SPRYRIDON KOTSOVILIS - Panel Moderator

Spyridon Kotsovilis teaches Comparative Politics (Greece, Eastern Europe), and International Relations and Law at the Department of Political Science in the University of Toronto (St. George and Mississauga campuses). He obtained his Ph.D. in Political Science from McGill University, where he was the Neporany doctoral fellow, and also trained in Complex Systems at the Santa Fe Institute, New Mexico. His research interests include democratization, ethnic conflict and foreign policy, and he is an expert in Modern Greek politics. He has published and widely disseminated his work in major conferences, and is currently working on a book manuscript. He has previously taught at McGill and University of Toronto, Scarborough, and has worked with Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders, where he is an elected member of the MSF Canada Association. In 2018, he received the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Arts and Science Superior Teaching Award.

JOHN KARKALATOS

John Karkalatos was born and raised in the Leaside community of Toronto and was an active member of the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox church. He went on to attend Victoria College at the University of Toronto and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1990. Immediately upon graduation, John moved to Greece to work for several multinational companies in Athens. He simultaneously began developing his grandfathers farmland, which sat abandoned since his grandfathers execution during WWII. John fulfilled his lifelong dream by ending his professional career at the age of 45 and retreating to a simple and rewarding life as a farmer in the village of Kiveri, Argolidas. John founded and self-financed the youth basketball camp, “Kiveri Basket”, which is now entering its 19th year of operation and has inspired thousands of children across Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

AMBASSADOR ROBERT PECK

With nearly 35 years in the Government of Canada as a career Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador Peck has held a number of important roles in Canada and abroad. In Ottawa these have included Press Secretary and Departmental Spoksperson to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief of Protocol of Canada. Mr. Peck was Canada’s Ambassador to the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria from 2004 to 2007. He recently returned to Canada following his tenure as Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic and High Commissioner to the Republic of Cyprus from 2011 to 2015. Ambassador Peck was recognized as a tireless champion of Canada-Greece relations, including the promotion of enhanced bilateral trade/investment and cultural relations. He and his Greek-born wife, Maria Pantazi-Peck, continue to be ardent supporters of several humanitarian organizations including ELPIIDA and Aghia Sophia Hospital in Athens, chronic care facility Asylon Aniaton, and Greek NGO “The Smile of the Child.” Mr. Peck has been recognized with numerous awards including the Foreign Minister’s Citation for Foreign Policy Excellence, the Minister’s Merit Award and the Grand Commander of the Order of the Phoenix by the Hellenic Republic.

KATERINA SOKOU

Katerina Sokou, is the Washington, D.C. correspondent for Greek daily Kathimerini and SKAI TV and Principal at News Intelligence consultancy. She is a contributor to U.S. and European media on Greece, transatlantic relations and globalization. She has covered the Eurozone financial crisis, interviewing senior officials and prominent economists, and is currently researching the U.S. role in the Greek debt crisis. Ms. Sokou obtained a B.A. in History from the University of Ioannina, Greece, an M.A. in International Studies from the University of Warwick, UK, and an M.A. in Journalism from Columbia University as a Knight-Bagehot Fellow in Economics and Business Journalism. Most recently, she was a Visiting Scholar at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, while in the past she worked at the business desk of the Washington Post, was International Financial News editor at Kathimerini, and a financial reporter at To Vima newspaper, where she covered Greece’s entry to the Euro Area.

VASILEIOS TSIAKAS

Vasileios is a Management Consultant with StrategyCorp, advising clients in highly-regulated industries on business and investment strategy. He previously worked in mid-market investment banking and corporate development. He also serves on the Board of Advisors of Stanbury Holdings, an EU-based operating partner to private equity funds investing in the Infrastructure and Education sectors in the EU and East Africa. He has been an avid supporter of Greek Diaspora causes, including The Hellenic Initiative, the Hellenic Canadian Board of Trade, the Modern Greek Studies Program at the University of Toronto, the Greek America Foundation, and was recognized last years as one of Greek America’s top 40 under 40. He is a graduate from the University of Toronto in Chemical Engineering and a Masters in Finance from IE Business School.

PANAVIOTIS YANNTOTSOS

Panayiotis Yannitsos is an award-winning Canadian filmmaker based in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is of Greek descent and was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. His grandparents immigrated to Canada from Argolida and Arkadia, Greece in the late 1950s. He is best known as a dramatic screenwriter as well as a social issue documentarian of several films in Canada, the United States, Greece, and in China. Today, Panayioti produces television and feature films for several companies within Canada and the United States, including his own, Inside Earth Productions, which is currently producing films taking place in Greece, Canada, the US, and Israel.

Freedom Besieged is a feature-length documentary concerning the economic and political climate of Greece and specifically how it has impacted the development and psychology of the nation’s youth. Treading fearlessly into what has been called a “humanitarian catastrophe,” the film explores the pursuits of Greek youth living within the country’s crisis. Carrying an overall hope-based theme, Freedom Besieged tells the inspiring stories of various Greek youth and community leaders who, without violence, seek a prosperous future amidst the crisis.
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