

European Integration and the Communist Dilemma: Communist Party Responses to Europe in Greece, Cyprus and Italy

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The book is not exclusively about Cyprus, but Cyprus forms a very major focus of the study. The book examines three case studies of contemporary communist parties: the KKE in Greece, Rifondazione in Italy, and AKEL in Cyprus. It therefore manages to do two things that ought to be of considerable relevance for *The Cyprus Review*: a very significant proportion of the book concentrates squarely on contemporary Cypriot politics, and it does so by placing the Cypriot experience in a comparative European political context, rather than treating it as an isolated or unique or sui generis issue. For this, it is to be strongly commended.

The study engages with three important strands of contemporary political science analysis: with theories regarding the Europeanisation of political parties (in other words, the analysis of how European integration has impacted on parties); with theories regarding euro-scepticism as a phenomenon; and with more general theories about the behaviour of and influences on political parties. The audience is likely to be primarily an academic one, but that is a commentary on audiences rather than on this book: it fully deserves a wider readership. In particular, it deserves to be read by party activists (especially those on the left, though the lessons of the book have a wider applicability), by media commentators, and by anyone with an active interest in European politics.

The main argument is set out in chapter two: what the author terms 'the communist dilemma', although later in the book he is careful to point out that the same dilemma can be seen to apply more broadly, not just to communist and former communist parties. Essentially, the dilemma is about a trade-off between ideological purity on the one hand and the hunt for votes and office on the other. The book uses European integration as a device for exploring this issue, examining how the three case study parties have dealt with the EU in terms of patterns of political competition (in other words, the way the parties have placed themselves in the context of rival parties in the political system), programmatic positions on EU issues (essentially, what positions they have taken on EU issues and how they have responded to EU policies), and transnational affiliations (their relations with EU-level party federations, in this instance particularly the European Left Party). The focus is very contemporary, starting at the end of the 1980s with the collapse to the Soviet Union and going up to the present day responses to the European financial crisis.

A brief introduction sets out the general approach of the book, before chapters 2 and 3 set out the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 concentrates on the 'communist dilemma', examining 'the overarching dichotomy ... between ideological consistency and moderation towards a more pragmatic stance' (p. 31). The chapter makes an important and useful clarification that too often communist parties are treated as a single undifferentiated mass, whereas this book insists that each such party deserves to be analysed and evaluated in terms of its own distinctive context and characteristics. This is not an original assertion, as the author makes clear, but it is a useful and relevant reminder. Chapter 3 explores the literature on political parties and European integration, focusing particularly on Robert Ladrech's seminal work on Europeanisation of political parties and on Taggart and Szczesniak's equally influential work on euro-scepticism. The book then proceeds to an evaluation of the three case studies in chapters 4, 5 and 6, before presenting comparative findings in chapter 7 and presenting a very brief concluding commentary.

In general, this is an excellent book. The author shows real knowledge and mastery of a wide range of relevant literature, and weaves these different strands together most effectively to construct an interesting and coherent analytical framework. The case studies provide an in-depth examination of three political parties that tend to get overlooked in broader surveys.

I can see why the choice was made to concentrate on these three parties, and to try to differentiate between 'communist parties' and 'radical left' parties. However, my initial reaction on seeing that differentiation was to think 'I wonder how well this will hold up?', and having read the three case studies, I am still a little unconvinced. I think that the experiences of those such as the Swedish Left Party or Die Linke in Germany or Spain's Izquierda Unida, to pick just three examples, are not so far removed at all from those of the parties dealt with in this book. I am not suggesting that the book would have benefited from including more case-studies – quite the contrary, since one of its strengths is the analytical depth it generates by not trying to spread itself too wide. However, particularly having read the cases of Rifondazione and AKEL, I am not so sure that the distinction between communist and radical left is quite so impermeable.

In addition, I would have liked to have seen a little more discussion about how each of these parties has responded to the current financial crisis. This is discussed, and it is one of the strengths of the book that it tries to bring this right up to date, but perhaps inevitably the discussion is rather curtailed. However, I trust that this work can serve as an inspiration for further research along these lines.

But these are quibbles. Overall, this is a very worthwhile and commendable contribution to the literature.

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