

# The Greek diaspora and the homeland in the time of the pandemic

Edited by Antonis Kamaras



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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy of SEESOX.

## Introduction

This collection of opinion pieces originated from the Greek Diaspora Project's blog which is dedicated to the interactions engendered between the Greek Diaspora and Greece due to the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic. These contributions were collected between May and September of 2020. They thus cover interactions that commenced with the initial reactions of Greek diaspora to the pandemic and the initial responses of the Greek government to the pandemic.

Underlying this collection of contributions is the understanding that the pandemic, being par excellence a global event, will both draw diaspora communities closer to the Greek homeland as well as affect their own communal evolution and, thus, directly or indirectly, the shape of their relationship with Greece. This understanding has also determined the main three themes of this collection.

First, the pandemic is seen as a major homeland crisis which, like all such past crises, mobilises diaspora actors with the purpose of aiding or connecting with the homeland. In the case of the pandemic this aid in its most consequential form originates – uniquely in the annals of Greek Diaspora & homeland relations - from Greece's significant diaspora scientific community. Such diaspora scientific involvement includes the communication and imparting of expertise and the advocacy of remedies relevant to the management of the pandemic and the treatments of its effects.

Second, the pandemic is a crisis for all of the countries that host Greek diaspora communities, affecting the lives of people of Greek descent, ranging from third-generation diaspora Greeks to more recent cohorts who migrated abroad due to Greece's recent, nearly decade-long economic crisis. As such, the pandemic affects profoundly the lives of diaspora Greeks in the domains of the sacred and the profane. In the domain of the sacred, the desirable degree of adjustment to the pandemic in the case of religious, Greek Orthodox observance becomes an issue of cross-border discourse and contestation, drawing into it the practices and proclamations of Greek Orthodox authorities in Greece and abroad. In the domain of the profane, the pandemic generates claims to the Greek state, by the stresses it imposes on the welfare of the less privileged Greek citizens living abroad and these claims in turn become contested in diaspora, and diaspora and homeland discourse.

Thirdly, the pandemic due to its massive, global impact, generates responses relevant to diaspora and homeland relations both in the EU and the US. Thus, the pandemic justifies a special focus on a) how the Greek state has interacted with the EU's legal order and policy response towards citizens of EU member-countries wishing to return home amidst widespread travel restrictions b) the impact of the pandemic on the relationship of the Greek-American community, the Greek diaspora's most numerous, wealthy and powerful, with Greece.

Our first theme entitled 'Diaspora scientists and technocrats into the homeland's pandemic fray' includes four contributions.

Foteini Kalantzi's (A.G. Leventis Research Officer at SEESOX) overview of diverse, Greek and non-Greek, diaspora and homeland, pandemic-related interactions in a comparative perspective, ranging from repatriation initiatives, to the offer to the homeland of assistance, either in the form of funding or purchasing of medical materiel, as well as in the form of medical advice.

Ioanna Soufleri (Science Editor of the Greek newspaper TO VIMA) sees the involvement of Greek diaspora scientists in the management of the pandemic in Greece as a natural progression, as much as a culminating point, to their nearly two decades' involvement in the popularization and the governance of the scientific enterprise in Greece. She notes evidence, which precedes the pandemic but also informs their pandemic-related response, that testifies to Greek diaspora scientists' commitment to the homeland, a commitment which has demonstrated itself in a variety of different ways.

Kimon Dracopoulos (Assistant Professor in the Data Sciences and Operations department at USC Marshall School of Business) relates his personal experience of how he has worked with the Greek Government, the political leadership as well as public health and civil defense technocrats, in order for the country to utilize advanced machine learning tools so as to manage and control tourist flows during the critical for the Greek economy summer tourist season. Kimon Dracopoulos contribution underlines key features of the scientific diaspora relevant to the pandemic's management in Greece, such as highly specialized knowledge, as well as the necessary homeland preconditions for such knowledge to be effectively transfigured into effective policy action by the Greek state.

Antonis Kamaras (Research Associate of the Greek Diaspora Project at SEESOX) compares and contrasts the input and impact of diaspora technocrats and scientists during Greece's preceding economic crisis and the subsequent pandemic crisis. In both crises Greek scientists and technocrats brought to the table independence from the Greek political system, prestige established abroad and specialized expertise not available in Greece. What differentiates the two crises is political contestation, with diaspora technocratic expertise during the pandemic period, despite the highly negative economic impact of the public health policies that this expertise advocated, enjoying majority consensus. By contrast, the policy responses to Greece's fiscal crisis were debated and implemented in a highly polarized environment which affected public perceptions of the involvement of diaspora's scientists and technocrats.

Our second theme entitled 'The sacred and the profane: religious and socioeconomic aspects of the diaspora & homeland relationship during the pandemic' includes four contributions.

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis (Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science & Public Administration at Bilkent University) analyses how the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as other major Greek Orthodox prelates in Greece and abroad under his supervision, adopted a more welcoming attitude towards public health ordinances, issued by state authorities worldwide, which constrained or altered Greek Orthodox liturgical practices. In doing so, the Patriarch built on his previous record of progressive stance towards major policy issues, a stance which has increased his visibility and support within Greece and in the wider international community at large while also aligning him with Greek Orthodox flock residing outside Greece and primarily in Western societies. This stance, in the case of the pandemic, has also put him at variance with Greece's Greek Orthodox leadership, with which the Constantinople Patriarchate's relationship is often contentious, while also giving leverage to the Greek government in extending pandemic-related public health measures to Greece's places of worship.

Georgios E. Trantas (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at Aston University, School of Social Sciences and Humanities) argues that this position has been shaped by two influences. First, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople's general guidance to churches under this supervision, to respect the ordinances of the public authorities of their host countries. Second, by the clear order of host countries' public authorities, as in the case of Germany, to suspend Holy Communion, a subject of still intense controversy in Greece and a liturgical practice which the Patriarchate, without calling for disobedience to state authorities, declared that it cannot be a conduit of infection.

Othon Anastasakis (Director of SEESOX and Principal Investigator of the Greek Diaspora Project at SEESOX) looks at how the pandemic has disproportionately affected European migrants in the UK, Greeks included, employed in the severely hit retail trade. Such migrants have not enjoyed by and large the financial cushion needed to protect them from their loss of employment, were not supported by the UK government as other employees and self-employed have, due to either the informality of their employment circumstances and/or their lack of unionization and could only attempt to return to their more disadvantaged European countries of their origin that they had left due to their lack of attractive employment opportunities.

Harry Theotokatos-Field (Associate of the Greek Diaspora Project at SEESOX in Australia) looks at a similar demographic in Australia, Greek citizens who are temporary visa holders (TVHs). He registers the mobilization of Greek-Australian stakeholders through communal action, representations to the host country state authorities and advocacy in the diaspora press, aimed at securing support for Greek TVHs. He also points out that Greek authorities, represented by Greek Embassy officials, have sought to promote nostalgia tourism as a form of economic solidarity by affluent Greek-Australians to the homeland, while at the same time failing to offer financial support to the hard hit Greek TVHs. His observation points to a unique feature of the pandemic in that, as it hits both the homeland and host states, it mobilises the Greek state to seek support from the diaspora while simultaneously exposing the same state's unwillingness to offer its support to the less fortunate diaspora groups.

Our third and last theme entitled 'The pandemic and the homeland through the prisms of the EU and US' includes three contributions.

Vasiliki Poula (Law student at the London School of Economics and a Research Assistant at SEESOX's Greek Diaspora Project) identifies the impact and interaction of European Union (EU) legal provisions and mechanisms, activated by the pandemic and affecting freedom of movement, with efforts undertaken by the Greek state to facilitate the selective repatriation of those of its citizens who wanted to return to Greece in conditions of severely restricted international travel. The larger issue that emerges is that in a crisis of such an international magnitude a core mission of a nation-state, providing succor to citizens abroad who are at risk, becomes mediated and must be accommodated by a flexible regulatory response by the EU supranational entity of which Greece is a member state.

Alexander Kitroeff (Professor of History at Haverford College in Pennsylvania) compares and contrasts the response of the Greek-American community to the pandemic's impact on Greece with that of World War II, another global crisis, contemporaneously experienced by Greece and its major diaspora communities. He finds that, in contrast to WWII where an increasingly affluent Greek-American community mobilized in support of a homeland living under a brutal occupation,

contemporary Greek-Americans, while proud of their homeland's effective response to the pandemic, are primarily focused in assisting their own communities. Members of these Greek-American communities have been suffering, just like other US citizens, from the pandemic compounded by the mismanagement of its effects by the Trump Administration.

Yiorgos Anagnostou (Professor of Transnational Greek Studies at The Ohio State University) renders specificity to the impact of the pandemic on the strategizing and positioning of an important Greek-American actor, namely the leading Greek diaspora newspaper, The Greek Herald. Yiorgos Anagnostou initially traces how The Greek Herald, a media organisation enmeshed both in Greek-American diaspora as well as in homeland politics, transitioned from supporting the candidacy of Hillary Clinton to supporting the Trump Administration – a function of the desire to be influential in the triangle formed by the US Administration, whoever the White House occupant may be, the Greek-American community and the Greek state. He subsequently looks at how the mismanagement of the pandemic has facilitated the transition, of this important diaspora newspaper, to becoming a critic of the Trump Administration which might well presage its future role in a triangle featuring the Biden Administration, the Greek-American community and Greece.

Following these contributions, the volume, in its concluding section, discusses continuities and discontinuities namely from the Fall of 2020 onwards, in relation to the trends identified by the volume's authors, as well as the potential saliency of these trends in the post-pandemic period.

# I Diaspora scientists and technocrats into the homeland's pandemic fray

## *Diasporic responses to the pandemic: Some initial observations*

By Foteini Kalantzi

The relationship between homeland and diaspora has the potential to acquire special significance in times of crisis, when issues of national belonging and solidarity become salient. This article looks at a selection of cases that demonstrate such diasporic engagement during the current unprecedented times of the pandemic crisis. During crises, diaspora groups can respond quickly, and their knowledge and familiarity with their home country on many levels, such as the social, political and economic, makes the response targeted. However, the pandemic is offering us a new framework to look at the homeland-diaspora engagement. The characteristic of the current crisis is that it is equally hitting homeland and hostland, so diasporas face the same difficult conditions. This is what makes this case exceptional when compared to other crises.

The following opinion piece looks at diverse responses by homelands and diasporas to address the pandemic. Based on initial observations, it suggests that there are disparities between the responses of different states. Research on repatriation of citizens stranded abroad or mobilisation for assistance for the management of the pandemic in the homeland could reveal the level of engagement between homeland and diaspora. In the case of Greece, there is an ongoing effort by the government to manage repatriation through the General Secretariat for Civil Protection and the Crisis Management Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; however, the Greek government was judged when many Greeks were stranded in a London airport, when their flight was cancelled. Forty-five million euros was allocated from the EU budget to help member states' efforts to repatriate their nationals from third-party countries. Even (post-Brexit) Britain has quietly obtained EU support to cover the costs of repatriation flights from Japan, the US and Peru for more than 14,000 people. However, the British Foreign and Commonwealth office has come under heavy criticism from British Pakistanis for their abandonment in Pakistan during the coronavirus pandemic. Governments worldwide have also been criticised for their failure to repatriate more than 100,000 ship employees still stranded at sea. Also, China's ruling communist party has been attacked for the failure in repatriating its citizens.

In the case of trying to mobilise their diasporas in order to assist in the fight against coronavirus, Serbia implemented its Returning Point programme, in cooperation with the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions and consulates, and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme. Through this Programme an open call was issued to health workers from the diaspora currently not professionally engaged, to temporarily return and help fight the epidemic

in Serbia. Greece employed the expertise of Greek diaspora scientists (such as Elias Mossialos) to offer their advice for dealing with the coronavirus; they assisted with the alleviation of certain pandemic risks and with the adoption of measures.

It is also noteworthy that the coronavirus pandemic has revived the [World Bank's interest](#) which facilitate monetary flows from diasporans to their countries of origin. In the past Israel, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and the Philippines have managed to finance development projects in this way. The renewed interest in diaspora bonds during the pandemic raises the question whether Greece would be willing to instrumentalise this investment tool. Perhaps the present moment poses a better opportunity for diaspora bonds, unlike the last unsuccessful effort back in 2011, when the Greek government was unable to raise the 3 billion dollars that it hoped for from the Greek community in the United States.

Diasporas prove their aptitude to support the homeland in times of crisis in a variety of ways. As the immediate responses in the case of the pandemic demonstrate, diaspora actors have channeled their efforts to support their homeland with financial resources, medical equipment, technical and advisory support. In many cases, new initiatives and structures have been set up to deal with the current crisis.

Regarding financial support to Greece, for example, the Hellenic Initiative, which is a transnational organisation, originally established in the US, of the Greek Diaspora has launched a fundraising campaign, the [THI Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund](#), for raising donations from Greeks and Philhellenes of diaspora to support the country's public health system, entrepreneurs and vulnerable people. Also, the high-profile Indian diaspora group [Indiaspora' has raised 600,000 dollars](#) to help communities that have been greatly affected by the pandemic crisis. More than half a million dollars was raised with [contributions from the Armenian diaspora toward the homeland](#). Furthermore, members of the [Bangladeshi diaspora from the United States mobilised funds](#) in support of poor families in the homeland financially affected by the pandemic. Furthermore, NOVA Ukraine, a U.S. non-governmental organisation, raised approximately 40,000 dollars and it has been working closely with Ukrainians in Canada to raise money toward the ['Protect Ukrainian Doctors from Coronavirus' campaign](#).

There are several examples, whereby diasporas supported the homeland with medical equipment. Nigerians in the Diaspora Commission have set up the 'Diaspora Support Initiative' for collection of funds to provide medical equipment and treatment for Covid-19 patients in Nigeria. Also, as it was reported, a [shipment handed over to the Ministry of Health of Armenia](#) and distributed to health facilities, included more than 87,000 medical gowns, 20,000 KN95 masks, 24,000 medical masks, 101 non-contact thermometers, biochemical raw materials for coronavirus diagnostic tests, and other medical instruments. Lebanese diaspora in Australia offered 300 testing kits to the remote northern [Lebanese town of Bsharri](#).

In addition, technical and advisory support was offered by diasporas. This kind of support is more valuable in contexts of developing countries, where social and public health services are not adequately developed. For example, the [Kurdish American Medical Association](#) developed a Covid-19 team to translate public health information and educate the global Kurdish community through the employment of social media. Similarly, [the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas](#) introduced 'telemedicine', i.e. long-distance coronavirus consultations for patients in Nigeria, particularly for those living in areas with limited or non-existent medical access.

In the context of the crisis, new diaspora groups were born to support communities, illustrating that a crisis such as the pandemic affects group cohesion within single or between diaspora communities irrespective of any interaction with the homeland. The '[Irish Covid-19 Support Group](#)' was born out of the big Irish community in British Columbia and it provides a space for the Irish community to come together to connect, coordinate, share information and keep an eye on the welfare of the Irish in British Columbia. Likewise, the group '[4FRONT's Youth Activism](#)', organised online meetings with young leaders from the Caribbean diaspora to discuss different government responses and the ways that the pandemic has impacted communities in US, France, Japan Canada and Brazil. Moreover, the [Greek Community of Melbourne](#) developed a coordinated response for Greek citizens without Australian rights during the pandemic; also a number of community organisations cooperated to prepare packages for families affected by the pandemic in the community.

The above examples of the immediate responses of diasporas and states towards their diasporas offer a fertile ground for further research on the ways and levels of interaction between homeland and diaspora. They also reveal the diverse capabilities of diasporas in terms of financial strength, mobilisation agility, and efficiency in deploying their networks to offer other kinds of help, such as technical support, equipment and advice. Last but not least, they portray that the pandemic can be observed through the lens of transnationalism, as there are signs that this crisis has triggered enhanced interaction between diasporic communities of different host countries in support of the homeland.

Foteini Kalantzi is the A.G. Leventis Researcher at the Diaspora Project in SEESOX, St Antony's College, University of Oxford

## *Greek diaspora scientists: From Dolly to SARS-CoV-2*

By Ioanna Soufleri

I began working at the VIMA newspaper right after concluding my post graduate studies abroad (in Britain and France). In the space of a few months, in early 1997, I went from a member of the student diaspora to a reporter for one of the oldest newspapers in Greece. My hiring by VIMA, the circulation of which stood at the time at 200,000, marked the first instance of a Greek newspaper staffing a reporter exclusively dedicated to covering scientific issues.

The timing could not have been better. In February of 1997 the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal, was announced to the world (Dolly was actually born a few months earlier). Shortly afterwards the isolation of embryonic stem cells became possible, enabling the sector of regenerative medicine to be borne. Contemporaneously, the decoding of the human genome (the completion of which was announced triumphantly by President Clinton in June 2000) was to revolutionize biology. All these scientific achievements on the one hand enchanted the Greek public, but on the other hand, they engendered fears and conspiracy theories, particularly so in the case of cloning. Thus, every week I would seek out scientists to interview, who would provide an accurate explanation of the research achievements that were being reported in credible scientific journals, for example, Nature and Science.

My contact with the Greek scientific diaspora came about due to this search for specialist scientists. But I emphasise that I was not looking for Greek scientists! It just so happened that often enough the leaders of research teams who published in prestigious scientific journals were Greeks. In the vast majority of cases they were diaspora Greeks and in far fewer cases they were diaspora Greeks who had repatriated in order to staff Greek universities and research institutes. This personal experience of mine seems to be confirmed by the numbers of scientists of Greek origin who are employed at universities and research institutes abroad.

I was never refused an interview by a Greek diaspora scientist. That being said, most of non-Greek scientists also seem inclined to explain their achievements to the wider public, even if the related inquiry originated from the other end of the world. Nonetheless, for Greek diaspora scientists an interview with a newspaper from the homeland always seems to have greater emotional charge. Rarely would the interviewee stick to the subject matter at hand, even for second generation scientists with less than fluent Greek. Thus, when the purely scientific discussion for the purposes of the newspaper's reportage was completed, the discussion would revert to Greece, with Greek political, economic and research issues being at the forefront.

Were I to encapsulate my experience with the hundreds of Greek diaspora scientists I had the pleasure to work with, I would focus on two themes: first their aptitude to contribute to the homeland and second the high esteem in which they held one another. Regarding the latter observation, which was in stark contrast with my observations of the scientific community resident in Greece, Greek

diaspora scientists I interviewed would invariably refer in highly complimentary terms to one or more of their diaspora compatriot scientists, whether they were collaborators or not. Often, they would suggest to me that 'you need to speak with x who is doing remarkable work on y domain'. These suggestions proved to be absolutely credible and naturally multiplied the presence of the scientific diaspora in the newspaper.

The aptitude to contribute to the homeland is verified by many ways. One of which is that rarely will there be a Greek in charge of a laboratory abroad without one or more compatriot doctoral or post-doctoral students working with them. This should not be taken as evidence of nepotism. Such students are strictly selected having gone through all the filters that are designated by international universities and research institutes. Naturally, this way the initial network of Greek diaspora scientist is strengthened and renewed by new blood.

It's well established that distinguished Greek diaspora scientists often readily accept invitations to offer their advice to their country by becoming members of government committees dealing with their domain of expertise, or in committees evaluating academics in Greece's research institutes.

The aptitude of contribution to the homeland becomes more demonstrable at times of crisis such as the one we are currently going through. When it became known that SARS-CoV-2 had arrived in Greece, Greek diaspora scientists mobilised in order to disseminate information of the pandemic's risk and the necessity of adopting social distancing measures. One example is Professor Elias Mossialos who did not shy away from controversy when he advocated that the carnival festivities in Patras, one of the largest cities in Greece, needed to be cancelled. And I will never forget the voice of George Pavlakis, a top scientist in the US National Institute of Health, coming through Viber: 'you have to write it so that everyone understands: a public health tsunami is on the way'. Likewise, the response of MIT Professor Konstantine Daskalakis was equally impactful. He gave a lesson in mass communication by explaining in accessible language what exponential growth, in virus contagion, means in order to convince his compatriots of the necessity of social distancing measures.

While the relationship of Greek diaspora scientists with the homeland is usually excellent, as I have portrayed it above, things do get complicated when repatriation is attempted. A significant number of scientists with brilliant careers abroad come back to Greece with the best of intentions only to leave disappointed after a brief stay. This issue is of the highest importance and well worth an in-depth examination as Greece is thus denied access to significant scientific capital.

Ioanna Soufleri is Chief Editor of VIMA Science. She received her PhD degree in molecular biology from the Pierre and Marie Curie University, Paris, France.

*“Give me a place to stand and, with a lever, I will move the whole world”*

By Kimon Dracopoulos

Almost every day during the summer I was on a Zoom call with the COVID 19 epidemiologists’ taskforce, reporting on the performance and the details of the epidemiological surveillance machine learning tool that my team and I had built. Our work, on top of targeting high risk travel profiles, mainly served as a surveillance and early warning system for a country that decided to open its borders on July 1<sup>st</sup>, in order to save as much of the tourist season as possible, given the centrality of the tourism sector to the Greek economy, while keeping the pandemic under control.

This tool traces its research origins to MIT where, together with my advisors Asu Ozdaglar and John Tsitsiklis, I spent most of my PhD years tackling the problem of allocating curing resources on a network epidemic, under the regime of full visibility of the epidemic progression. Adapting the allocation decisions online, as the epidemic progresses offers significant performance improvements hence underlining the need for constant learning and dynamic programming when dealing with such a dynamic phenomenon. This idea turned out to be the foundation of our team’s collaboration with the Greek government: collecting information dynamically and in a targeted way so that you make the most “bang for your buck” when testing at the ports of entry is naturally limited, hence leading to dynamic and pre-emptive political decisions for the protocols to be followed regarding visitors to Greece from any particular country.

The tool or system we introduced in Greece this summer combined real time testing results from prior tests performed at Greece’s point of entries to learn the risk profiles of travelers, from particular countries, and optimize the allocation of tests over time. This operation required the cooperation of different kinds of dedicated civil servants: doctors and nurses at the points of entry, firefighters and policemen who helped with operations, three different teams of IT developers to manage the different technological aspects, professors who met with me daily to provide insight and modeling advice, three different Ministries managing the different components, from procurement of tests to managing the labs to coordinating operational and staffing decisions.

I cannot recall a time after the Athens Olympics of 2004 that so many different groups of people and institutions had seamlessly collaborated on a single project in Greece. What made this happen? We were given a place to stand and a lever, and, at least from my perspective, we did move the freaking world. Let me tell you the story of what brought us here.

From me, it all started on March 21<sup>st</sup>, when Prof. S. Tsiodras, head of Greece’s COVID 19 epidemiological taskforce and one of the most impressive individuals I have ever met, said on TV that the lives of our elders were at risk, *“It is our mothers and our fathers”*. This guy is fighting for our mothers and our fathers --- and you can tell from his eyes that he is actually fighting. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, I Googled the name of Greece’s Prime Minister, “Kyriakos Mitsotakis”, and sent an email to the first address that popped up, entitled “In case you need help with Epidemics Analytics”.

Three hours later I received an email to chat and chat we did. We talked about the need for analytics in managing this crisis and agreed on a potential project (disclaimer: this project is pro-bono for my team and myself). The chat concluded with a "Let's do it". Having grown up in Greece, I would have bet my fortune that we would never "do it".

Looking back, I admit I was a fool to be a pessimist. I spent the next month meeting with every single member of Greece's COVID-19 team: the epidemiologists, the public health officials, the Civil Protection taskforce. We spent sleepless nights designing our strategy to open the borders and giving shape to our system, having deep technical discussions with the scientific team, creating contingency plans for all operational scenarios and ironing out technical glitches and potential fails. The scientific discussions with the international caliber committee of epidemiologists (S. Tsiodras, P. Lagiou, G. Magiorkinis, D. Paraskevis, C. Chatzichristodoulou) were critical to the development of the project and to building the confidence that the added value from this system would not be just "fancy math" but could produce actionable insights and the much needed control over the country's borders.

It was not all bells and whistles. Micro-politics were always there, the sarcastic attitude "This is Greece not the US" would halt development for a few days. But then General Secretary of Civil Protection Nikos Hardalias would impress upon the group that there will be no compromises in terms of adhering to mine and my team's adoption of exacting technical standards. Similarly, incredible individuals such as my colleague Prof. Pagona Lagiou made the earth tremble when she talked to the President of the Hellenic Republic to ensure that the project would have the full support of everyone involved during those initial stages. And then there was the anonymous, with the nickname "ccm.tgsd" (standing for "cc me to get s\*\*\* done"), who ensured that micro-politics will not stand in the way of the common good.

The day after the project went live, I decided to fly to Greece to overlook all the components of the system since every step was critical for the accuracy and the efficiency of the whole system. I started from the bottom and spent two days at the Athens Eleftherios Venizelos airport next to the doctors and nurses who took samples and the firefighters who were checking the paperwork and "decoding" the test/no-test decision. I was there from 6am to 7pm and I saw the same three firefighters working with the arriving passengers for the whole 11 hours, shattering my stereotype of Greek civil servants spending the last half hour looking at their watch counting down to the 8-hour mark. When I asked one of them, Vasilis Katsiadras, where he is getting all this energy, the answer struck me *"Our COVID-19 success story has been the only big win of our generation. I will do everything to keep it this way."*

I ended up staying in Greece for the whole summer, until end of September, exactly because such projects need constant overlook and tuning while the analytics need to be translated to the decision makers so that tough decisions are made on time and with confidence. Physical presence did make a difference and I would like to advise all of my colleagues that would like to help out in different aspects of Greek governance to actually be present physically. It does make a difference, and besides it is a win-win; it is the summer after all. Of course, for such a thing to happen one would need the backing of their home-institution, the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California in my case, that gave me complete support both financially and practically from the very beginning of this adventure and I am extremely grateful for that.

In terms of the policy outcome, in my judgment Eva proved to be a valuable tool. It enabled Greece to adopt PCR (i.e., COVID 19) test requirements in time, hence prolonging the tourist season way beyond other European, tourist-dependent countries. On the technical side, the benchmark would be improvement compared to random testing, that we indeed significantly improved over. I sincerely think that the true value of such a system is that it offered a -unique in the world- snapshot of the true, unbiased incidence of COVID 19 (percentage of positive cases per population, i.e. country-specific cohorts of visitors to Greece) hence flagging to the Greek authorities, about two weeks prior, an upcoming epidemic outbreak originating from visitors from a particular country. This early warning, in turn, allowed Greek authorities to bar entry to visitors from high risk countries while letting in visitors from low risk ones during the summer season.

What am I trying to say with this story? We were given a place to stand by the leadership: K. Mitsotakis, N. Hardalias, the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health but we also had an enormous lever: the Sotiris, Pagonis, Vasilis of our country. When the political will is combined with the amazing talent that our country possesses in all levels, from the incredible scientists of the epidemiological committee, to the over-qualified IT developers and engineers and all the workers on the ground, miracles can happen.

Kimon Drakopoulos is an Assistant Professor in the Data Sciences and Operations department at USC Marshall School of Business. The team which he led comprised by himself, Hamsa Bastani, Vishal Gupta and Jon Vlahoyannis developed Eva, a tool based on machine learning to distribute Greece's scarce testing resources, for Covid 19, at the country's borders based on visitors risk profile, so that early warning be provided to Greek state authorities as well as surveillance of the counties from which visitors originated.

## *Diaspora technocrats and scientists from crisis to crisis*

By Antonis Kamaras

Greece's large diaspora pool of scientists and technocrats, higher than the EU average, has meant that in times of crisis such scientists and technocrats achieve prominent roles as government advisors, leaders of state advisory bodies and agencies or public advocates of particular policy responses. [The enactment of such roles is facilitated by features of modern life](#), commonly associated with globalisation, such as flexible career structures, zero cost of communication, cheap air transport and a deterritorialised public discourse structured by social media, email correspondence and digitally available mass media.

We identify three mutually reinforcing features of diaspora technocrats and scientists that are particularly pertinent to their crisis's roles in Greece: relative independence from power structures dominant in Greece, prestige established through their research output and/or non-Greek institutional affiliation and domain expertise.

We synthesise these features of the diaspora technocrat and scientist with two core elements of major, international crises, be they imported from the external environment to Greece or exported by Greece to the external environment. First, the management of such crises, as they involve large, highly developed states, creates regimes by these states' policy makers and/or by institutions domiciled in their jurisdictions, such as multilateral organisations or universities and research institutes [1]. In such a situation, a country like Greece, of relatively small size and a middling OECD performer across a wide range of indicators, would tend to be a regime taker as opposed to a regime shaper. Second, the management of such crises in Greece would inevitably entail policy decisions that are highly disruptive and thus politically costly. These two elements of major crises play to the strengths of Greece's scientific and technocratic diaspora identified above. Distinguished members of this diaspora partake or observe from privileged vantage points the process of regime-creation under crisis due to their domain expertise. They can also advocate, with all the authority of their internationally established prestige, for radical, painful policies in Greece, which are compatible with the regime created by a crisis - and to do so from a position of relative, if not absolute, career safety.

Not surprisingly, in each crisis episode one or more diaspora scientists and technocrats comes to personify such diaspora prominence as well as to exert meaningful influence in Greece's crisis response. During Greece's fiscal crisis, we would argue that Andreas Georgiou, the ex-IMF technocrat appointed to head Greece's statistical agency, HELSTAT, was this person. By establishing in the eyes of Greece's creditors the credibility of Greece's economic statistics, he was instrumental in the attainment and constitution of Greece's agreement with its creditors. During the current coronavirus pandemic crisis, this person we would argue has been Professor Elias Mossialos, Director of LSE's Public Health, by virtue of his early advocacy to the Greek government of

adopting comprehensive social distancing measures. Looking beyond such personalities we can identify the features that they embody as distinguished members of Greece's scientific and technocratic diaspora: credibility due to institutional affiliation, the ability to grasp and represent internationally established practice, the willingness to argue for or take decisions that are controversial in Greece at least partly due to their relative personal immunity from the controversy that such decisions generate.

That being said, when we compare the fiscal crisis with the first phase of the pandemic crisis, we can also identify a crucial difference. The fiscal crisis generated severe contestability within Greece, thus integrating the roles assumed by diaspora technocrats and scientists in this contestability. The fiscal crisis was mediated via the creditor - debtor relationship with competing political forces and their supporters either rendering legitimate or illegitimate this relationship. Depending on which side of the divide Greeks and their political representatives fell, diaspora scholars and technocrats were either seen as critical allies, against destructive populism, in the fight to maintain Greece's membership in the EU, or Quislings aligned with the enemy in the attempt to make Greece a debt colony.

There has been no such controversy attached to Professor Mossialos or other notable Greek scientists who have vigorously endorsed the ND government's early implementation of comprehensive social distancing measures to combat the coronavirus pandemic, measures it should be noted that are already having severe economic consequences.

This should come as no surprise. First, public policies designed to contain the pandemic worldwide are essentially shaped by rapidly developed and exchanged scientific knowledge on a global scale and make no distinction between creditors and debtors. Second, this nexus of scientific knowledge and public policies forms a consensus on policy protocols with initial outliers eventually toeing the line, and only one highly developed European country, Sweden, sticking with its determination to pursue an unorthodox policy response. Thirdly, the decision to put a premium on the preservation of life regardless of the cost to the economy seems to accord with prevailing cultural norms in the European South, and certainly in Greece [2]. Consequently, there is no controversy in Greece over the adoption of the internationally dominant regime of managing the coronavirus pandemic. Nor is any calumny attached to the institution crystallising and propagating this regime, namely the World Health Organisation (WHO). The fact that the Greek government has appointed Professor Mossialos its representative to the WHO nicely captures the role of the diaspora scientists and technocrats as Greece's interface between global standards and their adoption in Greece under the pandemic.

Peering into the future, we would argue however that this stark difference from contestation to consensus, when we compare the fiscal with the pandemic crisis, might well be eliminated. The Greek government's coronavirus-specific response in public health terms, namely the increase in the number and the upgrade in the quality of Intensive Care Units, is universally welcomed, as it mostly involves increased allocations in equipment and personnel. Any wider public health reform, however, spurred by the coronavirus pandemic, will be sure to generate significant political contestation. In the field of the economy this will be even more the case. In this policy domain the ND government has also privileged diaspora technocrats, by entrusting the leadership of the Commission for the National Economic Growth Plan to the distinguished diaspora economist, Nobel-prize winner Professor Pissarides. It is fairly safe to assume that any proposals by the Commission for a radical revamping of

the Greek economy considered even more necessary due to the shock inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic, will return diaspora technocrats and scientists to their more familiar identity, originating in the country's fiscal crisis: as integral actors to Greece's political contestation.

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[1] Although it must be noted that in the case of the coronavirus pandemic, political leaderships at the UK and the US failed to make effective use, for their own benefit, of their powerful scientific and policy apparatuses.

[2] Indicatively Professor Mossialos himself has defended his advocacy of adoption of social distancing measures also on the grounds that no other policy option would be politically feasible in Greece, the implication being that failure to adopt such policies would be politically destabilising, see his relevant comment in <https://www.facebook.com/DimitrisKairidis/videos/686399135511979/>

## II The sacred and the profane: Religious and socioeconomic aspects of the diaspora and homeland relationship during the pandemic

### *The Covid-19 pandemic, Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate*

By Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has exposed the vulnerability of the international order and the interdependence between states and peoples across the globe. However, it has also served as a yardstick for the performance of states, international organisations and institutions, which responded to the crisis with variable success rates. The decision of the Greek government to take early and concerted measures paid off, and Greece emerged as one of the role model countries with the most effective response to the crisis, generating much needed positive publicity in the international media. Following a decade of deep economic, political and social crisis, Greece was no more the *bête noire* of the West. In the crucial first weeks of March, however, when the Greek government was taking early bold steps to stem the spread of the virus, including restricting attendance at religious services, its policy found a strong supporter in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Restrictions to religious services raised sensitive questions about balancing religious freedom and public health and stirred identity politics in Greece as in many countries around the world. The question of church attendance was a litmus test for the ability of the government to implement its anti-Covid-19 pandemic plans. The Patriarchate's support proved crucial, given the ambivalent position of the Church of Greece.

As the Church of Greece appeared split, with several bishops opposing restrictions to mass attendance and accusing the government of persecuting Christianity, the Ecumenical Patriarchate took the initiative and framed the incipient debate. With a video message on 18 March 2020, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew fully endorsed social distancing policy measures and framed his position on a sound theological basis: Observing social distancing measures was not a violation of but a realisation of God's will. Science and faith were not juxtaposed but stood on the same side of the struggle against the Covid-19:

In this struggle, our appointed states, governments and appropriate health authorities have the primary responsibility for planning, confronting and overcoming this crisis... Therefore, our dear children, we entreat you as your spiritual father to respond faithfully and patiently to all the difficult but necessary measures proposed by our health authorities and nations. Everything is being done for our protection, for our common good, in order to contain the spread of this virus. Our liberation from this distress depends entirely on our own cooperation. Perhaps some of you have felt that these drastic measures undermine or harm our faith. However, that which is at stake is not our faith – it is

the faithful. It is not Christ – it is our Christians. It is not the divine-man – but human beings. Our faith is firmly established in the roots of our culture. Our faith is a living faith, and there is no exceptional circumstance that can limit or suppress it. What must be limited and suppressed in these extraordinary circumstances are gatherings and large congregations of people. Let us remain in our homes. Let us be careful and protect those around us. And there, from our homes, strengthened by the power of our spiritual unity, let each and every one of us pray for all humankind... We are certain that, through our prayers as well, science will indeed prevail [1].

The Patriarchate's adamant position proved decisive in convincing the Church of Greece to side with the government and helped the Greek government insist on a seemingly unpopular position to restrict religious services, even during the Holy Week and Easter. In a letter Patriarch Bartholomew sent on 17 May 2020 to the Primate of the Orthodox Churches, invited them to share their views on the question of delivering the Holy Communion under Covid-19 restrictions. After noting that many unprecedented views were heard on how to offer the Holy Communion to the faithful he added that Orthodox primates could not remain indifferent to this. He also added that the Orthodox Church had been abiding by the guidelines given by health and political authorities and that it would continue to do so, provided that the essence of the Orthodox faith was respected.

His argument was further developed by Archbishop Elpidophoros of America. Based in New York, one of the hardest-hit cities by Covid-19, Elpidophoros tackled arguably the most sensitive issue regarding religious service restrictions, the Holy Communion:

What is more important for all of us? The Communion, the Body, and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, or the way we receive the Body and Blood? The answer is easy. It's not the way. It's the Communion itself that saves us and gives us Eternal Life [2].

This was not the first time that the Ecumenical Patriarchate took a public position characterised by responsibility and reason. Its circumspect position regarding state-church relations might have been influenced by the caution with which the Patriarchate has managed its precarious relationship with the Republic of Turkey. Yet there is certainly more than that. Throughout his tenure, Patriarch Bartholomew has put forward an agenda that bridged Christian values with some of the most important debates within post-industrial Western societies. His strong engagement with environmental issues, long before climate change and decarbonisation became top items in the global agenda, increased the international legitimacy of the Patriarchate, winning sympathies beyond its traditional constituency, among liberal progressive circles and the global civil society. The Patriarchate's stance in key issues of Greek foreign policy, with reference to Turkey and beyond, favoured moderation and conflict resolution, being in stark contrast with the mainstream nationalist and recalcitrant positions of the Church of Greece, especially under Archbishop Christodoulos [3]. Keeping the Orthodox Church inoculated against conspiracy theories, far-right xenophobic and racist political views and reconfirming that it endorses science and its recommendations for deterring the Covid-19 threat reinforced the appeal of the Ecumenical Patriarchate among Greeks across the political spectrum, in Greece and in the diaspora. It also helped governments across the planet in their fight against the pandemic. By invoking the fundamentals of Christianity and helping saving lives across the globe, the Ecumenical Patriarchate reconfirmed that leading by example is also the wisest way to accumulate soft power within Greece, the Greek diaspora and on a global level.

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#### NOTES

[1] "Message of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Regarding Covid-19," 2020, <https://www.goarch.org/-/message-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-covid-19>.

[2] "Archbishop of America: It is not the way, it is the Communion itself that saves us," *Orthodox Times*, updated 2/6/2020, 2020, [bit.ly/ArchbishopofAmericaonHolyCommunion](http://bit.ly/ArchbishopofAmericaonHolyCommunion).

[3] Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Orthodox Church and Greek-Turkish Relations: Religion as Source of Rivalry or Conciliation?" in *Religion and Politics in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Jeff Haynes (London: Routledge, 2009).

## *The Greek-Orthodox diasporic religioscapes of Europe in light of the Covid-19 pandemic*

By Georgios E. Trantas

I should begin by noting that to the Greek-Orthodox Diaspora in Western Europe the church serves not only spiritual but also sociocultural needs, being an *Ekklēsia* indeed. This has diachronically been so, ever since the major Greek-Orthodox migrant communities emerged there between the late 1950s and mid-1970s. The church constitutes a point of reference, a constant; while other structures, e.g., ideological and/or partisan, collapsed under the weight of their own irrelevance and banality. It would then be fair to say that, to a significant percentage of the Greek Diaspora, church connotes *belonging* as it encapsulates collective references of *being*.

It follows that the outbreak and peak of the Covid-19 pandemic – ranging variably from one country to another – has had a significant bearing on these communities. The overall disruption took several shapes and forms, ranging from rendering decades-long habits temporarily obsolete, to upsetting major plans. One could name several examples as such: the founding of the first ever Greek-Orthodox monastery in Central Europe for instance, in St. Andrä am Zicksee, Austria, had to be postponed to a more convenient time, pandemic permitting. That is indicative of the fact that the Orthodox Church as structure and organisation is not impervious to worldly affairs and their consequences, as it is called upon to operate in this world, even though its own *raison d'être* is otherworldly.

As for the diasporic communities, those had to temporarily part from their religiocultural traditions and stay safe at home instead. This was a painful compromise, among other things, because of the unfortunate timing; the pandemic coincided with the Orthodox Easter, by far the greatest religious holiday of the Eastern Orthodox calendar. Apart from the obvious theological reasons behind this, this period is marked by exponentially increased church attendance and social participation. It follows that this had a negative impact on both church and community life. Moreover, prior to that, a public discourse on the Holy Communion was ushered in. At this point I should parenthetically mention that the Greek Diaspora is not insular; it is subject to incoming influences that often originate in the homeland, where in this case church and state found themselves temporarily at odds as regards social distancing measures and the possibility of spreading the coronavirus via the Holy Communion. Be that as it may, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (EPoC), to which the Greek-Orthodox diasporic churches adhere jurisdictionally, reacted swiftly and sensibly.

But how does one reconcile, pure, unadulterated faith in a *mystērion*, which surpasses and exceeds human nature, with scientific thinking and rationalism; how does one possibly render compatible the other-worldly, the *epekeina*, the sacred, with the worldly and profane? Well, there is no easy answer! *Mystērion*, most commonly known as sacrament in the Western churches, stipulates preparation, while in turn it constitutes a form of *theōsis*. Moreover, to the church, the Holy Eucharist

is indeed the lordly sacrifice and to receive it is to truly receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which constitutes an event of immense significance, regardless of the frequency it occurs in one's lifetime, as a genuine expression of faith. Not to mention that the Holy Eucharist is in fact held as a healing sacrament.

And thus we return to the aforementioned question of whether to pay heed to either faith or reason: True, the answer is not easy, but the response is simple, as attested by the position of the Holy Synod of the EPoC and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, which was by extension implemented in practice by the Diasporic Churches. The EPoC steered clear of even partaking in that discussion, let alone triggering it for, in my view at least, to debate the sanctity and efficacy of the Holy Eucharist is, ultimately, to render it disputable. Avoiding controversy altogether, the EPoC issued a statement urging the body of faithful to follow the guidance of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and abide by the guidelines and laws of their states, while explicitly declaring its respect for medical science. At the same time, via its aforementioned statement, the EPoC stood by its own principles and Orthodox teachings as it communicated the church's firm empirical conviction that the Holy Communion constitutes "antidote to death" (Gr.: «*Ἀντίδοτον τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν*»), in accordance with the Orthodox teachings.

The Greek-Orthodox Metropolis of Germany and Exarchate of Central Europe (GOMGECE) constitutes a pertinent example on the management of the pandemic. It has extensive geographical jurisdiction over a demographically considerable population and it is diachronically well-established. In Germany then, one federal state after another, the authorities enforced prohibitions on the basis of the traditional manner that the Holy Communion is offered to Orthodox Christians, as they considered it potentially hazardous for public health in light of the coronavirus pandemic. The Metropolitan of Germany and Exarch of Central Europe Augoustinos, having consulted with the EPoC, had no other choice but to align the GOMGECE with the legal framework and the above-mentioned patriarchal guidelines, and further, to disseminate the corresponding restrictions to the clergy.

This was done via a pastoral encyclical (Ger.: *Hirtenbrief*), issued initially on 14 March, in which the relevant legislation was highlighted and the EPoC guidelines of 11 March were disseminated. Thereafter, all necessary social distancing measures were taken, all religious and cultural events and gatherings – including the national holiday of 25 March – were cancelled and the body of believers was urged to abide by all necessary instruction in order to stay safe and contain the spread of the virus. As regards conduct in churches, believers would no longer receive the blessed bread (Gr.: *Ἀντίδορον*) by the hand of the priest, but would pick it up themselves on their way out of the church. Self-evidently, offering Holy Communion was out of the question. Further church guidelines followed in succession on 30 April, 1 May and 13 May. The crux here, however, is that even though the mandatory exclusion from the Holy Eucharist was deemed by Metropolitan Augoustinos the most painful measure ever taken in his decades-long service in Germany, at no point did he venture to challenge the state and its laws.

It must be noted that this attitude is not an exception, but rather, the paradigm; the difference between Diasporic Churches has mostly to do with the timing of the implementation of social distancing measures, which by and large depended on any given state, government, the conditions and the legislation thereof. That was above and beyond the control of the churches that complied with the corresponding regulations. This general attitude seeks to reposition this discourse from the

‘antithesis of mutually exclusives’ to a ‘permissive synthesis’ that allows room for both worldviews and, in short, emanates from the church’s obedience to the state while firmly reserving the right to disagree as regards the fundamentals of the faith.

Yet again, I should reiterate that the aforementioned reconciliation of two diametrically different and seemingly incompatible perceptions of *being* is a difficult exercise indeed. But it is important to stress that there has been no confrontation with state authorities and the Holy Eucharist itself did not become the object of dispute between faith and reason. I wish to repeat and thereby emphasise that to be tempted to debate the sanctity and efficacy of the Holy Eucharist is, ultimately, to render it disputable. Hence, any amicable concession on behalf of the Diasporic Churches, in line with the EPoC, did not compromise their integrity as they steered clear of intransigence, which would be futile anyway – not to mention, the potentially harmful publicity for Orthodoxy’s reputation.

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*Between hostland and homeland: Vulnerable European migrant workers of the UK at the mercy of coronavirus*

By Othon Anastasakis

The coronavirus in Europe has been a par excellence Western European affair, in that the advanced democracies and economies of the continent suffered the biggest blow in terms of cases and deaths compared with the less advanced countries of South and Eastern Europe. As is well known, the countries worst hit by the virus are the most popular destinations for intra-European migration from the East and the South of Europe for the past three decades. Among these the UK, home to large numbers of European diasporas was badly hit by the virus. The switching off of the UK economy led, like in all other countries, to an unprecedented economic contraction and a dramatic rise of joblessness across all walks of life. This opinion piece spares a thought for the vulnerable European migrants who, having lost their jobs, were neither protected by the UK government's furloughing scheme nor benefited, in the medium or longer term, by other financial measures aimed to save businesses and avoid mass unemployment.

Many of these migrant workers, for instance, were working in the hospitality sector of the UK economy, primarily in the accommodation and food industries, which were the very first to be hit by the coronavirus and are expected to be the last to recover from it. The overwhelming majority of these migrants in these sectors are young people, in their 20s and 30s, existing in highly precarious circumstances: many of them are in short term employment contracts, they are not members of trade unions, they don't own their own property, they live in privately rented accommodation, away from their families, most of the time sharing a flat often in overcrowded circumstances, and they don't have enough savings to last them long. According to the [Institute for Public Policy Research](#), in the UK around 9% of EU workers are employed in accommodation and food compared to 5% of UK workers. But the vulnerable European migrants include other categories as well, such as those who are self-employed with their own small businesses, those with temporary contracts, those who arrived recently in the UK, or those working in the informal economy. For all of them, Brexit makes their uncertainty even more agonising especially for the ones who have not yet applied for the settled or pre-settled immigration status and with the highly selective and controversial point-based immigration system on the near horizon.

These are the vulnerable European migrants who on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March were all of a sudden left out in the cold. Pushed by circumstances, these people were faced with two stark choices: to stay put, or to return to their homeland and their more familiar family environment. The personal stories are countless. The first option to stay in the host land entailed the prospect of limited or no resources to get by, while the best-case scenario of finding some alternative job, among the few available jobs during the pandemic, entailed high health risks; some of them working in care homes, the gig economy, or supermarkets became even more vulnerable, with a few of them having to conceal their infection if the virus caught up

with them, in order to continue working and pay their bills at the risk of infecting others.

The other option to return to the homeland was equally disconcerting. For a start, the actual repatriation process was an odyssey in itself; on the one hand travel opportunities were limited, often too expensive and conducted under uncertain and cumbersome circumstances. Upon arrival in their homelands, their own countries viewed them as bearers of the pandemic under the fear that they would spread the disease. [Romania](#), with large diasporas in the UK and other Western European countries, deliberately put its diasporic citizens off from returning to Romania and barred flights during Easter. In most East and South East European states, the UK was seen in their press as the single European country with the worst reaction to the coronavirus which made the perception of the threat even bigger. Having arrived, all travelers would be put into quarantines usually for two weeks before they were allowed to circulate under the restrictions in the different national settings. Yet the biggest challenge for the vulnerable migrants is the post-corona job rehabilitation, with virtually no work prospects in their countries, which was the main motivation to leave in the first place. Ironically, while most of the countries in South East, Central and Eastern Europe were much less hit by the virus, the economic implications of the pandemic are anticipated to hit their economies harder with unemployment and recession expected to rise exponentially and with much less capacity for swift recovery. One is therefore left wondering whether the pandemic is creating a lost generation of young European migrants from the South and East of Europe; a lost generation in their working prime, who, having suffered from the first shock of the Eurozone crisis, now have to sustain the second shock from the pandemic? For the most vulnerable migrants, the pandemic is evoking issues of trust, belongingness and personal security. On all these counts, the feeling is one of lack of trust in both the host and homeland systems, ambiguous belonging and lack of security for the future.

There is no doubt that this pandemic is bringing the state back in. In all countries governments will have to step in to enhance the social welfare system, to finance the unemployed, to provide credit liquidity for small and medium sized businesses. At a more supranational level, the European Union has adopted a generous economic package to assist in the mitigation of the massive socio-economic impact in the EU member and EU candidate countries. This generates a second question for the vulnerable European migrants: for those who decided to stay in Brexit Britain, will there be any provisions for the low paid, unprotected European citizens who cannot benefit from EU funds, who are not part of the furloughing scheme and those who have not yet applied for [the settlement scheme](#)? From a more optimistic perspective, there will be [calls](#) for the UK to rethink its relationship with migrant workers and the lower skilled, considering their massive contribution during the tough times of the lockdown. But memory is also short and the reality harsh, and there is bound to be competition for the limited resources on offer in the post-corona period. This situation, unfortunately, runs the serious risk of rising nationalism again in the UK. And for those who were forced to return to their homeland, the virus may have brought the repatriation that their homelands were hoping to achieve, having lost a very energetic part of their working force in the previous three decades to the stronger countries of Europe. The question however is whether these weaker states will have the capacity and resources to keep them or whether they will have to lose them for a second time in a row.

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## *Greek temporary migrants in Australia: Wedged between coronavirus and Australian government policies*

By Harry Theotokatos-Field

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare in every affected country structural health, economic and social strengths and weaknesses with unprecedented speed and ferocity. In the case of multicultural Australia, aspects of the Australian conservative government's economic response to the pandemic have exposed significant xenophobic and neoliberal economic biases towards its 1.1 million temporary visa holders (TVHs) by excluding them from key worker support policies. Among these visa holders are approximately 2,000 Greek citizens who migrated to Australia after 2010.

I will focus here on the reporting of the Melbourne Greek-Australian newspaper, *Neos Kosmos*, on the pandemic's impact on the Greek TVHs, and through this also illustrate the significance of the role of diasporic/ethnic press. *Neos Kosmos* is a major centre-left newspaper published three times a week and with a daily digital English version. (Here I cover 6 months of the Greek print version.) It has a significant number of digital subscribers, around 50,000, and it is distributed across Australia.

Diasporic/ethnic press performs various critical overlapping roles such as it sustains and refreshes the Greek identity and association of its readers, it provides information in the heritage language about settlement and adaptation in the host country, and it can mobilise and inform the community on various local community, host country and diasporic issues.

Temporary visa emigrants form one of the most vulnerable working groups in Australia. They constantly have to satisfy various and changeable immigration bureaucratic criteria to remain in the country, have no welfare rights, few civil rights and a tenuous sense of belonging to multicultural Australia.

The most affected business by the COVID-19 lockdown announced by the Australian Government in March were hospitality, travel and entertainment, which employ many TVHs. The employment conditions of TVHs were further exacerbated by their exclusion from the government's Job keeper Payment program (a wage subsidy program for employees of business that have lost a certain percentage of their turn over). In April Prime Minister Scott Morrison exhorted international students and temporary visa holders without work, 'it's time to go home', echoing past conservative government rhetoric to mobilise public opinion against refugees and migrants attempting to reach Australia by boat. This statement was widely criticised for its xenophobic, insensitive and damaging impact (e.g., Australian universities have over 560,000 international students who are also TVHs).

In the following weeks the Australian government made a series of changes to temporary working visas by changing some of their conditions of employment, particularly for those connected to essential services and sectors, e.g., agriculture and health. A survey by trade unions in early April,

found that 50% of the TVHs were without work and 18% were working significantly reduced hours. At present, most States have introduced various cash and non-cash initiatives to support TVHs.

The majority of the Greek TVHs are adult students, who are allowed part-time employment, and the rest are on various temporary visas with employment rights, including sponsorship by employers. The majority of these TVHs are aiming to get a permanent visa. A critical factor contributing to the attention of the plight of the Greek TVHs by *Neos Kosmos* is their high visibility in the hospitality sector where many Greek-Australians run small businesses. In 2016 around 19% of all new Greece-born arrivals in Melbourne/Victoria (and a similar percentage in Sydney/New South Wales) were working in the hospitality sector, and this percentage is even higher among TVHs. *Neos Kosmos* mobilised the Greek-Australian community politically by raising awareness of the impact of the lockdown and by explaining the government's policies towards TVHs. It called on key Greek-Australian institutions, such as the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (the Community) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia to make representations to the Australian government to give special exemptions to Greek TVHs. *Neos Kosmos* also reported extensively on its contacts and interviews with government immigration Ministers and officials. No special changes were made for Greek TVHs.

The Consul General of Greece in Melbourne advised Greek TVHs to follow the Australian government's advice and leave Australia as soon as possible, even though he acknowledged the serious practical difficulties of this. The policy of the Greek government was to provide general consular support but not to contribute to the airfares of Greek citizens that had wanted to leave Australia. There was no change on this policy even after the Community wrote directly to the Prime Minister of Greece for financial support for this group.

In contrast, by May/June Greece, having dealt successfully with the first wave of the pandemic, was very keen to tap into the financial capacity of the Greek diaspora to holiday in Greece to assist in its economic recovery. Australia was one of the target countries of the Greek government, as it had dealt successfully with the pandemic. *Neos Kosmos* ran a series of interviews from Greek Ministers and senior officials, government promotions and even Greek regional promotions, inviting Greek-Australians to holiday in Greece. It was a largely pointless exercise because the Australian government is not allowing international travel of Australian citizens and permanent residents.

A number of Greek TVHs managed to leave Australia but most had very limited options. The actual repatriation process was a daunting experience given the distance involved from Australia to Europe. By March nearly all airlines operating in Australia had started cancelling flights in Europe; only Qatar Airways flew to Greece, while the price of air fares became prohibitive. From the newspaper reporting it is clear that many Greek TVHs have established new lives in Australia (at least 500 persons were estimated to be in the process of permanent visa application), others have young families, so leaving suddenly was not a realistic option. There was also uncertainty among TVHs as to whether they would be allowed to return back to Australia.

The newspaper also appealed to the Greek-Australian community to raise money, food, and other necessities and to take action to support the most vulnerable members of the community, including the TVHs. The community responded and many examples were reported, such as the establishment of a telephone hotline by the Community for Greek TVHs. In addition, *Neos Kosmos* ran a number of reports and advertisements on the impact of the lockdown on Greek-Australian restaurant/café

businesses aimed at presenting their situation, that of their employees and promoting their services.

Two examples, one from a student and one from a spouse of a recent emigrant published in *Neos Kosmos*, describe graphically the conditions faced by Greek TVHs. Student: *“All the money I had, I used it to pay fees for my school and apply for a bridging visa and I can’t work to survive...You’re forced to find ways to make black money and I, currently, the way things are with coronavirus, can’t even find that”*. The other from the lady whose husband was working in a restaurant: *“The only right we have right now is that of work. We don’t have health care and I dread the thought if we have to see a doctor or to go to hospital... There are newcomers who are facing survival issues, with no work, no support...A couple lives in a rented room, both are unemployed. Where? In Australia, where they came to find shelter from Greece’s economic crisis”*.

Harry Theotokatos-Field, Independent Researcher, SEESOX Associate in Australia

### III The pandemic and the homeland through the prisms of the EU and US

#### *Does EU law have space for repatriation (for Greece and beyond) amidst a pandemic?*

By Vasiliki Poula

Undoubtedly, the most significant consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is the thousands of deaths that humanity counts. At the same time, though, the unprecedented public health crisis has severely affected the lives of millions of people in various, unpredictable and complicated ways. In the European context, the new circumstances inevitably give rise to new challenges for the European Union's legal order and institutional architecture.

“Of all the specific liberties which may come into mind when we hear the word ‘freedom’, the ‘freedom of movement’ is historically the oldest and also the most elementary”, Hannah Arendt claims. Her writings become even more relevant in the European context, where the freedom of movement of persons, which allows EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU, is the cornerstone of Union citizenship. Movement within the single market and the Schengen area has been removed from the competence of member states and is regulated by EU law and more specifically, Directive 2004/38/EC (Free Movement Directive).

However, in times of a pandemic, human movement turns increasingly into a problem. The elementary freedom to move is curtailed for the greater good of public health. Despite the intuitive appeal of such a claim, a closer look at the legal status of such suspensions on the free movement of persons is necessary – we need to make sure that the limits of said derogations are legitimate, for as the Council of Europe's Venice Commission has stressed, “the gravest violations of human rights tend to occur in the context of states of emergency”.

The main measures introduced by national governments affecting the free movement of persons, which vary between member states, are the reintroduction of border controls by member states. Despite the important public health reasons calling for the elimination of travel, the need of European citizens to move across member states still exists. For instance, 7% of Greece's working population is classified as residing in another member state: students, whose universities closed; employees, who can now work from their home country and no longer need to reside in another country; people with underlying conditions who want to be with their families in case of an emergency – the list of people, who might have chosen originally to lead a life in another member state yet wanted to return to their own country upon the eruption of a global pandemic, goes on.

The desire – or sometimes, need – of certain people to come back to their home country is echoed in

Article 3 of Protocol No 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) that precludes a member state from refusing its own nationals the right to enter its territory and remain there for any reason.

Nevertheless, to conclude that measures prohibiting the entry of EU citizens legally residing in a member state's territory violate the ECHR could amount to a Manichean view of the legal status quo, for the curtailing of that right would not be illegitimate *prima facie*.

Firstly, the temporary reintroduction of internal border checks is possible in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code subject to conditions and notification to the Commission and the other member states. Article 25 allows the reintroduction of border controls in the context of foreseeable events. The checks may be introduced for a period of up to 30 days, that may be prolonged for another 30-day period, and in any event shall not exceed six months. Furthermore, Article 28 allows the reintroduction of border controls at internal borders in the context of cases requiring immediate action. The checks may be introduced for up to ten days, they may be prolonged for renewable periods of up to 20 days, and shall not exceed a total of two months. Border checks must be employed as a last resort, limited in scope and duration to the strictly necessary to respond to a serious threat and be in proportion to the threat. Public health is not explicitly included in the legitimate grounds to reintroduce border checks; Article 28 only refers to public policy and internal security. However, and even though EU law usually distinguishes public health from public policy, the latter can be broadly interpreted to fill the void under the current circumstances and justify the measures taken.

Secondly, the restrictions comply with the general EU law principle of proportionality. This is because they are not a blanket ban – excluding all travel whatsoever. The Greek paradigm, for instance, showcases this respect to proportionality in the case of repatriation, since the policy of 'selective' repatriation is reconciled with public health objectives along with the right of Greek nationals to return back home under extenuating circumstances (i.e. if they were in need of immediate health care and could not be treated at their place of residence abroad; if they had nowhere to stay due to the termination of their apartment lease; if they were stranded in transit in airports). In these and similarly extenuating circumstances the home country would initiate repatriation procedures.

One might argue that this strategy violates the EU principle of non-discrimination, which explicitly prohibits the discriminatory treatment between EU citizens on grounds of nationality. Thus, by prioritising the entry of long-term residents, while excluding the entry of other EU citizens, one could maintain that this amounts to a violation of non-discrimination. But again, upon a test of proportionality, the violation seems to be legitimate.

Beyond the four walls of the corpus of European law, on January 28, 2020, the European Commission announced that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism had been activated at the request of France to repatriate EU citizens present in Wuhan (China). This Mechanism, the operations of which are supported by resources of member states, has also been used by Greece. One of its most complex actions – involving the Greek Civil Protection Authority, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and airline companies – concerned the repatriation of ten Greeks from a town in Peru. The legal basis of the Mechanism is Article 196 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which states that the EU shall encourage cooperation between member states in order to improve the effectiveness of systems that prevent or protect from natural or man-made disasters, including acute public health emergencies, occurring both inside and outside of the Union. Therefore, once again,

the EU has showed institutional flexibility despite the unprecedented nature of our times.

In the Greek context, the significance of the European legal regime in the context of repatriations was reflected in the ministerial remit of the matter. Repatriations were primarily handled by Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, the Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs for European affairs, rather than Konstantinos Vlassis, the Deputy Minister of Diaspora Greeks, whose role might have seemed as the perfect fit for those circumstances.

As the pandemic crisis further evolves, the institutional and legal status quo of the European Union will be further challenged. Despite the commonplace criticism of the EU being a bureaucratic monolith, its legal and institutional framework seems to have been able to accommodate the complexity of our times, striking a golden mean between the personal and the collective, as well as the European and the national.

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## *Greek America and Greece during global crises*

By Alexander Kitroeff

“We’re launching a campaign to support the tourist industry in Greece this summer” tweeted the Pappas Post, a Greek American media outlet on May 20<sup>th</sup> of this year. And Greece’s publicity to keep interest in visiting Greece alive during the campaign #greecefromhome is publicized on a number of other Greek American websites, most notably the Chicago-based HALC organization. More recently, the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) announced a \$30,000 donation to an Athens-based research center working to support the public health in response to the coronavirus pandemic. These are some of the very few Greek American offers of help to Greece during the current pandemic crisis. The reason is that conditions in the United States do not permit Greek Americans to do as they have done in the past.

Earlier crises of global proportions, such as the world wars of the twentieth century and the economic crisis of the early twenty-first century were moments when Greek Americans expressed their solidarity with their homeland in words and in deeds. Most who did so were either American citizens by choice or by birth but with strong feelings of allegiance towards Greece.

The Greek diaspora’s interaction with their homeland has a long pedigree but its terms have always relied on conditions in Greece and/or in the host society. There are examples such as the Greek American lobby’s role in the imposition of the U.S. arms embargo on Turkey between 1975 and 1978 that can be fully understood only if we take into account the domestic circumstances in the United States. In that case it was a weakened presidency and a resurgent Congress willing to play a role in foreign policy formulation [1].

The same can be said of Greek American mobilisation in support of Greece during WWII, which stands out as a prime example of diaspora engagement with the homeland during a crisis that affected both Greece and the United States. Immediately after Greece entered WWII a group of Greek Americans formed the Greek War Relief Association (GWRA). The GWRA’s purpose was to raise funds to provide much needed clothing, food and medical supplies to the population in Greece [2].

The GWRA had the support of Archbishop Athenagoras, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, of Kimon Diamantopoulos, Greece’s ambassador to the United States, of the Greek ethnic press and many organisations. But its success came because it also had the support of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), the largest Greek American organisation with over 160 chapters (local branches) throughout the United States. AHEPA President Van A. Nomikos decided that rather than embark on its own aid for Greece campaign AHEPA should subsume its efforts under the auspices of the GWRA and its chapters became the main fundraisers for the effort.

In the 5-month period between the Italian attack in October 1940 which brought Greece into the war and the Axis occupation of Greece in May 1941 the GWRA sent \$ 3,766,000 to Greece. These

funds were used to supply civilians with food, heating fuel, clothing, and medical attention as well as outfit ambulances, construct of bomb-proof shelters, create refugee workshops, and support distressed families of slain soldiers.

After Greece was occupied by the Axis the GWRA continued its relief work. The GWRA's aid was especially critical during the awful winter of 1941-42 when famine swept throughout Greece. By March 1945, the GWRA had dispatched 101 individual fleet shipments to Greece which delivered 647,153 tons of wheat and other foodstuffs, 2,878 tons of clothing, and 19,601 tons of medicine and related supplies.

Enabling the Greek American efforts to support their homeland were three aspects of America in the early 1940s. The first was the widespread admiration afforded to Greece in the United States. In 1940 when Greece successfully repelled Italy's attack it was generously praised in the American media with editorials and articles and a photograph of an Evzone sounding the bugle with the Acropolis as the background in the cover of *Life Magazine* [3].

Secondly, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 the United States entered the war. Immediately, Greek Americans mobilised not only to support Greece through the GWRA, but also the United States by participating in the sale and purchase of the U. S. War Bonds that were issued to raise funds for the war effort. By all accounts they combined contributions to the GWRA and buying war bonds seamlessly [4].

Thirdly, what also mattered were the different conditions in the two countries. While Greece suffered famine, deprivation and the brutality of foreign occupation, the Greeks living in the United States enjoyed the benefits of a society that had left the Great Depression of the 1930s behind it, thanks to the economic activity the war generated. That gave the need to support the homeland an additional impetus.

Presently things are different, with the exception of the admiration Greece has earned for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic. American news outlets have praised Greece and its Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis for the effective way the country handled the outbreak [5]. The major Greek American news outlets have reported extensively on the positive coverage of Greece internationally. Greece's success has also been showcased on the webpages of AHEPA and the two lobbying organisations in Washington D.C., the American Hellenic Institute, the Manatos & Manatos firm, as well as the American Hellenic Council of California.

But here the parallels with the 1940s end. The situation in the United States is far worse than the one in Greece due to Washington's chaotic response to the pandemic and the ineffectiveness of its measures. This has meant that the two major Greek American institutions, AHEPA (and its women's organisation "The Daughters of Penelope") and the Church have had to focus first on helping their own members and also participate in the nationwide initiatives to support the work of health workers and the growing number of persons in need [6].

Yet despite the absence of direct Greek American aid to Greece during the coronavirus pandemic, the diaspora-homeland connection remains strong. All the Greek American lobbying groups have continued to alert U.S. policy makers to Turkey's actions on the Greco-Turkish border along the Evros river and over the migrant crisis in the Aegean more generally. The domestic pressures of the pandemic cannot deflect Greek American concerns from preserving the homeland's security.

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#### NOTES

[1] Alexander Kitroeff, “The Limits of Political Transnationalism: The Greek-American Lobby 1970s-1990s” in Dimitris Tziouvas ed. *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700 Society Politics & Culture* Burlington: Ashgate, 2009 141-153.

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[3] Editorial, “The Hour of Greece” *New York Times* October 29, 1940; *Life* December 16, 1940.

[4] Theodore Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964 350-353.

[5] Editorial, “In a Crisis True Leaders Stand Out” *New York Times* April 30, 2020; Matina Stevis-Gridneff, “Europe’s Battle-Hardened Nations Show Resilience in Virus Fight” *New York Times* May 10, 2020; Billy Perigo and Joseph Hinks, “Greece Has an Elderly Population and a Fragile Economy. How Has It Escaped the Worst of the Coronavirus So Far?” *Time Magazine* April 23, 2020; Elinda Labropoulou, “Greece has been a coronavirus success, but it will be hit economically anyway” *Washington Post* April 22, 2020.

[6] “Ahepa Family in Action” AHEPA Civic Responsibility News Release, April 14, 2020; <https://www.goarch.org/-/covid-19-relief-fund> ; “Elpidophoros Urges Faithful to Donate Blood” *National Herald* April 11-17 2020

## *Greek America in the pandemic: Entangling home and homeland in the media*

By Yiorgos Anagnostou

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed longstanding structural weaknesses in the US's healthcare system and existing worker protection laws against the backdrop of an immediate failure of governance. How could the United States, after one of the longest sustained periods of economic growth in its history, be so fragile, so unprepared? The immensity and immediacy of these questions inevitably drew Greek America into the national conversation.

I will focus here on one example, the unequivocal critique of the Trump administration's handling of the emergency in *The National Herald*, primarily in the form of editorials by Antonis Diamataris. He served as the Editor-Publisher of its English language version for 22 years, before his appointment as a Deputy Minister for Expatriate Greeks under the New Democracy government. He resigned in December 2019, amidst a much-publicised scandal relating to accusations of [falsifying his college resume](#).

Why focus on this example? *The National Herald* is a major weekly Greek-American publication in English with significant circulation. The newspaper exhibits a considerable current catering to conservatives, voters of the Republican Party, and Trump supporters, which constitutes a [significant Greek-American demographic](#). Still, my choice is not primarily motivated by the paper's editorial reversal from promoting conservative views to mostly critiquing Trump's administration. Instead, I draw from this case study to raise a broader issue: the ethics and politics of diaspora media. If the diaspora is both a home *and* a homeland institution, then what is the civic responsibility of one of its major newspapers in relation to the ethnic community, the American public, and Greece?

Since the onset of the pandemic in early March, Diamataris has been an outspoken critic of the Trump administration's handling of the issue, often in tones of utter shock and disbelief. In his own words, "How is it possible that the American authorities did not foresee the possibility of such a catastrophic crisis, given that we all assumed that as a rich superpower they have ready-made plans for every contingency and to fight any threat— internal or external – that one can imagine?" And, "the American people are watching in amazement and shock at the lack of preparedness of the government to control the spread of the coronavirus and its inability to provide medical and hospital staff with the most basic tools to deal with it" [1].

Diamataris' critique and the stance of *The National Herald's* editorial board is representative of a larger outcry, a sense of astonishment, both domestic and international, over the nation's grave mishandling of the pandemic, and this is echoed elsewhere in US media. At another level, however, as a publication relying on a relatively small demographic, *The National Herald's* position risks alienating those sectors of its Republican ethnic readership who support the President. Historically, Greek-American media has struggled to survive, relying on a complex constellation of funding sources from Greece and from within the diaspora itself, which requires careful navigation of the

divisions among their readership via-a-vis US and Greek politics.

But what are the political calculations motivating Diamataris? Diamataris is not a stranger to openly criticising Trump. As the editor of *The National Herald* during the 2016 presidential election, he threw his political support behind Hillary Clinton—albeit grudgingly—and did not mince his words in denouncing her political adversary, “We are frightened to imagine Donald Trump as commander-in-chief,” he wrote, “we believe he presents an unacceptable [risk to the country](#).”

Yet he reversed course upon Trump’s election. Praising the selection of Reince Priebus, a Greek-American, as White House chief of staff, he saw the appointment as a venue for the “community” to [access the new power](#). Diaspora interests trumped home political interests [2].

A diaspora public figure known for his close ties with the Karamanlis family and an open supporter of the New Democracy government, Diamataris places Greece’s interests, and particularly the current government’s, high up in his agenda. Can it be that his critique of the Trump administration serves broader diasporic calculations?

The landscape is complex when it comes to Greek-America’s positioning vis-à-vis the current administration. To contextualise some aspects of this terrain it is necessary to list the following sequence of political events involving Washington’s foreign policy in relation to Turkey and Greece.

In November 2019, lobbying organisations such as The Order of the AHEPA and the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC) officially condemned President Trump’s meeting with Turkey’s President Erdogan, and mobilised public opposition. “Turkey is not a friend of the United States, and Turkey’s President Erdogan [should never have been invited](#) to the White House,” the HALC’s Public Affairs Director said.

In November 13, 2019, in a joint press conference, President Trump welcomed President Erdogan as a “highly respected,” and “very good friend” to the White House. He added a personal note, declaring himself a “[big fan](#)” of the Turkish leader.

Only two months later, in January 2020, in contrast, no such joint Press Conference was on Washington’s diplomatic agenda on the occasion of the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis’ visit to the White House to garner support for the Greek position on the Turkish-Libya deal as a geopolitical move that “breaches of [Greece’s sovereignty by Turkey](#).”

The Greek media and Greek journalists did not fail to criticise President Donald Trump for “pass [ing] up on the opportunity to hold” a joint press conference, seeing this move as “[snub\[bing\] Greece’s diplomatic](#) overtures.

These diplomatic developments did not sway Greek-American support of the administration. A poll conducted between February 19 and March 9, 2020, on behalf of the online media *Greek Reporter*, indicated that among Greek-Americans, “support for US President Donald Trump has increased compared to 2016, despite negative views of his handling of Greek issues.” As the headline of the reporting indicates, Greek-Americans think of Trump as “[Turkey-friendly but still support him](#).” In this case, home political allegiance trumps solidarity with the historical homeland.

In conclusion, Greek-America’s political engagement during the pandemic illustrates the operation of certain diaspora institutions as simultaneously national and transnational. The articulation of homeland and home is active in the political discourse of selected Greek-American media.

There seems to be at least two political forces in the fragmented and contested terrain of Greek-

America's public sphere. First, a vocal lobby criticises the President for what is seen as his preferential treatment to Turkey, a critique which Diamataris has rearticulated in the context of the pandemic, where his critique of the US government seems to underline his political resolve to promote Greece's national interest in the context of geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean. Second, rank-and-file Greek-American Republicans continue supporting the President despite his diplomatic strategies in the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean region. The launching of "Greek Voices for Trump," self-described as "a coalition to empower and unite the Greek-American community to [re-elect President Trump](#)," signals the administration's investment in winning this demographic in the upcoming national elections. At the time of this writing, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Energy, Francis Fannon, "called on Turkey to [refrain from any provocative actions](#)," regarding Greece's maritime space. Will Diamataris continue his critique of President Trump betting on the Democratic Party's win in this year's election? In a parallel editorial line, Eraklis Diamataris draws a strong distinction between conservatism, which he values, and Trumpism, which he castigates.<sup>3</sup> In our uncertain and fluid times, a great deal may happen between now and November.

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#### NOTES

[1] Antonis Diamataris, "The Collapse of the U.S. Image." Email to *The National Herald* Subscribers. April 26, 2020.

[2] Only one year into Donald Trump's presidency, Priebus was dismissed as chief of staff. "He was undercut by the president himself at every turn—in private, [it was] reportedly common for Trump to mock and belittle Priebus." <https://www.vox.com/2017/7/28/15724206/reince-priebus-fired-trump>

## Conclusions and afterthoughts

As Greece has commenced its vaccination programme and prepares for the exit from the worst ravages of the pandemic, together with the rest of the world, it makes sense to take stock of our collected contributions, one year since the start of the pandemic in Europe. In this concluding part, we will relate our contributions to developments that have taken place since the Summer of 2020, put them in the larger context of the pandemic's impact on diaspora & homeland relations substantiated by media reporting and commentary, as well as speculatively attempt to project the analyses of our contributors to the future.

Let us begin by Greek diaspora scientists and the pandemic. Any further scholarly research on this issue would, in our judgment, strengthen our preliminary analysis on their centrality in Greek public and policy debate as much as in policy implementation relating to the pandemic. As we have crossed the first anniversary of the pandemic, what continues to be striking is the incredible exposure of Greece's scientific diaspora in the Greek media and in the related public discourse and policy discussion.

Indeed, the growing complexity of the pandemic's management, as well as the growing scientific knowledge on the pandemic, has drawn into Greece's public sphere a commensurate number of Greek scientists with the relevant expertise from diverse disciplines and sub-disciplines. For example, the issue of the willingness of the general population to vaccinate itself has brought to the fore diaspora expertise on the subject of fake news. On a much more important scale, development of anti-virus treatments and vaccines has made household names in Greece of such scientists-executives from the global pharmaceutical sector, as the co-founder of Regeneron, George Yankopoulos, and the CEO of Pfizer, Albert Bourla. Regeneron has become globally known for providing the experimental drug cocktail with which then President Trump was treated for COVID 19 and Pfizer has produced the first vaccine to be licensed for mass use in the US and the EU.

The pandemic's continued onslaught has also consolidated the identity of the diaspora scientist as a prominent public intellectual. Professor Elias Mossialos, Professor of Health Policy at the LSE, Manolis Dermitzakis, Professor of Genetics at the University of Geneva and George Pavlakis Senior Investigator of the National Cancer Institute in the US, have become household names in that regard. Elias Mossialos has focused on being an authoritative voice of pandemic-related scientific developments, as in the case of vaccine development and efficacy while also seeming to gently probe Greek policy makers on various issues relating to the pandemic's management, a role which must be situated in the context of his ongoing collaboration with the Greek government. Manolis Dermitzakis and George Pavlakis, unaffiliated with the government, have been more prone to advocate publicly for more stringent social distancing measures to contain the second wave of the pandemic, while subsequently the former did not shy away from arguing for a controversial, in Greece, relaxation of measures when he deemed such a relaxation appropriate. Both these diaspora scientists have also bluntly criticized the Church in Greece, and Greek colleagues of theirs who are

on record as supporting the Church on the issue of Holy Communion, for what see they see as an unhelpful attitude towards the pandemic's containment.

Furthermore, we note that the high profile that diaspora scientists have acquired during the pandemic has offered the opportunity to both diaspora scientists and Greek commentators to argue that Greece needs a more meritocratic order to retain or repatriate its scientists. In particular, eminent Greek epidemiologists and clinicians featured in the Greek press, mentioned the lack of meritocracy in Greece as a major reason for their decision not to repatriate to Greece. It is an open question whether this combination of a contribution to their country in its moment of distress linked with a particular institutional critique of the reason of their expatriation, creates a space of political opportunity for policy changes, either in Greek public health and/or in scientific research, that would facilitate brain gain processes. We mention in that regard, two emblematic public policy initiatives. First, the working group created by the government, composed of preeminent Greek diaspora medical scientists and pharmaceutical executives, from such pandemic-related corporate leaders as Pfizer, Regeneron and Astra Zeneca, and entrusted with the mission of issuing recommendations to the government for the development of life sciences R&D in Greece. Second, the government's introduction of generous tax exemptions to non-resident Greeks as well as non-Greek citizens whose relocation to Greece could be linked to a job assignment – a policy seeking to take advantage of the pandemic-induced trend towards non-office work so as to accelerate the repatriation trend.

Moving to the intersection of religion and the pandemic, we note the Ecumenical Patriarch's endorsement of public health measures, adopted by various jurisdictions, as well as the publicized in Greece compliance of Greek orthodox authorities in such important, diaspora-wise, countries such as Germany and the US. These developments both singly and in combination have underlined this important aspect of the pandemic in diaspora and homeland relations: its contemporaneous impact on the homeland and on diaspora host countries. Such an impact means that differentiated approaches by leading figures of the Greek Orthodox authorities, in Greece and abroad, contest each other to the extent that consensus in Greece, on the pandemic's impact on religious practice, is not preordained.

Consequently, the interaction between diaspora communities, host state authorities and host state Greek Orthodox Churches, has strengthened the Greek government's ability to institute effective pandemic-related measures in houses of worship in Greece. Illuminatingly, on the issue of Holy Communion, where the Ecumenical Patriarchate has either implied that it cannot cause harm or, at a minimum, has not explicitly argued in favor of using single-use disposable spoons, the government has not felt confident enough to temporarily suspend the practice of Holy Communion being distributed by a single metal spoon in Churches in Greece.

The pandemic has not proven to be a catalyst in rendering visible, and thus a government policy priority, the less privileged Greeks who migrated during the crisis, to Europe and other countries such as Australia. While the whole issue of brain drain/brain gain receded, due to the pandemic's all-consuming nature, we could assume that lowered skilled Greek migrants, employed in the retail trade and other such occupations, would have attracted for once both public and policy attention in Greece due to their much direr plight. Not so. Longer term, and in the context of the granting of the right to vote abroad to Greek citizens, it would be interesting to see whether this lack of concern becomes addressed by the ruling party or, alternatively or concurrently, is being picked up by

opposition parties vying for the diaspora vote.

On diaspora philanthropy and the homeland, and peering into the future, we note the EU's fiscal policy response, which unprecedentedly confers borrowing capacity to the EU, in aid to pandemic-hit member-states. Undoubtedly, this EU-wide policy response, combined with the European Central Bank's accommodative monetary policy, stands in contrast with the stringent austerity measures that Greece took during the fiscal crisis and provides the country with considerable fiscal resources with which to mitigate the pandemic's socioeconomic effects. Thus this manifestation of EU solidarity combined with ongoing, pandemic-distress in the US, will continue to mean that the pandemic, in and by itself, will not catalyze Greek-American and generally diaspora philanthropy to Greece.

Taking our cues from our contributors we could say that the future and deeper study of the diaspora and the homeland in the time of the pandemic could inquire on the potential of crises of a global nature increasing in recurrence and intensity, for a variety of reasons. Thus the intense as well as diverse diaspora and homeland interactions, such as the ones recorded in these pages, might well reappear in the future influencing both the Greek society and polity and diverse diaspora communities and groups.

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## The Greek Diaspora Project

Our project explores the relationship between Greece and its diaspora in the context of economic crisis and beyond. It investigates how the Greek diaspora can affect Greece's political and economic transformation and explores ways for the Greek state, economy and society to interact with its diaspora. This project is purposely designed to reach a wide audience beyond academia.

### Goals

The programme seeks to:

- Become the preeminent forum for debate between the wider diaspora scholarship and scholarship dedicated to the Greek diaspora;
- Relate Greece and its diaspora to countries which can serve as benchmarks in the way they conduct diaspora-homeland interactions, and conduct in-depth comparative studies;
- Be a port of call for anyone interested in contemporary aspects of the Greek diaspora, in terms of its library and archival resources, activities, institutional affiliations, policy relevant research;
- Analyse the new trends characterizing the current Greek diaspora in conjunction to the historical context, socio-economic change, varieties of cultural affinities and so on;
- Assess the developmental impact of the diaspora on the Greek economy and identify policies that can maximize its contribution;
- Provide valuable insights by serving as the nexus between research and policy;
- Inform Greek public debate and Greek policy makers on the Greek diaspora, its evolution and the policy implications of actual and potential interactions between the diaspora and Greece.

[SEESOX Diaspora website](#)

## South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX)

SEESOX is part of the European Studies Centre at the University of Oxford. It focuses on the interdisciplinary study of the relationship between European integration and the politics, economics and societies of the Balkans, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. Drawing on the academic excellence of the University and an international network of associates, it conducts policy relevant research on the multifaceted transformations of the region in the 21st century. It follows closely conflict and post-conflict situations and analyses the historical and intellectual influences which have shaped perceptions and actions in the region. In Oxford's best tradition, the SEESOX team is committed to understanding the present through the *longue durée* and reflecting on the future through high quality scholarship. SEESOX has the following objectives:

- To support high-quality research on South East Europe.
- To organise conferences, workshops and research seminars.
- To promote multi-disciplinary study of the region's development within Oxford University (e.g. politics, international relations, law, sociology, economics) working in collaboration with other Centres and Programmes within the University, including student societies.
- To spearhead intellectual exchanges and debate on these issues among networks of individuals and institutions beyond Oxford.
- To foster cooperation between the academic and the policy-making community.