflective national debates and political gestures of repair and embarrassment. These dynamics reveal a deep concern in both Greece and Germany about how they are perceived on the international scene. The chapter concludes with reflections on

how international status struggles are more interactive and self-reflective than usually assumed, suggesting different ways in which hierarchies may change from within.

**Interactive labeling and the production of international hierarchy**

This section develops two theoretical claims about hierarchy in international relations. First, I suggest that that the norm of sovereign equality, which helps legitimize multilateral cooperation, requires a concealment of international hierarchy. Second, I propose that international hierarchies are produced through interactive processes of self- and other-labeling where subordinate states contribute to their own subordination.

*Hierarchy in a world of sovereign equality*

Hierarchy comes from the Greek *hierarchia* (ἱεραρχία), which means 'leader of sacred rites' – or 'sacred sovereignty'.[11] It is an arrangement of items (objects, names, values, categories, etc.) in which the items are represented as being 'above', 'below', or 'at the same level as' one another. We find social hierarchies in all societies, but hierarchy clashes with most assumptions about international anarchy that have dominated realist and much of liberal IR theory.[12] Yet, the important observation for this chapter is that if hierarchy is about stratification, its logical opposite must be equality rather than anarchy. This is important for IR theory because of the assumption that sovereign states are formally equal under international law irrespective of their military power, economic size etc.[13] For the same reason, hierarchy is also awkward for the functioning of multilateralism, including the European Union, which gives its members – large and small – a

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[11] Grint 2013, 90.

[12] For a discussion, see Zarakol, this volume; Donnely, this volume.

[13] See Reus-Smit 2005. Sovereign equality was formally recognized as the basis of diplomacy and international law at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). See Osiander 2011.

promise of sovereign equality.[14] The principle of sovereign equality is written into the EU's treaties and is reflected in the rights and privileges that all member states enjoy. In principle, this makes it possible for the Danish Prime Minister to have just as much voice in the nomination of a new European Council President as the French President during a European Council Meeting. Also the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is attached to sovereign equality. All members of the Eurozone sit on the board of the European Central Bank and have equal voting rights.[15] Yet, although sovereignty is a marker of equal status in multilateral fora, it does not put all states in a level playing field. The difference in voting weights between big and small EU member states suggests that some states are more equal than others.[16]

Yet, even a closer look at the distributions of formal rights and privileges in the Eurozone, i.e. the institutional form of hierarchy, tell us little about how hierarchies actually play out. The degree to which 'objective' systems of measurement of power (such as voting weights or length of membership) feed into the negotiation of the euro crisis depends on different labels that are attached discursively to the different member states. Perceptions of relative status flow from the ways in which nations define themselves and are defined by their place in the international pecking order.[17] This symbolic and mediated struggle affects the relative positions of states.

### *Social labels as markers of hierarchy*

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[14] This promise is historically contingent: before state sovereignty was established as a universal principle, polities could not (and did not) necessary expect to be treated as equal. There were great formal differences in status, rights and privileges between for instance, colonies, protectorates and free cities and empires. See e.g. Nexon 1999; Nexon & Wright 2007; Krasner 1999.

[15] On 1 January 1999, the third and final stage of EMU commenced with the fixing of the exchange rates of the currencies of the 11 member states initially participating in monetary union, and with a single monetary policy under the responsibility of the European Central Bank. It was not until German unification that a European Monetary Union became politically possible. During the Maastricht Treaty negotiations in 1991–1992, Germany sacrificed its strong *Deutschmark* for a common European currency and was allowed unification (Berger 1997: 57).

[16] The practical experience of statehood can differ dramatically, but sovereign equality remains a guiding principle for how states talk to each other in diplomatic relations (Adler-Nissen & Gad eds. 2013).

[17] Pouliot 2011; Pouliot 2016.

How do we know hierarchy when we see it? IR scholars have adopted insights from sociology, particularly from Norbert Elias and Erving Goffman, to show how stigmatization plays a crucial function in international relations by shaming states, displaying normality and clarifying the boundaries of acceptable behavior.[18] This literature suggests that labels single out particular socially constructed attributes, whether related to religion, geography, race, gender, class or language or something else.[19] These attributes are used to homogenize the nation discursively. Sometimes the label in question connotes that a particular state has or is assumed to have a presumed positive or negative attribute of some kind – a superior quality or a 'handicap' or perceived cultural, social or racial difference. For instance, labels such as 'Europeanization'[20] or 'gender equality'[21] locate states in international hierarchies. Stigmatizing labels' negative connotations become manifested in discriminatory practices that in turn designate the nation's status in international society. In world politics, labeling is often directly linked to the distribution of resources and opportunities. For example, the Corruption Perception Index, which orders the countries of the world according to the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians, has an impact on the allocation of development aid to many countries. While the index, provided annually by the international NGO Transparency International, has been criticized for reducing the complex political and economic challenges facing a state to problems of corruption, it provides an efficient means of rating states according to one feature.[22]

International hierarchies are often moral ordering tools. They help decide when a state is 'guilty' or 'innocent', when it has to pay for war crimes, when it can be sanctioned and when it is allowed to defend itself. After World War II, Germany and Japan were occupied by the Allies and were

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[18] Zarakol 2011; Adler-Nissen 2014.

[19] See Lippmann, for one of the first analyses of the importance of stereotypes for public opinion (Lippmann, 1922).

[20] Rumelili 2003, 2004.

[21] Towns 2012.

[22] Lancaster & Montinola 1997.

punished not just as military, but also as moral losers.[23] Such processes involve an interstate dramaturgy that produces, upholds and challenge hierarchy. By their very political and social usage, stigmatizing labels confirm the existence of distinctions between full rights and rights as social privileges extend to certain groups and denied to others. Thus, labels become part of the struggle of both the 'higher' and the 'lower' nations alike. When it comes to economic transactions and debt, hierarchies are often naturalized on the state level so that the moral worth of a state – and resultant moral ordering of states – is simply taken to be a direct reflection of its sovereign debt.[24] As Fourcade puts it 'economy is always and everywhere a morality play, where actors – individuals, corporations, countries – are apprehended not only through numbers, formulas and charts aiming at precision, but also through rather coarse moral categories of virtue and vice, good and bad, high and low'.[25]

Hierarchies in international relations depend on constant recognition by both those that are above and below in ranking. As Subotic and Zarakol explain, states' 'sense of self' or cultural intimacy may be linked to sense of shame, guilt or embarrassment rather than positive traits or characteristics.[26] In other words, states' international positions are not just a result of their struggle for a better status vis-à-vis other states as Social Identity Theory[27] would have it, but also a result of their dealings with their own past and domestic conflicts (which again are shaped by the outside world). This does not mean that hierarchies are legitimate or accepted by everyone – often they are not. But in struggling to manage their international status, states sometimes end up reproducing their own subordination.

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[23] Buruma 1994; Zarakol 2011; Adler-Nissen 2014.
[24] Fourcade 2013: 622; Dooley 2014.
[25] Fourcade 2013, 262.
[26] Subotic and Zarakol 2012.
[27] Larson and Shevchenko 2010.

**Negotiating hierarchies in Europe**

Many Europeans have held exaggerated beliefs about how 'entering Europe' would impact on the relative status of their nation. As Giurlando shows, Italy's entry into the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999 is an example of this. Italy (as all EU members) had to make many sacrifices to enter the EMU, and to build support for these sacrifices, Italian political leaders explained that EMU membership would mean that Italy would rise in status.[28] Even before the euro crisis, the adoption of the particular path of economic reform and the construction of EU-level governance helped rank EU member states. Examining Italian newspapers from 1996-2004, Giurlando shows that even though Italy was one of the founders of the EU, adopting the euro was framed as something that would solve Italy's marginalization in Europe, as Italians had continued to identify themselves and were identified by others as a 'second tier' country compared to Germany, France and the UK. Italians understood EMU membership as a chance to allow external forces to re-shape them as 'modern' and 'mature' Europeans.

Giurlando argues that this constant comparison with other member states is a form of 'associative evaluation' revealing a 'perceived hierarchy' in Europe.[29] Associative evaluation helps explain the hopes and aspirations in Italian support for the euro. Therefore, when Italy joined the Eurozone there was a widespread sense that the country had indeed entered the league of European elite countries. Later, following the euro crisis, populist discourses developed, leading to what some observers see as an emerging 'intra-European neo-racism'[30] and neo-colonial politics,[31] which

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[28] Guirlando 2012.
[29] Giurlando 2012.
[30] Kouvélakis 2012, xix, see also Andreou 2012.
[31] Vosolle 2014.

discursively infantislises the periphery in Europe.[32] The correction of 'PIIG' immaturity has been viewed as a 'civilizing mission', a paternalistic eurocentrism directed within Europe itself.[33]

However, contrary to a structualist understanding of hierarchy, this dominant civilizing narrative and its resultant ranking of states was not the logical result of inevitable pressures that dictated austerity as the only answer to the euro crisis. As Matthijs and McNamara convincingly show, the response to the crisis that arose out of public and economic debates, privileged certain definitions and solutions over others.[34] Austerity and structural reform became the respective cures for member states' national problems of 'fiscal profligacy' and 'lack of competitiveness' over more federal diagnoses.[35] Swift implementation of those policies, the argument went, would produce both fiscal discipline and labor market flexibility, and the crisis would gradually go away.[36] Yet this winning narrative and subsequent set of policy prescriptions are puzzling since they did not fit the situation in Ireland, Portugal and Spain and only partly did the 'fiscal sin' logic materialize in Greece. 'Plausible systemic counter-narratives of what went wrong'[37] included the Eurozone's lack for supporting economic governance institutions, or the pressures of persistent trade and financial imbalances, yet neither of those would end up driving the debate, nor the solutions offered. How did the disciplining austerity narrative become dominant?

The most convincing answer so far is that the 'myriad explanatory narratives of the Eurozone debt crisis' emerged in a split between a EU- and a national-level account.[38] Both EU-level narratives and national-level narratives reflected largely an institutional approach to hierarchy. EU-level accounts of the euro crisis pointed to the euro's flawed institutional design at Maastricht in

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[32] O'Neil 2014; Marder 2012.

[33] Marder 2012.

[34] Matthijs and McNamara 2015.

[35] Matthijs and McNamara 2015, 235.

[36] Matthijs & Blyth 2015.

[37] Matthijs and McNamara 2015, 230.

[38] Matthijs and McNamara 2015, 235.

1991 and the many missing unions (economic, fiscal, political, financial, debate and banking) that were never constructed.[39] National-level accounts, on the other hand, focused on failings within the individual member states, and thereby turned the euro crisis narrative into a 'morality tale' of Northern 'saints' and Southern 'sinners'.[40] As Matthijs and McNamara write, 'Hard work, prudent savings, moderate consumption, wage restraint, and fiscal stability in Germany were seen as Northern virtues and were juxtaposed to the Southern vices of low competitiveness, meager savings, undeserved consumption, inflated wages and fiscal profligacy in the Mediterranean'.[41] The solution to the crisis accordingly became one of 'necessary' reforms in the periphery.

The national-level account won. This meant that the sinners needed to start behaving more like the saints. If they did, all would be well with the single currency's future. Instead of rebuilding the Eurozone from the top down (with supranational solidarity mechanisms) as the EU-level account prescribed, this strategy tried to transform Europe from the bottom up. Arguably, as critics adhering to a structural understanding of hierarchy explained, this strategy would force the Eurozone onto a path towards some kind of 'Model *Deutschland* writ large', by making wage and price flexibility in the periphery into the main shock absorbers during future crises.[42] As Matthijs and McNamara explain 'German thinkers, opinion writers and policymakers played a pivotal role in making the diagnosis of the euro's ills as well as stipulating its cure, framing and ultimately 'resolving' the crisis' (Matthijs and McNamara 2015: 236).

While a structural understanding of hierarchy in the euro crisis takes some way in accounting for the role of public debate and stereotyping, it glosses over important interactive processes and reify states. Blyth, Fourcade and others[43] point at the homogenization of nations, resulting from the

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[39] Matthijs and McNamara 2015, 230.
[40] Fourcade 2013.
[41] Matthijs and McNamara 2015: 235.
[42] Matthijs & Blyth 2015, quoted in Matthijs and McNamara 2015, 235.
[43] with Matthijs and McNamara 2015, as an important exemption.

moral tales of 'sinners' and 'angels', but they fall into trap of claiming that 'Germany' is doing something – or rather that German political leadership is uncontested within or outside Germany. Yet to fully understand why a particular narrative about the euro crisis became dominant, and how this enabled Greece to be situated at the bottom of the reform agenda, we need to analyze the complicity of Greek voices in this debate. We need to look at the self-reflexive and highly interactive responses that led to the construction of Germany and Greece as in a hierarchical and antagonistic relationship. This requires changing the question from 'what or who put Greece in this position?' (where Greece becomes a passive victim due to Germany's domination) to the question: How is the hierarchical relationship produced?

## Searching for labels of Greece and Germany

To capture the process that produces hierarchy, we need to investigate not only dominant narratives, i.e. hierarchy as a structure, but also how subordinate perceive their own position and that of the rest of Europe – and their mutual resonance. With this purpose in mind, publically available material within the Germany and Greece was analysed, the two countries that came to represent two extreme positions in the euro crisis. To select the periods for data collection, a parallel search was done on Google Trends. Google Trends analyzes a percentage of Google web searches to determine how many searches have been done for the terms entered compared to the total number of Google searches done during that time. A search was done for the country name ('Greece', 'Germany' / 'Greek*' and 'German*') and the word 'euro' (specified as the currency). This was done in both Greek and German languages. The search period was limited to January 2008 to March 2014 to identify peaks on the resulting curves. Correlating peaks in the two countries were identified and a selection was made for the largest search peak and a three-month period around this peak: April, May and June 2010.

Newspapers were selected not by the criteria of top circulation, but with a view to the newspapers' agenda-setting qualities and to represent different political views and ways of stereotyping in tabloids, broadsheet as well as intellectual newspapers. The aim was to cover as broad a spectrum of domestic public opinion and debate as possible. For Germany this resulted in the choice of *BILD*, Germany's largest tabloid, *Tageszeitung (TaZ)* a Berlin-based intellectual newspaper, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine* - a centre-right broadsheet.

For Greece, selection of newspapers proved more difficult because the economic crisis has dramatically changed the media landscape. Some newspapers have been closed permanently or have limited their circulation to Sunday editions, confining to Internet version on weekdays. Moreover, new newspapers have appeared as well as a series of online papers, magazines and blogs. There is a major difficulty of access to archives. Greek newspaper archives are generally not accessible online.[44] On this basis, the decision was made to cover four newspapers, two of which represent the mainstream - *Kathimerini* (centre-right) and *To Vima* (centre-left). Both newspapers are highly agenda-setting, especially in their Sunday versions. The other two Greek newspapers are *Proto Thema*, a tabloid style newspaper, (mostly) in circulation on weekends, and *Avgi* a left-wing newspaper, representing mainly the left-wing party *Syriza* which the has been the main opposition party since 2010, a serious challenger of shifting Greek governments and winner of the 2015 general election.

With this selection of German and Greek newspapers, the key patterns in public opinion is captured, although the most extremist or populist stances were not covered, which were either low in circulation and/or do not have online archives. The types of articles were limited to editorials, which were known to shape public opinion and produce labels. Despite the increased digitalisation of media, major newspapers editorials continue to influence national and

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[44] One has to go to each newspaper site and search through that or do a Google search with 'site:(internet address of newspaper) (search words)' and then limit the search through Google tools.

international politics and events, as well as provide insight into social and broader culture issues. A search was done with two keywords 'Euro' and 'Griech*' in German editorials and 'Germany' (and derivatives) and 'euro' in Greek editorials. This resulted in a total of 221 editorials of which 152 were Greek and 69 were German. An open coding process was used, adding labels along the way to ensure that all possible labels were included in the analysis. This open coding was subsequently reduced to 10 labels. For Germany, this resulted in 'oppressor', 'teacher, 'victim', 'other' and 'none'. For Greece it was 'cheater', 'tragedy', 'child/pupil', 'patient' and 'resister', 'other' and 'none'. Distinction was made between who or what is labeled ('the other', 'oneself', 'both' or none) and whether the label is positive or negative.

### *Results*

The survey of the editorials makes it possible to correct the story of 'sinners' and 'saints' and the unidirectional force of hierarchy as a structure. First, labels of nations and nationalities used in the Greek and German newspapers refer to different ranking principles with different policy implications. Second, German and Greek media produce not only negative, but also *positive* labels of 'the other'. For instance, one Greek editorial in the main Conservative newspaper argues that 'we can learn from the well-tuned and disciplined Germans'. Third, and perhaps most interestingly, there is a considerable degree of self-stereotyping or self-blame taking place. 25 pct. of German editorials are stereotyping Germans, and the majority of these labels are negative. The number of 'pure' self-stereotyping was significantly lower in Greek newspapers (12 pct.), but 30 pct. of the Greek editorials labeled both Germans and Greeks, and over 70 pct. of these were negative or mildly negative of Greece, arguing that the crisis is Greece's own fault (due to mismanagement, an intrinsically corrupt political establishment, a spoiled culture etc.).

**Table 1: Labeling 'other' and 'self'**

| Labels | Greek newspapers Number/Percentage | German newspapers Number/Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Other | 56        37% | 16        23% |
| Self | 18        12% | 17        25% |
| Both | 44        30% | 9        13% |
| None | 30        19% | 27        39% |
| Others/not categorized | 4        2% | - |
| **Total** | **152** | **69** |

This widespread Greek and German self-bashing based on crude generalizations indicates that states do not just seek positive identities with a view to maintaining or improving their relative positions. Through public debates they also internalize international criticism and develop various forms of shame. In fact, as I will demonstrate, there a remarkable degree of interaction and responsiveness in the Greek and German debates on the euro crisis and their own role in it. Both Greek and German editorials are deeply concerned with how 'the others' views 'us'. Controversial depictions of Greeks or Greece in German debates (and of Germans in Greek media) are quickly picked up, circulated and widely discussed. This suggests a European – or transnational – dimension of a domestic debate about morality and responsibility for the euro crisis. This concern is also

apparent in the many blogs by Greek journalists and opinion makers, frustrated with the ways in which foreign media display Greek as moral hazard and stereotype all Greek citizens.[45]

The subsequent sections explore how the different labels invoke particular positions in the international hierarchy, how they are in dialogue or respond to news outlets in the other member states and how these labels suggest different responses to the crisis.

**Table 2: Distribution of labels**
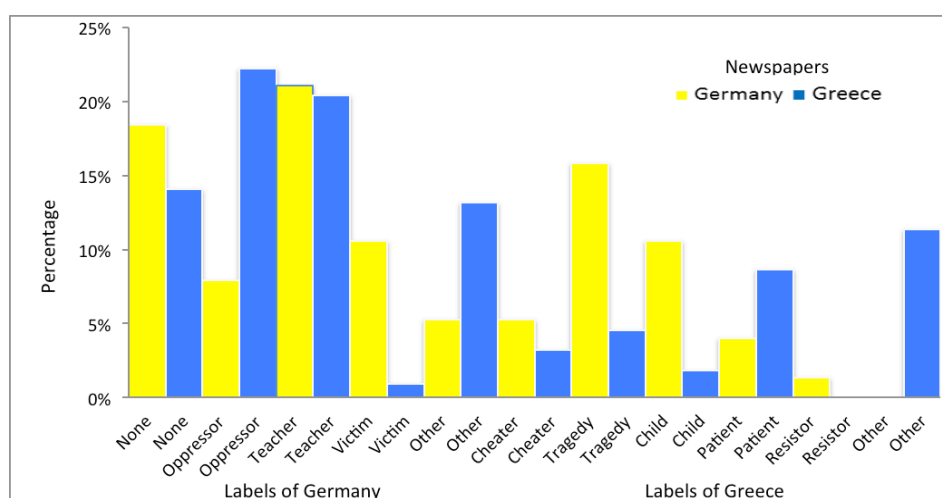


## Dominance: Negotiating the trope of Nazism

One of the most dramatic performances of hierarchy in the euro crisis is linked to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The Chancellor figures regularly in protests in the streets of Athens and Thessaloniki – with fangs dripping with blood and dressed up as the leader of a new Reich. The Nazi-version of the German Chancellor was staged first staged in a public protest in Greece in the summer of 2011, about the same time that Merkel made two provocative statements: that Greece was in need of more permanent 'supervision' and that its default could lead to the

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[45] See for instance 'Keep Talking, Greece', http://www.keeptalkinggreece.com.

dissolution of the euro and the collapse of European unity.[46] In Greek newspapers, no person is more identified than Merkel with the punitive measures.[47]

Yet when examining the Greek and German coverage of the trope of Nazism in the three-month period of 2010, references to the Nazi past turns out to be more complex. Many traits that are ascribed to 'the other' are traits that the Greek society struggles with domestically. Two patterns of labels relating to Nazism can be identified the survey of Greek and German editorials: (1) Germany trying to dominate Europe as it did during the Nazi regime, making Greece a victim or resistant to German occupation and (2) Greek neo-Nazism as the underdog's response to German hegemony and EU technocracy.

### *The German oppressor*

Several Greek editorials draw parallels between modern day soup kitchens and the 'hungry country' under German occupation. More than 500,000 Greeks died between October 1940 and October 1944, more than half of that figure is put down to hunger and malnutrition.[48] As one Greek editorial explains 'Germany does not pay its war compensations even though courts have ruled so, and the German government is politically pressuring Greece not to enforce the legal decision of its courts'.[49] The question of war compensation pops up in numerous Greek editorials. In a controversial July 2012 issue of the Greek left-wing magazine *Crash*, journalists placed a photo of the German Chancellor in orange prison uniform (à la Guantanamo) on the cover. *Crash* suggested sending Merkel to the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity (arguing that the Chancellor has 'made Greece a modern concentration camp,

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[46] *Bild* October 2010; *FAZ* April 2010.

[47] Other European countries have also dusted off their Nazi imagery during the euro crisis, including Cyprus (which was spared from German occupation), Spain and Italy.

[48] Lynn 2010: 5.

[49] *Kathimerini* 2010

in which the Greeks were isolated like lepers'.[50] With this labeling of Germany as oppressor, Greece becomes an innocent victim.

Yet the Greek (historical) subordination to German occupation and later dictatorship is not just a story of victimhood. It is also a story of humiliation and self-blame. As the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld notes, the Greek capacity for self-criticism is also 'an expression of political subordination, when some Greeks 'accepted' the military junta of 1967-1974 on the grounds that they 'needed' discipline or bowed before repeated Nazi claims that they were 'degenerate'.[51] This Greek narrative of subordination and need for external discipline generates a sense of shame, but it also paves the way for a possible active role: that of resistance. The newspaper *To Vima* quotes Navy reservist Giorgos Drakopoulos, 'All the Greek people must rally together to rid the country of all those who oppress and humiliate us'.[52] This trope is present in the streets of Athens with demonstrators holding banners saying 'Don't buy German products, resistance against fourth Reich' and the Greek unions have big banners saying *'Merkel Raus*!' (Merkel Out!). The idea of collective self-defense is seen as loyalty or bravery from the underdog's point of view.

The Greek image of Germany as a (neo-)Nazi oppressor is ambiguous and contested. Greek editorials are keenly aware of the sense of shame and guilt that German leaders carry with them. *Kathimerini* reports that this means that, 'the country, plunged into its guilt, is trying with agony to prove that all her actions are necessitated out of pure idealism'. According to this reading, Germany necessarily tries to mask its dominance as a form of 'euro-nationalism'. Interestingly, several Greek newspapers embrace and quote sociologist Ulrich Beck's criticism of German economic dominance.

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[50] *Crash* only appeared around that period and was highly marketed. Then the printed version stopped and now it is online only and it is not widely circulated.
[51] Hertzfeld 1987, 36.
[52] *To Vima*, Ref

While Merkel has never spoken up against the Nazi references in accordance with German stigma acceptance,[53] some German media have objected to the Greek accusations. On 10 October 2012, the *BILD* front cover reacted directly to the Greek criticism of Germany with the heading: 'Germany hasn't deserved this'. German tabloid newspapers picked up the use of Nazi symbols in Greek protests and were appalled. One cover reads 'the Greeks shames Europe… and still gets new millions'.

Related to the Nazi trope is the notion of 'colony'. Demonstrators in Athens use banners reading 'Merkel out, Greece is not your colony' and 'This is not a European Union, it's slavery'. The image of a colony is repeated in many editorials of *Kathimerini*, seeing the bailouts as colonial strategies. Interestingly, the colonial metaphor became almost literal in German press, when in October 2010, *BILD* controversially suggested that Germany or German citizens bought Greek islands as a compensation for the bailout. The heading read '*DIE REGIERUNG IN ATHEN WILL JETZT KRÄFTIG SPAREN – ABER WAS, WENN DAS NICHT REICHT? Verkauft doch eure Inseln, ihr Pleite-Griechen ... und die Akropolis gleich mit!*'[54], suggesting Germans should simply buy Greek islands and the Acropolis from the 'bankrupt-Greeks'. The tabloid quotes CDU leader Josef Schlarmann for saying: 'Greece owns buildings, companies and uninhabited islands that can be used for debt repayment'. Yet, far from all German newspapers rallied behind this proposal. German journalists are carefully watched by the rest of the world and by their each other in the ongoing self-reflexive debates about Germany's position in Europe.[55] For many Germans, upholding credibility after the atrocities committed during the Nazi regime still requires that Germany must live up to the highest moral standards and even outperform them, this does not involve colonizing or buying up Greek islands.

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[53] See also Jackson 2010; Adler-Nissen 2014.
[54] Bild, Ref.
[55] Adler-Nissen 2014

### *The complexities of Golden Dawn*

The reference to Nazism in the euro crisis comes full circle with the neo-Nazism of the Golden Dawn movement, which received 6,3 pct. of the votes at the general elections in Greece in January 2015. Golden Dawn is staunchly eurosceptic, opposing Greece's participation in the EU and the Eurozone. Its members are frequently responsible for anti-Semitic graffiti and their logo resembles a swastika. Officially denying that it has any connection to neo-Nazism, even though it openly admits heiling and selling WWII Nazi propaganda at rallies, the party admires Ioannis Metaxas, the Greek general who established the fascist dictatorship between 1936 and 1941.[56] Ilias Kasidiaris, a spokesman for Golden Dawn, wrote an article that was published in a Golden Dawn magazine on 20 April 2011, in which he said:

> What would the future of Europe and the whole modern world be like if World War II hadn't stopped the renewing route of National Socialism? Certainly, fundamental values, which mainly derive from ancient Greek culture, would be dominant in every state and would define the fate of peoples. Romanticism as a spiritual movement and classicism would prevail against the decadent subculture that corroded the white man. Extreme materialism would have been discarded, giving its place to spiritual exaltation'.[57]

In the same article, Adolf Hitler is characterized as a 'great social reformer' and 'military genius'. According to Greek cultural theorist Paul Cartledge (1994), this return to classical heritage (combined with references to Nazi myths) can be interpreted in part as a take-over from the West's desire for the modern Greeks to live up to their ancestors supposedly glorious past. Greek antiquity as a form of supreme society is in this sense constituted as a 'huge

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[56] Ellinas 2013.

[57] ''Ο Κασιδιάρης εξυμνεί τον Χίτλερ, 17 September 2012'''. Tvxs.gr. 2013-06-20, author's translation.

burden' on Greek self-understanding.[58] This combination of Nazi-era rhetoric to spite a German politician does lend itself to a perverted sense of irony. It underscores anthropologist Michael Hertzfeld's point that German Nazi propaganda on the one hand condemned modern Greeks as fit for only 'servitude and death', and on the other hand insisted that 'present-day Germans and the ancient Greeks [are] the twin pillars of the Aryan race'.[59]

The usages of Nazi regalia in demonstrations in Greek cities and the rise of the extreme right and left has given rise to much self-reflection in Greek newspapers about how the rest of Europe and in particular Germany views Greece. When polls showed that Syriza was not on the rise in 2010, one editor concluded:

> The news is better. First: we are no more the only black sheep in the white European herd… the polls show that the Greek public opinion is not only neo-fascists who want to burn the parliament but also people who think.[60]

With Syriza now in power, this 'black sheep' image has become stronger in the Greek discourse, further strengthening an obsession with status, hierarchy and resistance of international shaming.

**Subordination: Negotiating victimhood**

The most predominant image of Greece in German newspapers is that of the 'liar', 'cheater' and 'sinner'. These labels are linked to crime, decadence and lost virtues. These labels refer explicitly or implicitly to a better Antiquity where Greece was a 'superior civilization'. From this perspective, Germany is 'naïve' to support the Greeks. For the German tabloid *BILD*, the bail-outs (which are in fact mostly guarantees rather than transfer of funds) is called *'Griechenlandhilfe'*.

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[58] Cartledge 1994, 4.
[59] Hertzfeld 1987, 66.
[60] *To Vima* 2010.

*BILD* adopts the perspective of the 'ordinary German tax-payer' at the bottom of German society. Accordingly, Germany becomes the victim of a 'careless' and 'selfish' Greek society that drains the pockets of German tax-payers. One *BILD* headline reads *'Bundies gegen Lüge'* (Alliance against lies) and argues that journalists must now pose uncomfortable questions and 'dig out the truth'. *Bild* continues, 'they must ask why Greek tricked the EU and falsified statistics and say stop'.[61]

Falsified statistics refer to the time when the euro was launched in 1999. Italy was allowed in, despite doubts about whether it was ready. Greece was turned down because of the budget deficit and outstanding debts in a crushing blow for the political and economic establishment in Athens. By fiddling with the debt and deficit numbers, the Greek government later managed to convince the other EU members to allow Greece to join the Eurozone in 2001, signaling a landmark moment in the national aim to 'increase our standard of living' and 'bolster our national self-confidence', 'based more on knowledge and modern structures' as Minister of Economy and Finance Yiannos Papantoniou explained.[62]

While he secured Greece membership of the Eurozone, Papantoniou did not manage to convince the rest of Europe that Greece had modernized and become a well-behaving member state. In November 2010, the German magazine *Focus* released a front page with Aphrodite showing the middle finger and the headline 'Swindlers in the euro family'. The *Focus* cover was picked up by many Greek newspapers. In an instance of self-bashing, the Greek journalist cultivates the 'nasty' comments in the German press, arguing that German press has demonized Greece, making the crisis worse. As one editorial puts it 'The riots in the streets and the bad press is driving away tourists, we are not doing enough to attract FDI and to privatize'.[63]

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[61] *BILD*, May 2010.
[62] Lynch 2011, 54-55.
[63] *To Vima* 2010.

An interesting comparison is how Germany view Ireland, another of the PIIGS.[64] Ireland has been playing the 'good pupil' card in relation to developments in Greece. This has led Angela Merkel to urge the Greeks to follow the Irish example[65]. Also within Ireland, the hierarchy looks different. In terms of the causes of the crisis, the Irish have their own moral version of the immaturity thesis, as Power and Nussbaum highlight: 'Several people we spoke to believe that the Irish public acknowledges they are partly responsible for their own misfortune and are prepared to reap what they sowed.'[66] German public debate considers the PIIG countries quite differently. A 2014 poll in Germany showed that 60 pct. of those interviewed believe that Ireland 'took austerity lying down'.[67] This is not the case for Greece.

### *Greek tragedy*

A second and related image is that of the Greek tragedy, which suggests that the Greek suffering is inevitable and that there is little that Greece or any other state can do about it. The sense of tragedy has also been reflected in situations of tension between Athens and Berlin. For instance, Greek President Carolas Papoulias accused German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble of insulting the country by likening Greece to a 'bottomless pit' (later Schäuble refrained from using the terms, but it was repeated by German media and German government members). As one German journalist writes: 'The terrible scenes of Greece make us all deeply affected. But they should not lead to hasty relief efforts […] Where are the billions going anyway?'. The tragedy trope leads to the conclusion in several German newspapers in 2010 (repeated in May 2012 on the front page of *Der Spiegel*) that the Greeks must inevitably leave the Eurozone. 'Grexit' became

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[64] I thank Neil Dooley for this point.
[65] Lynch 2015.
[66] Power and Nussbaum 2015, pp.
[67] Kelpie 2014.

a common term and with that the idea that Greece had tricked itself into an exclusive club to which it did not belong and inevitably would have to leave.

Interestingly, several Greek editorials re-circulate this idea of an inevitable tragedy, which reduces the complexities of the euro crisis to a Greek problem. As one editorial in *To Vima* reads: 'We are not serious: we are not willing to work to get out of the mess where we led ourselves, acting immaturely'. Interestingly, the editorial adds: 'This is impossible to change'. In addition, Greek reports of its 'brain drain' of university educated young generations are often mentioned in *To Vima*, which concludes one of its editorials (without detectable irony!) that 'We need for Germany, France and UK to create a sort of economic directorship for Europe'. As Hertzfeld notes, quoting Mosse, 'even the most articulate members of an oppressed population may strategically adopt the negative features attributed to it by those of higher status'.[68] This self-bashing by Greek opinion-makers amounts to more than adapting to the practical realities of discrimination, it actively contributes to the subordination.

### *Immature pupil*

A third and related figure in both Greek and German newspapers is that of Greece as the immature pupil (with Germany cast as teacher). This label is related to the tragedy image, but it differs because it offers the possibility of change and improvement of position.[69] As with the other labels, the 'underdog vs. modernity' debate has a long history in Greek society. The self-labeling as 'immature' in Greece pre-dates the euro – and has an important relationship with a perception of not being 'modern', which is arguably synonymous with not being Western European enough. As one Greek editorial notes in 2010, 'it is no wonder that we will be thrown out of the Eurozone: we

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[68] Hertzfeld 1987, 66.
[69] Antonis Samaras, the Greek prime minister's charm offensive in Berlin in August for Germany's additional bail-out

are backwards, our technological development is low, and we have a middle class with no interests besides consumption'.[70] In terms of understanding the production of hierarchy, it raises a number of questions. Is there a 'hegemonic' notion of European modernity acting as a yardstick against which PIIGS come up short in their own (and others) estimations? How did that emerge? How is it reproduced or changed in the euro crisis?

There are plenty of 'tailored' diagnoses of immaturity for Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy (the PIIGS). The specifics are different, but the dominant narratives of what went wrong in these countries comes down to similar immaturity of political and economic governance that Greece is castigated for.[71] However, where Greece sees itself (and is seen) as the worst of the 'PIIGS', and lowest in the ranking of Eurozone members, Italians perceive that their relegation to second-class status – compared to the first class status enjoyed by Germany, France and the United Kingdom – is unjust. Associate evaluation matters for how states manage their relationship to other states.

Germany's role of teacher is uncomfortable in an interstate relationship in Europe, which is supposed to be based on equality and reciprocity. The perception of this role in Germany is far from homogeneous. Responding to the harsh criticism of Germany in Greek media, the German government organized an official six-hour state visit in 2012 where the German Chancellor met with Greek Prime Minster Samaras. In preparation of the visit, Samaras explained: 'We will receive her as befits the leader of a great power and a friendly country,' he said. 'People know that this government means Greece's last chance. We will make it. If we fail, chaos awaits us.'[72]. Samaras made an ambiguous statement: to be a 'great power' and a 'friend' are two different things and the ambiguity is also reflected in Merkel's statements.

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[70] Kathimerini 2010.
[71] Dooley 2014.
[72] McElroy 2012.

Keenly aware of the importance of symbolic gestures, Chancellor Merkel arrived in Athens in 2012 with the state plane flying the flags of Greece and Germany. The gesture set a tone of humility from the German camp. Merkel herself is very aware of the importance of renegotiating (or concealing) the hierarchy between the two states: 'I have not come as a taskmaster […] And nor have I come as a teacher to give grades, I have come as a friend to listen and be informed.'[73]

However, the subsequent remarks confirm the role of the teacher as Merkel began to evaluate the Greek reform efforts:

> I come from East Germany and I know how long it takes to build reform […] The road for the people of Greece is very tough, very difficult, but they have put a good bit of the path behind them. I want to say you are making progress!

Interestingly, Prime Minister Samaras contributed to the role-play. Greek officials underlined that Samaras was indeed a good pupil: 'Samaras showed a real will to change things', as one Greek government official says to German newspapers. 'He stressed what Greece had to do, not what others had to do for Greece.' In addition, the German officials respond by confirming this role: 'In our view Samaras is really trying to get things done,' one German official said, requesting anonymity. 'Nobody should see this trip as a sign that all is perfect. But we recognize things are moving in the right direction.'[74]

Yet the awkwardness of Greece's relationship with Germany was on display during the visit where Samaras stressed: 'Greeks are a proud people [and] our enemy is recession. But we are not asking for favors. In my discussion with the German chancellor I pointed out, however, that the Greek people are bleeding'.[75] This suggests that rather than being the pupil 'making progress', Greece is a strong and full-grown nation, suffering from the recession. Interestingly,

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[73] Smith 2012, pp.
[74] Ref, 1. 2. 4
[75] Smith 2012.

the principle of equality of opportunity is stressed in the 'we are not asking for favors' remark. On the one hand, Samaras insists on taking on the responsibility for resolving the crisis, suggesting equality between Greece and Germany, and on the other hand, he suggests that the crisis is more structural, putting Greece to its knees.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that neither an institutional nor or a structural understanding of hierarchy can explain the position of Germany and Greece in the Eurozone. The two understandings of hierarchy need to be combined and complemented with an analysis of national identity. This is because the euro crisis is not only about the skewed architecture of Economic and Monetary Union or failed national policies. It is also struggle over the sense of national self. Moreover, hierarchies (both when they appear as formal institutions and as broader societal discourses) are interpreted and reacted upon. Examining Greek and German debates about the each other's role in the euro crisis, this chapter has demonstrated how the crisis strengthens self-reflexive and highly interactive debates on national identities, self-blame and self-stereotyping. This interactive dynamic means that both Greece and Germany can appear as innocent victims (the Greek oppressed and colonized victim, the naïve German tax-payer) that suffer from the other's brutality (Nazism) or laziness (decadence). Tropes of Nazism in both German and Greek versions, criminality and colonialism are invoked as the Eurozone members are forced to interact more closely as the euro crisis; enforcing both a sense of common destiny and creating ideological and political divides. This results in complex political struggles that often collides nations with their leaders or with particular groups.

There are important tensions between ideas of state sovereignty (equality) and principles and practices of rankings of states (hierarchy). On the one hand, international organizations such as the EU guarantee all member states the same status and obligations (formal equality of all Eurozone

states and their equal obligations in economic and monetary politics under EU law). On the other hand, international law and multilateral governance pave the way for organized inequality through rankings of national performances. These institutional rankings have implications not just for economic policies, unemployment rates and domestic social unrest, but also for structural and more encompassing classification of states and national identities. Within the EU system of formal equality, an institutional hierarchy is reinforced by mutual stereotyping and moral shaming. The German Chancellor's delicate balancing acts during state visits to Athens indicate the difficulty of negotiating such hierarchical position in a discourse of equality.

Mediatized labels and stereotypes suggest particular positions for states and make different kinds of political decisions possible. Depending on whether Greece is a bottomless pit or a spoiled pupil in need of more discipline, it will need to act differently. Likewise it makes a difference for German strategy whether German economic dominance is labeled 'strict', 'oppressive' or downright 'hysteric' by Greek and German newspapers. The classifications of states in the euro crisis are volatile and ambiguous, making alternative political choices not only possible, but also more likely. Hierarchies can involve a high degree of self-reproach, irony and − more generally − a heightened self-consciousness. States can seek to resist domination or to move up in the hierarchy, but in doing so they often end up expressing complicity with the very same order they seek to resist. In this sense, Greece is complicit in its own relegation to the bottom of the hierarchy. This complicity, however, also means that there are possibilities of change from within and below in the hierarchy. This raises all sorts of interesting questions: are all states equally concerned about how they are viewed by others? Or are Germany and Greece more concerned about their international ranking than other states? If so, is this linked to their history and to their common fate and obligations in the euro crisis? More broadly, does the European project, rather than ensuring sovereign equality, strengthen hierarchy and thereby national shame? Answering these questions will require addressing how

institutional and structural hierarchies interact – and how reflective practices contribute to the evolution, transformation and sometimes undermining of these hierarchies. Such practices are deeply political and while their consequences are far from automatic, they show a pattern. This is, ultimately, the key added insight of focusing on the social production of international hierarchy and the interactions within it.