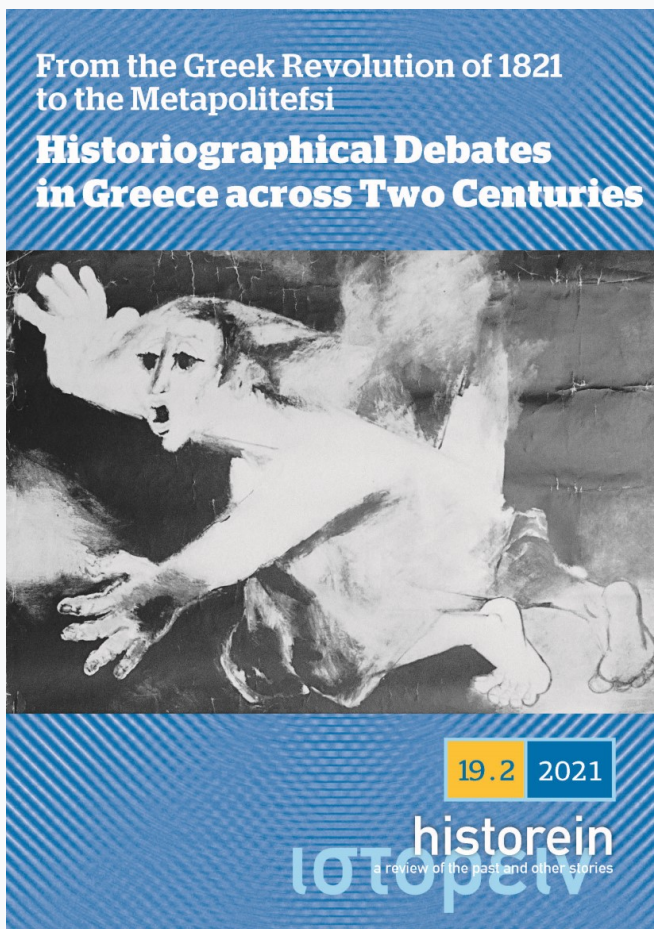


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From the Greek Revolution of 1821 to the Metapolitefsi: Historiographical Debates in Greece across Two Centuries



Stratos N. Dordanas and Nikos Papanastasiou, eds., Ο «μακρύς» ελληνογερμανικός εικοστός αιώνας: Οι μαύρες σκιές στην ιστορία των διμερών σχέσεων [The “long” Greek-German twentieth century: The dark shadows in the history of the bilateral relationships]

Chrysa Vachtsevanou

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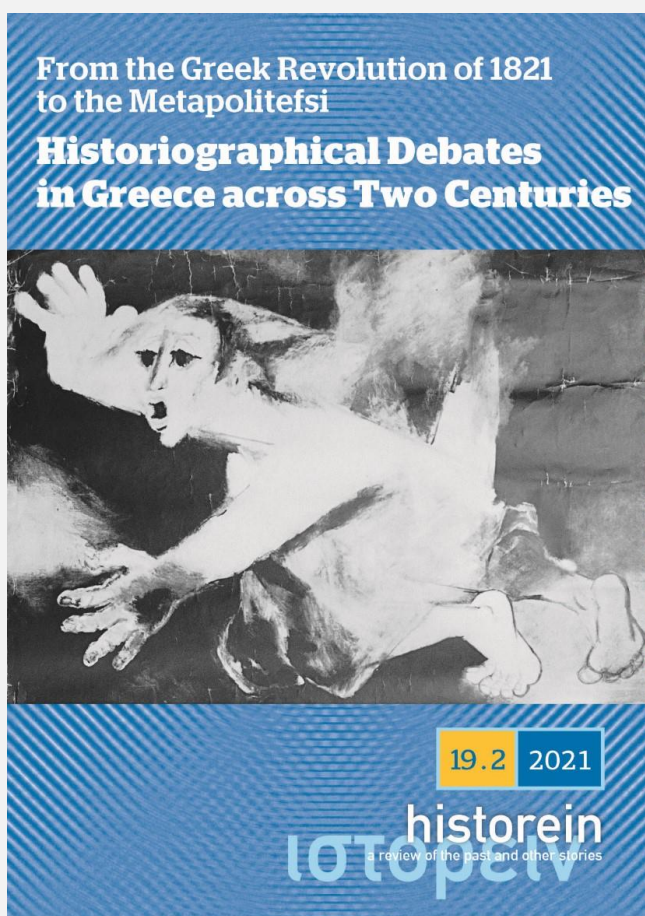
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*Ο “μακρύς” ελληνογερμανικός εικοστός αιώνας:*

*Οι μαύρες σκιές στην ιστορία των διμερών σχέσεων*

[The “long” Greek-German twentieth century:

The dark shadows in the history of the bilateral relationships]

Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2018. 488 pp.

Chrysa Vachtsevanou

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Adorned by a photograph of the German Archaeological Institute taken on 25 March 1933, the cover of this book gives an indication of the content of this anthology: The biggest part is structured around the National Socialist period, the German occupation of Greece and their impact in the aftermath of the Second World War.

As pointed out by editors Stratos N. Dordanas and Nikos Papanastasiou in the preface, the modern “shadows” of Greek-German relations are still affected by the past. At the dawn of the twenty-first century the two significant contemporary crises (the financial and the refugee crises) revived old grudges. Political circumstances have traditionally reanimated unresolved problems from the twentieth century and affect bilateral relationships, with issues such as German reparations and reconciliation appearing over and over again. Thus, it becomes clear that these “shadows”, wrapped up as stereotypes or clichés, often have the potential to burden bilateral relations. A book about the “dark” sides of Greek-German relations has, as a first task, to revive the ghosts of the past, since only through such efforts can they be subdued. How could an effective review of the past be acquired if not through the scientific research of those “ghosts”?

Beginning with this precise question, about how the past rekindles the present, this book aims to scrutinise contemporary Greek-German relations by illuminating both Germany’s presence in Greece, and German foreign policy as it concerns Greece, since the dawn of the twentieth century. According to the editors, the essential aim of the book is to analyse bilateral relations through new historiographical approaches and the latest research on primary sources. This process shall improve the public and academic dialogue related to the painful and confrontational past between Greece and Germany while it could prevent the instrumentalisation of history.

To achieve this, the editors collected contributions from 18 Greek and international

authors, taking a closer look at the root causes behind the developments in Greek-German relations during the twentieth century, locating them in their respective historical context while also discussing strategies for an effective political and historical dialog in the future. Dordanas and Papanastasiou respond to the current, turbulent state of the bilateral relations by encouraging the “questioning” and “research” of critical issues.

The first section of the book deals with the period around and during the First World War, underlining aspects of the German and Austrian policy towards Greece. Noteworthy is the fact that the academic research about Greek-German relations during this period is extremely limited and the studies so far have come mainly from Greek historians. Thus, two of the three articles in this volume “expanded” their archival research to the Austrian archives, reflecting the fact that Austria’s interest in the area at the time was much more significant than Germany’s. However, the reader should carefully consider this (necessary) expansion as it does not directly represent the German perspective but rather the Austrian. Konstantinos Papanikolaou outlines the tendencies and the Austrian-German perception regarding the future of Macedonia during the Balkan Wars. Through the use of interviews with contemporary witnesses and archival research, the author points out the complexity of this issue, using an “unorthodox” but interesting comparison between the brutalities that occurred during the Balkan Wars and the Sack of Magdeburg during the Thirty Years’ War. The German influence on Greece during and after the First World War is the focus of the other two articles of this section. In his article about Germany and the alleged “neutral position” of King Constantine during the war, Kostas Loulos describes the German policy using a controversial term by referring to “a typical example of *informal and peripheral imperialism*” (61) of a major power. However, the article offers interesting insights into the German influence on Greek politics. The section closes with an in-depth and yet moving analysis by Konstantinos Fotiadis that illustrates the joint responsibility of the Austrians and Germans for the genocide of the Greek Pontians in Asia Minor. However, the narrative follows a rather Pontic Greek-centric approach, that of the “us versus the enemy”, thus trailing away from independent and unbiased scientific inquiry.

The second section focuses on the interwar years as an era of German cultural infiltration of Greek cultural affairs and Greece’s economic dependence on Germany. The case study of Telefunken in Maria Dimitriadou’s chapter is an interesting example of the economic relations between Germany and Greece during this period. The author brings out not only the particular aspects of German economic and industrial expansion and Greece’s position in the geopolitical map of southeastern Europe, but also German economic interests specifically towards Greece, seen as a “connecting link” regarding the revival of the bilateral relations after the First World War. Phaedra Koutsoukou analyses the cultural and scientific relations between Greece and Germany during and after the National Socialist period until the establishment of the military dictatorship in Greece in 1967.

Though this continuum is pretty unusual for German historiography, it illustrates not only how the German National Socialists tried to exercise cultural, political and economic influence in Greece, but also the links to Germany’s foreign cultural policy and the mobilisation of science in the country’s efforts to regain its lost position in the political landscape of Europe. The next chapter in this section, by Alexandra Kankeleit, focuses on the activities of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens during the Nazi period. This section makes a significant contribution to casting some light on the continuities and discontinuities between the Nazi period and the postwar era in the interdependent fields of science, culture and foreign affairs and the understanding of German cultural policy in the twentieth century.

The third section of the book focuses on the so-called “New Order” and the German occupation of Greece. Vaios Kalogrias’ accurate overview of the background to the political, diplomatic and administrative decisions is fundamental to understanding Greek relations with the Nazi regime during the occupation period. Violetta Hionidou reveals, in her chapter, another aspect of the causes of the famine and food crisis in Greece. Although it is now commonly accepted that the main factor behind the great famine in Greece during the Axis occupation was the Nazis, Hionidou provides a well-researched new input, raising the question “Was it only the Germans?” Vasilis Manousakis, in the third chapter of this section, examines the Greek economy and the country’s financial dependence. The role of both countries, their motives and geopolitical and economic positions in Europe are outlined to explain the utility of the Greek economy to the German invaders and evaluate the financial consequences after the end of the war.

Arguably, the most difficult issue in the aftermath of the Second World War is that of reparations and compensation, which still burdens the relations between Greece and Germany. The aim of the fourth section of the book thus is to examine the main obstacle in the Greek-(West) German relations in the aftermath of the Second World War. Anna Maria Droumpouki illustrates the issue of German reparations for the Holocaust of the Greek Jews, while Despina-Georgia Konstantinakou focuses the spotlight on the background of the insistent Greek reparation claims after the war. These insightful studies constitute a great introduction to the last chapter of this section: Kateřina Králová and Jiří Kocian analyse the German policy of “dealing with the past” and the reasons why *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*<sup>1</sup> was less successful in Greece than in other countries in Eastern Europe. Particularly noteworthy within the last chapter are the explanations of terms and definitions that thoroughly reflect aspects of German policy.

The fifth section deals with the normalisation of bilateral relations during the Cold War and the first milestones in an effective way to overcome the past. The methodical review of the developments in Greek-(West) German relations during the Cold War by Dimitris Apostolopoulos serves as a substantial basis for this section. In what is the most densely written article in the volume, the author covers major issues – from the stabilisation of bilateral relations in the aftermath of the war, through the establishment of the



dictatorship in Greece and aspects of the (West) German political reaction to that, to the issue of war reparations. Andreas Stergiou's in-depth study on the geopolitical and geostrategic antagonism between East and West Germany and its relevance to Greece is, at the same time, the only article in this volume that deals with the division of Germany and its impact on bilateral relations between West Germany and Greece. Noteworthy is the role of the GDR regarding the West German issue of reparations to Greece, which Stergiou mentions. Nikos Papanastasiou, closing the chapter on the most significant factors in Greek-German relations during the Cold War, uses the role of the Greek department of Bavaria's public broadcasting service – a means of opposition during the resistance movement – as a “stepping stone” to describe the Greek-German relations during the Greek military dictatorship (1967–1974). Though the chapter covers the most important parts of Greek-German relations during the Cold War, core issues like the Greek immigration are only briefly mentioned.

The final section, entitled “From the courtroom to the movie theatre: ‘The Germans are back’ in films and justice”, reviews the contemporary representation of Germany in Greece. Nikos Zaikos' chapter describes the crimes of the Nazis in Greece and the legal concept of the reparation issue in detail, while Giorgos Andritsos, in the penultimate article of this volume, examines the postwar representations of the German occupying forces in Greek cinema. With this selection, while closing the retrospective of the dark shadows in the twentieth century, the editors leave open the question about what actually remains from these hundred years, which partly forms popular culture and collective thinking in the present.

As a whole, the volume has the merit of providing food for thought, not only on Greek-German relations during the last century, but also on the burning issue of demands for war reparations. Additionally, the different perspectives offered by historians from various backgrounds offers a wide range of elements worthy of consideration in trying to understand the factors that influenced contemporary bilateral relations between Greece and Germany. The extensive study in Greek and German archives underlines the impressive depth of research of the authors.

The chronological cut-off point of the book lies around 1990, although some authors stretched their research into the twenty-first century. Furthermore, when it comes to the timeline, historians contextualise studies about the crimes and victims of the Nazi era in different ways: Some of them place them in a precisely defined period, while others identify a historical continuum between earlier and later periods of German history. These issues underline the difficulty of analysing bilateral relations and the multiple facets of the tasks (military, political, economic, social, cultural, etc.) this volume aims to cover.

Overall, the book focuses on the impact of the Second World War but also manages to provide interesting considerations on the bilateral relations between Greece and

Germany, combining political aspects with cultural and economic elements. *The “Long” Greek-German Twentieth Century* offers an informative read for scholars and the general public and can be an interesting starting point for one’s own reflections and considerations on the factors that influence contemporary foreign policy and bilateral relations. Whatever the strengths and shortcomings of this book, it constitutes a multifaceted anthology of contemporary Greek historiography in the field of Greek-German relations – such a significant endeavour deserves to be translated in other languages in order to reinvigorate international academic discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past) refers to Germany’s process of coming to terms with the history of the National Socialist period and the Holocaust.