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George Papaconstantinou

The Greek Crisis: Responses from Greece and from Europe

A full decade has passed since the Greek economy started shrinking; eight years since the first-ever bailout of a member-state of the European Union; six years since the largest debt haircut in history; and two years since a disastrous referendum almost cost Greece its place in the Eurozone.

Greece's former finance minister (2009-2011) highlights the reasons that led to this development, the obstacles encountered along the way and the outlook for the country in the years to come. While major budgetary and structural adjustments have been achieved, the challenges Greece continues to face are numerous, including its momentous sovereign debt, the trust deficit vis-à-vis its European partners and ongoing domestic political polarization.

Papaconstantinou argues that for Greece to generate growth, jobs and prosperity for its citizens, it needs to change dramatically in order to attract foreign investment which is the binding constraint in a country with a very low domestic savings rate and a moribund banking sector.

Hubert Beyerle

„No Homeland Calling“ – The presumed return of war-time refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina to their homeland

Do refugees from war or civil war return after the end of the crisis they escaped from? This is suggested by many current statements of politicians and journalists. But the reality is more complex.

The case of the refugees after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992-1995 is a telling one. Return, in particular minority return, was understood as an essential element in the Bosnian post-war order. Even if some figures suggest significant refugee returns in the war's aftermath, the overall and long-term numbers provided by German, UN, and Bosnian population statistics show that there has not been a substantial return of Bosnians to their homeland after the end of the conflict.

In the long run, the trend has rather been the opposite. The refugee wave of the 1990s can be seen as part of a wider trend of world-wide emigration of Bosnians. The new concept of „mixed migration“ seems to be a useful approach to characterize this development.

Michael Schmunk

Dževad Karahasan – The most important contemporary writer from Bosnia and Herzegovina

An appreciation

The author gives an introduction to Dževad Karahasan's opus magnum and leads a conversation with the renowned writer-philosopher about his new book and the lessons of the Seljuk Empire for contemporary Bosnia.

Bad leadership, state failure, de-individualization, political fundamentalism and terrorism brought the long flourishing Seljuk Empire in the 11th and 12th century to an end. Karahasan uses a historic-cultural metaphor in his novel "The Solace of the Night Sky" (2016) to describe contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, the long-suffering country in the heart of the Balkans. He narrates the story of the famous Seljuk scientist, philosopher and poet Omar Chayyam. It is also a story of the ancient, enriching mingling of cultures of the Orient and the Occident. "Solace of the Night Sky" is part 'Bildungsroman', romance and family saga, as well as a history novel and political parable.

The novel takes us on a journey back in time to middle age Persia. But in fact, it confronts the reader with some terrifying narratives from the failing "Dayton-Bosnia", as Dževad Karahasan sees it, and from the murderous Middle East of our time. The novel offers lessons for a more citizen-oriented democracy and the de-ideologization of "cohabitation" between Orient and Occident. In his interview, Karahasan provides a deep insight into his novel and his philosophical and political views and visions: "In retrospect, I have realized that 'Solace of the Night Sky' somehow reflects my personal coming to terms with the Yugoslav wars and the Bosnian tragedy."