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Nikos Smyrnaiois, Panos Tsimpoukis

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## **1821 tweets: Networks and ideological discourse around the Greek revolution bicentenary**

Panos Tsimpoukis, LERASS, University of Toulouse

Nikos Smyrnaiois, LERASS, University of Toulouse

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**Abstract:** In this paper we propose an original method combining large scale network and lexicometric analysis in order to link identifiable communities of Twitter users with the main discursive themes they mobilized around the 1821 Greek revolution bicentenary. Overall, the network analysis highlights a double polarization among Greek Twitter users who posted about 1821. On the one hand, we find a large pole on the Right of the political spectrum that represents more than half of our sample. This pole comprises three main sub poles: an international-official sub pole, a neoliberal sub pole and a nationalist-conservative sub pole with close connections to the xenophobic far-right. On the other hand, we find a much smaller leftist pole. Our content analysis demonstrates that the discussion about the bicentenary that took place on Twitter was characterized both by presentism, that is determined by social and political issues of the present time, as well as “ideological battles” around historiography that express political divisions that run through Greek society.

The year 2021 marked the 200th anniversary of the 1821 Revolution against the Ottomans, which eventually led to the formation of the modern Greek state. In order to celebrate the momentous occasion, a special committee called Greece 2021 was formed to organize the national festivities of the bicentenary commemoration in March 2021. Greek businesswoman Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, best known as the president of the bidding and organizing committees for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, served as the head of Greece 2021. Many prominent business people, mainstream academics, cultural figures, and historians participated in the committee. For the right-wing government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis that organized the celebration, as well as for the economic elite connected to it, this was a great opportunity to stage a series of events that would boost its popularity and occupy the news agenda.

But things didn't go as expected because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the social, economic and political tensions that it triggered. The majority of the planned events were cancelled, leaving plenty of room for the dissemination of controversies around the 1821 bicentenary in social media that largely countered the official agenda. In this paper we propose an original method combining large scale network and lexicometric analysis in order to link identifiable communities of Twitter users with the main discursive themes they mobilized around the 1821 revolution bicentenary. This in order to distinguish the political and cultural issues and cleavages within Greek society that were made visible on Twitter on the occasion of this event.

## **1. Debating a complex historical event on social media**

Since their creation, social media platforms have been the scene of numerous experiments in popularizing history, whether they be projects led by academic actors, heritage institutions or the media. However, these traditional protagonists of "public history" are now largely overtaken by initiatives and accounts created to share and comment on historical material without bothering with contextualization, veracity and referencing of sources (Grandjean, 2018). At the same time, the debate around historical events that takes place on social media is almost systematically determined by social and political issues of the present time. François Hartog (2003) qualifies this regime of historicity which, according to him, has characterized our era since the fall of the Berlin Wall as "presentism". For Hartog, 1989 marked the end of a regime of historicity that began with the advent of progressive liberalism, where the future took precedence over the present and the past, and where the latter was considered from a distance. Presentism, on the other hand, is marked by the replacement of history by memory, while the traces of the past are omnipresent and considered without hindsight, i.e. interpreted and understood according to present issues.

Presentism can be exacerbated by the particular socio-technical characteristics of social media platforms such as Twitter where users have a real-time view of the information circulation, thus favoring the high-frequency temporality so characteristic of online controversies. Indeed, social media constitute a vast public arena in which the hierarchizing and framing of political facts are played out, and in which is formed our representation of the world and the issues that run through it (Rochira *et al.*, 2020). Public expression and the circulation of ideas is thus mediated by complex technical devices, most often controlled by global private digital platforms with powerful economic interests (Smyrniaios, 2018). This digital public space is fragmented because, unlike traditional media, digital social media are both plentiful and very diverse, constantly mixing the private and the public, the intimate and the political (Habermas, 2021). Far from the ideal of a “market of ideas” where a democratic consensus would be formed through the confrontation of rational arguments, the digital sphere is a symbolic battleground where multiple actors try to impose their interpretation of the world by all means. A battle for cultural and political hegemony is thus being fought online between contradictory, and often incompatible, points of view, which mobilize all the symbolic, technical and economic resources available.

These “ideological battles” are even more severe when it comes to the interpretation of complex historical events such as the French Revolution (Gildea, 1994), whose bicentennial celebration took place in 1989 and gave rise to numerous public controversies (Garcia, 2000). Symmetrically, the Greek revolution of 1821 represents a field of conflict between opposing historiographical but also ideological and political currents (Stathis, 2021). Its reading serves as the compass for interpreting the whole process of the foundation of the nation state of Greece and the forging of the modern Greek identity. Opposing political actors make selective use of the history of 1821 revolution by forming historical genealogies through which they could claim authentic continuity with leading social groups and figures of the revolution.

Accordingly, each of its readings function as the starting point in shaping the political practices and ideological cleavages in the present. These cleavages were reactivated in 2021 in the context of post-crisis Greece riddled with acute socio-economic problems and extreme political polarization (Spourdalakis, 2014) as well as distrust of the mainstream politics and media (Katsourides, 2016). This was particularly true on social media. The interest of Twitter, compared to other more popular platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, lies not only in its open architecture, which makes it a predominantly political communication tool, but also in the sociological characteristics of its users among which there is an over-representation of highly educated and highly politicized strata.

## 2. Methodology

In the context of this study, we collected 19.117 tweets that were published during the period between 11 February 2020 and 21 March 2021 and contained the terms “1821”, “1821gr” or “Ελληνική Επανάσταση” (Greek Revolution). These tweets were published from 8.252 unique users. The collection of the tweets was performed using the DMI-TCAT tool, which is based on the Twitter Search API (Borra and Rieder, 2014). The keywords allowed for the collection of tweets on a variety of topics related to the celebration of the bicentenary of the Greek Revolution. The starting point of the studied period was one year before the official celebration day, a choice that allowed us to trace the preparations and the discussions concerning the forthcoming celebration. We stopped the collection a few days before the official date of the bicentenary (25 March 2021) in order to avoid biasing our sample with a mass of official messages that were posted on that day.

For the purpose of our analysis, we implemented a robust research protocol previously applied in numerous studies (Smyrnaioi and Ratinaud, 2014; Ratinaud and Smyrnaioi, 2016). This protocol enables to discover homogeneous Twitter user communities by tracing their interactions. Indeed, research has shown that clusters identified in Twitter retweet and mention networks correspond to opinion or affinity groups (Mousavi & Gu, 2015). In the context of political controversies these groups are characterized by political homophily (Barbera, 2015). Furthermore, our method enables us to draw the main discussion frames and themes mobilized by these communities.

This implies a two-step procedure. Firstly, a directed graph is generated using the open-source software Gephi (Bastian, Heymann and Jacomy, 2009). This graph is calculated on the basis of the retweets and mentions of the users that have published a tweet during the studied period comprising the selected keywords. Each one of the Twitter accounts is represented by a graph node. When an account retweets or mentions a different account, an edge (in other words, a link) is created between the nodes, representing an interaction. The interactions between the accounts are visualized using Atlas Force2 algorithm (Jacomy *et al.*, 2014). This algorithm takes in consideration the degree of interactions between network nodes, in order to arrange them in the graph. In this case, this degree is calculated on the basis of the amount of retweets and mentions that each account receives. The more an account is retweeted or mentioned by a different account, the more the two accounts are close to each other in the graph. The resulting graph consists of distinct communities each of which includes users that tend to interact in a higher degree, compared to the rest of users. The composition of each cluster and its political orientation is determined by manual annotation of the most mentioned and

retweeted accounts. The effectiveness and relevance of this manual characterization method has been statistically demonstrated (Fraisier et al., 2018).

In the second step a lexicometric analysis is performed on the sample of the tweets that were collected during the period in question. This corpus is analyzed with the Reinert method (1990), which is implemented in the open-source software IRaMuTeQ (Ratinaud, 2004). This method relies on hierarchical clustering which groups segments of text in different groups of words, the latter described by the software developers as *classes*. The classes obtained consist of text segments that appear together in the text in a statistically significant level ( $p < 0,001$ ). These classes, otherwise “lexical worlds” (Reinert, 1990), represent different discursive themes, i.e. topics discussed in the tweets. Furthermore, the IRaMuTeQ software also identifies *characteristic segments* for each class, in this case tweets, which include the word structures most present in each class. This allows us to identify the most representative tweets for each class that we will use as quotes in the content analysis.

### 3. Results

As we can see in Figure 1, during the period in question we observe some peaks in Twitter users' activity comprising the selected keywords. These peaks correspond to different controversies or discussions that took place during that period. Two of them concern the reposting by the Greece 2021 committee of part of two articles by Professor Aristidis Hatzis from the Greece 2021 committee. Another peak concerns the publication of a video in which Hollywood star couple Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson, who obtained Greek nationality in July 2020, urge citizens to participate in the celebrations of the bicentenary. Finally, users show a lot of interest in two events, a cover-parody of BHMAGazino and a meme posted by the LGBTQ community, which occur in the days before the bicentennial anniversary. We'll detail the content of the tweets referring to these events further.

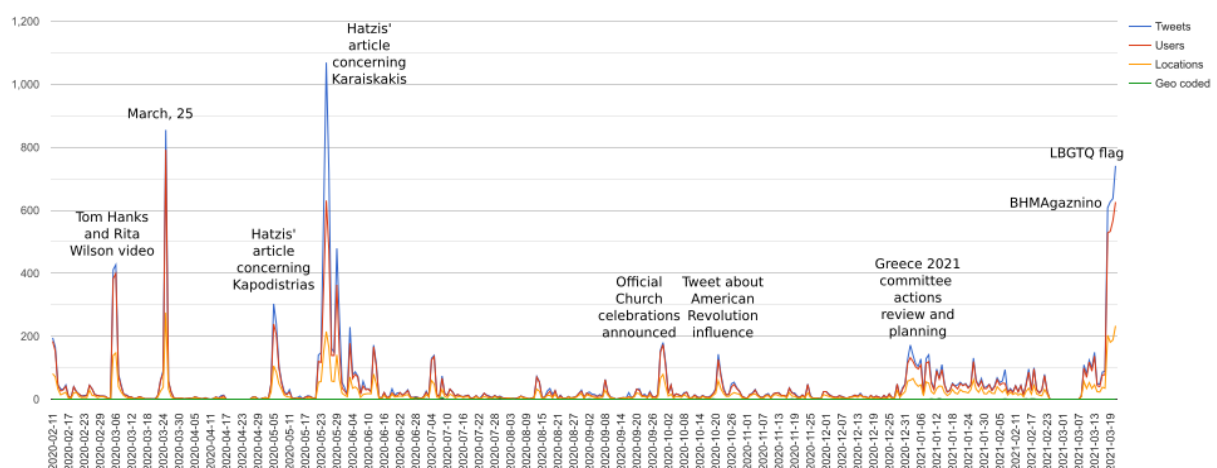


Figure 1: the number of tweets per day comprising “1821”, “1821gr” or “Ελληνική Επανάσταση” during our sampling period and the main events discussed. (Source: authors, DMI-TCAT)

### 3.1 Network analysis

In a first step, we analyzed the clusters formed by the interactions of users in our sample. The network analysis clearly shows a political polarization between the Left (left part of the graph) and the Right (right part of the graph), but also a cleavage within the Right between an international-official, a neoliberal and a nationalist-conservative sub pole.

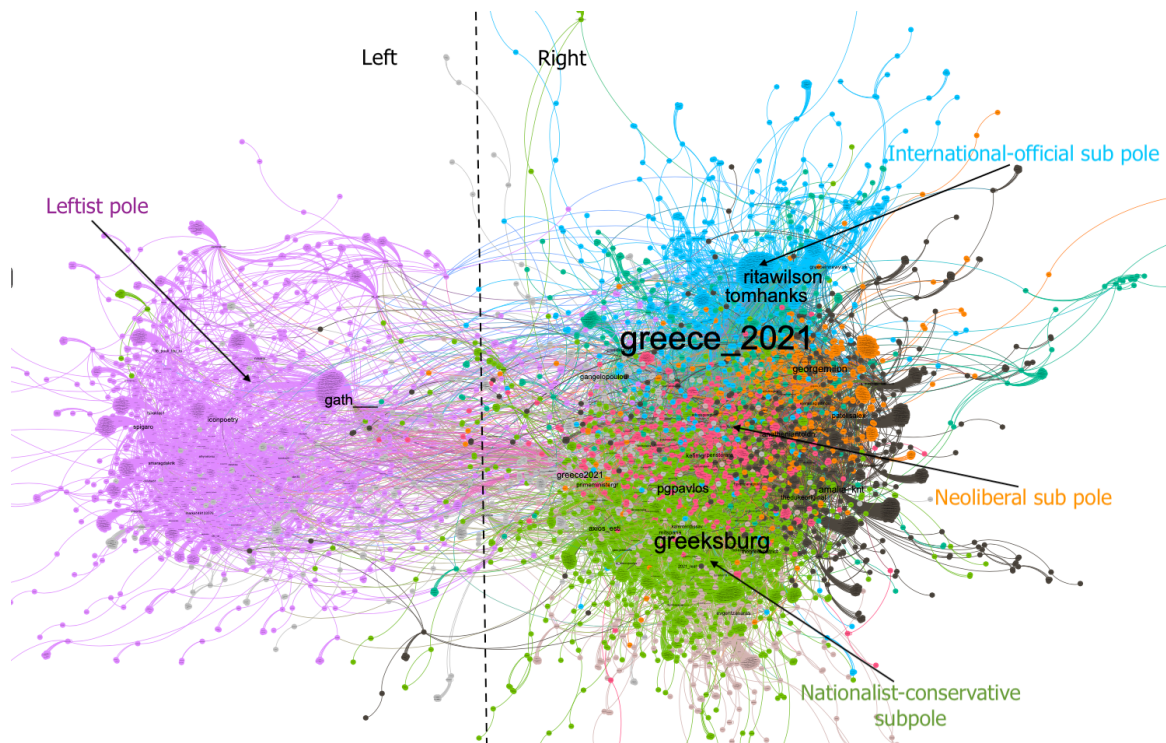


Figure 2: the graph of the mentions network comprising the tweets of our sample (Source: authors, Gephi)

#### ***The nationalist-conservative sub pole***

The nationalist-conservative sub pole is composed of the second largest cluster of users including 16,85% of the accounts of our sample (green). The most mentioned or retweeted accounts of this cluster belong to nationalist conservatives (pro- but also anti-government). Among these we find accounts that during the period in question posted tweets that belittle ethnic or gender minorities such as Albanians and homosexuals. We also find in a central position the account of Savvas Kalenteridis, a former secret services officer, and an account dedicated to renowned composer Mikis Theodorakis that posts essentially patriotic content.

Some members of this cluster interact with the members of a smaller group (3,28% of the sample, pink) at the lower part of the graph. The most cited accounts of this community post outward nationalist and racist content. Among the most cited accounts we find the –suspended – account of Christos Pappas, leading member of the neo-Nazi political party Golden Dawn who was condemned to imprisonment for criminal activities in October 2020. We also find the account of Stochos, a neo-fascist Greek weekly newspaper, as well as an account that posts satirical memes and frequently retweets posts from Ilias Kasidiaris, also an imprisoned former leading member of Golden Dawn. Overall, these two clusters constitute a nationalist community with strong links to the xenophobic far-right.

### ***The neoliberal sub pole***

This neoliberal sub pole is situated in the heart of the right part of the graph and is composed by two clusters, highlighted in fuschia (5,07% of the sample) and black (9,03% of the sample). This sub pole consists of users that cite frequently members and partisans of the neoliberal wing of the conservative government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis, as well as accounts related to liberal think tanks and public figures. The most cited accounts of this community are the Center for Liberal Studies - Markos Dragoumis (a non-profit think tank based in Athens), the official account of the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the personal accounts of Niki Kerameus (Minister of Education and Religion Affairs) and Adonis Georgiadis (vice-president of ruling party Nea Dimokratia and Minister for Development and Investment).

Among the accounts that are highly cited in this group we find Alexis Patelis, chief economic adviser to Greece's Prime Minister, Babis Papapanagiotou, a former journalist and spokesman for the government, and Thodoris Georgakopoulos, the Director of diaNEOsis, another liberal think tank based in Greece. The central position of this neoliberal sub pole results from the fact that its members interact both with the nationalist-conservative sub pole at the lower part of the graph but also with another, the international-official sub pole on the upper right part of the graph.

### ***The international-official sub pole***

The main component of the international-official sub pole is a cluster on the top right of the graph, in blue, which represents 9,46% of the sample. The most cited accounts are those of the official committee Greece 2021, the Hollywood stars Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson, US based news portal Greek City Times, German based portal Griechenland Aktuell as well as the account of Ioannis Chrysoulakis, Secretary General of Foreign Affairs. This cluster emerged following the publication of a video on March 6, 2020 on the Greek City Times YouTube channel. In this video, Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson urged citizens to celebrate the bicentenary of the Greek



Revolution<sup>1</sup>. It brings together essentially Greeks from abroad, their media and representatives.

This cluster intertwines with two other, smaller, groups which are situated towards the center of the graph and make up respectively 3,31% (light blue) and 5,07% of the sample (orange). The most cited accounts of these clusters are the official account of the President of the Hellenic Republic, the account of the U.S. Embassy in Athens and the personal account of Geoffrey Pyatt, former U.S. Ambassador in Greece. Other highly cited accounts comprise Greek ministers and pro-government mainstream media such as Antenna TV, SKAI TV, news portals iEfimerida, Enikos and Amna, the Greek State news agency. In these clusters, we also find embassies in Greece (Cyprus, Germany, France, Israel, Ireland). Overall, this international-official sub pole is firmly related to the government and its supportive media as well as to foreign officials.

### ***The leftist pole***

On the opposite left side of the graph, there is a clearly separated pole which consists of two clusters, a main in purple (24,32% of the sample) and a secondary in green (1,87% of the sample). This pole is composed of left-leaning users and members of the opposition. In contrast with the other pole, the members of this community do not cite officials or state organizations, with the exception of the account of Alexis Tsipras leader of the main opposition party SYRIZA. The accounts of this leftist pole cite frequently humor and parody contents such as the posts of Ellinofreneia (satirical left-leaning radio and TV show), of Katioussa (website close to the Communist Party of Greece) and of Tasos Anastasiou, cartoonist for “Avgi”, a left-wing daily newspaper connected to the opposition.

The rest 19,09% of the sample is highly fragmented in clumps of very few users. In order to examine the topics and discursive themes that were privileged by the different groups of users, we conducted a lexicometric analysis of the tweets of our sample.

### **3.2 Lexicometric analysis**

Our lexicometric analysis of the tweets of our sample revealed three main groups of discursive themes comprising a total of 16 classes that resulted from the lexicometric analysis (see Figure 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Greek City Times (2020) *Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson excited to celebrate the bicentennial of the Greek War of Independence*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITHRAKV0sss> (Accessed:2 March 2022)



In response to the publication of a video by the Greece 2021 committee concerning the anniversary of the assassination of Grigoris Lambrakis we read in class 9: *"Hey @Greece2021, your purpose is to commemorate the 200 years of the nation's rebirth and recovery, instead you are trying to divide the Greeks. What did Lambrakis have to do with '21'?"*. Another user comments: *"While the committee is commemorating the assassination of Grigoris Lambrakis, we ask the removal of its members from organizing the celebrations of the Greeks"*. Grigoris Lambrakis was an emblematic figure of the Greek Resistance during the World War II, assassinated by right-wing thugs in 1963 after a speech in an anti-war meeting. In this class we find fragments of a controversy sparked by Konstantinos Bogdanos (a renegade deputy of the ruling party known for his nationalist opinions) in which he wonders why the committee focused on the anniversary of the assassination of Lambrakis, a figure of the Left, on that particular day<sup>3</sup>.

*Was the first governor of modern Greece a dictator?*

In classes 11 and 12, we find traces of controversy regarding two articles of Aristidis Hatzis that were reposted by the Greece 2021 committee. Professor of Philosophy of Law in the University of Athens, Hatzis is also the director of the Center for Liberal Studies - Markos Dragoumis as well as a member of the committee Greece 2021. In the first article, originally published in 2016, Hatzis mentioned that Ioannis Kapodistrias had established a "modernist dictatorship"<sup>4</sup>. Ioannis Kapodistrias is considered as the founder of the modern Greek state. Although in modern historiography there is ambivalence about Kapodistrias' policy (Andriakaina, 2016) there seems to be a consensus that since his arrival in 1828, he established an authoritarian regime, which provoked vast reactions (Spyropoulos and Fortsakis, 2017). However, several historians have criticized the use of the term "dictatorship" in that particular historical context.

The phrase in question was cited in a tweet of the Greece 2021 committee and led to numerous reactions. For example, a user said sarcastically: *"Perhaps we should thank Mr. Hatzis and @greece2021 because their attacks on Kapodistrias have provoked a great interest in the study of this great personality"*. Another criticizes the fact that those who expressed negative opinions on the article were classified as far right: *"@glakopoulos I appreciate you, I read your article on @greece2021 a. the term dictator for this particular era is unhistorical b. the role of the committee is not*

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<sup>3</sup> Huffington Post (2020) *Κύκλοι της Επιτροπής «Ελλάδα 2021» απαντούν στο Κ. Μπογδάνο για τη δολοφονία Λαμπράκη*. Available at: [https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/entry/kekloi-tes-epitropes-ellada-2021-apantoen-sto-k-mpoydano-via-te-dolofonia-lamprake\\_gr\\_5ec959ddc5b69a413bb4fa22](https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/entry/kekloi-tes-epitropes-ellada-2021-apantoen-sto-k-mpoydano-via-te-dolofonia-lamprake_gr_5ec959ddc5b69a413bb4fa22) (Accessed: 23 February 2022)

<sup>4</sup> Χατζής, Α. (2016) *Κύριε Πρωθυπουργέ, το 1821 ήταν μια Δημοκρατική και Φιλελεύθερη επανάσταση!*. Available at: <https://www.andro.gr/apopsi/hatzis-liberal-greek-revolution/> (Accessed: 23 February 2022)

*to highlight sexual preferences and c. Mr Hatzis is not a historian and is inadequate. Conclusion, we are not all right-wing extremists and conspiracy theory believers”.*

*Are the private lives of the heroes of the Revolution relevant?*

The reference on “sexual preferences” in the previous tweet is relative to another article published by Hatzis on the website of the Greece 2021 committee entitled “The Love of Karaiskakis”<sup>5</sup>. It dealt with the private life of Georgios Karaiskakis, a central military figure of the Greek Revolution, and in particular his description of his mother as a prostitute and his love affair with a young Turkish girl that he dressed in man’s clothes and brought along in every important military and diplomatic meeting. Once more, the committee’s account on Twitter posted parts of this article, provoking negative reactions: “@greece2021 did very well to withdraw the specific passage about Karaiskakis, the lines it contains are highly sexist and I wouldn't want them to be normalized. No, I am not speaking ironically at all”. Another user calls the Twitter community to sign a petition demanding the committee members to resign. “The deconstructionists also took on Karaiskakis, another incident which shows that the @greece2021 committee has deviated from its purpose and has become a laughing stock”. Another user criticizes the committee : “The @greece2021 committee should project a unifying and honest national narrative with key meanings, symbolism, values and inspirations. I’m sorry but the preoccupation with the sex life of Karaiskakis' mother is a sickness, a perversion”. According to another user the article highlights deeper political differences in the representation of the Greek Revolution: “This is not a communication problem, it is a political one, since they present their ideologically biased articles as scientific evidence”.

*Was the Greek revolution a liberal-European event or an episode of Ottoman decay?*

In class 14 we trace another controversy that concerns the influence of the American and French Revolutions upon the Greek Revolution. This discussion was triggered initially by several articles published in national newspapers (authored by academics such as Nikos Alivizatos, Richard Clogg, Napoleon Maravegias as well as Aristidis Hatzis) and flared-up by two tweets published by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister respectively. We read a comment: “For so many years they tried to make us think that the Greek Revolution was a child of the French Revolution. After Pompeo’s visit (Ed. Note: United States secretary of state from 2018 to 2021), we are told that the Revolution is a child of the American Revolution”. Another user points out the importance of the context of the Balkans region in triggering the Revolution: “The Greek revolution was much more connected to the developments in the Balkans since the fall of the Ottoman Empire than to the American and French

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<sup>5</sup> Χατζής, Α. (2020) *Ο έρωτας του Καραϊσκάκη*. Available at: <https://infognomonpolitics.gr/2020/02/o-erotas-tou-karaiskaki/> (Accessed: 23 February 2022)

*Revolutions*”. Another one notices that the influence of the American Revolution is even mentioned in the Greek national anthem: *“I’m told that our fellow citizens are surprised to hear that the Greek Revolution was inspired by the American Revolution. Who will inform them that George Washington’s name is mentioned in our National Anthem?”*.

This controversy is relative to a long-standing debate about whether Greece is part of the Western world, a position defended by liberals, or it’s closer to the Orient (Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans in particular). It is worth mentioning here some results of a survey conducted by the aforementioned Center for Liberal Studies - Markos Dragoumis regarding the representations of Greek citizens towards the Greek Revolutions. During this survey the participants were asked to choose which country had the greatest influence on the Greek Revolution: only 1,1% of them mentioned the United States while 42,5% indicated Russia, 18,3% France, 17,1% Great Britain and 6,2% Austria (ΚΕΦΙΜ, 2019).

*Was the Greek revolution a national, a liberal or a social one?*

In the same class, another historiographical controversy takes place, that of the disputed historical continuity of the Greek nation and the nature of the Greek revolution. What sparked comments on this controversy was a tweet by the Greece 1821 committee referring to the work of major 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, one of the first to defend the idea of the continuity of the Greek nation from the Antiquity to modern times through the Byzantine Empire <sup>6</sup>. In defense of this idea, one user writes: *“According to the @greece2021 committee, Greeks have only been around for 200 years”*, while another opposes the multiethnic nature of the 1821 uprising: *“why are we talking about the Greek Revolution since it was not only the Greeks who rebelled, the region was also inhabited to a large extent by Turkish people, Arvanites, Vlachs, etc., who also actively participated in the revolution?”*. In the same vein, a user stresses: *“the Greek revolution of 1821 was a class, proletarian, anti-feudal, anti-monarchical and at the same time national-liberating popular revolution. In the end, its social content never prevailed, because of its protagonists”*, while another one notes that *“the French revolution was a class struggle against the feudal lords while the Greek revolution was a national liberation struggle. The French revolution was a civil war while the Greek was a national Christian revolution”*. The Greece 1821 committee remains in the center of the dispute and gets criticized from different angles: *“@greece2021 You have managed to put a large part of the people against the celebration of the most important*

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<sup>6</sup> Ελλάδα 2021 (2021) *Η «Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους» του Παπαρρηγόπουλου*. Accessible at: <https://greece2021.gr/timeline/25-timeline/645-i-istoria-tou-ellinikoy-ethnous-tou-paparrigopoulou.html> (Accessed: 23 February 2022)

*anniversary. So celebrate for yourselves and share the congratulations among yourselves”.*

These comments reflect a cleavage that can schematically be described as that that between the supporters of the “liberal revolution” (mainly present in the neoliberal sub pole of our sample), the supporters of the “national revolution” (nationalist-conservative sub pole) and the supporters of the “social revolution” (leftist pole). As Panagiotis Stathis (2021) remarks, *“the main historiographical controversy through most of the twentieth century was that between the opponents of the national history and the Marxist or left historians concerning the character of the revolution. This controversy is summarized in the dilemma whether 1821 was a national or a social revolution”*. More recently another historiographical current gained momentum, linking the Greek Revolution to the European Enlightenment and insisting that it was only secondarily a social subversion and primarily a political and ideological liberal revolution (Pizanias, 2021). These historiographical traditions correspond to different currents of public opinion. In the aforementioned survey regarding the representations of the Greek Revolution, 90,4 % of the participants said that the term “national revolution” fits well the Greek Revolution, 54,6% of them declared that the term “social revolution” is appropriate, while 52,9% of participants believe that the Greek Revolution can be qualified as a “liberal revolution” (ΚΕΦίΜ, 2019).

Globally, in this class we find traces of the main narratives concerning the Greek Revolution, which take the form of either-or dilemmas: either the Greek Revolution may be characterized as a national or a social revolution; as a modern revolution or a traditional rebellion; as a European event or an accomplishment that drew from Balkan and Eastern contexts (Andriakaina, 2016).

### **The bicentenary and contemporary Greek politics**

Our lexicometric analysis also revealed controversies that are related to contemporary Greek politics and long-standing conflict between ideological and political currents of the Left and the Right, expressed around current affairs

*What about the money?*

One of these was, as expected, the COVID-19 pandemic (class 4). A user comments, for example: *“100 years since the Greek Revolution of 1821 and we celebrate the struggle for freedom by being confined to our homes”*. Another user says: *“This is no time for celebrations after the tragedy of the coronavirus. The @greece2021 committee should be disbanded and the proceeds donated to Health sector”* or *“Let's leave the fiestas for the Greek revolution of 1821 and give this money to education, publishing, theatres, culture, with full transparency”*. There are also hints about

possible corruption and public money misuse that point out the precedent of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games where Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki was also the head of the organizing committee: *"Has the @greece2021 committee really filed a budget or we will be confronted once more with the countless corruption scandals of the Olympic Games?"*.

### *1821 memes*

Finally, within the corpus we find comments concerning two memes that attracted users' attention. The first one concerns an illustration in the cover page of BHMAGazino magazine that portrayed contemporary politicians such as the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Emmanuel Macron, Boris Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen as heroes of the Greek Revolution era. This cover was perceived as pro-government propaganda and was sarcastically commented and parodied particularly by the leftist pole: *"As the bicentenary approaches, the kitsch with the @greece2021 story will grow thicker and thicker"*.

The other event was a meme posted by LGBT community accounts based on a classical painting of 19th century artist Theodoros Vryzakis, entitled "Oath of the fighters". In the meme the heroes of 1821 hold a rainbow flag, instead of the Greek flag which appears in the original painting. Following this publication, we find critics as well as supportive comments. *"The Sydney Opera House will be illuminated with the Greek flag to mark the bicentenary of the 1821 Revolution. In our country, unfortunately, we see weird ideas from certain groups"*, mentions a user. Another user, in response to a tweet by a ruling party deputy known for his nationalist and sexist opinions comments: *"Thanos Plevris opens up the issue of homosexuality in the Greek Revolution. So let's start with Byron (Lord Byron an English poet who participated in the Greek Revolution) who dressed boys in women's clothes in Mesolongi"*.

### **Conclusion**

Our research points out the political divisions and cleavages of the Greek society that were reflected on the discussions around the Greek Revolution bicentenary commemoration. Overall, the network analysis highlights a double polarization among Greek Twitter users who posted about 1821. On the one hand, we find a large pole on the Right of the political spectrum that represents more than half of our sample. This pole is far from being homogenous. It consists of three main sub poles: an international-official sub pole that groups the Greek diaspora and its media, Embassies and foreign leaders as well as officials related to the ruling party of Nea Dimokratia and its supportive media; a neoliberal sub pole with a central position that consists of think tanks, media pundits and government officials of the neoliberal Right; finally, a nationalist-conservative sub pole with close connections to

the xenophobic far-right. These groups of Twitter users correspond to the different blocks that compose the supporters of the ruling party and the government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis (the most radical part of the nationalist-conservative sub pole being oppositional). On the other hand, we find two clusters that constitute the leftist pole which makes up a quarter of our sample and is composed of users that essentially post satirical content about the government but also the Greece 1821 committee. We can conclude that the discussion around the bicentenary of the Greek Revolution, as an officially organized event of national interest, was much more invested by users who are globally right-wing and pro-government. The leftist opposition was much less active and limited itself to ironical comments and criticism about the official agenda.

Our content analysis on the other hand clearly demonstrated that the discussion about the bicentenary that took place on Twitter was characterized both by *presentism*, that is determined by social and political issues of the present time, as well as “ideological battles” around historiography that express political divisions that run through Greek society. In this respect, along with the traditional opposition between leftists, liberals and nationalists, the framing of the Twitter discussion points also to the interpretative scheme that focuses on the “*so called Greek peculiarity, the traumatic encounter of tradition and modernity or otherwise, a narrative about the never-ending and always postponed modernity due to the burden of the country’s Oriental, Ottoman and Byzantine past that makes convergence with Europe an aspiration unfulfilled*” (Andriakaina, 2016).

This online controversy points out that, on the occasion of the bicentenary celebrations, different groups tried to impose their interpretation of the Greek Revolution. By doing so, they left traces both in interactions and in discourse, which sketched long-standing cleavages that are also observed in other public arenas. Further research would give more insights on the way that “ideological battles” of historical nature are taking place in the Greek digital public sphere.



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